

Nourishing Body and Soul

A man with dark hair, wearing a black button-down shirt, stands behind a table covered with a yellow cloth. On the table are several plates of food, including what looks like a salad, a bowl of soup, and a martini glass. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a building.

the  
Chopra Center  
Cookbook

DEEPAK CHOPRA, M.D.

DAVID SIMON, M.D. / LEANNE BACKER

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**The Chopra Center Cookbook:  
Nourishing Body and Soul  
Deepak Chopra**

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John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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# Preface

The most ancient and profound wisdom tradition of the world proclaims that a single undifferentiated reality Spirit-differentiates itself into all forms and phenomena. Observer and observed, knower and known, seer and scenery are different expressions of the same underlying spirit. The science of Ayurveda takes this insight to a very deep level in which body, mind, and soul are understood as interwoven domains along the continuum of consciousness. These differentiated aspects of consciousness—which is in its essence pure existence, pure knowledge, and unbounded love—express themselves as our physical body of matter, our subtle body of energy and transformation, and our causal body of information and intelligence.

Wherever there is energy, there is information, intelligence, and transformation. Life evolves by regularly consuming and recreating itself. On our sun-drenched planet, the energy of our nearest star nurtures the lavish and extravagant growth of the ecosystem that supports the great chain of Being. Ultimately, we are all beings of light, the dust of stars circulating in the cosmos. Quantum physics tells us that at its essence all matter is trapped light. The same field of electromagnetic energy that creates thunder and lightning in the sky also generates the ideas that emanate from the synaptic networks of our brains. Human language, emotions, and thoughts are as much an expression of the pattern of swirling energy of the universe as a rock, a tree, or a human body. In other words, even our thoughts are photons of light originally trapped by the plants that grow from the earth. All life nourishes itself through this light.

Ayurveda holds that food is more than just protein, carbohydrate, and fat. It is concentrated intelligent energy of the universe. In fact, an ancient Vedic hymn boldly declares, "Food is Brahman," that is, "Food is Consciousness." When we nourish ourselves with food that is derived from the blissful marriage of Father Sun and Mother Earth, this food nurtures not only our bodies, but our minds and souls as well. The same intelligence that differentiates into seer and scenery, biological organisms and their environments, and messenger molecules and their receptors, differentiates into six types of taste receptors and the six codes of intelligence that are expressed as the flavors in food. No other biological science has this deep and profound understanding that our taste receptors are designed to access the intelligence of the universe so that we can nourish ourselves in body and soul.

Subconsciously, we recognize the relationship between food and spirit, because our language uses taste metaphors to denote emotions. We are all familiar with expressions such as sweet love, sour grapes, salt of the earth, pungent remarks, bitter resentment, and astringent humor. Ayurveda suggests that a little sweetness adds delight to life, whereas too much can be cloying. A touch of sour adds interest, but too much makes us grimace. A little salt provides endurance, but too much raises our blood pressure. Bitterness, pungency, and astringency add spice and complexity to life, but too much may cause us to feel irritable, resentful, and withdrawn. The flavors of life in the right proportion add richness to both our food and our experience.

All this might be interesting philosophy were it not for the fascinating recent scientific discoveries that the most healing foods are those that contain potent concentrations of plant chemicals that a

responsible for their flavor and color. The six tastes present in food are clues to these healing phytochemicals (phyto is Greek for plant), which demonstrate that good food is good medicine. Although a popular myth suggests that food that is good for you cannot be pleasing to the senses, the fact is that healthy food was designed by nature over millions of years of evolutionary time to be pleasurable. With our modern emphasis on nutritionally empty, highly processed, and additive-rich foods, it is no wonder that we have epidemics of heart disease, cancer, and degenerative disorders. It is time for us to remember that nature provides us with the nutrients we need to create meals that are delicious and nutritious.

Over the years, thousands of people have come to the Chopra Center to heal themselves, to learn more about themselves, to improve their relationships, and to accelerate their spiritual evolution. Repeatedly they have told us that the meals they enjoy with us are among the most gratifying components of their experience. The food at the Chopra Center is designed to delight the senses, enliven vitality, and create joy for just being alive and having the opportunity to eat. As a result of the frequent requests of our guests we offer you the recipes of the Chopra Center for Well Being. We trust that you will experience for yourself how food can nurture not only your body, but also your soul.



