

Set Realistic Expectations in the Kitchen

In preparation for the New Year, a talk show host recently discussed upcoming fitness trends with three notable physical trainers. The host asked each trainer how often – and for how long – a person should exercise each week. All three concurred that a weekly fitness routine should include a 45-minute workout session five times per week.

My reaction to their collective response? Laughter. Although I enjoy exercise and workout three times per week, I recognize this isn't the case for the vast majority of people. I even occasionally remind the young, fit instructors at one of my classes that I'm a 45 year-old mother of two who just wants to look good in a pair of jeans and there is no need for me to deadlift 50 pound weights so I can throw out my back. I looked at one smirking young instructor last week as I struggled to complete some ridiculous exercise and said, "you just wait until you're 45!"

Professionals in any field who set unrealistic expectations only demoralize well-intentioned folks who want to pursue a new endeavor. This applies to cooking as well. If I admonished novice – yet eager – home cooks that they should prepare dinner five times a week, no one would take this course. Cooking just two meals a week is not only an achievable goal, it gradually yields the goals we all want to attain: To save money, eat healthier and enjoy family time together around the dinner table.

Most people exercise to lose weight and stay healthy, not to run a marathon or look like Mr. Universe. Similarly, most people want to cook at home because it's best for themselves and their families, not because they want to open a restaurant or be the next celebrity chef. By setting reasonable goals, you can gradually develop basic culinary skills, gain confidence in the kitchen – and succeed!