



TIME TO GET REAL

Instead of eating empty calories and suffering a sugar low from candy, indulge in fresh fruit to help you lose weight, fight disease and feel great.

CHALLENGE #1

PUMP UP THE PRODUCE

SEE HOW OUR TWO FAMILIES FARED WHEN WE ASKED THEM TO INCREASE THEIR INTAKE OF FRUITS AND VEGGIES.

BY MICHELE BENDER

Apples. Bananas. Broccoli. Carrots. Chances are you know you need to branch out from these usual suspects—not to mention eat more produce in general—but you don't know where to start. So this month's mission was to see which Challenge family, the Avaglianos or the Lehmans, could make the greatest improvement by adding nature's bounty to their lives. Each week they received a shipment from Melissa's/World Variety Produce (melissas.com), the largest distributor of specialty produce in the U.S. By the end of the challenge, they'd been introduced to 49 types of fruits and veggies, dropped pounds and boosted their energy. Here's how they gave their meals a makeover and how you can too!



★★ CHALLENGE #1 WINNERS! ★★

» THE AVAGLIANOS

THE PARENTS

PEGGY, radiologist
PETER, set designer,
both 45

THE KIDS

MICHAEL, 17
AMANDA, 15
(Christina, 20, and
Katie, 18, aren't
participating because
they're away at college.)

THE PETS

Nicki (a Siberian husky),
Krammer (a golden
retriever training to be a
seeing-eye dog),
Minnie (a cat) and
an unnamed goldfish

HOME

Egg Harbor City,
New Jersey

CURRENT STATS

Peggy, 183 lbs and 5'4"
Peter, 278 lbs and 6'

GOAL FOR MICHAEL

Lose the weight he's
gained since quitting
football due to an injury

GOAL FOR AMANDA

Drop those extra
pounds and increase
her flexibility

HOT
STUFF



PRE-CHALLENGE "Planning was our biggest obstacle in terms of eating more produce," says mom of four Peggy Avagliano. With both Peggy and her husband, Peter, working long hours and Michael and Amanda being busy teens—the two oldest are away at college—this family often eats on the go. As a result, fruits and veggies aren't top of mind. But in their best week, the Avaglianos quintupled their fruit consumption and quadrupled their veggie intake to win the challenge.

Peggy lost 8 pounds and Peter, a diabetic, stabilized his blood sugar. "My levels were less like a roller coaster," he says. Their son, Michael, began eating breakfast (like a mango or strawberry smoothie) and bringing his lunch rather than grabbing pizza.

THEIR TOP QUICK TIPS

★ **Pack It Up.** "It only required a little thought in the morning to put carrots, grapes or sliced apples in a cooler," says Peter, who doesn't have a fridge at work. The key, explains their nutritionist, Elizabeth Fassberg, R.D., is to make fruits and vegetables easy to eat without much prep. "Fruits like melon should be seeded, sliced and stored in a lidded container," says Fassberg, president and founder of Eat Food, a nutrition consulting company in New York City. "With crisp veggies such as jicama, wash and store them in resealable bags."

★ **Shop Smarter.** The Avaglianos were surprised to find you can buy healthy foods in quickie marts. "I've been eating chicken Caesar wraps and subs from the same convenience stores for years," says Peter. "But it wasn't until this challenge that I realized these places sold options like celery or carrots with peanut butter."

★ **Redefine Dessert.** "I missed that indulgence less when I had sweet alternatives like berries or yogurt-covered raisins," says Peggy. Amanda found out how delicious chocolate-covered strawberries and bananas could be, and Michael discovered a love of blackberries. "It was just as satisfying and still felt like a treat to have grapes while watching TV instead of a bag of chips," adds Peter.

WHAT THEY WON! The Avaglianos received a \$250 gift certificate from T-fal (t-falusa.com) to go on a cookware shopping spree.

HOW TO GET YOUR FILL

Smart ways any family can work more fruits and veggies in all day long

BREAKFAST

★ **Put it on top.** Puree fruit to use on pancakes and waffles in place of syrup, and mash fresh berries to spread on toast instead of store-bought jam.

★ **Bake it in.** Mix frozen berries into muffin, pancake and quick-bread batters.

LUNCH

★ **Refresh old meals.** Put a new piece of produce, like chopped clementines or kale, into a familiar dish, such as your favorite salad.

★ **Get saucy.** Dipping veggies in low-fat "sauces" makes produce more appealing—especially to kids. Try marinara, vinaigrettes, low-fat ranch or slightly sweetened yogurt.

DINNER

★ **Follow the half-plate rule.** If you have a choice of two sides when you're out for dinner or lunch, opt for two veggies rather than one veggie and rice, bread or pasta.

★ **Start on Sunday.** Roast large amounts of veggies on the weekend and use them as no-fuss side dishes for dinner throughout the week.

