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Lamorinda Can Eat Well While 'Living Lean'

By Susie Iventosch



Living Lean founder-Sheena Lakhotia Photo Susie Iventosch

Café Teatro, and Gepetto's of Orinda, Yankee Pier, Rising Loafer and Diablo Foods in Lafayette, and Amoroma and Terzetto's in Moraga have partnered with "Living Lean" to offer healthy choices.

Lakhotia is an AFAA (Aerobics and Fitness Association of America) certified personal trainer and a certified sports nutritionist with advanced degrees in immunology and genetics from U.C. Davis and Cornell University. With studios in Montclair and Orinda, she's helped hundreds of clients in the East Bay to live a leaner, healthier lifestyle.

"I have been a fitness instructor for years, teaching kickboxing, step aerobics, dance aerobics, ball and muscle and spinning classes at mostly big clubs like Bally's, 24 Hour Fitness, and Linda Evans," Lakhotia said. "I saw a lot of people working really hard to become more fit and not having much luck. They were burning calories, but then not following up with a healthy lifestyle. I wanted to develop a quantitative, results-oriented program that would ensure that if people put in the time and effort, they would get the results they wanted. Exercise is the key, but what a person eats also plays a crucial role."

According to Lakhotia, the eating plan is very specific, and though she provides a "Living Lean" cookbook for clients to use at home, the opportunity to partner with restaurants makes staying the course easier for her clients whose lives include dining out.

In fact, Lakhotia holds special dinners every four to six months at "partner" restaurants to celebrate the success of her clients. The next such party will be held at Pizzeria Amoroma in Orinda, where the chef features a grilled prawn kebab dish that fits right into the program. Shelby's of Orinda serves this week's featured dish, Grilled Chicken Mango Salad, which co-owner Arno Kober says is one of the most popular salads on the menu. And, Rising Loafer of Lafayette makes the "Living Lean" multi-grain bread, concocted with the help of Lakhotia. (Take it from me, this bread is amazing!)

Client Polly Gori fell and broke her arm just three weeks into the "Living Lean" program, but it didn't deter her from accomplishing her goal of losing 15 pounds and fitting into her favorite old pants in 12 weeks.

"In any other program I would have dropped out for fear I could no longer participate. But Sheena's program is personalized for each client. Living Lean trainers focused on what I could accomplish and

We all love to eat really yummy food and delight in savoring every tasty morsel of those dishes we enjoy, whether it's Nation's Burgers or Fettuccine with Sun Dried Tomato-Gorgonzola Alfredo sauce. And, despite our best efforts of control, sometimes the calories go places we didn't authorize, like hips and thighs, or right around the middle. That's where Sheena Lakhotia's "Living Lean" program comes in to play.

"Living Lean" is a program which helps people increase the muscle in their bodies and decrease the fat, making them leaner, stronger and healthier. The program includes weekly body fat testing, a customized exercise and menu plan, weekly nutritional counseling and personal training. For people who like to dine out, many local eateries have partnered with "Living Lean" to offer healthy options for those who are serious about the program. Shelby's, Pizzeria Amoroma, Baan Thai,

motivated me to stick with it. I didn't have to "keep up" with anyone else and even without the use of my arm, I managed to stick with the program."

Jane Cygan, also a local convert to "Living Lean" is in her second year of the program and she not only "reveres" Sheena, but really appreciates the fact local restaurants are on board.

"I have made some major changes in my diet and have been living with them ever since," Cygan said. "Sheena makes it easy because she is always giving us helpful hints like which restaurants have "Living Lean" dishes, and health food stores that give discounts on the protein bars and the protein powder that we all use daily, in addition to tips for every day shopping that make living lean a real pleasure not a chore."

Cygan also won the 2008 "Living Lean" recipe contest with her Red Snapper Veracruzana. See recipe below.

Lynn Simon, another "Living Lean" faithful said the program was just what she needed to get back in shape.

"I knew that I needed to exercise more and eat right, but just couldn't get started, or stay with a healthy routine on my own," she pointed out. "Sheena's program has provided me with a great team of quality trainers who provide motivation, nutritional coaching, a sensible eating plan – customized for my goals, and fun spinning and weight-training classes. Now, I'm truly lean, having lost 15 pounds of fat and gained five pounds of muscle. I'm stronger than I've been in a long time."

