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New book makes it easy to go 'flexitarian'

Interested in taking first steps toward more healthy eating? Turn to "The Flexitarian Diet," by dietitian Dawn Jackson Blatner.

Blatner (who's the national spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association) is not a strict vegetarian but is a "flexitarian," which simply means she's a casual vegetarian who eats meat on occasion.

In her book, Blatner is elementary in her approach

and rigorous when it comes to rules.

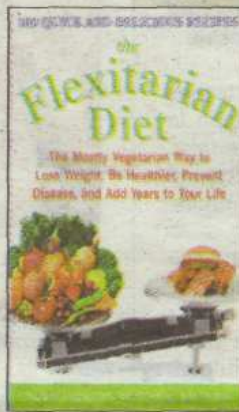
"[Food] is a building block of everything you are in terms of mood, cells, your skin," Blatner said. "You're only as healthy as your last trip to the grocery store."

With that in mind, her one rule if you want to be a good flexitarian: "Before you pull into the checkout aisle, make sure that 25 percent of your cart is whole-grain,

SHOP SMART

Dawn Jackson Blatner's kitchen always includes:

- Fruits and veggies, stored at eye level in the fridge.
- Trans fat-free margarine
- At least one fresh herb
- 100 percent whole-grain bread, pasta, cereal, oatmeal
- Canned tuna in water
- Garlic
- Low-sodium soup
- "Good" oils (olive, sesame, peanut)
- Stocked spice rack



25 percent is lean protein and make absolutely certain that the final 50 percent is filled with fruits and vegetables. So, 25-25-50," she said.

The book is loaded with tips, quizzes, recipes and strategies.

One of her top tips: "Don't put veggies in the drawer! Put them in the middle of the fridge at eye level, because that's where you look first." (CHICAGO TRIBUNE)