

Forget New Year's Resolutions and Start Making Soup

by Susan Russo



New Year's resolutions. They're nothing but bunkum.

"Resolve to lose weight." It sounds real enough. It's a statement made in the dark of winter when we are most vulnerable. The holiday season romanced us with its twinkling lights, sparkling cocktails (can you say 400-calorie-martini?), and carb-heavy desserts. We indulge. We regret. Then on January 1st we commit to a diet.

By January 10th, most of us (read I) rummage through the pantry closet for something, anything chocolatey, salty, sweet, or preferably all three. We spot the bag of blue corn tortilla chips hidden behind the oatmeal and tell ourselves, "These are pretty healthy." We eat a few. Close the bag. Re-open it. Eat a few more. Next thing we know, half the bag is gone. Then we're thinking, "Well, hell, I already ruined my New Year's resolution. I might as well eat 'em all now."

If any diet worked, then why do magazines promote them on their covers every month, every year? Because they know that we are fallible and that living a life of extremes isn't attainable for most. Consider some of these weight loss claims from popular women's magazines: **"Melt 10**

LBS

Fast

!

" "

Shed One Size!

In Just 2 Weeks!

" "

Shrink Your Belly!

" And these are just the ones on my coffee table.

I say, "No." No to fast fixes, unrealistic goals, and tasteless foods. No to diets.

I say, "Yes" to moderation. After 30-some-odd years, I have found that it's the only way for me

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to stay healthy and fit and sane. I eat *all* foods, but in moderation. I eat meat and cookies and drink an occasional martini. I also exercise regularly, in moderation; most days for 30-45 minutes.

I spent too many years obsessing about my weight, about exercise, about eating. My resolution this year is to live life, enjoy food, and stay healthy by forming and maintaining habits I can realistically sustain.

I also resolve to eat a lot of soup, which will be easy. Broth-based soup filled with veggies are nutritious and filling. Studies have shown that people who eat 1 1/2-2 cups of vegetable soup before a meal [consume about 135 fewer calories at the meal](#) .

Lately, I have been eating my Easy Butternut Squash and Kale Soup. It's chock-full of vitamin-rich veggies and fiber-rich beans. With both winter squash and dark, leafy greens at their peak, this soup is ideal for the cold winter months.

Sure, I eat pretty well, exercise, and eat a lot of soup. I also have bad days when I feel awful about the way I look or regret eating mindlessly. But I know that eating well is more than just a resolution. It's changing the way you think about food and giving yourself healthy yet delicious options from which to choose. That's why foods like soup are so great to have in the house -- if you've taken time to make something healthy and delicious, it's a whole lot easier to eat something that will make you feel good about yourself.

Easy Butternut Squash, Kale, and Chickpea Soup

Serves 6

Note: This is a vegetarian soup. If you omit the sprinkling of cheese on top, then it's vegan. □

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 yellow onion, diced
2 carrots, peeled and sliced
3 celery stalks, sliced, preferably with some leaves
1 medium butternut squash, peeled and cubed (about 3-4 cups)
1 (14.5 oz) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
7 cups low-sodium vegetable broth (more if you prefer it soupier)
1 small bunch kale (dinosaur or curly), washed and thinly sliced (about 5 cups)
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
salt, to taste
1/3 cup chopped fresh basil
1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley
grated Parmesan cheese, for sprinkling on top

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1. In a large pot over medium heat, warm olive oil. Add onion, carrots, and celery, and saute 5-7 minutes, or until lightly browned. Add the squash, chickpeas, and broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce to low and cook 5-7 minutes, or until squash is tender but not mushy. Add kale, crushed red pepper, and salt. Heat through, about 3 minutes. Stir in herbs. Taste it, and adjust seasonings as desired. Serve hot, garnishing each bowl with a sprinkling of grated cheese.

Susan Russo is a free lance food writer in San Diego, California. She publishes stories, recipes, and photos on her cooking blog, < [Food Blogga](#) and is a regular contributor to NPR's < [Kitchen Window](#)

. She

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