

Episode: Food Rules



Full Transcript

HEALTHY EATING FOR BUSY WOMEN PODCAST
WITH KAT RENTAS

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Hello there, my friend! Welcome back to the podcast. How's it going? I'm excited you're here with me today. Because we get to talk about one of my most favorite topics ever, when it comes to food and changing our eating habits. And that topic is setting food rules for yourself. Now, you may be thinking, "Um, excuse me. Food rules is what I'm trying to get away from. What the heck". And yes, of course. We are trying to get away from certain kinds of food rules. You know the type. The food rules that make us feel restricted and those food rules written by other people that just aren't sustainable long-term. In this episode, we're not talking about those kinds of food rules. I want to talk to you today about creating your own food rules. From a very empowered and intentional place. And this is the goal I have with every one of my clients that enters my coaching program. Every woman who comes into my practice essentially learns how to create her own food rules. Based on managing her own mindset, based on getting in touch with her body, based on what preferences she has around food. Basically, she's learning how to take her power back with her eating habits, so everything she eats feels like her decision, regardless of what the foods are. And this is what I mean by creating your own food rules. And it can make many of us nervous when we hear the term "rules", right? And understandably so. Because it can kind of feel like rules are made to be broken a bit when it comes to food. I know this was the philosophy I had with food for many years. Eventually, after I was done trying crash diets, restrictive meal plans, weight loss programs, I just decided that any food rules were meant to be broken. And that having any types of food restrictions, boundaries, or rules in my life was setting myself up for failure. So, for some time I actually went in the completely opposite direction. I didn't pay attention to anything I was eating. I used this reasoning as kind of an excuse to binge eat and overeat. I wasn't listening to what my body needed from food.

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And eventually, this opposite approach led me to feeling just as out of control as restrictive dieting did. And the point of me telling you this, is that I want you to know that you don't have to be in either of these extremes. Creating your own food rules doesn't mean you're forcing yourself to eat a certain way. It doesn't mean you're restricting yourself, or that you're having to use willpower to stick to rules that don't feel like your own. And it doesn't mean the opposite extreme either. It doesn't mean you're just eating food when you're seeking comfort and not paying attention to what your body needs. Creating your own food rules, or food constraints is meeting in the middle.

So, you're not forcing yourself to follow specific food restrictions that feel inauthentic to you, but you're also not engaging in unconscious overeating behaviors and not being intentional with your food decisions. Creating your own food rules is the middle ground where you're being very intentional about those eating decisions and you're setting rules and boundaries with food from an empowered place. And a way that you can start creating your own food rules, right now, is by setting food constraints. And I want to explain exactly what I mean when I say food constraints. Because the word constraint can feel a little ugh, right? Most of us will perceive this word to mean something that feels very stiff or restrictive. Anything that implies a total lack of freedom. If we're being honest. But I want to explain what I mean when I say you can set your own food constraints. And what I mean by this is setting your own food rules in a way where you're just removing options for yourself. You're placing limitations with food in a way that simplifies your eating habits. And I'm going to share specific examples so you can see what I mean here. So, here are some common food constraints that my clients will come up with, that they create for themselves. So, these food constraints are limitations that they set with their eating habits that end up simplifying their eating habits as a whole. Examples are going out to dinner once per week, right? This is actually a limitation that my boyfriend and I like to set.

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Drinking alcohol on special occasions only. Eating sugar on weekends only. Having fast food a couple of times per month. Only eating dairy a certain number of times per week. You get the idea. What a food constraint is, is a limitation that you can set on yourself with food, not as a means to place restrictions. We're not coming from that intention. But as a way to simplify your healthy eating decisions. Alright? And doing this isn't just for the hell of it. It's not just to increase your level of discipline with food or even to get the results you want with your body. That's not even why setting food constraints is ultimately useful.

The biggest reason setting food constraints can be useful, is because it removes options with your eating habits. And much of the time, the reason why your eating habits feel so out of your control is because you have all of these options. You're going to have all of these things running through your mind when you're on your healthy eating journey. Your brain is constantly going to be thinking "Should I eat this? Should I not eat that? Is this food okay? Do I want to be eating this much?". And this can be expected, especially with where most of us come from when it comes to food. So, I have a pretty long dieting history and I have a history of desperately searching for the "right food answers". I know so many of you can relate to this. And because of diet culture, this is the mindset many of us end up in. So, then what happens? When we start trying to eat healthier and develop a more intentional relationship with healthy eating, we feel overwhelmed. Because that mind chatter is still occurring. We're still constantly questioning everything with food, because we feel like we're still searching for that perfect solution. This mindset can feel very messy. It can feel very noisy. And sometimes the best thing we can do when we're in this mindset, is to set some food limitations that clears out the noise. But, the important thing to note is that these limitations have to be set from a very loving, empowered place in our minds.