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Deepak, David, and Leanne

The Chopra Center at La Costa Resort and Spa

Carlsbad, California

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# Introduction



We owe much to the fruitful meditation of our sages, but a sane view of life is, after all, elaborated mainly in the kitchen.

JOSEPH CONRAD

**Y**ou become what you eat. This basic principle proclaims the straightforward yet profound fact that almost every molecule that currently resides in your body was derived from food you put in your mouth. From the chemical-rich blood that flows through your circulatory system to the jellylike mass of neurons that composes your brain to the rigid calcium-reinforced girders that make up your skeleton, your body is, in essence, food woven around your DNA.

Did you have a piece of cantaloupe for breakfast this morning? Within hours, carbohydrate molecules of the melon will be in your liver, waiting to supply you with energy when it is time to shop for more fruit. The vitamin C in your cantaloupe will be a component of your antioxidant shield protecting your lungs from carcinogens you inhale on the way to the market. Some of the beta-carotene contained in your breakfast fruit will be converted into vitamin A, shoring up the pigment cells in your retina so you can distinguish a ripe melon from one that has passed its prime.

At its most fundamental level, food is energy and information. The energy component of food is quantified by the number of calories it carries. The informational component of food is characterized by its composition of vital nutrients. The proportion of protein, carbohydrates and fats, vitamins and minerals, and the specific natural chemicals that a food source provides all describe the informational aspect of food. Digestion is the process of metabolizing the energy and information of food into the energy and information of your body. When your diet provides the right constituents and your body is capable of extracting the energy and information you need, you create a healthy, vital body.

## **Healthy Nutrition Should Be Easy**

Next to breathing, eating is the most natural process in the world, and we believe that it should be easy and enjoyable to follow a healthy diet. Nevertheless, we see people every day who are confused about what to eat. Why has nutrition become so complicated? Partly it is because of the amazing choices that are currently available. Never before have so many people had so many food options. We enjoy choosing from dozens of different kinds of pasta, cereals, grains, and nuts. We appreciate the opportunity to sample fruits and vegetables from distant regions of the country and exotic places around the world. We welcome the access to unprecedented varieties of milk and dairy products, as well as other protein sources. And yet, with these expanded choices arise greater uncertainty. Is there a difference between frozen, canned, and fresh vegetables? Are whole grain products really better for

you than refined and enriched pastas and breads? Should you be drinking nonfat, 2 percent, or whole milk? Are organic foods worth the additional cost? These are some of the questions we hear each day at the Chopra Center that reflect the sometimes overwhelming options available today.

Our access to diverse sources of information has also generated confusion. On a regular basis, new experts in nutrition offer their convincing arguments for an innovative dietary plan. One exhorts you to eat more protein and fewer carbohydrates, while another proclaims the opposite is best. One tells you to eat more animal products, another encourages you to become vegan. Recently an author has suggested that your blood type has a role to play in your nutritional choices. For every diet or nutritional plan that is aggressively promoted you can find a contradictory approach that is vigorously advocated. It is not surprising that people are confused.

### **Reestablish the Mind-Body Connection**

We believe that part of the problem underlying this confusion is a loss of connection between mind and body. People are so busy thinking about what to eat that they have lost the ability to hear what their body is asking for. This breakdown in communication probably began in childhood when orders to "finish everything on your plate" were obeyed even when you may not have been hungry. Most of us were taught to eat when it was time to eat and eat as much as was on our plate. Considering how many children were encouraged to disregard the signals of their body, it does not surprise us that overeating and obesity are at epidemic levels.

One consequence of the disconnection between body and mind is that many people view their appetites as the enemy. They fear that if left unchecked their hunger for food will compel them to eat vast quantities. This shows the extent to which we've lost mind-body integration, for a strong appetite is one of the most important signs of good health. When consciously listened to, it can tell you when and what to eat in order for you to remain vital and free from illness.

People have as much emotional attachment to their diet as they do to their politics and religion. We define ourselves by what we eat, and this is not entirely inappropriate, for our body is made of food. We just don't believe that healthy nutrition has to be so complicated. If you are straining to follow a diet that is supposed to be good for you, the stress probably outweighs the benefits. Eating is biological alchemy that transforms vegetables and grains into muscles and bones. Celebrate the Magic!

