

Healthy News:

Health Education Newsletter: March

Cooking With Arthritis

By Bryan D. Vargo

Chef and cookbook author Melinda Winner was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) more than 25 years ago. Feeling devastated and defeated after gaining 100 pounds from years of eating poorly and being sedentary due to the pain and physical limitations from her RA, Winner knew it was time for a change.

To help others with arthritis regain independence in the kitchen, she authored *A Complete Illustrated Guide to Cooking With Arthritis* (Tate Publishing and Enterprises LLC, 2009). Here's an excerpt from her book highlighting tips to cooking with arthritis.

1. Store things such as flour, sugar, coffee and tea in glass containers with lightweight lift-off lids on your countertop.
2. Purchase an ergonomically designed knife with a large handle. This allows you to have leverage and stability using your body weight to maneuver the knife.
3. Store your pots and pans on wall hooks or a pot hanger from the ceiling. This will eliminate unnecessary bending.
4. When filling or emptying large pots of water, use a plant stand for transport and a small plastic measuring cup to transfer the water.
5. When you have a lot of prep work to do, sit at the table instead of standing.
6. Purchase a rubber mat to stand on when you are cooking at the stove. The padding helps prevent back and leg pain.
7. Use a small kitchen funnel to separate egg whites. Place the funnel over a glass and crack the egg into the funnel. The white will slide into the glass while the yolk stays in the funnel.
8. Many times when you buy a bottle of sauce, it needs shaking before opening. Don't shake it; roll it. If your hands are sore, use your forearm and the weight of your body.
9. Arrange your kitchen cabinets so that lighter, easy-to-handle things are on the upper shelves and the heavier items are on the lower shelves. Place your spices and canned goods on a lazy Susan.
10. Try washing your dishes by hand. It is a welcome relief to soak in the warm soapy water.
11. Buy a smaller trash can and bags that have handles. When it is time to be emptied, just slip your arms through the handles and pull the bag out.
12. Substitute a whisk for a handheld electric drink mixer. They are lightweight and have thick handles.
13. To wipe off countertops, buy thick sponges. They are easy to hold and relatively inexpensive. They also hold up well in the wash. You can probably get one week out of each sponge. Use it for two days and wash. Also make sure the sponge is stored where it can air dry after each use.