

DIETARY ESSENTIALS

by Paul Pitchford

Good dietary practices form an important foundation of healing, making all medicines and remedies far more effective. The following principles are based on the information in Paul Pitchford's book—*Healing with Whole Foods: Asian Traditions & Modern Nutrition*. Please refer to this book for a more complete understanding of the subjects that follow.

Numbers in parenthesis below represent corresponding pages in *Healing with Whole Foods*.

Awareness Practices. Upgrading to a better diet without an awareness of the factors involved invites disaster. Becoming more aware of one's true nature helps the process of choosing a good diet. Moral and compassionate choices improve one's health and digestion, i.e., mind influences the body and digestion. Regular, consistent yoga, meditation, prayer, contemplation, chi gung, t'ai chi or similar practices calm and focus the spirit and mind, and enhance one's ability to make superior choices in diet and all other aspects of life. (5-6, 87, 105-106, 646, 336)

Activity & Exercise. Moving the body stokes the metabolic fires, burns up toxins, and circulates and cleanses the blood and lymph. Being active enough is absolutely essential for digestive excellence and vitality. (85, 344)

Whole is better. Precious minerals, vitamins, oils, fiber, enzymes, and hundreds of phytochemicals essential for our immunity and general well being are stripped away in the refining of foods. Avoid white bread, white rice, white flour pastas, refined sugars (including brown sugar), organic refined cane juice (the nutritional equivalent of "organic white sugar," and is recently found in many supposedly healthy treats), refined oils, fat-free milk and other fat-reduced dairy products (calcium doesn't metabolize without the fat), fat-free tofu, and all products in which fat or other nutrients are removed. (86, 211-213) Genetically modified foods cannot be trusted to be healthful. Genetic engineering is very much an immature technology at this point in time. (19-22)

Simpler and fresher is better. Too many ingredients in a meal results in less nutrition, less energy, and digestive and mental upset. Eat fruit by itself and milk by itself. Try eating proteins and starches at

separate meals. Protein meal example: Lentil soup, or tempeh, or fish with abundant green and non-starchy vegetables; starch meal example: whole grain such as brown rice, or spelt bread and butter with green and non-starchy vegetables. Many people have reported feeling the best they have in their lives when following these kinds of simple "food combining" plans. Freshly prepared foods always have greater vitality and provide more "qi" life force potential. Minimize eating canned, frozen, packaged foods. To be healed, most folks need to slow down and do earthy processes; one basic healing process is preparing and handling foods in a calm and focused manner. (447-449) If you don't have time, slow down and time will magically appear. Try it! Simple meals take very little time to prepare. (260-271)

Avoid Junk & chemical ingredients, especially highly processed, chemical-laden foods, and poor quality pastries, candy, soft drinks, donuts, sweet rolls, etc. (345-346) Even small amounts of these, if present regularly in the diet, can wreak havoc with your liver and immunity. (86, 448-449) Avoid body creams, lotions, and cosmetics that contain unnatural chemicals. (644)

Avoid intoxicants including alcohol, marijuana, coffee, tobacco, and all others. (329-330) As the name implies, "intoxicants" poison you. The great Chinese Zen Patriarch Hsuan Hua simply said: "all intoxicants make you stupid." Marijuana is especially sinister because it was originally reported in the news media as harmless; later studies suggest it causes permanent brain damage three times faster than alcohol. (701 #22) A little alcohol can spark circulation and help metabolize fats and proteins; however it also causes cell necrosis (death). A better choice is the final stage of alcohol fermentation—vinegar. Unfiltered, unpasteurized vinegar has far more medicinal effects than alcohol—without the detrimental side effects. (205)

Avoid Overeating. Eating too much of any food, even the highest quality organic, whole food, causes wastes to accumulate in your body and shortens your life span faster than any other common nutritional mistake. Chewing your food thoroughly (until liquid) is the best way to avoid overeating. Thorough,

relaxed chewing has many benefits, and many whole vegetal foods do not digest adequately without proper chewing. (251-253)

