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Boulder dietitian's cookbook teaches eating European-style

By *Cindy Sutter*

Camera Staff Writer

| UPDATED: ABOUT 22 HOURS AGO



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"Thin" Cheese Crepes are an example of the type of recipes Layne Lieberman includes in her book, "Beyond the Mediterranean Diet: European Secrets of the Super-Healthy. The crepes include ricotta cheese, which adds protein, and lots of healthy fruit, but they have a decadent feel.

How much can a well-trained, highly experienced registered dietitian and nutritionist learn about food from living in Europe?

Quite a bit, as it turns out. Layne Lieberman, who now lives in Boulder, spent two years in Europe after her husband took a job there. The knowledge she garnered was not a strict list of foods to eat and foods to shun. It wasn't a magic food that everyone should eat more of. Nor was it an appreciation for the nutritional components of food such as calories or carbs.

Instead it was a true understanding of how foods of all sorts are truly integrated into a culture, how high-quality, local foods are held in high regard and how shopping for food is informed by a relationship with the purveyor.

"They aren't so focused on the nutrition panel," Lieberman says of the people in the three countries she focuses on in a new cookbook: Switzerland, France and Italy.

"They're touching, tasting, smelling. It was a sensory response to food. Food is an enjoyment."

Lieberman's cookbook includes her observations, data on the three countries' health profiles — she chose the three healthiest in Europe — and 50 recipes that seek to meld the best elements of European food culture with a nod to how Americans cook and eat.

The book, "Beyond the Mediterranean Diet: European Secrets of the Super Healthy," looks closely at each country and their traditional foods and how some of their practices can be incorporated into the American diet. The Swiss diet, for example, is high in dairy foods, with one or two servings

of low-fat dairy such as kefir or yogurt accounting for a substantial amount of protein in the diet. Eating a small square of dark chocolate is common, and fermented foods are encouraged, along with plenty of water and herbal tea throughout the day.

In France, no foods are considered forbidden, but high quality foods are eaten in company and in moderation.

In Italy, fresh vegetables and fruit are eaten in abundance. Pasta is common, but sauced lightly and served in much smaller portions than is typical in America. Lentils, beans and nuts are an important part of the diet.

Lieberman says living in Europe, rather than simply traveling there, gave her a true appreciation of how Europeans value and nurture their food traditions. In Italy, for example, where the citrus fruit is beautiful, most people would never think of drinking a glass of bottled orange juice for breakfast, she says. Instead they would squeeze a fresh orange.

Doing so not only satisfies the palate with an incredibly vibrant juice. The orange itself has a built-in portion control — it would take a lot of oranges to fill the 12-ounce glass that Americans might glug down on the way out the door.

Similarly, in France, a croissant with jam makes breakfast. Sounds decadent, but as Lieberman points out, the croissants in France are considerably smaller than those generally sold in the states. Such a breakfast in France is under 200 calories.

In addition, the food in Europe is of very high quality and rarely processed. Lieberman, who worked for 20 years as director of nutrition for a major supermarket chain in the Northeast, says the stores are smaller in Europe with many fewer processed food items. In addition, food is more tightly regulated, with additives receiving strict scrutiny and GMOs not permitted.

Yet, the book also recognizes the lifestyles of Americans. Thus, the "beyond" in the title. Lieberman who was diagnosed with severely high cholesterol at age 9, takes care with saturated fats.

"I've had hypercholesterolemia my whole life. I understand how to control it," she says. "I understand how to get through the clutter that's out there."

Through her training, Lieberman has learned that the diets shown through studies to have the best outcomes are the Mediterranean diet and the DASH diet — which leans heavily toward fruits and vegetables, with lean meats and low-fat dairy included.

Lieberman says the calorie density of fat, even healthy fats, means that it should be used in moderation. Rather than the 4 tablespoons of olive oil each day that some versions of the Mediterranean diet suggest, she recommends 1 tablespoon. She also likes to see fat coming from whole foods such as avocados or nuts. She also emphasizes low-fat dairy more than the typical Mediterranean diet does.

Bea Steiner, marketing director of Alfalfas Market, says the store recently hosted a book signing for Lieberman, because her book fit in with the lifestyle some of its customers are seeking. In addition to looking at European food culture, Lieberman places heavy emphasis on foods grown organically and locally.

"We are always trying to promote health in one way or another," Steiner says. "We try to bring in all sorts of different prescriptions."

A big takeaway message is to take pleasure in eating and to eat slowly, which makes it easier to reduce American super-size portions to the normal portions enjoyed elsewhere.

