“I recommend *Integrative Nutrition* as a must-read for everyone interested in this most basic component of good health.”

—Andrew Weil, MD, bestselling author of *8 Weeks to Optimum Health and Healthy Aging*

**INTEGRATIVE NUTRITION**

Feed Your Hunger for Health & Happiness

Joshua Rosenthal

Founder and Director, Institute for Integrative Nutrition
INTEGRATIVE NUTRITION

Feed Your Hunger for Health & Happiness

Joshua Rosenthal
FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR INTEGRATIVE NUTRITION

www.integrativenutrition.com
I am truly blessed to do the work I do everyday and to interact with so many incredible people who share a vision to change the world. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of my journey thus far.

I would especially like to thank:

The staff of Integrative Nutrition—you all contribute to the mission of the school. Your visions, creativity, intelligence, love and support consistently take the school to new levels.

The guest speakers who continue to inspire my students and offer new perspectives on the health and nutrition puzzle,

All of the students, alumni and their clients who have helped shape my view of things,

My dear parents for their unconditional love and support,

All of my friends who add love, laughter and support to my life,

Anyone who has ever purchased my books, joined the school’s community, and everyone I’ve met along the way. You’ve all helped me get to where I am today.
Life is a delicate balance between doing good and avoiding harm. The earliest single-cell organisms explored their environment looking for food, evading poisons and trying to avoid becoming food themselves. As life expanded into a multi-cellular animal kingdom, a kind of “inner knowing” developed. Animals have a sense of what to eat or avoid and instinctively know how to eat when sick, when breeding or in different seasons of the year. Our earliest human ancestors also had this inner knowing, as they ate local roots and greens and benefited from successful hunts and seasonal harvests.

Life has certainly become more complex. Our ability to process and transport foods has expanded beyond anything previously experienced in human culture. We fill supermarkets the size of football fields with more than 45,000 items, many of which are processed, packaged items wrapped in bright shiny packages and filled with sugar, fat and additives. Amidst all of this abundance, our compass of inner knowing has gone awry. It’s become blocked by the magnetic attraction of foods that are engineered to tempt our taste buds but to neglect our health. We no longer instinctively know what to eat.

Adding to our confusion is an overwhelming glut of information about nutrition. A stampede of new diets on the market each claim to be the best and each have developed their own small following: High protein, low carbohydrate versus complex carbohydrate, low protein versus all raw foods versus vegan versus only grapefruit and on and on it goes. What each of these approaches misses is that we’re all different. Our biological individuality allows one person to thrive on a diet that is a terrible for someone else. Following a diet plan designed by someone whose genetic makeup and nutritional needs are different from our own cannot restore our inner knowing. For real answers, we must look deeper.
In actuality, all of life is nutrition. Understanding this truth requires that we adopt a new perspective on food—one that integrates nutritional science, biological individuality and relearning our inner knowing. In this book, my friend and colleague, Joshua Rosenthal, presents an integrative holistic framework that will help readers see nutrition in an extraordinary light. His approach to nutrition offers a clear path to healthy living. I’ve watched his school, the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, grow from a small group to class sizes reaching more than 1,000 students. The word is out, because people are literally getting sick and tired of eating food that doesn’t truly nourish them. With a simple, unique theory, Joshua’s program addresses the full framework of nutrition. It focuses on truth rather than dogma, on real experiences rather than concepts and on a nutritional spectrum beyond food groups.

I know firsthand that a holistic, integrative approach like Joshua’s really works. For decades I’ve seen how people who have lost touch with knowing what was good for them can recover health and balance. As a young physician in the 1970s, I began to practice a more natural method of patient care that included nutrition, vitamins, herbs, stress reduction, lifestyle changes and exercise. It became clear to me that people needed more education about how to be well. Like, Joshua, I created a school. When I started Omega Institute over 30 years ago, it was simply an adventurous experiment to create a space where people could learn and directly experience how to live in greater balance with themselves, others and our environment. I had no idea then that the holistic industry would become so large and in demand. People who come to Omega even for just a few days awe me with their capacity for transformation. I witness dramatic changes in their lives from eating whole foods, taking in lectures from inspiring teachers and experiencing nature.

