

Have your pasta – and eat it, too

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Cookbook author Layne Lieberman dished out samples, recipes and tips on how to eat indulgently while staying healthy at an Upper East Side event

Healthy Eating

At age nine, Layne Lieberman was told she had high cholesterol. Because her family wasn't exactly accommodating of her needs, she had to learn to navigate the world of food and nutrition herself.

"It was difficult for my parents to grasp the fact that maybe we shouldn't eat so much fatty food. They made big American breakfasts every morning and served big portions of meat at dinner," she said. "It was a sign of having a good life back in the '70s."

The young miss Lieberman took on the responsibility of managing her own special diet, developing what would become a lifelong passion for nutrition in the process.

Last Thursday evening, the cholesterol-conscious American Heart Association spokesperson, registered dietitian and new author held a book signing at the Barnes & Noble Upper East Side store, debuting *Beyond the Mediterranean Diet: European Secrets of the Super-Healthy* just in time to round out American Heart Month. A portion of the proceeds from the event went to the American Heart Association.

Of course, there was food: hors d'oeuvres like smoked salmon with dill and strained yogurt, sandwiches made with low-fat, low-sodium farmer's cheese, chocolate mousse made with tofu, cocoa, and maple syrup, and pumpkin muffins made with applesauce.

"Nobody could believe it was all healthy!" she said.

The recipes for those dishes and more are included in the book, which chronicles her first-hand experience with European food culture. In it, Lieberman explains how Americans can incorporate the European secrets of healthy eating into their grab-and-go lifestyle.

Americans have been following the "Mediterranean Diet" model for years, replacing butter and beef with olive oil and seafood, but Lieberman noticed that Europeans have been able to achieve some of the highest health statistic rates in the world without having to take that route.

"Italians, for example, would never drink orange juice from a container, they go buy fresh OJ, or they squeeze two oranges and that's it," she said. "They have a low sugar diet, naturally, and wouldn't think of buying a carton that's been sitting around for a while."

During her time overseas, Lieberman observed that people in Europe's three healthiest countries — France, Italy, and Switzerland — have figured out a wholesome diet that includes pasta, cheese, bread and chocolate. Thus, Lieberman believes she holds the secret to eating those and other foods while staying fit.



Lieberman signs copies of her new book for fans at an Upper East Side event.

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“The Swiss consume an average of three servings of dairy a day, but the dairy cows aren’t injected with hormones,” Lieberman said. “Low-fat, hormone-free milk and yogurt are the way to go; they prevent osteoporosis and control blood sugar and blood pressure.”

Also, she says, try serving sauce underneath the food at the bottom of the plate, rather than drowning the food in it by pouring it on top—this French technique will help cut out fat.

And, try pacing yourself so that you’re taking about twenty minutes to eat your meal — that’s how long it takes for the brain to register fullness.

Lieberman’s book also features a supermarket shopping guide and tips on how to “order boldly” when eating out. Needless to say, she’s very popular among her Upper East Side friends.

“They love going out to dinner with me because they don’t have to figure out what they’re going to order,” she said. “They say, ‘I’ll have what she’s having.’”

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It might seem obvious, but one of the tricks to being able to eat what you want is using a smaller plate and controlling your portions, she said.

“The French diet works because portion sizes are normal. Meat or poultry is three to six ounces, and pasta is about one cup, cooked,” she explained.

It’s also important to be mindful of the quality of your ingredients.



Readers sampled tastes of Lieberman’s healthy recipes.

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