

DIETS THAT WORK

How NeNe Leakes Lost 20 Pounds:

The Steady, Portion-Controlled Plan

Famous for her curves as well as her tell-it-like-it-is attitude, NeNe Leakes has been gaining attention lately for a different reason: She lost 20 pounds last year by revamping her eating habits. The *Real Housewives of Atlanta* star, 49, says she used to eat too much late at night, resulting in calorie overload during the least active part of her day. Once she tweaked her habits by eating a small breakfast and having dinner earlier, the pounds started coming off. These days, NeNe looks downright trim and toned in a bikini.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Though she didn't work with NeNe, registered dietitian Lisa Young, an adjunct

professor of nutrition at NYU, says that changing the timing of her eating likely made a big difference. "By starting to eat earlier in the day and scaling back how much she ate in the evening, she helped her metabolism run more efficiently," says Young, author of *The Portion Teller Plan*. While making a concerted effort to eat smaller meals and spread her calorie intake throughout the day, NeNe also began paying attention to how she feels after eating. "I'm a small-portion eater — I don't like to feel full," confesses the mother of two. Overall, "What she did is develop healthier habits," Young says, "which is great and sometimes hard to do" in your late 40s. NeNe gets an extra helping of kudos for that! **LS**



Before: Heavier Housewife

NeNe was honest with herself before losing weight. Her biggest problem, she said, is "that I work all day and forget to eat and then I eat late at night with some cocktails."



Now: Toned & Tight!

Twenty pounds later, NeNe is bikini-ready again. "It's all about being mindful about what we eat and portion control," she says.

A LIGHT BUT STEADY MEAL PLAN TO HELP YOU DROP POUNDS AND STAY ENERGIZED

Eat This

Breakfast

1 slice of whole-grain toast with 1 tsp. of butter, 1 hardboiled egg, ½ grapefruit



Lunch

Bowl of minestrone, ½ turkey sandwich (2 slices turkey, lettuce, tomato, mustard on sprouted bread)



Dinner

4 oz. broiled chicken breast with 1 tbsp. teriyaki sauce, ½ baked sweet potato, 1 cup broccoli



Snack

A.M.: ½ cup cottage cheese, ½ cup fresh berries
P.M.: Handful of sugar snap peas, 2 tbsp. hummus



Why It Works

If you're not usually hungry in the morn, have a light meal to rev your energy and curb hunger later.

Adding more veggies to your midday meal helps you control your calorie intake and your appetite.

Having a portion-controlled dinner with all the food groups keeps your metabolism humming.

Combining protein and produce in snacks curbs hunger and fuels energy between meals.

Other Options

- 1 cup cooked oatmeal with ½ cup blueberries, 1 tbsp. chopped walnuts
- 1 slice whole-grain toast with 1 tbsp. nut butter, mandarin orange

- 1 slice vegetable pizza (topped with spinach, broccoli, mushrooms, onions, tomato), mixed green salad with 1 tbsp. vinaigrette

- 4 oz. broiled or grilled salmon, accompanied by ½ cup cooked brown rice and 1½ cups mixed vegetables sautéed in 1 tsp. olive oil

- 1 banana and 5 almonds
- 1 pear and 6 pumpkin seeds
- 1 cup edamame
- 2 cups popcorn sprinkled with cinnamon

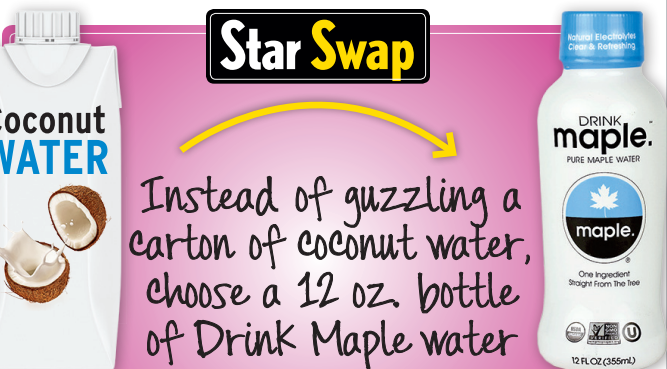
MAXIMUM METABOLISM

HARNESSING THE THERMIC EFFECT OF FOOD

Besides leading to low energy and out-of-control hunger later in the day, NeNe's previous habit of not eating much until dinner cheated her of an important weight-control mechanism: the thermic effect of food, which is the metabolic boost you get from digesting, processing and storing food. Just as exercise can rev up your metabolism while you're working out and for a while afterward (often called "the after-burn effect"), the processes of eating, digesting and storing food can give you a temporary metabolic boost from each and every eating occasion.



Which means: If you eat smaller amounts throughout the day, you'll be able to benefit more often from that metabolic uptick. Include protein in your meals and snacks and you'll get an even bigger metabolic bang for every bite. Want proof? Having a high-protein meal elicits a 30 percent greater increase in the thermic effect of food than a low-protein meal does and a 98 percent greater increase in metabolic rate than fasting, according to a 2015 study from the University of Arkansas. Chalk up another win for the power of protein!



With the trade, you'll save 60 calories and 15 grams of added sugar without sacrificing the refreshing taste and quality hydration you crave.