Eat food that is good for you and you will experience renewal in body and mind. The question is, what food is good for you? To answer this question we draw upon two primary sources: Ayurveda and modern nutritional science. Ayurveda (pronounced ah. -your vay-duh. ), the most ancient healing system on earth, dates back to India five thousand years ago. The word Ayurveda has two Sanskrit roots: ayus, meaning life, and vid, meaning wisdom. Ayurveda, then, is a science of life wisdom which can guide us in making the healthiest possible choices.

We also draw upon the latest information from modern science, which illustrates that healthy food can nurture and renew us in body and soul. The Chopra Center Cookbook is about teaching you how to eat in healthy ways so that both your need for nutrition and your need for enjoyment are satisfied. The recipes are simple and delicious. They are nutritionally balanced and consistent with both modern nutritional science and the most ancient healing system on the planet. We have seen the benefits of this program both personally and professionally. Enjoy and share the information contained within.

these pages. Together we can live long and healthy lives.

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# The Wisdom Of Food

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In cooking, as in all arts, simplicity is the sign of perfection.

CURNONSKY

**T**his book is a practical guide to help you prepare delicious, healthy meals that nourish your body and soul. The principles of our program have their roots in both modern nutritional science and the world's most ancient health system, Ayurveda. Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word that can be translated as the "wisdom of life," or "the science of longevity." It offers a holistic approach to living that is based upon a fundamental principle: your choices are metabolized into your body.

Make healthy choices and you will have a healthy body. To the extent that you can choose, elect the option that is most likely to nourish you, and avoid choices that are toxic or depleting. One of the most direct choices you make on a daily basis is what to put into your mouth. We encourage you to choose to eat healthy, delicious foods so you can create a healthy, vital body. Pay attention to these seven simple precepts and your diet will help you create greater mental and physical well-being.

1. Eat a wide variety of foods during the day.
2. Listen to your body's signals of hunger and satiety.
3. Use food to fill the emptiness in your stomach, not your heart.
4. If the meal isn't delicious, it isn't nourishing you.
5. Favor foods that are natural and vital.
6. Use herbs and spices liberally as both flavor and health enhancers.
7. Eat with awareness.

Let's explore each point in more detail.

1. Eat a wide variety of foods during the day. Most anthropologists date the origin of modern human beings to about 150,000 to 200,000 years ago. Up until about 10,000 years ago, we spent most of our days hunting and gathering food. During the course of a day, we sampled dozens if not hundreds of food sources. In addition to any animal protein we could snare, we ate a diverse range of roots, leaves, fruits, nuts, berries, beans, mushrooms, and seeds. Some primates in the wild today have been observed to nibble on more than two hundred different kinds of plants each day.

The average Western diet is much more limited in variety, and as a result we miss out on the extensive natural pharmacy that is available. Unfortunately, burgers, fries, and a diet Coke do not allow us to take advantage of the nourishing properties that a delicious, widely varied diet offers. Each day, nutritional scientists are discovering new health-promoting chemicals that are available to us through food. Think variety when it comes to your diet, and be sure to include the six tastes described later in this chapter.

2. Listen to your body's signals of hunger and satiety. Jonathan Swift once said, "My stomach serves me instead of a clock." Your appetite is your ally. Listen to it. You probably don't go to the gas station when your fuel tank is half full. Don't sit down at the meal table if your stomach is half full. Consider your appetite as a fuel gauge from 0 (completely empty) to 10 (stuffed). Do not eat until you are at level 2 (very hungry) or 3 (definitely hungry). Eat until you reach a level 7 (satisfied). Do not go beyond this to a level 8 (rather full), 9 (uncomfortably full), or 10 (stuffed). Once you have reached your satisfaction level of 7, wait until you are back down to a level 2 or 3 before you eat again.

|                 |           |                     |
|-----------------|-----------|---------------------|
| <i>Appetite</i> | <b>10</b> | stuffed             |
| <i>Gauge</i>    | <b>9</b>  | uncomfortably full  |
| Eat at level 2  | <b>8</b>  | rather full         |
| or 3. Stop at   | <b>7</b>  | satisfied           |
| level 7.        | <b>6</b>  | almost satisfied    |
|                 | <b>5</b>  | no hunger awareness |
|                 | <b>4</b>  | could eat           |
|                 | <b>3</b>  | definitely hungry   |
|                 | <b>2</b>  | very hungry         |
|                 | <b>1</b>  | hunger pains        |
|                 | <b>0</b>  | completely empty    |

