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Need more oomph? Just ask the ‘Double Energy Twins’

by amanda pazornik, staff writer

When Judi and Shari Zucker create meals for Jewish holidays, they incorporate the healthy, vegetarian diet they’ve followed since childhood — age 11, to be exact.

They trade egg matzah for whole wheat, skip the oil when making potato latkes and taste everything — in moderation. It’s a lifestyle that’s given the Los Angeles natives their successful career as the “Double Energy Twins.”

The duo, now 47 and residing in Santa Barbara, will be at Books Inc. in San Francisco on Friday, May 15 to sign copies of their latest book, “The Double Energy Diet.”

j.: Where do you two get all your energy?

Judi: We believe our energy has a lot to do with a positive attitude and a lifestyle that incorporates a plant-based diet. We’re vegetarians — no meat, fish or chicken. We try to buy organic and local. It’s also very important to move and exercise. Energy begets energy. If you have time to watch TV, sit at the computer or anything you do outside of work, you have time to exercise.

Shari: Find an exercise that you truly enjoy. We love to run every day. If you can’t afford to join a health club, go walk, swim, do yoga or stretching. Three times a week is better than doing nothing. We do our exercise first thing in the morning — it brings oxygen into our system and makes us feel alive.



FITdouble energy twins
Judi (left) and Shari Zucker

j.: In addition to being vegetarians, what are some of your dietary rules to live by?

Judi: We believe in “upper foods” and “downer foods.” The important thing is to stick with “upper foods” — fruits, veggies and water. We try to avoid “downer foods” — alcohol, sugar, excessive salt and caffeine. We don’t believe sugar is very healthy and use other forms of sweetener — agave nectar, maple syrup or honey. We also avoid foods with trans fats.

Shari: We follow the LML (light-moderate-light) diet: a light breakfast of yogurt and fresh fruit, a bigger meal at lunch and the lightest meal at night. We totally believe that exercising in the morning is better because you have energy throughout your day. Even if you exercise at night, it’s better to do that than nothing at all.

j.: What got you started on your health kick?

Judi: It all began when we were 11 years old. An art teacher in elementary school would talk about the benefits of a vegetarian diet. We were also burned out on Shake ‘n’ Bake chicken. So we became “junkatarians.” Even though we didn’t eat meat, we’d still eat the white bread from a hamburger and other processed foods.

Shari: In high school, we were very fortunate that we could run fast. We started breaking records in the mile and realized some foods gave us more energy than others. We got rid of the sugary foods and the junk, and incorporated whole grains. We dusted off the cookbooks and started cooking for our family. Pretty soon, we were creating our own recipes, which we turned into “How to Survive Snack Attacks ... Naturally.” It sold over 75,000 copies — we don’t even have that many relatives.

j.: Let’s face it, most Jewish holidays revolve around one or several big meals. What’s your advice for staying healthy while partaking in festivities?

Shari: We’re Italian Jews, so we know the whole idea behind Italians and Jews is food and family. It’s very easy to stay healthy during the holidays. Take potato latkes at Chanukah — there are so many healthy versions. You don’t have to deep-fry them. Potatoes and onions are good for you, if it’s all done in moderation.

If someone has cheesecake, we’ll have a piece. We won’t eat meat, but we won’t be social outcasts either. A diet needs to really make people embrace you, not distance you.

Judi: A kosher diet can be very health-conscious. And you can always have whole-wheat matzah at Passover.

j.: Do you consider living a healthy lifestyle and eating right a mitzvah?

Judi: When we’re healthy, we allow ourselves to be better parents. You’re doing your kids and family a favor by taking care of your health. And, like a rabbi who just loves the Jewish faith, Shari and I are passionate about health and nutrition. When we find out someone has lost weight, has more energy or is no longer diabetic, it’s rewarding for us. It’s truly our mitzvah to share the knowledge we have about health and nutrition.

Judi and Shari Zucker will be at Books Inc., 2251 Chestnut St., S.F., at 6:30 p.m. Friday, May 15. Information: <http://www.doubleenergytwins.com>.