

Sample Interview Questions

Q: You have both worked in the field of education. How did that impact your approach to the book?

A: It was very important to both of us that we not just give readers good information, but that we teach them how to use it.

Q: Have you seen positive effects of healthier eating in your own families?

A: Absolutely. We both began the journey towards healthier eating, in part, because we were trying to cope with various health challenges. As we began to make changes, we saw positive effects on everyone – not just those struggling with a tangible health need.

Q: What about kids? They are notorious for not eating well and are tough critics for whom to cook. How do you make meals that they are going to eat and enjoy?

A: That's a question that is very near and dear to our hearts. Dorie has two boys who were in the toddler through early elementary years while the book was being written and we both care deeply about the nutritional plight of children in our country – it has been predicted that this may be the first generation of children in modern history to not outlive their parents because of current health trends. That's a pretty sobering statistic.

We worked hard to create meals that are not only child-friendly, but parent-friendly as well – good taste and easy to prepare. Not every child will like every item, but we feel there's something here for everyone.

Much of what our kids chose to eat is affected by what they are exposed to and whether or not they are given ownership of the process. Throughout the book, we have tips for involving kids in food preparation and getting them interested in food. Most of these tips are in the sidebars, marked with the face of a child chef.

Q: Why is eating healthy so important?

A: There are many reasons. From a financial stand point, it only makes sense; as a nation we spend 100s of billions of dollars a year on health care and lost work days, much of which could be avoided if we took better care of our bodies. Eating healthier also improves our quality of life. We feel better, both emotionally and physically. We are better able to concentrate and to retain information, so we perform better academically and at our jobs. Healthier eating also impacts behavior, attitude and how we feel about ourselves. Even if we do not choose to eat healthier for ourselves, we must do it for our children. Children need that experience and that model, and they need us to be at our best as well – it's hard to parent when you're grouchy and tired and sick. Finally, we need to eat healthier if we are going to live a long life. Poor diet and a lack of physical activity may soon overtake smoking as the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. That's a trend we need to change.

Q: You have a chapter dedicated just to sodium. Why?

A: While we need some sodium, consuming too much sodium can present a major health risk. What's important to know is that the amount of sodium we consume – even as kids – can precondition us to develop sodium sensitivities that complicate heart issues later in life.

The scary part is that the food industry has not clued in to the importance of this yet and package many foods with ridiculously high amounts of sodium. It is way too easy to consume way too much sodium on a daily basis. We need to be aware of what we consume and how we can reduce that. It's actually very easy – and you can do it without sacrificing flavor.

Q: What's the deal with fats? We've been told for years to avoid them and yet you are saying they're good for us?

A: Well, yes and no. The main problem with fats is that they contain a lot of calories – 9 calories to every gram of fat, which is more than any other nutrient. If you're trying to lose weight, or need to reduce your calorie intake, it makes sense that cutting back on fats would be helpful.

However, fats are critical for multiple body functions, including cell growth and brain function. If we totally cut out fats, we're "throwing the baby out with the bath water."

Not only that, but some fats – omega-3s, essential fatty acids, unsaturated fats – are actually good for you. These fats can help to lower cholesterol and impact heart health. The trick is to find ways to consume healthy amounts of the good fats and to avoid the bad fats, primarily trans fats.

Q: What about the person who says, "I can't afford to buy healthy food. It is just too expensive."?

A: That's a good question. Eating well does involve making the choice to spend good money on good food. But it doesn't mean that we have to spend a fortune. And, many people would be surprised to learn how inexpensively it can be done, often even saving money. On our website we compare the cost of some of our homemade meals – using quality ingredients – with the cost of restaurant meals. The savings is rather remarkable – even compared to fast food prices.

Buying local is a great way to bring down the cost of good food – and you usually end up with more nutrition as well.

Another great way to save money is to use the ingredients that you purchase to make meals that will feed your family more than once – a pound or less of chicken in a batch of hearty soup or chili can stretch to 6 or 8 servings.

