

Menu makeover

Chef offers in-home diet overhaul by Malcolm Johnston



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Nutritious can still be delicious, says Wasserman

REPORT CARD

STUDENT Marni Wasserman

GRADUATED York Mills Collegiate, 2000

BEST SUBJECT Biology

WORST SUBJECT Math

CURRENT JOB Holistic nutritionist and personal chef



THERE YOU ARE at the local supermarket, full of healthy intentions. No cookies, chips or sweets and as many green things as possible, but beyond that, you're lost. What's spelt bread? Rice: good or bad? Low carbs, high protein — or is it the reverse? When it comes to healthy eating, there's no shortage of motivation; quality information, or a lack thereof, is often the culprit.

Luckily, Marni Wasserman, holistic nutritionist, personal natural chef and longtime Bayview resident, is here to help.

Wasserman, 27, has been back in the neighbourhood for only a year. Before that she was earning her chef stripes at New York City's Natural Gourmet Culinary Institution where the focus is on cooking for health.

That stint came after she graduated from Toronto's Institute of Holistic Nutrition.

Now, back in her Bayview neighbourhood, she has set out to bring healthy habits to her hometown through her company, Delicious Knowledge.

"I do a whole food makeover for clients. I'll go into their kitchen and change over all their ingredients and take out all the junk and make everything natural and teach people about eating

whole foods," she says.

("Whole foods" are those items that are closest to nature, such as apples instead of apple juice, whole grains instead of refined flours and so on).

Wasserman also hosts cooking nights, where classes of four to eight gather at her place to learn about healthy cooking, socialize and chow down.

Each night features a different theme, such as alternative sugars or Mexican cuisine.

Eating right has been a focus for Wasserman since her days as a student at York Mills Collegiate. She always brought a nutritious lunch to school and was an active kid, she says. She was an "avid student" — who worked hard and studied hard — and was generally health-conscious.

With Delicious Knowledge, she's bringing that perspective to a city in need, she says. For all of Toronto's charms, the city and its restaurants fall behind other cities when it comes to sensible eating.

"New York is 10 times further ahead. Toronto is getting there, but there aren't enough resources or enough stores for people who are interested in getting involved with this, and I've met quite a few people who wish there were more of that," she says.