3. Use food to fill the emptiness in your stomach, not your heart. We learn to associate comfort with food at an early age. When you were upset as an infant, the chances are your mother offered you a bottle or her breast to calm you. As adults we sometimes seek food for its soothing, rather than its nutritional, properties. If you do this on a regular basis, you are almost certainly not listening to your appetite. This often results in poor digestion, disturbed sleep, and weight gain. Use food to feed your body. Develop conscious communication skills to fill your heart.

4. If the meal isn't delicious, it isn't nourishing you. Enjoy your meals. Delicious food is nourishing your body, mind, and soul. If you are struggling with a diet that you believe is good for you, but do not find at all appetizing, it will not ultimately be nourishing and you will not be able to stay with it for

long. In this book we will convince you that you do not have to sacrifice delicious meals for good health.

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5. Favor foods that are natural and vital. According to most traditional health systems, food carries vital force in addition to carbohydrates, proteins, fats, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. This life force is known as prana in Ayurveda and chi in Traditional Chinese medicine. Freshly picked green beans from your garden are abundant in prana; beans that have been sitting in your pantry for six months are lacking in prana. To the extent possible, favor fruits and vegetables that are locally grown, freshly harvested, and prepared as soon as possible after picking. Not only are they more delicious, but you are sending your body the message that it is receiving the highest quality health-promoting nutrients.

The longer that a food has been sitting on a shelf since its harvesting, the more likely it is to be affected by oxidation. Free radicals initiate the decomposition of a fruit or vegetable immediately after it is disconnected from its source. A sliced apple or banana that has been sitting around for an hour begins turning brown because free radical molecules floating in the air deplete it of its natural antioxidants. Rancid food is this process taken to the extreme. We therefore encourage you to favor fresh foods as much as possible and to the extent that is practical reduce your intake of frozen foods, leftovers, highly processed, microwaved, and canned foods.

Reduce Frozen Leftover Highly processed Microwavable Canned Favor Recently harvested, when possible Freshly prepared All natural ingredients Conventionally prepared Fresh, when possible

As more information becomes available on the harmful effects of pesticides on our personal and environmental health, we encourage you to favor organic fruits, vegetables, and dairy products as much as you can. Reduce your consumption of processed and highly refined foods. Favor fresh opposed to canned or frozen, recognizing that there are some foods, such as garbanzo beans, tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, salsas, and condiments that are just too difficult to regularly prepare fresh. Whenever you can, avoid leftovers or reheated foods. We are not encouraging you to become overly zealous about this point. Simply have the intention to eat foods that are as freshly prepared as possible.

6. Use herbs and spices liberally as both flavor and health enhancers. We encourage you to take advantage of nature's edible gifts to make your meals delicious and nutritious. Become familiar with the culinary and health-promoting effects of herbs and spices and use them generously. Even the simplest quickly prepared meal can be transformed into a culinary delight through the appropriate use of seasonings. We will share with you what we consider the essential ingredients to create the nutritional alchemy that will bring pleasure to your senses and well-being to your body.

7. Eat with awareness. A principle of Ayurveda is: How you eat is as important as what you eat. If you gobble down your meal while driving or watching television, it will not be as nourishing or life-supporting as when you eat with awareness. Savor your food through all five senses. Try to minimize the chaos in your environment while you are eating. Even if you only have fifteen minutes for lunch, hold the phone calls and allow yourself to appreciate the miracle of food.

Occasionally eat a meal alone and notice the sounds, sensations, sights, tastes, and smells that are available to you. If you are following the previous principles, your meal will not only be sumptuous to the taste, but will also look and smell delicious. A healthy meal nourishes all the senses, and when you pay attention to all five senses, your food will be more nourishing.

A simple and practical approach to ensuring healthy nutritional variety is to pay attention to the taste of your food. According to Ayurveda, everything edible can be classified according to one or more of six basic tastes: sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter, and astringent. If you sample foods that correspond to each of these tastes throughout the day, your meals will provide a wide assortment of health-promoting nutrients. Let's look at these six tastes one by one.

