

Sneaky Nutrition

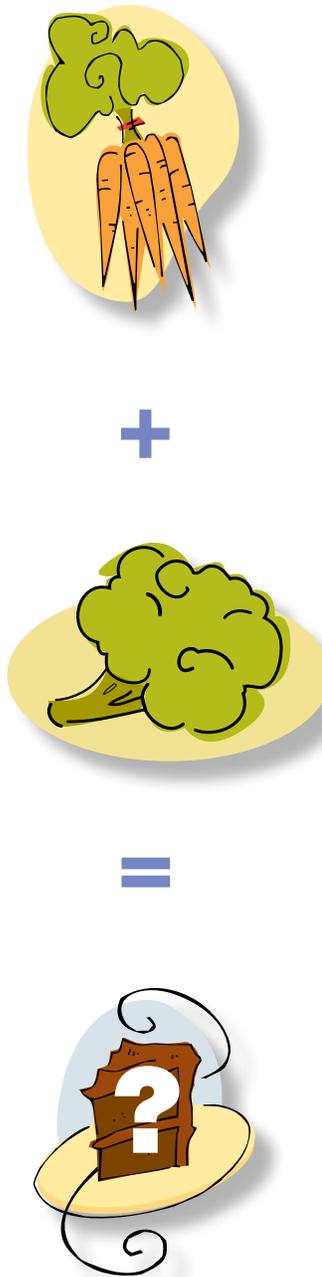
By Jennifer Krueger

About the author: Jennifer Krueger has a M.A. in Education, a M.Ed. in Health Promotion, and has worked as a member of the UT Wellness Team for three years. She is also the mother of two toddlers, a picky two year old and a not-so-picky three year old.

Chances are, if you have children, you've been in a food fight. I don't mean the fun kind of food fight that happens at summer camp, I mean the kind where you've spent an hour cooking a healthy meal and your kids won't touch it.

Two new cookbooks, *The Sneaky Chef* by Missy Lapine and *Deceptively Delicious* by Jessica Seinfeld, address this problem by using pureed fruits and vegetables as standard ingredients.

I'm a healthy eater, however, when I flipped through the cookbooks, I admit some of the recipes sounded a little bit... well, icky. Would my children really eat brownies containing a cup of spinach? Would they gobble up tacos made with a half cup of sweet potato?



Curious, I decided to make the gingerbread spice cake from *Deceptively Delicious*. The recipe calls for one cup of pureed broccoli and ½ cup of pureed carrots. I pulled a bag of frozen broccoli out of the freezer and some baby carrots out of the fridge, steamed them in the microwave, and pureed them (separately) in the blender. Both of the cookbook authors suggest making the purees ahead of time and then putting them in freezer bags for later use. Still, it only took me 20 minutes to make the batter (including the purees). As the spice cake was cooking, the distinct aroma of broccoli filled the kitchen. I was getting a bit concerned that I had just made a broccoli cake, and not a spice cake.

Seinfeld suggests letting the baked goods cool completely before serving. This helps the vegetables become less pronounced in flavor. I snuck a bite shortly after taking the cake out of the oven—broccoli. It tasted like broccoli! An hour later, it tasted like spice cake—with broccoli. Three hours later, my husband tasted it (without knowing the secret ingredients) and said, “Hey, that’s pretty good.” The next day, my toddler son burst into tears when his sister ate the last bite of his spice cake.

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Turkey Meatballs

Adapted from the *Deceptively Delicious* recipe for Turkey Meatloaf

INGREDIENTS

Makes 8 servings or 20 to 30 meatballs

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup + 2 Tbsp. Italian-style (seasoned) bread crumbs
- ½ cup nonfat (skim) milk
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- ½ onion, finely chopped
- 2 celery stalks, finely chopped
- 1 pound lean ground turkey
- ½ cup grated Parmesan
- ½ cup carrot puree
- ¼ cup ketchup
- 1 tsp. salt
- ⅛ tsp. pepper
- 1 cup bottled tomato sauce

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Coat a 9" x 5" loaf pan with cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl, soak the bread crumbs in milk.
3. Coat a large nonstick skillet with cooking spray. Set it over medium-high heat. When the skillet is hot, add the oil. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, 7 to 10 minutes. Add celery and cook 3 to 4 minutes longer. Scrape the mixture into the bowl with breadcrumbs. Add turkey, Parmesan, carrot puree, ketchup, salt and pepper, and stir to combine.
4. Roll the meat mixture into balls. If the mixture seems too moist to roll, add the extra 2 Tbsp. bread crumbs (or more as needed) to bind it. Place the meatballs on a cookie sheet greased with a light coating of cooking spray.
5. Bake for 25 minutes in the preheated oven, then turn them over and continue baking for about 10 more minutes, or until somewhat crispy on the outside. Serve with pasta and sauce, as finger food, or however you'd like.

Note: *Deceptively Delicious* features a recipe for spaghetti and meatballs that includes a homemade sauce.