Our society desperately needs more people who can help others to deeply nourish their health and inner beauty. Joshua and his students are part of a growing revolution to awaken and change society for the positive by recognizing the interdependence of all life. They represent a great opportunity for healing on many levels of our society and our planet.

This book encapsulates this different approach and new path. It offers you simple tools to help take control of your life by changing the way you view your health. Each of us can unlearn destructive habits and start living to
our fullest potential. As we learn to tune into our inner knowing, we begin to listen to our bodies and fill them with whole, natural foods that nourish us.

We live in an era of “time poverty,” where we’re caught in a constant state of “hurry sickness.” We consume massive amounts of caffeine to speed us up, eat fast foods to save time, work while eating to stay productive, but we never catch up. It is possible to shift these behaviors. Start by slowing down here and now: enjoy this book. Savor it like a good meal. Then start your meal with a few moments of silent breathing, chew slowly and enjoy the taste. Health and happiness begin with slowing down to enjoy every moment of your life.

_Stephan Rechtschaffen, M.D., is cofounder of Omega Institute for Holistic Studies and chairman of Omega’s board of directors. He is a holistic physician who uses concepts of time and healing as the focus for developing optimal health._
How to Use This Book

Set an Intention
To help you prepare for the journey ahead, please take a moment now to clarify your personal goals around health and well-being. What are your main health concerns? What is it you wish to learn or accomplish by reading this book? Devoting a small amount of time now to understand your optimal personal nutrition will result in a healthier, happier future later.

Experiment
In this book, you will find discussion of major dietary theories. But the food that is best for you is not going to be found in the pages of a nutrition book. No one diet is perfect for everyone. To best determine what is appropriate for your unique body and lifestyle, this book will guide you through experimenting with new foods and learning to listen to your body’s responses.

Be Open to Discovery
A permanent shift in health may seem like a big challenge requiring a lot of dedication, but our approach is not about acquiring more self-discipline or willpower. It’s about personally discovering what feeds you, what nourishes you and ultimately what makes your life extraordinary.

Climb One Rung of the Ladder at a Time
With this book you will unlearn old habits and absorb new information. Give yourself permission to go slowly. Big changes do not require big leaps. As far as your body is concerned, permanent change is more likely to happen gradually rather than through severe, austere diets. Proceed with care for yourself. Have fun.
About five years into my researching the world’s longest-lived, I realized that spry centenarians never tried to live to 100. Longevity happened to them. It was not about discipline or personal responsibility. It was about their environment.
—Dan Buettner
When I started Integrative Nutrition, I was just one person with a simple idea that if I could change what people ate, I could change the world. I started by moving to New York City because it's a global melting pot of people. At any time, day or night, you can walk around and experience any kind of food or people speaking almost any language. This energy is part of what makes it one of the greatest cities in the world. By living among so many different types of people and experiencing their culture, I felt more connected to the global community. I realized I didn't want to create just a school; I wanted to create a movement.

The phrase “Think globally, act locally” coined by the environmental movement encourages us to understand how our actions can impact the world. With a global mindset, we can create better health and greater happiness. The school’s mission is quite similar: “to play a crucial role in improving health and happiness, and through that process, create a ripple effect that transforms the world.” One of our core values is to “support each other in the global shift to better health.” The world is really set up for this support and connection. At no time ever before have we had such easy and accessible means of communicating through social media platforms, online video calling or chatting, and affordable transportation.

I've already mentioned how the U.S. impacts trends around the world. I think we can also look at local cultures and see how they can influence our thinking about nutrition and health. I think it’s fascinating to take a look at what the world is eating—and see what’s working. People have been eating around the world for millions of years. Each day, we all wake up and have
to decide what to eat. We’ve got a planet of 7 billion people who are full of wisdom and customs that we can all learn from. Now that you’re familiar with many of the major dietary theories, you can continue to build on the wealth of information gathered from the global community.

