

Two local companies are putting emphasis on **healthy eating**, using organic foods and portion control to show their clients the light

BY JON HINDMAN

The Organic Lifestyle Change

DREAM WELLNESS AND OPTIMAL NUTRITION INC. want to profit on improving your eating habits. But rumor has it that you'll profit, too. The idea of DREAM Wellness began in 1992 when founders Dr. Brian Stenzler and Dr. Gregg Baron were attending undergraduate college in upstate New York.

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"OUR CONCEPT WAS to create an environment where people could learn to live a true wellness lifestyle," says Stenzler, who is a chiropractor at both DREAM Wellness San Diego locations—Pacific Beach and Solana Beach. "Our intention is to teach the population that wellness is a proactive approach toward creating physical, mental, social and spiritual harmony. We want everyone on this planet to realize that how much health and wellness a person has at any given time is much more choice as opposed to chance."

Through relaxation, exercise, adjustment, mental wellness and diet, DREAM Wellness hopes to train and retrain its customers on reaching a healthy balance. One of the aspects of the program is a dedication to teaching people how to adopt better eating habits by cooking meals using nutritious and organic foods.

Stenzler admits that organics are more

expensive but says that more people are realizing how beneficial the extra cost is. Pesticide levels found in non-organic produce are one of the biggest concerns.

According to Stenzler, "Pesticides can have many negative influences on health, including neurotoxicity, disruption of the endocrine system, carcinogenicity and immune system suppression. Pesticide exposure may also affect male reproductive function and has been linked to miscarriages in women."

Therefore, there is little doubt in many experts' minds that organics foods are superior to non-organic foods.

Armed with this knowledge, DREAM Wellness has created a cooking program in which it educates people on how to prepare nutritious meals for themselves. Tamara Renee, a certified nutritionist on staff at DREAM Wellness, believes that "eating nutritious can be delicious."

Besides teaching cooking, Renee also spearheads a program that prepares meals for people. A lot of folks lead extremely hectic lives but want to start avoiding the fast food avenue that far too many Americans are traveling down these days.

Says Renee, "We plan, shop, clean and cook for you. All you need to do is reheat. People are plenty busy these days, and our weekly meal service provides a great convenience and dollar savings by delivering right to their door. Our minimum is only five meals per week."

FAST FOOD THE HEALTHY WAY

Unlike DREAM Wellness, which has all-encompassing programs geared toward an overall better well-being, Carmel Valley-based Optimal Nutrition has carved a niche by shipping pre-made organic meals all over the United States. Michelle Weinstein, founder of Optimal Nutrition, started the company in August 2006 after coming to the realization that most meal plans on the market were not customizable and portioned out to specific body sizes—in addition to the fact that most served food that seemed designed for astronauts. Not everyone, she says, is out to lose weight.

So Optimal Nutrition was founded on the premise of making sure that meal plans fit clients' specific needs. Some of her clients, for example, are athletes who are looking for meal plans to spur increased strength and muscle growth.

Weinstein, like the folks at DREAM Wellness, believes in using organic foods because, as she says, "Organic is a lifestyle change. Our clients like to feel fresh and healthy. We go after that 5 to 10% of people who value organic foods."

But part of the decision to "go organic" was also based on the premise that it promotes environmental good, something Weinstein sees as an extremely important practice in this day and age.

"As we grow and have more capital, we're going to be using corn materials and biodegradable packaging materials, as well," she predicts.

But in the meantime, the company's

number one priority is giving customers meal options that are quick and convenient without all the hormones, grease, pesticides and other potential health detriments found at traditional fast-food joints.

A lot of people eat fast food because "everyone is putting a dollar amount on their time," she says. The solution: All of Optimal Nutrition's meals are fully prepared and just need to be reheated in a microwave, oven or on the stovetop.

Admittedly, Optimal Nutrition's meals are a lot more expensive—about \$30 per day for females and \$40 per day for males—but you can't really put a price on your long-term health, can you?

FOR DO-IT-YOURSELFERS


Stenzler, Renee and Weinstein know that their programs aren't for everyone, but they hope to instill healthier eating habits in all of us. Even their own clients are on their own occasionally, and they know that they will eat out.

So, says Weinstein, "It's all about portion control. 'Use your hand as a reference guide. Our dietitians say that if you make a fist, that's how many carbs you should have. And if you open your hand flat, that's how much protein and vegetables you should have.'"

People won't always be presented with organic choices, either.

Therefore, Stenzler stresses, "Please understand that it is better to eat non-organic vegetables than no vegetables at all."

There seems to be proof that an increasing number of people are accepting an organic lifestyle. Renee says that, in part, the trend toward using more organics, and subscribing to healthier eating habits overall, is evidenced by the growth of companies like Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. She recommends that more people start to shop at stores like these when possible.

Finally, Renee offers up very well-known and standard tips for a healthier existence: "Drink a minimum of eight glasses of water per day, eat breakfast, lunch and dinner and try to get snacks in between. A snack is just a small portion of real food required to maintain the metabolic burn rate." 



Grilled Salmon with Field Greens Salad

Recommended Recipes

HERE'S A QUICK and healthy meal for two you can make at home:

Grilled Salmon

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
Juice of two fresh lemons—about ¼ cup
2 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil, thyme, parsley and rosemary
2 tsp. grated lemon peel—use organic lemons
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 salmon fillets

Combine olive oil, lemon juice, chopped herbs, lemon peel and garlic in a saucepan. Gently whisk over low to medium heat until mixture is blended.

Brush the flesh side of the fish with olive oil mixture. Add sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste. Grill over medium heat, flesh side down until lightly brown, about 2½ minutes. Turn over and brush with more of the olive oil mixture. Grill until thoroughly cooked (about 2 minutes, depending on

the thickness of fillet).

Remove fillets to plate, skin side down. Drizzle the healthy remaining olive oil mixture over the fish. Serve with fresh lemon and a side salad.

Field Greens Salad

2 cups organic field greens
6 Tbsp. white beans, canned
2 Tbsp. feta
2 Tbsp. golden raisins
1 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil

Salad Dressing

3 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
1½ Tbsp. red wine vinegar
Dash sea salt
Dash fresh ground pepper

Buy pre-washed greens. Top with all the goodies and toss in olive oil and red wine vinegar.

[Recipe provided by DREAM Wellness]