**Sweet.** Sweet is the taste of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. Foods that carry the sweet taste increase your body bulk. Breads, grains, nuts, pasta, most fruits, starchy vegetables, dairy, oils, and animal products are considered sweet. Sweet foods supply the majority of what we consume in a day.

In every category of taste, there are foods that are highly nutritious and others that should be eaten more sparingly. Favor fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, cereals, breads, and nuts. In addition to supplying your energy needs, they are good sources of fiber. If you are not ready to go vegetarian, reduce your intake of red meats, favoring cold-water fish and egg whites. Minimize your intake of highly refined sugar and wheat products. Favor low-fat dairy, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated oils while minimizing cholesterol-rich products and foods containing partially hydrogenated oils.

**Sour.** Any food that is mildly acidic is experienced as sour. Citric acid, lactic acid, ascorbic acid, and butyric acid are just a few of the acidic chemicals that contribute to the sour taste of foods. Along with the sweet taste, there are sour foods that are more nutritious than others.

Favor oranges, grapefruits, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, and tomatoes while reducing your intake of pickled foods, green olives, alcohol, and vinegar. Small helpings of lowfat yogurt and buttermilk can aid in digestion. Although aged sour cheeses can be delicious, use them judiciously, as they are usually high in cholesterol and difficult to digest.

**Salty.** Salt is the flavor of ion-producing minerals on the tongue. The principal salt of our diet is sodium chloride, which comes from mines or naturally salty bodies of water. The salty taste is also carried in soy sauce and many other sauces, seaweed, fish, and salted meats. In the right dose, salt adds flavor and stimulates digestion. Too much salt can contribute to high blood pressure and fluid retention.

**Pungent.** We often use the term "hot" to describe the pungent flavor. The spiciness of pepper, ginger, and other pungent sources comes from essential oils that interact with chemical receptors on the tongue. Most pungent foods contain natural antioxidants and infection-fighting chemicals. Due in part to their antispiling properties, pungent spices have been highly prized for millennia. A shortage of spices was a major incentive for the fifteenth-century journey of Columbus. Pungent flavors stimulate digestion and help mobilize stagnant secretions. Recent studies have suggested that components of garlic and onions, also pungent foods, may help lower cholesterol levels and blood pressure.

Commonly available pungent foods include: chili peppers, cayenne, black pepper, fresh and dried ginger, horseradish, onions, garlic, leeks, mustard, cloves, cinnamon, peppermint, thyme, cumin, cardamom, basil, oregano, and rosemary. Adding spices and herbs to your life will serve both your palate and your health.



**Bitter.** Bitter is the taste of most green and yellow vegetables. Some green leafy vegetables such as endive and kale are particularly bitter. The bitterness is due to natural plant chemicals known as phytochemicals, which have detoxifying, diseasepreventing, and healing properties that improve our chances for long, healthy lives. Broccoli and cauliflower, for example, are rich in the phytochemicals known as isothiocyanates, which have been shown to help fight cancer and heart disease. Asparagus, green peppers, and cabbage are rich in flavonoids, which help resist genetic injury, fight infection, and may even reduce your risk for memory loss. The bottom line: Eat your vegetables—they are good for you.

**Astringent.** The last of the six tastes is more of an effect than any actual flavor. Astringent foods have a drying, compacting, and puckering influence on your body. Beans, legumes, and peas are considered to fall within the astringent category, and provide excellent sources of vegetable protein, complex carbohydrates, and fiber to your diet. Several fruits are astringent, such as cranberries, pomegranates, persimmons, and tart apples. Green tea is also astringent and has been found to be a rich source of natural cancer-preventing chemicals. Astringent foods are an essential component of any diet that promotes renewal.

### **Weight Loss and Wellness**

Many people struggling to shed unwanted pounds seek quick and effortless solutions, often bouncing from one weight loss diet to another. Unfortunately, quick fix diets seldom produce lasting benefits and may not be nutritionally balanced. At the Chopra Center for Well Being, we believe that attaining and maintaining an ideal weight is most easily achieved by following a consciousness-based approach. The principles outlined earlier, combined with a regular fitness program, will enable you to lose about one pound per week until you reach your optimal weight.