Water. Virtually all municipal water suppliers add chlorine. Use a good quality filter to remove it and other possible contaminants. The majority of communities also fluoridate water, which needs to be removed by reverse osmosis or distillation machines; other specific fluoride-removing filters are now becoming available. (122-129)

Hot and Cold—your thermal nature. Being either too hot or cold contributes to illness. If you are too cold (you have an aversion to the cold, are pale, dislike cold food and drinks, sleep curled up, overdressed, etc.), then warm up by avoiding excessive cooling foods (citrus, tomatoes, raw foods [e.g. lettuce], foods and beverages served cold in temperature, etc.) and by eating more cooked and warming foods (spices such as ginger, cinnamon, fennel, fenugreek, turmeric, dill, cumin, caraway; warming grains—spelt bread and noodles, oats, quinoa, wild rice, and others, warming vegetables—mustard greens, winter squash, onion family, etc.) If you are too hot (an aversion to heat, like cold drinks and foods, dress scantily, have red face and eyes, dark yellow urine, etc.) then reduce warming foods, especially alcohol, cigarettes, coffee, and red meats, and eat other warming foods sparingly. Also use cooling foods such as bell peppers, lettuce, celery, citrus fruit, wheat, soy products, mung beans, and others. (58-67)

Excess and Deficient—your strength. If you are excessive (robust, reddish complexion, thick tongue coating, loud voice, strong pulses, extrovert) then reduce excess by using fewer excess promoting foods—meats, eggs, dairy, butter, wheat, sugars and sweets and add more bitter foods such as lettuce, celery, bitter herbs such as chaparral, dandelion root, burdock (sold as gobo root in groceries), seaweeds, rye, amaranth, corn, aduki beans, raw foods, sprouts, cereal grass, wild blue green algae, etc.; (115-122) if you are deficient (frail, pale, little or no tongue coating, weak pulses, introvert), then chew your food especially thoroughly, and eat more building foods—butter or ghee and other dairy products (if you tolerate dairy at all), rice, wheat, quinoa, tempeh, nuts and seeds; doing a yearly parasite purge often helps restore the deficient person. (89-94)

Colds & Flu: common "Exterior" conditions are usually fairly easily resolved. The main remedy is to sweat. Use herbs such as ginger, cayenne, raw garlic, chamomile, mints, yarrow, and kuzu to open the pores and increase circulation.. To facilitate sweating, take hot showers, saunas or baths after taking sweating herbs. Cleansing, antiviral items such as echinacea, chaparral, citrus seed extract (citricidal™), and vitamin C are also often quite useful. (68-70)

Parasite elimination is a primary consideration in nearly all therapeutic plans. If parasites are not eliminated from the body, good quality food may not be effective, as they reduce one's overall vitality and rob the body of nutrients To destroy parasites you can remove their mucoid home in the intestines by eating 2 tablespoons of raw rice and 1 tablespoon of pumpkin seeds as your first meal of the day. In addition to inhibiting parasites, this process teaches one the art of thorough chewing. Wait at least 2 hours before eating again. Following this "raw rice" step for two or more weeks is essential if a parasite program is to succeed long term. Parasites are repelled by hot or pungent spices such as cayenne, cloves, ginger, garlic (raw), onions (raw); they also dislike unpasteurized "raw" sauerkraut, pumpkin seeds, and very bitter herbs such as black walnut husks, wormwood, mugwort, chaparral, and echinacea. Including such spices, herbs and foods in the diet periodically can help keep parasites at bay. It's a good idea to do a parasite purge once a year. (114-115, 654--666)

Organic foods are more flavorful and contain greater amounts of nutrients than standard sprayed, chemically fertilized foods—often double or more the amount of minerals and vitamins. Supporting "organic" growers supports the renewal of our Earth. (455, 641)

