

Thinking Outside the Box!



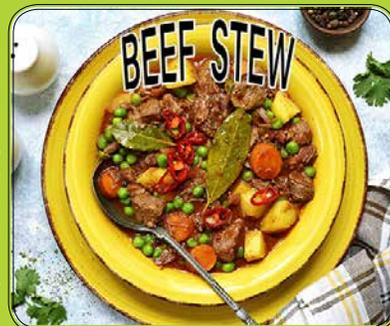
For most adults, there have been many times through the years when their goal has been to improve eating habits and/or lose weight. It can be sparked by our clothes fitting tighter, something we have heard or read about, the importance of nutrition in improving quality of life, and possibly reducing the risk of chronic disease, wanting to get more toned, etc. Whatever the reason, many people jump in full-throttle. Some want to try a new diet that a friend or family member swears by. Others join an expensive meal delivery service that focuses on portion size and macro make-up, while others find some miracle plan on the Internet. Fact is, there is a plethora of weight loss information out there. It can be confusing! But at the end of the day, the most clear-cut way to lose weight is by consuming fewer calories than one needs a day. This concept is simple: put yourself in caloric deficit.

For the most part, if a person consumed only cake, but consumed fewer calories than what is needed, weight loss would occur. Yet, this person would likely not meet recommendations for the key nutrients needed to keep the body running optimally and feeling good. Further, since cake is high in calories, it is very likely that the person would be very hungry on this type of diet. Compliance would not last and likely, once the usual eating pattern returned, some weight would be gained.

Placing oneself in caloric deficit isn't that difficult. Just think, with just as little as a 100-200 calorie deficit per day, over time this could result in roughly a 10-15 pound weight loss per year. For most, this may not seem like a lot or quick enough, but with just this one small change, the tide of weight gain could be stopped or reversed. You can consider adopting a larger calorie deficit for faster weight loss but it's important that a diet shouldn't be one that leaves you hungry, miserable, and wanting to quit. The goal is to develop an overall eating pattern that meets nutritional needs, assists with meeting weight and fitness goals, and can be maintained over a lifetime. Combine the strategy of eating 100-200 calories fewer each day and 30 minutes of brisk walking per day (this can be broken up to total 30 minutes) for an even greater calorie deficit, giving most people a potential improvement in their cardiovascular health.

Before jumping on a new fad diet, which can be a confusing diet that limits certain food groups, or ordering up a meal plan, try increasing the number of fruits and vegetables consumed daily. Aim for most meals to have half the plate or half the meal be fruits and vegetables. Choose mainly lean protein foods while keeping the portion size to less than the size of the palm of your hand. Aim to have most of your grain choices be whole grains while limiting refined grains and sugars. Limit the number of times you eat out per week and always keep nutritious snacks at the ready to ward off hunger and lower the risk of defaulting to a high-calorie, low nutritional value snacks or meals. Adopting these suggestions, for most of the general public, will increase the chances of meeting nutritional needs, not feeling hungry, and longtime success. With your doctor's clearance, consider adding some brisk walking to your day. Be patient, stick with it and your overall health and waistline will benefit.

Soups are a great way to load up on vegetables, make lean proteins tasty, and experiment with a variety of no/low calories herbs and spices. Make a big batch, freeze it, and use it for lunches. Consider serving this alongside a small piece of fruit or a piece of cheese to round out the meal.



Ingredients: 4 servings

- 1 onion, diced
- 16 oz. low-sodium beef broth
- 12-14 oz. frozen peas and carrots mix
- 1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 lb. stew meat
- 2 medium-sized potatoes, diced large
- Black pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. flour
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp. garlic powder

Directions:

1. Place the stew meat in a large mixing bowl. Sprinkle the meat with the flour and garlic salt. Gently toss.
2. Pour the frozen peas and carrots in a microwave-safe bowl. Add the diced potatoes along with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the low-sodium beef broth. Cover and microwave for 10 minutes.
3. In a large pot, add the olive oil and heat over medium-high heat. Once the oil reaches temperature, add the onions, and cook for approximately 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add the stew meat and sear the sides to help lock in the flavor. Add the remaining broth and Worcestershire sauce and bay leaves.
4. Bring the broth and meat to a low boil for 2 minutes. Remove the cooked veggies and potatoes from the microwave and add the entire contents (including the liquid) to the pot. Turn heat down to medium and simmer for an additional 10-15 minutes, or until the potatoes are fork tender.
5. Season to taste and serve.

Tips:

- Stews are a great way to use up fresh vegetables that are near spoiling or too few in quantity to make a whole dish. Just clean them, chop them up, put in a microwave-safe dish, add a little water (1-2 tbsps.) and microwave until tender (6-8 minutes).
- Canned vegetables can be substituted or mixed with frozen. Just drain the canned vegetables and add to the stew in the same step that the broth is added. The texture may be a little different, but canned vegetables count as vegetables too.
- Double the batch and freeze some in individual containers.
- Consider serving over $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked brown rice or whole wheat egg noodles
- Consider keeping a container in the freezer, where leftover scraps of vegetables from previous meals can be added. Once the container is full, thaw it in the microwave and then use this random combination as the vegetables in your stew. Just add the thawed veggies in the same step that you add the broth. You never know, this may end up being the best stew ever eaten and you cut down on food waste.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.

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