Finally, we have to look at the long range plan. Eating well today can make such a significant difference in our health for years to come, that we will save in doctor's bills, medications and missed work days above and beyond what we spend in food.

Q: What if I have a friend who is sensitive to gluten and can't eat many grains? Are there recipes for her in your book?

A: Most definitely. More than half of our recipes are gluten-free or have a gluten-free option. They are all marked with a symbol at the bottom so that they are easy to find.

Q: I noticed you have a chapter on diabetes. Why would that be of interest to readers who do not have diabetes?

A: Type 2 diabetes used to be called "adult-onset diabetes." We can't call it that anymore because so many children are being diagnosed with it. The very sobering thing about Type 2 diabetes is that it is very much impacted by lifestyle choices – in many cases, it can be prevented or delayed if we make healthy choices. It's really something we all need to be aware of – especially those of us with children since what we feed them today will impact their adult years.

Q: I worry about my heart. Is there anything I can do to prevent heart disease?

A: So much can be done! It is becoming increasingly certain that healthier eating habits early in life can lessen the risk factors for heart disease. Even if you've already been diagnosed with heart disease, there are many things you can do to improve your body's ability to handle the illness. Increasing fiber and healthy fats, decreasing calories and trans fats, and paying close attention to sodium intake are all critical parts of a heart-healthy diet. Really, a heart-healthy diet is a healthy diet for everyone. And, of course, regular visits with your doctor will help you make the choices that are best for you.

Q: Do your healthier eating tips really prevent cancer?

A: Nothing will guarantee that someone is not going to contract cancer and there are numerous carcinogens (cancer-causing agents) in our environment that we cannot control. But, doesn't it make sense to limit the ones we can? The type of cookware we use, the chemicals we clean with, even the ways in which we use our microwaves can affect our risk for cancer. What's more, eating foods that are high in anti-oxidants gives our body a boost in finding and "disarming" the free-radicals that can be so damaging.

Q: Do I need to be a vegetarian to be healthy?

A: Absolutely not. But it's okay if you are. The vegetarian diet is one that promotes eating a lot of vegetables and fruit, which is a great thing. We are very supportive of vegetarians and offer many vegetarian recipes. However, we also realize that a balance of nutrients is important for good health and we advocate finding some of those nutrients in animal proteins. Whether you are vegetarian or not, increasing your vegetable and fruit consumption and limiting animal fats is a sound choice we recommend.

Q: I see ads all the time that applaud the benefits of fiber. Why is fiber so important? And doesn't it taste like rabbit food?

A: What fiber tastes like depends on how you eat it and, let me tell you, the added richness oats give to chocolate chip cookies hardly tastes like rabbit food! And if you've never cooked brown rice and had its popcorn-like smell fill your kitchen, you're missing out.

Fiber does a variety of critical things for our bodies. It keeps us regular, which in turn keeps us comfortable and keeps our system clean. Fiber binds with cholesterol and removes it from the body before it enters the bloodstream. Fiber also helps to regulate blood sugar and it strengthens our immune system.

Q: How do you expect me to have time to shop for all this stuff, let alone have time to make it?

A: Time is a precious commodity and we realize that most people don't have much of it. We provide tips and suggestions for saving time. Our Quick-Fix meals offer solutions for a variety of situations: prepare foods ahead of time and keep them in the freezer; put something in the slow cooker early in the day and it's ready for dinner when you are; choose a meal that can be prepared in 30 minutes or less. Or, use some of the prepared foods you can find at the store – we show you how to read labels and find ones that are good for you. Hey, in our shopping guide, we actually list brands that we like and tell you why we like them.

Q: What if people have questions for you beyond what they find in the book?

A: We would love to hear from them! Answering specific questions and working one-on-one with individuals and families are some of our favorite things to do. We have a website they may provide some of the information they are looking for: www.SimpleChoices4HealthierEating.com. On that website are ways in which they can contact us. We respond to everyone from whom we receive a message.