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GEDDY GARDEN NEWS

*"Whatever you can do, or dream you can,
Begin it."*

Goethe

January is our time for assessing our personal lives and making plans for our futures. In other words, it is the time for New Year resolutions.

Many people make resolutions that relate to their health. Exercise classes enrollment increases in January, and more diet cookbooks are sold in that month, too. We are concerned with trying to improve our health through eating proper diets. Like many others, a lot of my resolutions are concerned with food. I have been learning about the nutritional value of certain vegetables and my goal is to include more of them in my diet. In 1790 Thomas Jefferson was impressed with the amount of vegetables consumed by the French, not so much meat but wholesome vegetables, and he tended to follow their example. I have no intention of ever becoming a vegetarian, even though I am aware that about 4% of Americans are today. However, I will aim to include more vegetables than I presently eat.

There are certain ones that I consider the most important. Dark green leafy vegetables are rich in nutritional value and contain lutein. Lutein acts as an antioxidant and is useful in filtering out dangerous sunlight and thereby protecting the tissues of the eyes. Lutein can only be found in the foods you eat and vegetables like kale and spinach are rich in lutein. I love spinach salad, so I can easily add that to my diet this year.

My doctor has told me to avoid a lot of carbohydrates, so I am aware of what I should not eat. It is important that everyone get the advice of their doctor when thinking of changing their eating habits. For my health a low carbohydrate diet is a must. Therefore, I avoid pasta, white bread, rice, and white potatoes. Avoiding the white potatoes poses a real problem for me. I love potatoes in every form. Potatoes are rich in protein, vitamins, minerals, vitamin C, iron, thiamin, phosphorus, and niacin. I will, however, substitute the sweet potato for the white potato. The sweet potato is a very healthy food. It contains the daily recommended amounts of vitamin C, plus potassium, and is a great source of beta carotene. I found that by sprinkling cinnamon on the sweet potato and baking it you really do not need to give it the marshmallow treatment and it tastes delicious.

I plan to include more vegetables, but I will limit it to those I like. I do not want to feel I am punishing myself. I've researched and found that lutein, which is important for my needs, is also found in tomatoes, broccoli, oranges, and corn.

Fruits, of course, are also important in my diet. Among the fruits I plan to eat more often are strawberries. Strawberries are a healthy food that reduce stress, calm anxiety, and they contain less sugar than lemons and oranges. John Gerard wrote of the medicinal virtues of the strawberry and also suggested adding distilled strawberry water to white wine to "relieve the spirits and make the heart merry." The colonies were full of wild strawberries. In Maryland a 17th-century colonist wrote, "Wee can not sett downe a foote but tred on strawberries." Most Virginia planters grew strawberries and we find receipts in early cookbooks for strawberry preserves and jam. I will eat plain strawberries and also plain blueberries. These are both foods that are good for you and taste good as well. The antioxidant powers of the blueberry helps to ward off serious diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer's disease. They are beneficial in providing good vision and anti-aging. In the 18th century a New England receipt combined both strawberries and blueberries and nutmeg. A blueberry sauce was included. This dish was called blueberry buckle and it is delicious, but a lot of sugar is involved.

In the protein department fish is very good for you. I recently learned to eat salmon, which is high in omega, which is good for the heart. I really do not like most fish, but I'll try a little harder. Since most lipsticks contain fish scales, maybe I can cover the fish category by wearing more lipstick.

Beverages are a major part of my diet. Due to the sugar in most fruit juices, I choose V-8 and tomato juice. The top four sources of caffeine in the American diet are coffee, soft drinks, tea, and chocolate. I drink sugar-free and caffeine-free soft drinks, but I will aim this year to include more water and tea. I already drink a good amount of low-fat milk for calcium.

Another goal is to use less salt on my food. Salt is the most widely used seasoning in the world and I confess to being an abuser. As a substitute I am adding more herbs for seasoning.

Garlic is a healthy herb that I plan to include in my life this year. Eleanor Roosevelt is said to have eaten three chocolate covered garlic balls every day in her adult life in the belief that it would improve her memory. Her doctor recommended it. I think I will pass on the chocolate covered variety, but Thomas Jefferson had a salad dressing that I would like to try that contained garlic. It consisted of one crushed garlic clove and sesame or benne oil. He wrote to John Taylor of South Carolina in 1808, "The African Negroes brought over to Georgia a seed which they called Beni, and the botanists Sesa mum. I lately received a bottle of the oil, which was eaten with sallad by various companies. All agree it is equal to the olive oil, a busel of seed yields 3 gallons of oil. I propose to cultivate it for my own use at least."

I use more honey in place of sugar in my diet. It takes 12 bees their entire lifetime to make a tablespoon of honey. All that energy should not go to waste. We should all eat more honey.

I have shared some of my resolutions, but dietary resolutions are not the only ones I made.

I hope to be able to keep myself financially solvent, but I also resolve to indulge in an occasional luxury item if I feel the item will bring me joy. Nothing too extravagant, but an occasional frivolous purchase is good for the soul.

I plan to continue in my exercise program for my good health.

Emerson said the means by which a soul attains its highest development are books, travel, society, and solitude.

"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything."

Marcus Tullius Cicero

Have you made your New Year's resolution yet?

Janet Guthrie