

Getting your kids to eat well

By Jim Cornelius
News Editor

The dinner table can turn into a battleground when you're trying to get your kids to eat well. Nobody wants to be *that* parent battling a picky eater. In addition to being unpleasant, fighting over food can be counterproductive.

"That was something I did not want to do," says Angeline Rhett, of Angeline's Bakery and Café. "I did not want my kids to hate healthy eating. I just didn't do the battles."

But Rhett understands better than most the importance of healthy eating. It's her business and her calling. So what do you do?

Angeline sneaks the good stuff in — making the kid-favored mac-and-cheese a somewhat healthier profile.

"Yeah, it does have cheese and butter and milk, but I do put in processed carrots and nutritional yeast," she says. "I sneak it in there."

She also notes that sometimes a kid's problem isn't with the flavor of the food as much as it is the texture.

Jess Draper has had good

success in building good eating habits with her children.

"Involve the kids," she suggests. "Let them help choose the fresh or frozen produce at the store. Have them join you in an Internet search about the food to find out how it can benefit you, and healthful ways to prepare it. Or let the children peruse a colorful cookbook themed on vegetables, or raw recipes, or whatever healthy diet persuasion your family favors. Cookbooks can be checked out from the library."

Small tricks can entice a child.

"Serving something in a different way, frozen blueberries instead of fresh for example, can make all the difference in kids wanting to try something," Draper says.

Getting kids interested in where food comes from can help, too.

"Grow sprouts in your kitchen," Draper says. "With a few simple supplies your children can watch seeds turn into healthy edibles in a couple days. Find instructions online at www.urbanearthworm.org/2014/04/28/grow-sprouts-jar.

"Help your child plant a

garden, as simple as a flower pot on the porch with easy-to-grow peas. Their investment in nurturing the plants that produce their food will likely make the eating all the more enjoyable for them."

Kids are different — even when they've been raised exactly the same. Rhett notes that one of her children is "an omnivore." The other understands the value of healthy eating, but...

"He knows the drill, but he wants pancakes for breakfast, he wants peanut butter and jam on bread and he wants meat and cheese for dinner," she says.

"I think that sugar is ... I really think it's just the devil. Halloween just stresses me out. — Angeline Rhett"

If there's one thing Rhett tries to take a hard line on, it's sugar intake.

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PHOTO BY JESS DRAPER

Your kids just might think homegrown peas are more fun to eat!

devil," she says. "Halloween just stresses me out."

You can avoid having sugary snacks around the house and provide healthy, flavorful alternatives. Eventually, your child is going to want to eat *something* — and if what's on hand beats a massive sugar surge, that's all to the good.

Substituting healthier ingredients is one way of "getting there" with kids. But sometimes you just have to back off a bit and hope that simply modeling good eating

habits will eventually catch on.

"He knows my platform," Angeline says. "You can put it out there — this is where I'm coming from. None of us can hit it all the time."

Rhett reported a sign that the message is getting through. Her strong-willed eater knows that healthy eating in the morning can boost performance — and he recently asked his mom for a green smoothie to fortify him for competition in Battle of the Books at school.

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Healthful substitute ingredients make these dishes taste like their naughty cousins, says Angeline Rhett, who works hard to stay abreast of all the wonderful alternatives that are now available to people who either have dietary restrictions or simply want to lead a more healthful life.

"Eating healthy is really an opportunity to be creative," she says.



Folks are continually surprised how tasty a healthful alternative can be. So if you want yummy without feeling bad afterward, come to Angeline's and explore a menu that will satisfy your cravings — and leave you feeling good all over.



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