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Very important. So, to clarify. The first reason why setting food constraints or limitations can be useful is because it will reduce the overwhelm and noise when it comes to healthy eating. So, right now your brain has a lot of conflicting thoughts when it comes to making food decisions. You're going to reach for certain foods and your brain will think "Do we want to eat this?", "Are we not supposed to eat this?", yada, yada, yada. All of the things. And setting food constraints will reduce the overwhelm and the noise. Because you're deciding food rules for yourself before that part of your brain brings in that mental chatter. And this is the second reason why this is useful. Because setting food rules and constraints doesn't indulge that mental chatter. That's trying to convince you that "You don't know how to eat healthy" and that "This is too much". Where you're just feeling really helpless and frustrated because you're constantly stuck in indecision. Creating these food rules puts you in a position where you're running the show. You're the boss of your eating habits. And the third, big reason why it's useful is that it keeps your eating habits simplified, right? It makes everything more clear. So I want you to take a little time to consider, what food rules would make sense to you right now? And I want you to be very, very careful here. Because if you're setting any type of limitations with food from a place of desperation, then you won't be setting limitations that actually serve you. And this is sneaky. Because your brain's really going to want the results with your body and healthy eating habits quickly. This is why our brain's reach for the quick-fix diets and weight loss programs. Which isn't our fault, because it's just how our brain's are designed. It's always seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. But, this is the part of your brain that will try and set food limitations from that place of desperation. And I want you to think about what food limitations you would set if you weren't in a rush. If you were willing to live with the body and eating habits you have now. And if you were setting these limitations from a place of love and care for your own body.

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You have the power to set any food limitations that would simplify your eating habits. But I recommend liking your reason for doing it. So, I'm going to give an example of a past client so you can see how this would work. She got to a place where she was managing her mind so she overcame her emotional eating. And she built the skills of listening to her natural hunger, fullness – all of it. And after this point, she was really just left with what food decisions she wanted to make. We cleared up what I like to call “the drama” of her eating habits at this point, and what was left was the intentional food choices she wanted to make. And this means her energy shifted from that desperation to curiosity at this point. So, this is when she was ready to start coming up with food rules for herself. She was able to start thinking about food limitations that would serve her. And for her, it was simple. She first decided to only eat dairy on special occasions and when she went out to eat with her family. Since she discovered for her that dairy didn't sit well with her body. It's not something that made her feel fully satisfied with food. And this was a decision that she felt great about and it cleared up a lot of noise for her. Another limitation she set was not eating in front of the TV. So, this was something she found herself doing a lot. And it's not something she even really cared to do. She knew it was something that caused her to mindlessly eat. And she wasn't able to access her natural hunger or fullness when she ate in this way. So she set that limitation with herself. And the cool part about this limitation for her, is that her husband followed, and it became a limitation for their family, but in a way that served her. And in a way that served their family dynamic as a whole. So, this is exactly how setting food rules or limitations can be a gamechanger. And I will mention that it may serve you to call these “food intentions” rather than “limitations”, right? I can even feel this way a little too. My brain definitely still has some thoughts about the word limitations. And if that's the case for you, just think of these as food intentions. Because that's what they are. I have a food limitation where I only go out to eat once per week.

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But, really it's just a food intention I set for myself. Because technically I could go out to eat more than once per week. And I know that because I make the rules. If I have friends or family in town I likely will go out to eat more than once. Or when I go on vacation. There are exceptions to these limitations I set for myself. But I'm also very honest with myself. I know when I'm not following these limitations for reasons I like. And I know when I'm not following these limitations for reasons I don't like. But I'm never beating myself up about it, either way. This is a limitation that feels good and makes my eating habits much simpler, where it feels more intentional and under my control. Alright? I'm hoping this makes sense here. The purpose of setting any type of food rule for yourself is to set empowered boundaries with food. It's to simplify your eating habits in your mind. It's to create more focus and attention around your eating habits. When it is done in this way, a food constraint doesn't mean restriction. A food constraint can quite literally mean freedom for you and your eating habits. Because you'll have set these limitations from a place of love, intention, and care. And then you can go on about your day knowing you've already set your eating habits up for success. But the most important thing to remember, is that if you're setting any food limitation from a place of doubt, a lack of self-trust, or desperation, then it's not a limitation you should be setting. The goal of setting food limitations and your own food rules is to get comfortable becoming the expert of your own eating decisions and of your own body. So, consider, what are food limitations that would feel empowering and make sense to you now? That would set you up for success? And then, if you set a limitation and then have a setback. So maybe you don't commit to the food rule you set. That's when you get curious and evaluate what worked, what didn't, and maybe you consider tweaking your approach to better serve you. You can get comfortable setting your own food rules, just like your reasons for doing so. Alright, my friend. I know this was a somewhat different episode today. Thanks for hanging out with me. And I'll talk to you next week.