



Q “Is it true that certain foods have ‘negative’ calories?”

A No, although different foods have different “thermic effects” (translation: the energy it takes you to digest, absorb and metabolize them), says Mary M. Flynn, Ph.D., R.D., a research dietitian at Miriam Hospital in Providence. High-fiber, low-cal foods generally have a greater thermic effect, so celery, with 1.6 grams of fiber and just 16 calories per cup, has become a poster child for negative-calorie foods (grapefruit is another one). But the science stops there, because you use only a fraction of those calories to fuel the digestive process. If you slim down with celery, it’s simply because you’re filling your belly for just a few calories.

Q “How likely am I to get sick from mayo in a picnic salad?”

A You could catch a bug from any perishable dish that sits in the heat, but potato salad may be safer than some other picnic staples. “Most mayonnaise contains vinegar, an acidic ingredient that inhibits the growth of bacteria,” says Shelley Feist, executive director of the Partnership for Food Safety Education in Arlington, Virginia. Prevent food poisoning by

keeping anything that can spoil at or near 40 degrees. Store food and drinks in separate coolers so your lunch doesn’t get a blast of hot air when you grab a soda. Pack a few small portions instead of a single large one; put them out one at a time so that nothing sits for more than two hours (one hour if it’s 90 degrees or hotter). Nest serving bowls inside larger ones partially filled with ice. (For a slim potato salad recipe, turn to page 112).

Q “Will dieting really shrink my stomach?”

A “The only way to change the size of your stomach is with surgery,” says Caroline Apovian, M.D., director of the Nutrition and Weight Management Center at Boston Medical Center. But you may *feel* as if your tummy had shrunk after you drop pounds. Consistently taking in fewer calories reprograms the hormones and nerve endings that control satiety, so you need less food to feel full. Even though you can’t shrink your stomach, you can downsize your appetite.

Ask Sara Snow



Sara Snow is a natural-living expert, a TV host and the author of Sara Snow’s Fresh Living.

“I love to grill. Does it matter what kind I use?”

Gas grills are generally greener; they burn cleaner than charcoal, so they create less pollution. But if you prefer the smoky flavor that comes from cooking over hot coals, you can lessen the environmental impact. Head to the hardware or grocery store and pick up natural hardwood lump charcoal instead of synthetic briquettes, which release toxins. While you’re there, get a chimney starter, a metal cylinder that heats coals naturally in 10 to 20 minutes.

Read Sara’s blog at www.fitnessmagazine.com/sarasnow, and go to sarasnow.com for more green tips.

Got a question about food or weight loss? Send us an e-mail at nutrition@fitnessmagazine.com.