Honoring your appetite and eating with awareness will reawaken a healthy connection between your mind and body. When listened to, your body will tell you when it is hungry and when it is satisfied. Pay attention to the messages it is sending—it is trying to tell you what it needs to be healthy and fit. Ensure that all six tastes are available at every meal and you will satisfy the cravings that can sabotage your efforts to lose weight.

Please avoid crash diets. Although you may see quick results, study after study has demonstrated that the benefits cannot be sustained. Start a nutritional and lifestyle program today that will serve you throughout your entire life. Do not try to lose weight through diet alone. Exercise your body to enhance your cardiovascular system and convert fat into muscle. You will feel better about your body and about yourself. We encourage you to shift your goal from achieving a specific number on your bathroom scale to attaining an optimal level of physical and emotional well-being. The Chopra Center 30-Day Nutritional Plan will support you in achieving this goal.

### **Wine and Well-Being: A Word on Alcohol**

The fermentation of fruits and grains into alcoholic beverages dates to antiquity. Egyptian references to an intoxicating beverage derived from fruits stored in warm places can be identified over four thousand years ago. Around 1500 B.C., Middle Easterners created the first malt beverage from fermented grains. Wine, beer, and distilled alcoholic drinks have long played a role in cultures around

the world, offering the potential for both pleasure and suffering. Although overindulgence in alcohol-containing beverages can contribute to emotional and physical distress, an occasional offering to Dionysus, the god of grapes and ecstasy, can be part of a healthy lifestyle.

Studies have shown that there are natural health-promoting chemicals in wine that may have a protective effect against heart disease and cancer. These natural disease-fighting substances, which have been shown to have potent antioxidant properties, go by such names as polyphenols, flavonoids, and resveratrol. These compounds are most concentrated in the skins of grapes. Because the production of red (but not white) wine involves prolonged contact of the juice with the grape skin, red wine has the highest concentration of these health-enhancing chemicals.

If you are so inclined, enjoy an occasional glass of wine as part of a delicious meal in the company of friends and loved ones. From a taste perspective, wine contains predominantly sour and astringent flavors, with traces of bitter and sweet; therefore, it can complement and contribute to a balanced meal. This is not the case for distilled alcohol.

With over 40 percent of North Americans affected by a family member with alcoholism, it is important to remember that alcohol has potentially adverse effects on almost every system and cell in the body and can contribute to serious illnesses affecting the nervous system, liver, and digestive tract. It is also a source of essentially empty calories with each gram of alcohol contributing about 7 calories—almost as much as a gram of fat, which has 9. A pint of beer or eight ounces of wine contain about 200 calories, while an ounce of distilled liquor has about 80 calories; therefore, alcohol is not a useful component of a weight-loss program. Our bottom line is to consider an occasional glass of wine as another source of flavors and phytochemicals that can be part of a healthy nutritional program.

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# The Art of Cooking, The Art of Eating



One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

The true cook is the perfect blend, the only perfect blend of artist and philosopher. He knows his worth: he holds in his palm the happiness of mankind.

NORMAN DOUGLAS

**N**utritious food is a celebration of life, capable of enlivening your vitality and engaging all your senses. Unfortunately, because of the hectic pace of modern life, eating is more often an exercise in refueling than a celebration. Like many, you may prepare your typical dinner by microwaving a pre-made or frozen meal, heating up a can of soup, or stopping off for fast food on the way home from work. Your dining time may be spent in front of the television, catching up on your mail, or in a heated discussion with your teenage children. It is no surprise that over one-third of adults are regularly troubled by indigestion and heartburn and over half of the North American population is overweight.

The environment in which you eat can be an important component of the nourishment you receive from your meal. We encourage you to consider that the sounds, sights, sensations, and smells you ingest while eating are as important as the flavors and nutrients you put in your mouth. If you are watching the evening news while eating dinner, you are consuming those turbulent sounds and images along with your salad. If you are arguing with your family, you are metabolizing anger and frustration together with your pasta. When you fall into habits that don't support the celebration of life, you lose the opportunity to enhance your well-being and enliven renewal.

Ask yourself, "Am I being nourished by all my senses when I sit down to eat?" If you are eating while watching television, on the run, in your car, or in front of your computer, the chances are you can improve your sensory nourishment. Make a commitment to get back in touch with the delights of dining, and you will see benefits in your health, your vitality, and your relationships.

