

The Food Doctor Is In

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When Dr. Timothy Harlan isn't seeing patients at Tulane Medical Center in downtown New Orleans or teaching courses at the School of Medicine, he adopts his alter ego, "Dr. Gourmet." Under that moniker, Harlan compiles meal plans that he says will help the public with weight loss and encourage healthy eating.



Dr. Timothy Harlan as Dr. Gourmet offers recipe ideas and shopping lists for families short on time but interested in healthy eating. Harlan is an assistant professor of clinical medicine at Tulane. (Photo by Gene Feldman)

Harlan is a former restaurateur who went to college with hopes of continuing his career in the restaurant business. But a family member's declining health changed his focus to the medical field. Harlan's love for creating meals hasn't dissipated; he transferred that passion into a venture that provides healthy and flavorful menus for the entire family.

"The name (Dr. Gourmet) has been around about 10 years and was given to me by a creative friend of mine who was a music writer for the *New York Times*. Since then, the name has stuck," says Harlan, an assistant professor of clinical medicine in the School of Medicine.

Barely through his second year of medical school, Harlan joined forces with his brother, who is a television producer in his home state of Georgia, to create the Dr. Gourmet cooking show that aired on local public television stations. Harlan used the show to teach viewers how to create meals that followed the guidelines that he was learning in medical training.

"It was perfect," says Harlan. "I was a chef and a doctor, so it made a lot of sense to do this."

Today, Harlan has a small staff that helps him maintain a [Dr. Gourmet](#) website, which scores hundreds of thousands of visits. Most readers of the site subscribe to receive daily newsletters via e-mail that contain recipe ideas. The website also has software that helps visitors create weekly meal plans complete with printable grocery lists.

"That's a big part of what makes me different from other Internet diet sites," says Harlan. "It's free and we focus on accepted research. Studies show that the Mediterranean-style diet is best for a person trying to loose weight. So that's what we incorporate into the meals."

Mediterranean style, he explains, refers to healthy foods eaten by people living in countries on the Mediterranean Sea. The diet is high in vegetables, beans and peas, fruits and whole grains. The main animal proteins are fish and dairy instead of beef and poultry.

In response to the question that many of his patients ask when they need to lose weight ? "What should I eat?" ? Dr. Gourmet offers "Eat This Diet," a plan made up of recipes that follow Mediterranean food choices.

The Dr. Gourmet program also is collaborating with the Lance Armstrong Foundation to provide recipes and meal plans to LiveStrong.com, a website that focuses on fitness and wellness.

Harlan is associate chief of general internal medicine and geriatrics for outpatient services at [Tulane Medical Center](#).