Cooked versus raw. Cooked food is more centering, calming, more deeply tonifying and better for subtle mental and spiritual development—according to Ayurvedic and traditional Chinese medical thinking. Raw foods often harbor parasites and should be cleansed before eating. (572) Raw foods are also said to weaken digestion and reduce one's digestive fire. Eating them at room temperature is best; avoid eating any foods straight from the refrigerator. Eating spices such as ginger, black pepper, garlic and cayenne can offset the cooling effects of raw foods. When there is

degeneration such as cancer, raw foods and juices can help spark regeneration, and except in cases of deficiency and coldness, can be used abundantly to help resolve stagnancy and degeneration of most types. (405-424) If raw foods cause diarrhea, coldness and weakness, they should be reduced or discontinued. Most Americans can benefit from about 20% of the diet coming from raw fruits, vegetables and sprouts. As a person is more "excessive" (see above), then it is usually beneficial to increase raw food consumption. A food that many modern people can greatly benefit from lies on the border between "raw" and "cooked": unheated cultured vegetables, most often available as "raw sauerkraut." This food, through fermentation, is broken down much like in cooking, yet it contains bacteria which support healthful digestive flora, which in turn greatly benefits digestion. It additionally contains nearly all the enzymes, vitamins, and other nutrients found in raw cabbage and other vegetables from which it is made. (619-569)

Vitamins and other supplements, which are often synthetic, isolated nutrients in a pill, can be useful, but also may be confusing to the metabolic role of the liver-gall bladder functions, particularly when over consumed for long periods of time. (211-216) Ultimately, to support high-level health it is better to ingest whole foods and "super foods" (e.g., algae, cereal grasses, [227-250] bee pollen, [151-152] nutritional yeast, [139-140] wildcrafted plants and herbs [215]), choosing the appropriate ones for your constitution.

Meats including fowl and fish, if raised in feedlots and fish farms, seem to do more harm than good when eaten regularly. (135-136) The best quality meats are range fed without hormones or chemically sprayed feeds. Wild game is also acceptable. However, for most people, meat consumption is either unnecessary or can be limited to holidays or special occasions. According to Ayurveda, sufficient animal fat is available in dairy products such as butter and yogurt. When meat or fish is needed for weakness and deficiency, it should be taken in small amounts (not more than 3 oz. daily), and is ideally thinly sliced, marinated in a vinegar-water solution, then cooked with ample vegetables and appropriate seasonings into soups and stews. Note: The milk of nursing mothers in recent years frequently fails an

FDA test for safety for human consumption due to pesticide/herbicide levels. Milk from vegetarian mothers usually passes the test (meats and other animal products contain more poisons than plants). Unless one is certain of the purity of their waters, shellfish should be avoided as they frequently contain alarming amounts of heavy metals. (152-158)

Dairy products are frequently of poor quality, containing hormones, antibiotics, and poison sprays. Homogenized and pasteurized dairy products are undesirable. "Organic" dairy products are becoming more widely available, often in the form of goat milk products, which are naturally homogenized due to the small size of their fat globules. This and other factors make goat milk easier to digest, and even when not purely organic, most goat farmers will refrain from antibiotics and hormones in the feed of their animals. (149-151). As mentioned earlier under the "Whole is better" section, reduced-fat dairy is not a quality option.

Cookware & microwave ovens. Avoid aluminum cookware as it leaves residues in food cooked in it which reduce kidney function and negatively affect brain function via hormonal pathways. Stainless steel leaches the heavy metal nickel when food is cooked or stored in it; an exception is "surgical" stainless steel. The safest cookware are the thick enamel pots with heavy cast iron cores. (452-454) Avoid microwave ovens—in-depth research shows they denature proteins in food, making them toxic. (60, 112-113) Also avoid storing water and foods in plastic—toxic plasticides can bleed into food from plastic containers. (520, 530)

Oils & Fats produce weight, moisture, calmness and protect the body and mind, and help one to feel "rooted." These are "yin" qualities. In an emotionally and technologically stressful world, people crave plenty of fat for protection and relaxation. (158-160) The heavier fats—lard, butter, cream, and the fats in red meats, dairy products, and eggs—contain a predominately "saturated" component. Such fats are harder to digest, clog the heart and arteries faster, and appear to contribute to a number of common cancers. Perhaps even worse are the lighter "polyunsaturated" oils that are hydrogenated into margarines and shortenings. These liquid oils are made into solid, saturated-appearing fats. Such synthetic fats can not only increase cholesterol much like their saturated fat cousins, but harbor dangerous "free radical"-forming