★ **Bring fruit to the dinner table.** Make a fruit salsa with mangoes or peaches to serve with grilled meat.



The Avaglianos with Nicki (left) and Krammer (right)

FamilyCircle.com Read family blogs, find great veggie recipes, get expert advice from chef Miki at Melissa's Produce and cheer everyone on at familycircle.com/healthyfamily2012



» THE LEHMANS

THE PARENTS

TIFFANY, 39, mortgage underwriter
ANDY, 45, building engineer

THE KIDS

ANNA, 9
JACK, 6

HOME

Des Moines, Iowa

CURRENT STATS

Tiffany, 242 lbs and 5'3"
Andy, 246 lbs and 6'2"

GOAL FOR ANNA

Quit looking to food as her comfort and reward

GOAL FOR JACK

Eat more veggies and less fast food

WIN IT!

One lucky reader will get a \$500 gift card to throw a healthy backyard summer party courtesy of Edy's Fruit Bars. Go to familycircle.com/backyardparty for official rules and to enter. See page 158 for details.

NEXT MONTH

PRE-CHALLENGE The Lehmans were in a produce rut. "I really thought we were being healthy with, say, an orange at lunch and green beans with dinner," says mom of two Tiffany Lehman. But their food journals, which revealed they were eating less than half the number of servings needed per day (see guidelines at right), also confirmed that they needed to shake up their intake.

Then Melissa's Produce introduced some new food favorites, including jicama, sliced peppers and lentils. In their best week, the Lehmans ate four times the amount of fruit and three times the amount of vegetables they usually do. Both Tiffany and her husband, Andy, felt stronger during their workouts and no longer experienced a late-afternoon energy nosedive. Even more impressive: Tiffany has trimmed 4 inches from her waist, her BMI went down nearly 7% and she shed 8 pounds. Andy lost 11 pounds and buckles his belt on a tighter notch. And Anna has more energy for exercise.

SECRETS TO THEIR SUCCESS

★ **Get Grid-Locked.** "If you don't make a plan for eating fruits and vegetables, you tend to buy fewer, use less and waste some," explains Stephanie Karpinske, R.D., the Lehmans' nutritionist and author of *Read Before Dieting: Your 4-Step Plan for Diet Success*. She had the family make a one-page grid showing each day of the week and write down where they would include fruits and vegetables.

★ **Go Meatless.** Save cash and calories by cooking a weekly vegetarian dinner. "A stir-fry helps you eat a lot of different veggies at once and is a great way to use up leftovers," says Karpinske. The Lehmans' favorite meatless meal was quinoa tacos, which combine this rich source of protein with black beans, taco seasoning, baby spinach, salsa and shredded cheddar cheese.

★ **Snack Smarter.** "I felt full on less when I ate red peppers with Greek yogurt dip rather than granola or other 'healthy' bars," says Tiffany. "Plus, the crunch factor helped me mentally wake up."

CHALLENGE #2 The new liquid diet: We challenge our families to decrease their intake of sugar-sweetened, calorie-laden, caffeine-pumped beverages.

REQUIRED EATING: KIDS VS. ADULTS

Confused about how much produce to feed your child or yourself? Here, the latest recommendations for those who average less than 30 minutes of activity per day:

FRUIT GUIDELINES

KIDS 9-13 YEARS OLD

→ 1.5 cups daily

GIRLS 14-18 YEARS OLD

→ 1.5 cups daily

BOYS 14-18 YEARS OLD

→ 2 cups daily

WOMEN 31-50 YEARS OLD

→ 1.5 cups daily

MEN 31-50 YEARS OLD

→ 2 cups daily



VEGETABLE GUIDELINES

KIDS 9-13 YEARS OLD

→ 2 to 2.5 cups daily

GIRLS 14-18 YEARS OLD

→ 2.5 cups daily

BOYS 14-18 YEARS OLD

→ 3 cups daily

WOMEN 31-50 YEARS OLD

→ 2.5 cups daily

MEN 31-50 YEARS OLD

→ 3 cups daily



[TRY THIS NOW!] Make eating fruits and veggies easier with this yummy recipe from chef Miki Hackney of Melissa's Produce.

JICAMA FRIES → MAKES 2 servings

PREP 5 minutes **BAKE** at 425° for 20 minutes

Heat oven to 425°. Peel and cut 1 large jicama into french fry-shaped sticks. Coat a large baking sheet with olive oil (you can use a Misto). Place jicama sticks on prepared sheet. Spray jicama with olive oil and sprinkle with a little sea salt and fresh parsley or other herbs or red pepper flakes. Bake at 425° for 20 minutes. Turn off oven and keep fries in oven until serving. Do not cover. **PER SERVING** 233 CAL; 1g FAT (.13g SAT); 4g PRO; 53g CARB; 29g FIBER; 64mg SODIUM; 0mg CHOL.