Preparing and eating delicious food can be an art form. It provides a daily opportunity to express your creativity. Have the intention to be more conscious as you plan your meals, shop for ingredients, cook your dishes, and finally enjoy the delicious product of your efforts. Your body, mind, and soul will relish the experience.

Your kitchen and dining area are great places to create living space that reflects your personal taste and integrates the healing energy of nature, and brings beauty and richness into your life. Pay attention to colors, sounds, and textures that enliven your senses. Consider eating in your formal dining room on a regular basis, rather than saving it only for those rare holiday dinners. Use your special dishes occasionally for a family meal, savoring the sumptuousness of food served on beautiful plates. Light candles and play beautiful music during your meals. Make a pact with your family to engage only in lighthearted conversations while eating, saving the heavy discussions for later.

Even when you are eating alone, make your dining experience special. You can be your own delightful dining companion.

Become an artist in the kitchen. Begin by renewing your relationship with Mother Earth. Take a walk outside and connect with the energy around you. Appreciate the beauty of the plants, flowers, land, and natural bodies of water that compose your environment. The energy of the earth becomes the energy of your body through your intake of fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Favor foods that are in season, and to the extent possible, locally grown.

Artists thrive on inspiration. Develop a collection of inspiring cookbooks. Arrange your kitchen to be beautiful, alive, and inviting. Plant an herb garden in your home or apartment—you can create an amazing botanical bounty in pots. Take a walk through your local food store and pay attention to the vibrant colors, fragrances, and textures of the fruits and vegetables available to you. Appreciate the luscious red peppers, yellow squashes, and white mushrooms. Savor the aroma of ripe strawberries and fresh asparagus. Enjoy the cobbled texture of corn on the cob, the smoothness of tomatoes, the velvety softness of peaches. Listen to the sounds of the people moving about you. Feel their energy and excitement.

If you feel intimidated by the food market because you have not previously considered yourself an inspired cook or chef, try this simple experiment: Go into your grocery store and select one item from the produce department. We suggest you begin with broccoli, cauliflower, or zucchini. During the week, try cooking your chosen vegetable in every conceivable way. Saute it, steam it, blanch it, marinate it for a salad, make it into a soup or casserole, cut it into bite-size pieces to eat with a dip. Don't worry if a given attempt isn't very successful. Have fun experimenting and enjoy the process. In a very short time, you will begin to build your confidence and your ability to cook creatively. Envision yourself as a culinary artist. Tap into your creative ability to produce beautiful and delicious food.

Involve your family. Children have the wonderful ability to make a routine task fun. The kitchen may end up a mess, but the time spent together will be well worth it. Be passionate about food and encourage your family to share your enthusiasm. Celebrate the planning process, the cooking process, and the eating experience. The food you eat carries the wisdom of the earth, the intelligence of the farmer, and the love of the cook. Every nurturing meal is a celebration of the seasons, cycles, and rhythms of nature. Delicious, lovingly prepared food renews, revitalizes, and nurtures your body, your mind, and your spirit.

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# The Basics of Nourishment



I like a cook who smiles out loud when he tastes his own work. Let God worry about your modesty, I want to see your enthusiasm.

ROBERT FARRAR CAPON

**E**very delicious meal is created from wholesome ingredients. When your pantry is stocked with high-quality staples, you have the foundation for delectable, nutritious meals. The longer something has been sitting on your shelf, the less likely it is to contribute to an appetizing and healthy meal. Begin the process of cooking and eating with awareness by detoxifying your kitchen. Clean out the supplies you will never use: rid your pantry of old cake mixes, ancient spices, dented cans, stale grains, and anything else that may be past its prime. Make the commitment to bring only the purest, most natural, and most wholesome foods into your home. Stock your pantry with quality ingredients to ensure that your meals are delicious and provide optimal nourishment for your body. Your body is made from the food you eat. Purchase and consume the highest quality food to create the highest quality body.

## Pantry List

The following items can be found in natural food stores and most regular grocery stores. Mainstream food markets are beginning to carry more natural and organic foods. As increasing numbers of people purchase natural and organic items, the market for these products will grow and they will become more widely available. If you live in an area where a natural food store is not available, encourage your local grocery store manager to stock food products that are healthy and organic. Give the manager a list of a few items that you will buy, and then buy them as they become available.