Winning the Battle with Smoking... One Cigarette at a Time

Neva Kennelly does not consider herself a role model. Even though she smoked up to two packs of cigarettes daily for 26 years, she is hesitant to accept praise for cutting down to a handful of cigarettes a day. “I feel like I’ve failed in some ways because I haven’t quit completely, but I’m proud of myself in other ways because I was such a heavy smoker and I have cut down a lot.”

Neva, with the Killeen Clinic in LA 31, tried to quit many times. “I felt like I was losing my best friend. I was so dependent. It was definitely harder to control the psychological cravings than the physical ones. I would seem to do well the first month or so. But then my stress level would go up, and I would start smoking as many cigarettes as before I tried to quit. That’s still a battle for me.”

This time Neva is winning the battle. She remembers the day it started—September 6, 2006, she decided to change her life. She and her husband quit together. Neva is proud of him. He smokes even fewer cigarettes a week than she does, and sometimes smokes none for days at a time.

Neva’s ultimate goal is to be smoke free and never buy another pack of cigarettes again. Being involved in the WIC Wellness Works program at her clinic has



Neva with her daughter Renessa in the middle and her husband Dan.

given Neva other options in coping with cigarette cravings and with the stressors in her life. “If you keep busy and stay active, you don’t think about smoking as much. Our wellness coordinator, Edith, really gets us moving. She encourages me and says, “Don’t you want to see your grandchildren some day?”

“I’m starting to work out with a friend too. We’re doing the treadmill and bike at my house. And of course Edith encourages us here and we try to work out during lunch. The exercise really helps. You feel like you breathe better when you’re moving.”

Practicing wellness has also helped Neva with the urge to snack. “I have gained some weight

since I cut out all the cigarettes, but I drink a whole lot of water and I try to eat a lot of fruit and veggies.”

Neva doesn’t have to look far to see how smoking negatively impacts her life. She explains, “I think a big thing for me is watching my mother’s health. She has a lot of health problems due to smoking. She’s only 68. She’s had many heart problems, she’s prone to stroke, and it’s all from cigarettes. I don’t want to have to go through that. You can prevent all the health problems smoking causes.”

Neva, who has reduced her cigarette intake by over 75 percent, is well on her way to being smoke free, one day at a time.



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Apparently, I was the only one who tasted broccoli, likely because I knew it was in there.

Round two: blueberry-spinach brownies. There are recipes for veggie brownies in both cookbooks, but I decided to try the quick brownies (doctoring a box of brownie mix) in Lapine's book. It's a simple recipe: substitute a ½ cup of wheat germ (available at most grocery stores) for ½ cup of the brownie mix and add one cup of "purple puree" (blueberries and spinach) to the batter.

The brownies had more of a cake-like texture than most boxed brownies, but they were moist, tasty and a hit with the whole family. Best of all, they tasted like chocolate, not spinach!

Round three: Italian turkey meatloaf with carrot puree (from *Deceptively Delicious*). To satisfy my kids, who have never been fans of meatloaf, I rolled the mixture and turned them into crispy oven-baked meatballs. Success! Not only did the kids like these, but they were easy to freeze in zipper bags and store for future meals.

Both cookbooks contain a wide assortment of recipes for meals, snacks, and desserts: dishes such as macaroni and cheese with squash puree, French toast with sweet potato puree, and many more creatively healthy choices.

Most of these recipes sound great, even with the unusual ingredients, but some may require you to stretch your imagination a bit!

Sneaky Suggestions:

- Let the baked goods cool completely before serving.
- Use frozen, jarred, or canned ingredients to make the purees (although frozen fruits and veggies generally have a higher nutritional content and fresher taste).
- Don't substitute standard ingredients (although you can substitute various purees).
- Don't judge the outcome until someone other than you has had a taste test.
- Use jarred baby food if you don't have time to make your own purees. In her book, Lapine has a list of how they can be substituted in recipes

I felt a secret thrill that my two-year-old son was eating broccoli (previously, I had only seen him lick it and then throw it down on his plate in disgust).

This brings me to the sticky issue of the chef's little secret. Should we be hiding the fruits and vegetables we feed our family? Will they ever learn to appreciate healthy eating if we puree the good stuff until it's almost invisible? Lapine states, "Secretly slipping nutritious ingredients into meals actually facilitates teaching because it takes away the stress and the urgency to win (the food fights). We know we're getting what we want even if they don't, so we can guide them in the direction of a healthy diet in a more relaxed atmosphere."

Seinfeld refers to the sneaky technique as "loving deception." "Forcing your kids to eat foods they hate only reinforces their

distaste" she says. Seinfeld's nutritionist Joy Bauer adds, "You should by no means stop putting at least one visible veggie on the table at lunch and dinner. Trust me, even if your kids don't go for the veggies immediately, they will eventually."

I only felt a little sneaky in giving my kids these fruit and veggie rich foods, and that guilt was outweighed by the pleasure of knowing they weren't eating empty calories. An added benefit is that my husband and I have both enjoyed these recipes, and in our fast-paced lives, we now have some easily prepared healthy meal options. So will I keep sneaking around the kitchen? You bet your broccoli I will.

