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THE ART OF MAKING FRIENDS

Count up the number of friends you had in high school or college. Now compare that with the number you have as an adult. It's likely that the total has shrunk somewhat. It's hard to make and keep friends when work life and home life are so busy. And your ready-made friend pool has gotten smaller too. Adulthood isn't like living in a college dorm. You're not constantly surrounded by like-minded people your own age who are eager and available to socialize. Even if you have hundreds of Facebook "friends," the number of close friends we have peaks in our 20s and then steadily declines.

Even though it's harder to make friends as you get older, there are ways to reverse that trend.

1. **THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU LIKE TO DO.** Bicycle? Quilt? Rock climb? Visit Civil War battlefields? Learn a foreign language? Meetup.com is a site where people with similar interests create local groups to share activities and meet new people. Go to an event even if you're tired or shy or intimidated.
2. **DON'T EXPECT TOO MUCH TOO SOON.** Friendships start as acquaintances. New acquaintances tend to be wary of "over sharers." As your friendship develops, there will be plenty of opportunity to share thoughts and feelings.
3. **BE CONSISTENT.** It's hard to develop a friendship if you don't see the person regularly. Always follow through on promises. If you can't keep an appointment you've made, call them to let them know.
4. **REKINDLE AN OLD FRIENDSHIP.** Circumstances change. Perhaps the reason you grew apart is no longer an issue. Reach out and schedule a coffee date. Give yourselves time to catch up.
5. **APPRECIATE THAT WHAT PEOPLE LOOK FOR IN A FRIENDSHIP HAS CHANGED FROM YOUR CHILDHOOD DAYS.** Most adults just want company. They don't care if you're the coolest kid on the block or drive the hottest car or know all the best restaurants. People simply like to have someone to share life's experiences with.
6. **NURTURE THE RELATIONSHIP.** It takes time to build a new friendship. And it takes a little work, too. Be positive and supportive. Really listen to what's going on in your friend's life. Be supportive and understanding without giving advice unless your friend asks for it. Tell them about yourself. Share thoughts and experiences so your friend can get to know you.

QUICKTAKES



REMAKE YOUR SOCIAL LIFE

Having good friends adds to a rich and fulfilling life. It turns out that friends aren't just beneficial for your emotional well-being. Friendship can have a positive effect on your physical health as well.

- Studies find that people with a supportive group of friends and family have a lower risk of chronic disease and strong immune systems, which generally leads to a longer life.
- People who have healthy relationships show lower levels of a protein called interleukin-6, a sign of inflammation. Many age-related conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease and some types of cancer are linked to inflammation.
- Having healthy friendships can also reduce your blood pressure, heart rate and production of stress hormones.

NEW FOODS, NEW FRIENDS

Sharing food just might be the best icebreaker around. Everybody eats, everybody appreciates a good meal and everybody has an opinion about the experience. There are scads of ways to broaden your culinary horizons and expand your friend base at the same time. You don't have to be a gourmet cook to explore food and friendship. Some popular opportunities include:

- **SIGN UP FOR A COOKING CLASS.** Check the Y, community center or nearby cooking school for a list of classes. Explore a cuisine or a technique you're unfamiliar with. Tibetan momo dumplings or authentic Bavarian sauerkraut anyone?
- **JOIN A MEETUP.COM COOKBOOK CLUB IN YOUR AREA.** Groups share recipes and meals from a single cookbook or magazine.
- **TAKE A TASTING CLASS.** Chocolate, wine, beer or cheese tastings serve as gateways to new experiences in flavor. You'll discover taste buds you never knew you had.
- **CONSIDER CULINARY TRAVEL.** Whet your appetite for adventure and friendship by exploring farms, markets, producers, kitchens and restaurants anywhere in the world. Type "gastronomic tours" into your browser Search bar and start dreaming.

CHICKEN CURRY, SRI LANKAN STYLE

SERVES 6

Explore South Asian flavors in your own kitchen. Sweet spices like cinnamon and cardamom, two spices prized in Sri Lanka, combine with hot pepper in this quick curry.

Shopping tip: Lite coconut milk has 60% less calories and fat than regular coconut milk. Look for it at well-stocked supermarkets.

INGREDIENTS

2 teaspoons olive oil 1 cinnamon stick
2-3 cardamom pods, crushed
8 curry leaves (or 8 Thai basil leaves or 1 bay leaf)
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
2 large sweet onions, such as Vidalia or Texas Sweet, chopped
1 teaspoon curry powder
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper (or to taste)
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
2 14.5-oz (410-g) cans no-salt-added chopped tomatoes, drained
6 boneless skinless chicken thighs
1 14-oz (400-ml) can lite coconut milk
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup (15 g) chopped fresh cilantro or parsley

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

202 Calories
10 g Fat
3 g Saturated fat
0 g Trans fat
16 g Protein
14 g Carbohydrate
7 g Fiber
226 mg Sodium
46 mg Calcium

Source: Healthy Living Kitchens



DIRECTIONS

Heat the oil in a large, deep skillet or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add cinnamon stick, cardamom pods, curry leaves, garlic and ginger. Cook, stirring for 30 seconds. Add onions and cook, until soft, about 5 minutes. (If onions stick, add a tablespoon or two of water.) Stir in curry powder, cayenne and turmeric, followed by chopped tomatoes. Cook another minute or two.

Add chicken thighs, pushing down so they touch the bottom of the pan. Cover and cook for 5 minutes. Add coconut milk and salt and cook uncovered until the chicken is tender, 10-12 minutes. Remove the cinnamon stick and bay leaf, if using. Sprinkle with cilantro or parsley. Serve with steamed brown basmati rice.