

## The 52 New Foods Challenge

## How a Bay-area mom takes the stress out of feeding kids healthy foods

ne Monday morning in 2011, Jennifer Tyler Lee watched in disbelief as her husband, Anthony, playfully got the kids ready for school—with no arguing or cajoling—simply by racing them to see who could be first. "That's when I had that moment where I said to myself, 'What happens if I take the struggles we're having at the dinner table and turn it into a game?" recalls Lee.

That night, the former Fortune 100 strategy consultant created a contest using index cards and craft paper. She challenged James, then 4, and 7-year-old Catherine, who refused to eat practically anything but peas and macaroni and cheese, to earn points for trying colorful veggies and fruits, plus bonus points for brand new foods. To Lee's delight, the

TIPS FOR PICKY EATERS

- SET ASIDE 30 to 60 minutes one day a week to cook with your kids, not for your kids.
- THINK of meal preparation as a craft activity. Set up a low worktable with ingredients arranged like project materials.
- FOCUS on the fun, not the food. You don't have to end up with a perfect recipe at the end. Explore with your kids and all the rest will fall into place.

-Jennifer Tyler Lee

strategy worked. Before long, even Catherine no longer turned up her nose at garlic and kale.

That summer, Lee and her children invented Crunch-a-Color, a healthy eating game originally sold at Pottery Barn Kids. When her email in-box filled with messages from grateful parents, she realized her idea was making a difference. "It turned out it was helping lots of other families too, many more than I ever anticipated," she says.

In early 2012, Lee launched The 52 New Foods Challenge and encouraged her children to try a different unfamiliar food each week and help shop for groceries to cook together. Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution picked up her weekly recipe blog, and in November 2014 The 52 New Foods Challenge cookbook debuted with fun activities and recipes like crispy Brussels Sprouts Chips, Lee's

personal favorite and "the least likely food to end up on our table."

The Challenge not only won over Lee's kids; it transformed their mom, too. "Prior to doing this," she says, "I tended to control every part of the process, so cooking projects were not really designed to engage the kids. They were designed to make it easy for me. And they were very heavily scripted. Coming at it with this fresh, new approach allowed me to let go and let the kids lead."

Story by Nancy Henderson, a food writer in Chattanooga, Tenn.



Jennifer Tyler Lee and her son, James, mix up a blueberry smoothie

## **Blueberry Blast Smoothie**

Use fresh or frozen berries—whatever you prefer—to make this nutritious smoothie.

- 1 cup blueberries
- banana, peeled
- cup nonfat plain yogurt
- cup fresh orange juice
- or 5 ice cubes

- 1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp coarsely chopped fresh mint leaves, plus whole leaves for garnish
- 1. Combine blueberries, banana, yogurt, orange juice, ice cubes, lemon juice and mint in a blender jar. Blend until smooth, about 2 minutes. Pour into glasses, garnish with mint leaves, and serve immediately. Serves 2.

PER SERVING: 150 cal, 0.5g fat, 0mg chol, 4g prot, 36g carbs, 4g fiber, 35mg sodium (Continued on page 26)