And it’s important to talk about not just the food, but the lifestyles and behaviors that contribute to our overall health in the world. I’ve seen so many cases where primary foods really override secondary foods. When people have a good life, they can often get away with eating whatever they want. Paris is a great example. People always wonder, how can the women there eat butter, bread and rich paté and still look so good? Well, they eat slowly and enjoy their meals. They talk to each other and give eye contact rather than constantly checking their phones. I think that eating and drinking in a more balanced and open way also helps them avoid cravings and binges. Many people today order only salads when they are out with friends but spend the night gorging on ice cream or chocolate.

The Secrets to Longevity

More scientific research backs up my idea of primary food—that living well is more than what’s on your plate. I first read about the Blue Zones in a National Geographic article in 2005. The title of the article was, “The Secrets to a Long Life.” I thought, who doesn’t want to know those secrets? Just look at the market today. We are flooded with products that promise to make us look younger or defy our age. What if we could just live a long, happy life?

Author Dan Buettner wrote the article I read and subsequent book about these areas of the world that boast centenarians, or people who live to be 100 or more. And they don’t just live longer but with a better quality of life, having very little disease or stress. As I mentioned in chapter 1, these areas include Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa, Japan; Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica; Loma Linda, California and the Greek island of Ikaria. What can we learn about these regions of the world that could help boost our longevity?

“In the United States, when it comes to improving health, people tend to focus on exercise and what we put into our mouths—organic foods, omega-3’s, micronutrients,” Buettner wrote in a 2012 New York Times article. “We
spend nearly $30 billion a year on vitamins and supplements alone. Yet in Ikaria and the other places like it, diet only partly explained higher life expectancy. Exercise—at least the way we think of it, as willful, dutiful, physical activity—played a small role at best.”1

One of the big factors that Buettner emphasizes is social structure. In the Blue Zones, they have different cultural attitudes about getting older—people stay engaged in the community through social activities and family life. Old people are celebrated and talked to rather than shunned or isolated. In Costa Rica they use the term “plan de vida,” or life plan, which describes living with a lifelong sense of purpose. Buettner says purpose and love are essential ingredients to the Blue Zones lifestyle.

Some of the other qualities he’s found in studying these areas that offer amazing health benefits include eating a plant-based diet, reducing stress in life, participating in spiritual communities, making time for family and finding your tribe. I know many students who enroll at Integrative Nutrition feel like they have found their tribe. I speak a lot about finding support in your life and surrounding yourself with people who share your values. Take a nod from the Blue Zones and start implementing some of these changes to your life.

The Jungle Effect

Along with these longevity hot spots, you can find many places around the world where the diets make you healthier. Family physician Daphne Miller, M.D., traveled to what she calls cold spots—canyons, deserts, islands, frozen lands, and jungles where people have few problems with chronic disease. She decided to learn more about how indigenous diets affect our health for her book, The Jungle Effect: The Healthiest Diets from Around the World. She found that getting back to the land could create better health for her patients in San Francisco, especially when they followed the diet of their ancestors. Our early ancestors relied on their intuition and experimentation to discover what plants tasted best, along with utilizing the freshest, local, natural ingredients.
Miller found clues to solve the diabetes dilemma faced by much of the modern world from the local diet in Copper Canyon, Mexico, home to 50,000 Tarahumara Indians living in remote canyons. Their diet consists of corn, beans, squash, eggs, chicken, chiles, berries, wild greens, cactus, oranges, tomatoes, avocados and the occasional wild game or fish. She was surprised that their diet was quite high in carbs, but they were unrefined and home-made. She learned that the glycemic index of corn is reduced when combined with beans and squash. Plus, many of the healing spices and plants in Mexico, including cactus, have been shown to help lower blood sugar. She realized that the high rates of diabetes in Latino populations living in the U.S. could be explained by losing these parts of the traditional diet along with eating too many highly processed, sugary foods.

