

Who Says That a Low Protein Diet Has to Be Boring, Bland, or Repetitive?

We hope this book will be the start of a satisfying culinary and taste adventure! We think it will help you to discover that you still can enjoy a vast array of wonderful tasting and healthy foods and recipes that are naturally low in protein. The book will show you just how varied and interesting the diet can be using a wide variety of fruits and vegetables and only a limited number of commercially made low protein products.

Often the focus of a restricted diet is on what you *cannot* eat. Our book focuses on the best of what you *can* eat. We have worked intensely on the book for two years, developing and testing recipes that we thought would inspire and delight you as well as support a healthy lifestyle.

When we decided to create this book, we intended to have 250 to 300 recipes—but we just kept coming up with more ideas. Finally, we had more than 500 recipes in our collection! Our goal was to make only recipes that we ourselves and our families would happily eat—and to make recipes that minimized use of special low protein products. Not only are low protein products expensive, but they are not available to everyone. We wanted the recipes to be useful for people everywhere who need a low protein diet. With that in mind, our collection includes many ethnic dishes from around the world that we hope everyone will enjoy.

While you can manage without most special low protein products, we think that low protein bread and pasta are important staples of a low protein diet and so we include plenty of ideas for using them. Fortunately, low protein pastas and ingredients for making low protein bread are available in many parts of the world.

For recipes that use bread or pasta, you may use the particular bread or pasta (homemade or commercial) that you most enjoy. We do not specify brands and usually have you add in the

appropriate nutritional information for the bread or pasta that you decide to use rather than calculating a particular kind or brand into the recipe. If your diet allows, you can even use higher protein store-bought bread or pasta. We tried to make the recipes as flexible as possible, so that people with diverse taste preferences and diverse diet needs could use them.

Both of our major criteria for the recipes—food we would serve our families and limited use of brand-specific low protein products—meant that we limited our use of processed foods. Instead, we focused on using fresh fruits and vegetables, just as we ourselves like to eat and to serve our own families every day for healthy living and great taste. Another goal was to make recipes that could be adapted for higher protein diets as well, so family and friends can join in and eat most of the same foods as the person on the diet. As such, we give many tips for making the recipes suitable for everyone. There are very few recipes in the book that are geared only to low protein diet needs.

We have many recipes that you can incorporate into your daily meal plans for ordinary as well as special-occasion days. You'll find recipes for skilled cooks as well as those who are just starting out. You'll find recipes for days when you feel adventurous or when comfort foods are all that appeal; recipes for days when you need a really quick meal or days when you want to do something more leisurely or more challenging. Some recipes are really low in protein, while others are a little higher for diets that are more lenient. There are recipes suitable for just about anyone, from young children to older adults and everyone in-between.

Each recipe has an introduction, with initials afterwards indicating whose recipe it is (DC for Dorothy Corry and VS for Virginia Schuett). Some of the chapters were done predominantly by one or the other of us, depending on the kinds of recipes that best suited our cooking interests. As you become familiar with the recipes, you will

discover that we like to use somewhat different ingredients and different flavors. We also have slightly different cooking styles, reflected in the recipe instructions. This was one of the strengths of our collaboration: we had our own unique contributions to the recipe collection, which made it more varied and interesting than it would have been with either one of us as the lone author.

Who Should Use This Book?

We made this book useful for two different groups:

- *For people with an inherited metabolic condition requiring a low protein diet*
- *For people with kidney (renal) disease where a very low protein diet may be beneficial*

If you are part of the first group, you may not even know that the other group exists, and vice versa—or at least it may be a surprise to learn of the benefits of a low protein diet for different medical needs. The nutritional data we provide for each recipe will allow both groups to enjoy them. Just ignore the information you don't need for your particular diet.

The “Metabolic Group”

This is the group of people who have inherited metabolic disorders requiring a low protein diet for treatment. It includes people with phenylketonuria (PKU), tyrosinemia, branched-chain ketoaciduria (also known as maple syrup urine disease or MSUD), various organic acidemias (such as methylmalonicacidemia, propionic-acidemia, and isovalericacidemia), and other similar disorders. The low protein diet for these conditions needs to be augmented with a high-protein nutrient-rich supplement that is low in one or more amino acids. We provide nutritional data for the amino acids phenylalanine (phe), tyrosine, and leucine, as well as for protein to help in the dietary management of many of these disorders.

