



An energy explosion

We all want double the energy. We're all searching for the way to have more pep, more verve, or more spring in our step. If we're lucky, we find the magic combination of sleep, exercise, dietary habit and routine that helps us feel like we have double our usual energy. But if we glimpse into the lives of a pair of twins, particularly those who call themselves the "Double Energy Twins" and write cookbooks with titles like "Double Your Energy with Half the Effort," it might appear like they have an unfair advantage.



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Healthy Habits

I recently spent some inspirational time over homemade pumpkin muffins with twins Judi and Shari Zucker, in Shari's Montecito home, after they had finished their morning run and swim and before they began prepping for their appearance on Cox Channel 8's "Community Heroes" TV show (airing in the next few days, through May 10, 4:30 to 5:00 p.m.). You may have seen them around the community, and they're certainly their best advertisement for the energy-boosting, vibrant plant-based lifestyle they advocate in their series of cookbooks, talks and appearances. The duo embodies energy, and they finish each others' sentences, as twins should do.

The twins wrote their first cookbook, "How to Survive Snack Attacks," while still in high school, and their latest is "The Double Energy Diet." Far from a diet plan, it's a collection of their favorite recipes, culled from years of cooking plant-based vegetarian fare for families that include growing children and award-winning competitive athletes. They spent three years testing and re-testing the recipes and writing them for clarity, providing information on vegan options and information on how to use different sweeteners.

During the twins' writing process, they also put their research skills and background in health and nutrition (they have degrees from UCSB) to work, poring over the latest research about food and health. They told me that studies show that following a plant-based or vegetarian diet can add up to 15 years to a person's life expectancy and is shown to reduce the risk of developing many chronic diseases, such as type II diabetes. Along with facts and cooking instructions, they include information on raising healthy children (they have five between the two of them, so they speak from experience), tips for pregnancy, eight great energy foods and more.

If you want to try to sneak a veggie-based dish into a party or convince a dinner table filled with reluctant converts of the energizing potential and delicious tastes in vegetarian food, try serving the

twins' Eastside enchiladas. Going meatless or incorporating meals with less meat is easier to do than we might think, particularly when we can eat familiar, comfort foods.

Personally, I loved the twins' pumpkin muffins, but anything with naturally sweet and antioxidant rich pumpkins in baked goods are an easy sell for me. My sweet tooth often takes me to Santa Barbara and the Sojourner's pumpkin chocolate chip cookies on Fridays or Sundays. After hanging with the Zucker twins, I may just have to make my own pumpkin muffins and eat them after a run and a swim, of course. Trading recipes and tales over muffins reminded me of the importance of inspiration, of seeing people like the twins who are taking control of their health and making a difference in their everyday lives.

Eastside enchiladas

Ingredients

- 12 no-lard flour tortillas
- 1 large jar picante sauce (medium spice)
- 1 bunch chopped green onions
- 1 clove garlic minced
- 1 can sliced black olives
- 1 large red bell pepper, diced
- 1 can non fat refried beans (pinto or black beans are good)
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 1 8-ounce box low fat cream cheese (softened)
- 2 cups shredded cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded cheese placed aside for sprinkling on top

Process

Preheat oven at 350 degrees. In a large bowl, mix in the picante sauce, onions, garlic, black olives, red bell pepper, non fat beans, diced celery, cream cheese and shredded cheese. Scoop up the mixture with a large spoon and put a couple of large spoonfuls of the mixed ingredients into a flat tortilla and roll it together. Place tortilla into a 9" x 12" casserole and repeat this procedure, lining up each stuffed enchilada next to each other. Sprinkle with the added cheese and place aluminum foil over the top. Bake for 25 minutes. Recipe makes 12 servings.

For a dairy free version, substitute 16 ounces of tofu for the cream cheese and use tofu cheddar cheese.

Felicia Marie Tomasko is a registered nurse, writer and yoga teacher. She coordinates and is one of the teachers who leads an on-going yoga class at the Carpinteria Woman's Club on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. She can be reached at ftomasko@yahoo.com.



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