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Gourmet chef's cookbook designed for prostate health

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Ask him about his favorite dish - chicken Catalonian style - and his description will make your mouth water: tender chicken breast, sliced eggplant, chopped onion and green peppers, olives, marinated in seasoned tomato sauce and baked to colorful perfection.

"It's the aromas and textures and colors and tastes that I love about creating meals," John Dodson said. "If you have a meal that looks good, you're halfway there."

He's a gourmet chef - a life passion and skill he honed while serving in the Army during the Korean War - an epicurean, a retired pharmacist and Holston Valley Medical Center CEO.

He's also a prostate cancer survivor.

Soon after his diagnosis in 1999, the Kingsport man joined a support group - the Prostate Cancer Support Group of Greater Kingsport - and began learning about the importance of healthy diet for prostate health from Dr. Charles E. Meyers, founder of the American Institute for Diseases of the Prostate in Charlottesville, Va.

"I found out I could take the dishes I love and just change some of the

ingredients and perhaps the way it's prepared and it's good for prostate health," he said. "And it just so happens that the same foods that are good for prostate health are great for heart health as well."

The American Cancer Society estimates that there will be more than 232,000 new cases of prostate cancer in the United States this year. One in six American men will develop prostate cancer in the course of his lifetime, according to the Prostate Cancer Foundation. Along with traditional cancer treatment like radiation and chemotherapy, many groups are advocating healthy diets rich in lycopene, an antioxidant found in tomatoes.

Dodson didn't let the word "healthy" get in the way of the desires of his palate, he said. What his newfound cooking style lacks - red meat and high fat - it makes up for in color and taste with seafood, chicken, spices and endless fruits and vegetables.

He's sharing his love of cuisine in the form of a cookbook titled "Blue Ribbon Recipes for Prostate Health" - a collection of 170 of his favorite recipes adapted to promote prostate health.

Compiling recipes was no small task for the cookbook's author. He's never been one to follow written directions when it comes to food making, he said.

"I don't think I've ever fixed a dish the same way twice, so it was a challenge to sit down and organize my thoughts enough to write a recipe." Dodson said.

"And mine isn't necessarily the only way to do it. I'd encourage people to play with a recipe and make it their own."

Cookbooks cost \$12 and are available at the Wellmont Wellcare locations the Fort Henry and Bristol Malls, Mary's Kitchen Shop, Hibbert-Davis Coffee Gallery, and Mac's Medicine Mart and Good Food Grocery. Money from cookbook sales will go to the prostate cancer support group to help fund community education

about the disease.

"Truth is, I've never met a food I didn't like," Dodson said. "I hope these recipes help people who need to watch their diet and that they can take the ideas in the book and build on them."

For more information about the cookbook contact Dodson at 245-3234. For more information about the local prostate cancer support group call group facilitator Kathy Visneski at 224-5592.

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