compounds that severely damage immunity. Strictly avoid all products containing "hydrogenated" and "partially hydrogenated" fats and oils. (161-182) Another poor quality fat is the oil in deep-frying vats used for French fries, chicken, and other deep-fried foods. Many restaurants never change these oils, but top them off as they evaporate. Through repeated heating they form synthetic polymers, which take on qualities similar to common plastics and the new breed of hard car waxes. Good quality oils are scarce. Virtually all oils sold in supermarkets and the majority sold in health food stores (such as canola oil) are routinely refined, which removes most of their lecithin, chlorophyll, many minerals and other important nutrients. Because of its dense nature and the amount of time involved in its metabolism, refined oil is more damaging to the body and its immunity than most other refined foods, including refined white sugar. All beneficial oils are unrefined, and ideally "cold pressed." (180t, 179-181)

Polyunsaturated oils should never be used for cooking. They can be used on foods and salads and must be unrefined, cold-pressed and stored in dark containers and kept refrigerated. The omega-3 variety of these oils include flax oil, hemp oil, and fish oils, which are especially valuable for cleansing the heart and arteries and for bolstering the body against disease and degeneration. (162-166) An omega-6 variety of oil found in the seeds of borage, evening primrose and black current is rich in a "GLA" fatty acid, which excels in treating a wide variety of painful and degenerative disorders. (171-176) The best cooking oils are either "monounsaturated" (high oleic), e.g., virgin olive, sesame, peanut, high-oleic sunflower, high-oleic safflower oils, or saturated such as butter, coconut and palm kernel oils. As a result of their rich saturated fat backgrounds, most Americans do best without cooking in saturated fat. The real challenge is to find the unrefined variety of the monounsaturated, high oleic oils. Note: Unrefined oils are usually marked as such. Also, for a more healthful diet, minimize cooking with oil. (183-187)

What is a balanced diet? There are many dimensions of balance. A person can balance his/her thermal nature, occupation, lifestyle, strengths and weaknesses, disease processes, desires, spiritual aspirations, constitution, hereditary background, and climate. In ancient times there were few choices.

People simply ate what was available in their locale. Eating as much of your diet as possible from your region is still an excellent idea. Now more than 50,000 choices for foods and food products bewilder the modern American. However, a healthful, basic diet that most people can adapt to their needs contains foods recommended by Ayurveda for supporting "Sattva," which means balance and essence: (640-652) carbohydrates in the form of whole grains, breads, pasta (grain examples: wheat, spelt, kamut, oats, barley, corn, rye, rice, wild rice, buckwheat, millet, quinoa, teff, amaranth); vegetables and fruits; and proteins and fats in the forms of legumes (beans, peas, lentils, soy products such as tempeh, tofu, miso), nuts and seeds, brewer's yeast, algae such as seaweeds and micro-algae (spirulina, chlorella, wild blue green), and dairy products (yogurt, buttermilk, kefir, etc.). Since eggs and animal meats including fish, fowl, and red meats counteract long-term Sattvic balance, they ideally are taken only when necessary for weakness and deficiency. A small, optional amount of fats in the form of butter, cream, and fats and oils used in food preparation (e.g., on salads) and in cooking can also be included. Much of the fat in a diet can come from whole high-fat protein foods such as nuts and seeds, dairy and soy products, and animal products. In fact, the majority of the calories from these foods comes from their fat content.

Some of the grains are abundant in fat and/or protein: these include wheat, spelt, kamut, quinoa, teff, amaranth, and oats (quinoa and oats are especially rich in fat). As the use of high-protein grains increases, the use of legumes and other protein foods can decrease. Percentages in the diet by weight of the above categories that work well for most Western people: Carbohydrates—40%; fruits and vegetables—40%; and proteins—20%. When protein foods, including the high-fat varieties, are kept under 20% of the diet, then the fat content in the diet is moderate, often 15-30% of total caloric intake. (108-109)

Of course, a balanced (Sattvic) diet that nurtures all facets of one's life is much more than a certain ratio of quality ingredients; at its foundation is a kind and mindful attitude regarding food, its preparation, and those who partake of it.