

Kathy Abascal diet is aimed at wellness

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By [Nicole Tsong](#)



BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Kathy Abascal, who lives on Vashon Island, aims to make you feel better, but weight loss is often a side benefit.

TWO DAYS into an anti-inflammatory diet, and I was obsessed with snacks. Correction: I was obsessed with my two-snack-a-day limit.

Three meals and two snacks sounds perfectly reasonable. But my snack monster was unhappy. I hoarded my favorite snacks to eat them at the allotted time. I stared at the bag of cashews in my car. I drank black coffee — thank God for caffeine — and brooded about food.

I also cut out a few food groups: sugar, wheat, dairy, dried corn, red meat, alcohol. But Kathy Abascal's success stories are so extreme, cutting out a few of my favorite things seemed a small

sacrifice. Testimonials from Abascal's fans say her anti-inflammatory diet has helped end migraines, gotten them off medication, diminished joint pain and helped them lose 30 to 40 pounds, all without portion control.

A biochemist by training and herbalist, Abascal cut out foods she knew inflame immune systems to see if she could end her own aches and pains. The pain went away, and Abascal lost 30 pounds. Since 2007, she has taught the program to thousands of people online and in local classrooms.

She admits nobody fully understands why it works, but her scientific approach is sensible and intuitive. Obesity is a symptom — a sign our bodies are not working — not its own problem, she says. Take out foods that make our immune system flare up, and you will feel better and lose weight. Everyone's immune system attacks sugar and chemical food additives. Gluten and dairy are inflammatory for about half the people she sees. Dried corn and peanuts are susceptible to mold.

Abascal also has an ingenious trick to make us eat our veggies: meals and snacks require a ratio of 2/3 vegetables and fruits to 1/3 protein and whole grains. My handful of cashews required two handfuls of carrots. I ate fewer cashews. Eating in proportion contributes to healthy bacteria in our intestines, she says.

There also is science to the snacks. When we graze, even small amounts of food like milk in coffee trigger insulin release, she says. The constant insulin stresses the body, and growth hormones, among others, get thrown off. Space out meals and your body does what it is designed to do.

One student, White Bear Woman, took the class out of desperation. She had tried every diet out there. A restaurant owner who lives on Lopez Island, she thought she ate relatively healthy. But at 63, she had vertigo, chronic pain, high cholesterol and high blood pressure; she was overweight. After five days, her pain ebbed; her vertigo disappeared. After six months, she's lost 40 pounds.

Best of all, she says, "It empowers people who are pretty beaten."

I'd be lying if I said it wasn't hard. I verge on the shakes when I kick sugar; I miss yogurt terribly. There's no delicate way to put it: I was stopped up for a couple days, too. But that eased. My skin was clear; I've dropped a couple pounds. And it feels like a long-term, sustainable way to eat.

One night out, I picked clams and spinach over pizza, and was surprisingly satisfied.

But Abascal, bless her heart, is realistic. She doesn't expect you to give up wine or chocolate forever.

Still, if nothing else has worked, try it for three weeks and see what happens. It may be the diet that changes everything.

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