The “Renal Group”

This is the group of people who have limited kidney (renal) function and have been advised by a healthcare professional to begin a low protein diet to ameliorate symptoms as well as to help them maintain kidney function and avoid or delay dialysis. The low protein diet may need to be augmented with an essential amino acid supplement, depending on how low the recommended protein intake is. The diet also typically restricts several other nutrients. We provide nutritional data for protein as well as sodium, potassium, and phosphorous to help in the dietary treatment of kidney disease.

A Balance between Too Much and Too Little

For both groups, there is a delicate balance between getting too much and too little of the restricted nutrient(s). A healthy balance of these nutrients is crucial in order for the diet to be most effective.

You should use this book only when you have an understanding of the diet you are dealing with, based on specific recommendations from qualified healthcare professionals (a specialist in metabolic disorders or a specialist in kidney disease). We are not prescribing a diet or suggesting which recipes in the book are suitable for any individual diet.

Anyone who is on a low protein diet, for either a metabolic disorder or kidney disease, has his or her own unique needs. In fact, we do not expect that all of the recipes in the book will be appropriate for every diet. If you have any questions, check with your own physician or dietitian to determine how these recipes can be incorporated into your personal diet plan and if any are unsuitable for the plan.



The Renal Connection

When we began work on this book, we planned only to make the recipes suitable for people with PKU and other inherited metabolic disorders. This is a group we are both very familiar with through many years of experience, both professional and personal.

However, shortly after we started, our focus changed slightly. We were contacted by Nga Hong Brereton, a research nutritionist specializing in kidney (renal) disease at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine (Baltimore, Maryland). As the Research Program Coordinator for the General Clinical Research Center, she helps manage many patients with kidney disease and was familiar with *Low Protein Cookery for PKU* (by Virginia Schuett). She wondered if we would consider making our book appropriate for people who may need to be (or may choose to be) on a very low protein diet for renal disease. She noted that Dr. Mackenzie Walser, MD, also from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, had recently written a book discussing the benefits of a very low protein diet for people with kidney disease (*Coping with Kidney Disease: A 12-Step Treatment Program to Help You Avoid Dialysis*, John Wiley & Sons, 2004). She explained that currently there was no cookbook to help people implement the recommended diet and that it would be a great help to have a low protein cookbook that also contained information on sodium, potassium, and phosphorous.

While other cookbooks do exist for diets during kidney dialysis, none to our knowledge contain recipes that are as low in protein as needed for the regimen recommended by Dr. Walser. We realized that it was likely no one else had the collective experience that we did in developing and making very low protein recipes, particularly for low protein breads. We concluded that there might never be a suitable book for this group unless we extended our analyses to include the nutrients needed for renal disease diets and we

decided that we really wanted to make our knowledge and experience with low protein diets as widely useful as possible.

That is how this aspect of the book came to be. We hope our book will provide inspiration and delicious nourishment for those of you with renal disease who can benefit from a low protein diet. Even people on a moderately low protein diet can benefit from the recipes in our book.

While we *are* low protein cooking experts, we are *not* renal diet experts. Thus we don't offer any specific advice about the diet for kidney disease as some cookbooks geared for this group may offer. We leave that to dietitians and doctors who are experts in renal disease, and we expect you to work with them closely in devising a diet that meets your special needs.

We hope that most of the recipes in the book can be incorporated into your diet. Please see *Using the Recipes* for information on ingredients and specific tips about ingredients that may be altered to better suit a low protein diet for renal disease. Please make special note that added salt is not calculated into the nutritional analysis except when indicated.

For Everyone

This book is about fresh foods, flavor, fun—and healthy eating.

We sincerely hope that you will enjoy all of these things while managing a low protein diet, and that the recipes and ideas in the book will provide you with ongoing inspiration.

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