

## **Diets**

**By Christian Lengkeek**

I have never understood diets and I don't think ever will. I have a friend named John who has the strictest diet I know of. Every day John gets up in the morning and eats breakfast. He cannot eat anything that has gluten, dairy, meat, nuts, and veggies—except greens and acorn squash. He can't eat any fruit except passion fruit and kiwi. In accordance with his limited diet, for breakfast he has mashed passion fruit and acorn squash. After that, he has a salad with kiwi jam spread on top. Then he has gluten-free cereal with soy bean milk on top. And if he is in an extra good mood, he has acorn squash iced soy cream.

There is another kind of diet that many people have which I call the *easy diet*. If food comes up in a conversation, they will immediately say, "Remember, I am allergic to eggplant." They will always pick a food that they themselves don't like and is not common. They might say anything from caviar to artichokes. They always say it in a proud way as if by not eating artichokes they are making a great sacrifice. I think some of them actually believe they are adding years onto their life.

Also, there are the people who say, "Oh, I'll just have a little bit." I once knew a man named Gustave, who was always watching his weight. Whenever he was offered any food, he would say, "Just a little bit." When I would go to his house for lunch, the dishes that he served were small, but many. First, we would have a little salad, then a little pizza, then a little soup. After that, we would have a little sandwich. He would continue giving me a little of this and a little of that until I could eat no more. After that, he would continue to eat a little of this and a little of that and tell me now that he was on a diet he hadn't been gaining much weight. When I knew Gustave he was three hundred pounds. I have heard that he is now four hundred and fifty pounds. They say he ate a little of everything a little too much.

One of my good friends was on what I call a *flexible diet*. He would change his diet every other hour. If we went out to lunch together he would begin the meal by saying he was allergic to dairy products and by the end he would say he was becoming a vegetarian. He would order a large hunk of steak and eat it all. When the waiter came to take our order for desert, he would say he hadn't felt well after the piece of steak and was now becoming a vegetarian. Then he would order two giant pieces of cake and a dish of ice cream.

My friend John told me that he goes to a man named Doctor Mason. He also told me Doctor Mason works as a dietitian during the day and meat slicer at the

deli at night. I walked into Doctor Mason's office and asked if I could schedule an appointment. "Sure," said the woman at the front desk. "He will see you in a minute." In a couple of minutes Doctor Mason called me into his office. He had me sit down on a chair and said, "Christian Lengkeek, look at me." I looked at him. He looked like he was in his mid-forties; he wore a long white jacket and a pair of inch-thick spectacles. He reached into a cabinet next to him and took out a loaf of bread and held it up in the air and said, "Mr. Lengkeek, you are allergic to gluten."

"But, Doctor Mason," I said, "How did you figure it out?"

"When you looked at the loaf of bread, your arm moved."

He gave me a list of thirty vitamins I supposedly needed. I was furious. I turned around and stormed out of the office.

A week later John invited me over for lunch. As I ate a bowl of mashed passion fruit and acorn squash, I said, "Do you believe everything Doctor Mason says?"

"Yes," said John. "He must know something. He's a meat slicer."

"But how did he get certified?" I asked.

"You only need to take a couple classes, and some people don't even bother to take them."