Stock up on essential items for the pantry, but also plan on purchasing food on a regular basis to have the freshest possible foods on hand. If you live in an area where a particular food staple is not readily accessible, you'll need to plan ahead. Try not to keep food items too long. The Ayurvedic approach to health values freshness and encourages limiting canned, packaged, or frozen foods. If you are eating meat, poultry, or fish, use fresh, not frozen products whenever possible. Remember-fresh is best!

## Herbs and Spices

Purchase your spices in small quantities. Buy what you will use. If available, buy spices from the bulk bin, which are usually less expensive. Check with your source to ensure that they are as fresh as possible.

### HERBS AND SPICES TO KEEP ON HAND

| <b>Indian Spices</b> | <b>Herbs</b>     | <b>Sweet Spices</b> | <b>Odds and Ends</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| asafetida<br>(Hing)* | basil            | allspice            | black pepper         |
| mustard seeds        | thyme            | nutmeg              | sea salt             |
| cardamom seeds       | oregano          | cinnamon            | Chinese five spice   |
| coriander            | Italian herb mix | cloves              | chili powder         |
| cumin                | sage             | fennel seeds        | red chili flakes     |
| turmeric             | tarragon         | garam masala*       | ginger               |
| fenugreek seeds      |                  |                     | curry powder         |

\*Found in health food stores, Indian, Asian, and Middle-Eastern markets (check the Internet for sources if you have none of these where you live).

### Grains, Nuts, and Seeds

Buy organic whole grains, nuts, and seeds whenever possible in quantities of one or two pounds at a time, and favor raw nuts and seeds. Because of their high oil content, nuts and seeds can spoil easily. When possible, buy them from the bulk bin and check for freshness. If you don't use them up right away, store nuts and seeds in recycled glass jars with tight-fitting lids or in plastic resealable bags in the refrigerator. Store grains in recycled glass jars with tight-fitting lids as well. Label all jars and bags and include any cooking instructions printed on the packaging.

Maintain a stock of the following grains, nuts, and seeds:

rolled oats

basmati rice

quinoa

millet

multigrain cereal

dried pasta-spaghetti, penne, lasagna

couscous-white for pilaf and whole wheat for breakfast cereal

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pearl barley

whole wheat flour

whole wheat pastry flour

flax seeds

sesame seeds

sunflower seeds

pine nuts

walnuts

pecans

almonds, whole and sliced

#### **Beans and Other Legumes**

Buy beans and legumes in quantities of one or two pounds at a time. Also keep on hand some canned or jarred cooked beans for speedy meal preparation. You will find fresh dried beans and lentils in bulk bins or packaged in plastic bags on the grocery shelf. You may be able to find organic beans, both dried and canned, in health food stores. Store the beans and legumes in recycled glass jars with tight fitting lids. Label them and include any cooking instructions printed on the packaging. We consider the following to be staple beans and legumes:

red lentils

brown lentils

mung beans

garbanzos

split peas-green and yellow

white beans-Great Northern or navy

black beans

pinto beans

#### **Condiments and Baking Supplies**

Look for condiments that have pure ingredients. There is a vast variety of curry sauces, pasta sauces, salsas, salad dressings, and marinades available. Favor items with vinegar or lemon juice, which are natural preservatives. Many salsas, sauces, and salad dressings can be made from scratch, but it is convenient to have quality prepared condiments available at home when you need them.

Keep on hand small quantities of basic baking supplies. Packages of flour, baking powder, and thickeners often end up sitting on shelves for years. Buy in quantities that you will use over weeks or months to ensure the highest-quality breads and baked goods.

Keep these basic condiments and pantry items on hand:

maple syrup

Bragg Liquid Aminos (A nonfermented soy sauce found in health food stores. Use like soy sauce.)

tamari soy sauce

balsamic vinegar

rice vinegar

apple cider vinegar

extra virgin olive oil

sesame oil

ghee, homemade or purchased (see page 38)

vegetable oil spray for oiling pans

Dijon mustard

salsa

vinaigrette salad dressing

lemon juice (fresh-squeezed)

apple juice

raw organic honey

kombu seaweed

tomato paste

coconut milk, low-fat



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