"We are not enjoying food, not allowing our brains and stomachs to work together. It's mindless eating," Lieberman says.

She hopes her book can help to change that.

Contact Camera Staff Writer Cindy Sutter at 303-473-1335 or sutterc@dailycamera.com (<mailto:sutterc@dailycamera.com>).

"Thin" Cheese Crepes

½ cup white whole-wheat flour

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

1/4 teaspoon salt

2 large eggs plus 2 egg whites

1/2 cup fat-free milk or original almond milk

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

1/2 cup seltzer or sparkling water

6 ounces part-skim or light ricotta cheese

6 teaspoons apricot fruit spread (100 percent fruit)

3 cups fresh seasonal fruit, diced

Directions: In a blender or food processor fitted with a stainless steel blade, combine whole-wheat flour, all-purpose flour, salt, eggs, egg whites, milk and oil until smooth, scraping the sides once or twice.

Transfer to a bowl, cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or overnight. Slowly whisk seltzer into the batter. Heat a large nonstick skillet sprayed with cooking spray over medium to high heat.

Ladle 1/3 cup batter into the center of the pan. Immediately tilt and rotate the pan to spread the batter evenly over the bottom. Cook until the underside is lightly browned, about 30 seconds to 1 minute. Using a heatproof silicon or rubber spatula, lift the edge and then quickly grasp the crêpe with your fingers and flip. Cook until the second side is lightly browned, about 20 seconds. Slide onto a plate. Repeat with the remaining batter, spraying the pan as needed and stacking crêpes as you go. If the pan begins to smoke, reduce the heat to medium.

As you prepare your filling, cover crêpes with a paper towel or keep warm in a 200-degree Fahrenheit oven. To assemble, place a crêpe on a clean cutting board. Spread 2 tablespoons of ricotta and 1 teaspoon of jam in the center, leaving a 1-to 2-inch border.

Fold in the sides to make a square shape, leaving a "window" in the center. Press down on the corners, as necessary, to help keep the crêpe folded. Serve with 1/2 cup of fresh fruit per crêpe.

Note: White whole-wheat flour, made from a special variety of white-wheat, is light in color and flavor but has the same nutritional properties as regular whole-wheat flour. It is available at large supermarkets and natural-foods stores and online at [bobsredmill.com](http://www.bobsredmill.com) (<http://www.bobsredmill.com>) or kingarthurlour.com (<http://www.our.com>). Store it in the freezer.

Serves 6.

Nutrition information: 207 calories, 5.9 grams fat, 198 milligrams sodium, 29.2 grams carbohydrates, 1.3 grams fiber, 10 grams protein.

Tip: For an easier version of this recipe, buy natural crêpe batter or prepared (pre-made) crêpes in your food market. Prepared (imported from France) crêpes are often sold in the produce aisle.

Source: Beyond the Mediterranean Diet: European Secrets of the Super-Healthy

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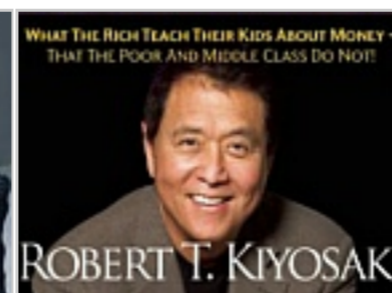
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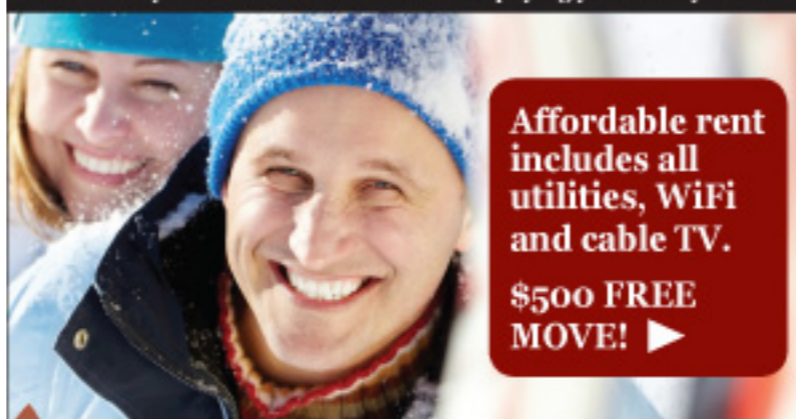
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Boulder dietitian's cookbook teaches eating European-style

By Cindy Sutter Camera

Staff Writer Boulder

Daily Camera

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