**Healthy Eating, What does it mean to you?**

By Hannah Sabatia



Health eating is beautiful approach to life, and we have seen the need to revisit this long talked about topic especially after lockdown experiences. But it can be a challenge if we are unable to define what it means in a general perspective of things considering we all look at food differently based on our cultural heritage, experience or exposure and so forth.

When I was growing up in Africa, a mixture of maize and beans, ‘*Githeri’, yam, cassava and ugali,* formed a big part of my main meals. I can still feel the taste of it in my mouth today but that time, because I didn’t understand what I know now, I never used to like it. Today, meet me in St Helens shops searching for that same maize and beans and you won’t believe it’s me. Off course these foods were highly starchy meaning they had high energy but because our lives involved manual work, we were all slim to the bones. The same diet here if applied, especially for someone whose job involve sitting on a comfy office chair with computer all day, it can create a health hazard.

So what I’m I advocating here? Eating anything without using up what we eat in form of energy can create a pile up in our body that we do not really need. So if we are not in a position to utilise more that we eat in form of activity and exercise, then it is better to reduce the amount of food on our plates.

In my recent health eating sessions, which are part of making sure key health messages get out to our community members, I have noticed that some people do forget to take seriously what food or what they eat. This can be as a result of a number of factors and it is understandable. But it is not doing us any good. It was great though to see people desire to make those small changes like increasing fruit and vegetable portions in their daily diet and reducing fat and cakes from the daily diet as well. One participant in the session showed us a plate of his lunch before the session and at the end he said he now realise what was missing in that plate. This was great to hear.

A picture containing text, plate

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The rate of obesity, hypertension and type 2 diabetes are said to be going up, yet these are conditions that can partly be monitored through what we eat. There are many resources that can help guide us to the right direction even when the food we eat when we were growing up is different from that we have around us in our new habitat and environment. One of this resource being shared for free is the NHS eatwell guide. Here, there is a wealth of information with picture and easy to understand illustrations to help us have a rough idea of what is best to eat for health and wellbeing living. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/>

So next time you meet me in St. Helen’s in Swansea, I’m only searching for some foods that are close to what I have learnt to be healthy.

A table full of food

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Recipes ideas:

African- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/cuisines/african>

Caribbean: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/cuisines/caribbean>

Asian: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/cuisines/indian>

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/resources-s3/2017-11/Can.pdf>