

## Think before you eat

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Lisa Cassidy/Daily News staff

Kate Scarlata, co-author of the book, "Real People Need Real Food," talks with her son Kevin, 13, in their kitchen.

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**GHS**

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Living in a world of fast food and prepackaged products, two local dietitians and mothers decided it was time to act.

The result is "Real People Need Real Food," a book by Kate Scarlata and Laura Einbinder that offers tips and recipes for families.

Get back to basics and slow down when making meals, says Scarlata, a Medway mother of three children.

"We live in a very fast society," says Scarlata, sitting in the Medway Starbucks where she and Einbinder often met to write the book. "My philosophy is enjoying what you eat, not eating as a means to an end."

One key is to turn the television off when eating. When the television is on, people are less likely to realize that they just plowed through a box of crackers.

The book has a TV Viewing Worksheet so families can log the programs they watch and the foods they eat when they're in front of the TV. It also has questions to help kids become more aware that they are targets of television food marketers.

Other helpful features include a Healthy Habits Quiz, sheets for logging food choices and exercise, and extensive reference sections.

Families should sit down for dinner and pay attention to one another, Scarlata says.

"That's gotten lost a bit. I'm one of nine kids. We always sat down for dinner," she says. "We're becoming less and less close with the people we should be close with."

It is important to spend time preparing and enjoying food, says Einbinder, also a mother of three children.

"Make food and family eating a priority," says Einbinder, 42, of Medfield. "If you're out on the soccer field, pack a picnic dinner."

Instead of going for fast food after a practice, Scarlata says she sometimes throws food in a slow cooker to be ready when the family comes home.

However, the authors know that fast food can sometimes be the only option, and include suggestions on what items to pick up during those times. For example, choose a side salad over french fries and avoid breakfast sandwiches made with biscuits or croissants.

At restaurants, think about splitting an entree, as portions can be huge, says Scarlata, who recommends the grilled chicken sandwich at Mickey Cassidy's in Medway.

At the grocery store, grab vegetables over prepackaged items, she says.

"If it's convenient, it's probably bad for you," she says. "Get away from throwing something in the microwave that's done in a few seconds."

Balance is another important component to a healthy diet, Scarlata says. A meal should include a combination of healthy carbohydrates, protein and colorful vegetables, she says.

"A lot of the time, the vegetable piece is often left out," says Scarlata, 43. Parents can put lettuce or tomato on a sandwich. A salad roll up is another idea, Scarlata says.

"Kids are picky eaters," says Einbinder. To help, parents can have their children build their own meal. For example, with a salad, children can choose from lettuce and other greens, peppers, diced-up eggs and cheese cubes.

People should always aim to eat a more balanced meal, says Paul Mazzuchelli, the director of public health in Milford. However, it can be hard to achieve perfection in a diet.

"It's not going to happen overnight," Mazzuchelli says. "It's changing people's habits, changing people's way of thinking. It's something you have to do on a gradual basis."

Scarlata and Einbinder hope that their book, which came out in January, will be one way to help out.

"We're not doing it for monetary gain," Einbinder says. "It's something we both felt compelled to do."

The authors met at Brigham and Women's Hospital 20 years ago, where they were both working as dietitians.

Scarlata now has her own practice in West Roxbury and Einbinder is self-employed, while both dedicate many hours to their children.

It took about 2 1/2 years to write the book, which is available on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com.

"We really write honestly," Einbinder says. "We talk about our own personal experiences. We have our own stories to tell."

Scarlata and Einbinder will be at books events on April 6 and 13 at the Whole Foods in Bellingham.

The book has already been well received, says Scarlata, who is already working on a new one about breaking bad habits.

With the pressures of the quick world of today, it is important to strive for balance in food and make healthy changes, the authors say.

"Keep it real," Scarlata says. "Just do the right thing more often than the wrong thing."

### **A 'Real Food' recipe for 'Real People'**

*MetroWest dieticians Laura Einbinder and Kate Scarlata recommend several cookbooks in their book, "Real People Need Real Food," and also provide a few of the recipes they like to serve to their own families. Try this quick and easy recipe to get your family on the path to healthy eating.*

## **CRANBERRY BREAD**

*Perfect winter quick bread packed with nutrients! It does not require a mixer.*

### **INGREDIENTS:**

2 cups white whole-wheat flour

1 cup sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 cup canola oil

3/4 orange juice

1 egg, mixed with a fork

1/2 cup chopped walnuts

2 cups coarsely ground fresh cranberries

2 teaspoons orange zest, optional

### **DIRECTIONS:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Prepare loaf pan with small amount of oil.

Using a knife or a food processor, coarsely chop cranberries and set aside. Put all dry ingredients in a mixing bowl and blend together. In the center of the bowl, add oil, egg and juice, and mix wet and dry ingredients together just until blended. Add cranberries, nuts and orange zest, if using.

Put batter in prepared pan.

Bake at 350 degrees for one hour.

*Makes 1 loaf, serves 12.*

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