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Opening Extract from...

The Recipe for Life

Healthy eating for real people

Written by Sally Bee

Published by Collins

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The Recipe for Life
Sally Bee
introduction

In my first book, The Secret Ingredient, apart from all the lovely, healthy recipes, I wrote about my experiences when I suffered three heart attacks in the space of one week at the tender age of 36. I spoke about the moment my husband was told to come and say his goodbyes, and about the immediate effects the experience had on both my family and myself.
The trauma I suffered was huge, both physically and emotionally, and it took such a long time to recover to the level of fitness that I have now, happily, achieved.

So, moving on, I'd now like to share with you the next stage of my recovery, which will lead on nicely to the delicious recipes included in this book. It may seem like a strange partnership: survival, recovery and food. But if you read on, I think you'll start to understand what good healthy food has
meant to me, and maybe it will help you understand your relationship with food a little better. I hope so…

my philosophy

My philosophy about food is very simple. It is the only thing that can give us our health. Other things can take it away, such as drinking, smoking and a lazy lifestyle. But food is what makes us what we are. The food we eat affects our energy levels and our sleep patterns. It affects how happy we feel and the way we look – our hair and our skin I am living proof that eating a rounded, healthy diet works. I was, quite literally, at death's door and now I'm probably more energetic than many of my friends. I feel the effects of a poor diet within minutes. If I'm away from home for a few days and can't eat what my body needs, I very quickly begin to feel tired and lethargic and fed up! I can't make you any promises about your personal health, but you can rest assured that the healthy ingredients that I choose are all thought to be health giving in some way by doctors and scientists who are properly trained to comment.

So all my recipes will offer you nutrition and are quick and easy to make. You don't have to be an expert chef to give yourself and your family good health – you may just need a few new ideas and a gentle nudge in the right direction.

If you've just been diagnosed with heart disease or another health problem, don't think that this is a prison sentence and don't assume that 'diet' food is your only choice. Try to see your situation in a positive light. You have a fantastic opportunity to take control of your future health. You have the chance to make some wonderfully positive changes that will not only benefit you but the family and friends around you. There are a few tips that I can give you from my experiences that might help you to get on the right track to a healthier future:

* Learn to listen to your body after you've eaten. Which foods lift your mood and help you to feel energised? Which food makes you sleepy, lethargic or sad? I think that when you listen well, you'll soon realise that natural, unprocessed foods will lift you and energise you rather than tire
you out. But don't take my word for it – try it for yourself.
* Take notice of how you move and start to push yourself a little. When you are walking around the shops or to and from work, ask yourself if you could walk a little quicker. Then

see how you feel when you do speed up for a while. Look in the mirror – you'll probably see a lovely flushed face smiling back at you. Very healthy!

* If this is all new to you, make a commitment to have a healthy week. Spend the week eating good food and incorporating a little more movement (otherwise known as exercise) into your routine, and then properly listen to your body at the end of that week. Have you felt more energised? Have you slept well? Are you ready for another, even better and healthier week?

* Set some goals that you'd like to achieve. Maybe it's a change of job, or looking good for a wedding in the summer or trying for a baby or running a marathon. Whatever it is that you'd like to achieve, by taking control of your health through nutrition, you should feel proud and capable of improving your self-discipline and motivation in all areas of your life. Taking control of your diet is just the beginning…

The thing that surprises people when they start to change the way they view food and exercise in the right way is that it isn't a chore and they don't feel that they are depriving themselves. I know that if you follow some of my recipes and start to eat for nourishment (and enjoyment of course!), you will feel and see the benefits on the inside and the outside. And what I hope will happen is that you won't want to go back to your unhealthy ways, because you'll love the feeling of wellbeing too much to let it slip.

the missing piece of the puzzle

After my heart attacks, my body was badly damaged and was struggling to survive and I had to find a way to help fix it. This certainly wasn't going to be helped purely by low-calorie snacks, soups and drinks without any nutritional benefit, and being slim alone wouldn't fix the problem. Therefore I needed to make sure that every mouthful of food I ate gave my body some nutritional value. And at the same time, I had three young children at home and it was important to me that they grew up with a good healthy attitude towards food, just as I had done. I didn't want them to think that a diet of mung beans and spinach was normal. Our meal times at home were, and forever will be, precious times. Meal times offer an emotional outlet for the day's events. It's a time when we share our stories and concerns and funny moments. And to match this mood, it's crucial that the meals we eat feed our heart, our body and our soul. Our food is not just required to stop us from feeling hungry. It is also not just needed to give our body nutrition, although that's obviously a most important part; food has to satisfy our emotions as well as our hunger. This is the missing piece of the puzzle that you may have been struggling to find. It's also necessary for our food to feed our emotions. Imagine if you sat down every day to a green salad and jacket potato because you were on a 'diet'. I think life would be pretty miserable and unsatisfying. Maybe that's why dieters run for a big chunk of chocolate at the drop of a hat. Maybe it's not the calories or the sugar that they crave, maybe it's the emotional fulfilment they are lacking.