

This side of 60 . . . By Marie Snider

WHAT DOES "HEALTHY AGING" MEAN?

Mostly, we have very healthy meals at our house. We eat oatmeal every day for breakfast. We like salmon, eggs, yogurt, brown rice, vegetables and a little bit of meat. And this time of year, most of our desserts come from the freezer - apples, blackberries and Saskatoon berries from our summer garden.

It's a nourishing diet, but sometimes it becomes boring. That's why I often get ideas from my friends at the pool. They have wonderful recipes for delicious casseroles, healthy cookies, soups and salads.

Lois, who grew up in India and is an excellent cook, often talks about complicated Indian dishes she makes. I'm sure they would taste good, but they are too much work for me. So I was glad when she shared a recipe for a simple vegetable curry served with rice.

She suggested a potato and pea curry. At the time, I had no white potatoes on hand so I made it with sweet potatoes. Now it's one of my regulars.

I especially like Indian food because of one specific ingredient - turmeric. It's turmeric that gives Indian food its yellow color. And I recently learned that this interesting spice has unusual medicinal properties.

Turmeric is said to reduce inflammation, slow the growth of bacteria, protect the liver, improve circulation and help arthritis. It also has a specific preventive effect against Alzheimer's disease.

In his book, *Healthy Aging: A Lifelong Guide to Your Physical and Spiritual Well-Being*, Dr. Andrew Weil told about the diet of the long-lived people in Okinawa. Turmeric is one of their staples.

Weil, who is clinical professor of medicine at the University of Arizona, has gone to this Japanese island three times to try to figure out why the people live so long and are in such good shape.

One time he took his 92-year-old mother along. When he introduced his mother to near-centenarians, the Okinawans began the conversation by stating their age.

"Hello, I'm 96, how old are you?"

Wrote Weil, "This was quite a cultural shock for my mother, but after a while I think it was refreshing for her to sense the benefits of living in a culture where old age is cause for downright pride."

Weil thinks that our non-acceptance of aging is one of the great obstacles to "doing it gracefully."

This doctor believes aging doesn't "suddenly overtake us at some point in life I find it useful to think of aging as a continuous and necessary process of change that begins at conception.

"Wherever you are on the continuum, it is important to learn how to live in appropriate ways in order to maximize health and happiness. "

In his book, Weil shares his secrets for maximizing health. One of those secrets is the therapeutic effect of turmeric.

He also advocates staying physically active, taking naps, getting on top of stress, practicing deep breathing and having the right attitude.

It isn't so important how long you live as "how" you live. Said Weil, the goal is "to live as long and as well as possible, then have a rapid decline at the end of life. "

So wherever you are on the continuum, remember to maximize every day of your life. And consider spicing things up a bit with a dash of turmeric for flavor and health.

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