For those of us who are not official clients of the "Living Lean" program, we can always try the healthy recipes presented here, or better yet, head over to your favorite restaurant and ask what they offer in the way of "Living Lean" recipes. You may not have time to adopt the entire program, but you can, every once in a while, order the healthier option on the menu! You may not feel quite so guilty the next time you order fries and a chocolate shake to go with your burger!

A little bit about Shelby's

The restaurant has been inside the Orinda Theatre Square for about 15 years and is well-known in the Orinda community. According to current co-owner Arno Kober, the founder of Shelby's opened the restaurant with her daughter Shelby and this is how Shelby's received its name.

Carlos Rangel, Arno Kober and Gregory Heynes teamed up about four years ago and took over the operation of the restaurant.

"Several dishes from the original menu are still featured and enjoyed by some of the establishment's earliest patrons," Kober indicated. "The Chinese Chicken Salad is one of those, but our Grilled Chicken and Mango Salad is gaining ground and is outselling all the other salads we now have on the menu!"



Photo Susie Iventosch

Shelby's Grilled Chicken and Mango Salad

(Serves about 4)

Ingredients

Salad Fixings

Mesclun Mix enough for 4

2 mango's, ripe, but still firm enough to slice

1 avocado

2 large skinless chicken breasts

red onions rings (I grilled these in olive oil until crunchy)

2 ripe tomatoes (heirlooms are best for this dish)

1/4 bunch parsley, chopped

Dijon Vinaigrette

1/2 cup finely minced red onion

3 tablespoons Dijon mustard

6 tablespoons red wine vinegar

3 tablespoons water

1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

1/2 teaspoon sugar

freshly ground black pepper

Directions

In a bowl, whisk together the onion, mustard, 2 tablespoons of the red wine vinegar, water, salt, sugar and pepper. Gradually whisk in the olive oil. Set aside.

Season chicken breasts with salt and pepper and grill on a hot grill about 3-4 minutes per side. Set aside.

Put the mesclun mix in a large salad bowl. Cut the tomatoes in half, remove the stem and slice in half moons. Mix with the greens and sprinkle the salad with red onion rings.

Peel the mango with a sharp potato peeler and cut lengthwise (the thinner side facing you) right along the pit. Then cut the remaining flesh from the fruit and dice in generous sized cubes.

Cut the avocado in half, remove the pit and, with a large spoon, scoop out the meat right along the skin and cut in slices.

Serve all ingredients atop the mixed greens and sprinkle generously with parsley.

Slice the chicken breast in strips and decorate the salad with it.

For a "Living Lean" evening with your friends, serve without the avocado and serve vinaigrette on the side.

For all other occasion dress your salad with the delicious Dijon Vinaigrette and avocado the way we serve it at Shelby's.

Jane Cygan's Red Snapper Veracruzana

(Serves 6 -8)

Ingredients

3 lbs. of red snapper fillets (6-8 fillets)

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup fresh lime juice

1/4 cup olive oil

2 cloves of garlic crushed

12 small tomatoes (6 large or diced canned tomatoes drained)

2 onions thinly sliced

1 tablespoon of tomato paste

1 large bay leaf

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

18 green olives, pitted and cut in half

2 tablespoons capers (minced)

2 green chilies, seed removed and cut i to strips (jalapenos preferred)

1/4 cup fresh lemon juice

Directions

Place red snapper in a shallow 2-quart casserole. Rub the fish with salt and lime juice. Prick the fish with a fork to aid in penetration of the lime juice and marinate for 3-4 hours. Place the olive oil in a heavy 12" skillet. Add the garlic and onion and cook until soft (3-5 minutes). Peel, seed and coarsely chop or use canned diced tomatoes (drained). Add the tomatoes, tomato paste, bay leaf, oregano, olives, capers, chilies and lemon juice to the skillet. Cook stirring, over moderate heat for 10-15 minutes until the mixture is thick and some of the liquid is evaporated.

Place the snapper in a shallow baking dish large enough to hold them in one layer (approximately 3-quart) and cover them evenly with the tomato sauce. Bake,uncovered in a preheated 325-degree oven for 20-30 minutes or until the fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Serve with brown rice and a crisp green salad. Leftovers are good for lunch with brown rice.

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