In Iceland, people have low rates of seasonal affective disorder and depression, even though they have periods of winter with no sunlight and not a lot of vegetables growing on the island. People do eat wild fish and game, fresh milk and wild berries. In fact, Icelanders eat more fish per capita than anywhere in the world, according to Miller. And even foods like lamb have high amounts of omega-3 fatty acids in them because the lamb eat tundra grass.

“They are able to get their antioxidants through surprising ways, like waxy potatoes, cabbage, and wild berries,” Miller wrote. “I suppose they could import more greens, but they prefer their traditional foods. There is a feeling that this is what we do and we keep healthy.” This example shows that the secrets to good health are really all around us when we choose to tune into our environment.

Miller also explored her own Ukrainian grandmother’s recipe for borscht, which was made with canned sweetened beets, generous amounts of sour cream, and store-bought chicken broth. After a little digging, she found the recipe for borscht in her grandmother’s hometown of Chodorov. Turns out the original recipe used fresh grated beets, light chicken stock, salt, pepper, and a spoonful of yogurt or clotted cream. You don’t have to have a Ph.D. in nutrition to see how the modernization of these indigenous diets could create health problems around the world. Nutrition is not as complicated as the media can make it. Sometimes the best recipe is to keep it simple, nutritious and use whatever foods are freshest in your area.
Before Integrative Nutrition, I was an investigative reporter at a local television station. I had my dream career but I struggled to find balance which led to a variety of health problems. It started with a few running injuries and from there snowballed. I would see a doctor to treat one injury or illness and another would pop up. I practiced yoga at the time and the more I committed myself to my practice, the more in tune I became with my body.

My body knew before my mind that there were things in my life I needed to change. As my awareness grew and I consciously made those changes, my body healed itself. Astounded by my body’s ability to repair itself from the inside out, I decided to become a certified yoga instructor.

Integrative Nutrition was my way to bridge the gap between my investigative reporting career and yoga teaching. I remember saying to my childhood friend, who was also enrolled in the school, “Maybe I’ll be on a health show one day or even have my own.” By graduation, that maybe became my reality. The nationally syndicated daytime talk show, The Doctors, called me to discuss moving to Los Angeles to join them as an investigative health reporter. Now my investigations help viewers make informed decisions about their health, wellness and safety.

While Integrative Nutrition certainly helped me achieve new heights in my career it also shifted my life perspective. Listening to Debbie Ford’s lecture was a pivotal moment for me. The idea that our shadows make us whole was something I had never considered before. This was a life changing moment for me. I now stand wholeheartedly and confidently in my truth. I think that was the balance I always sought.

It was always my dream to be a national correspondent. I never imagined it would be in quite this way or that my journey would bring me to Integrative Nutrition. In retrospect all of the dots line up. I guess that’s the beauty of looking back, you get to see you were never really lost.
A Country Without McDonald’s

While many fast-food chains are rapidly expanding throughout the globe, there’s one country in South America where McDonald’s did not survive. In Bolivia, people prefer their traditional foods to Big Macs. Citizens still love hamburgers, but they prefer to buy them from indigenous female street vendors called cholitas. The fast-food chain closed all locations in 2002 because it was simply not profitable. The failure piqued the interest of filmmakers, who made a documentary in 2011 called, “Why did McDonald’s Bolivia Go Bankrupt?”

“Fast-food represents the complete opposite of what Bolivians consider a meal should be,” according to the blog El Polvorín. “To be a good meal, food has to have be prepared with love, dedication, certain hygiene standards and proper cook time.”

What I find most interesting about Bolivia is a culture where community values prevail. Bolivia’s population values their food systems, food producers, and their ecosystems, so much so that food sovereignty laws continue to pass in the government to ensure that they preserve their food traditions and put less economic pressure on commodity crops. The country’s first indigenous president, Evo Morales, even called U.S. fast-food chains “a great harm to humanity” at a United Nations General Assembly meeting in 2013. Talk about a slow food nation. I wonder what would happen in other countries if more of the population embraced longer, slower meals rather than quick, convenient foods.

The Healthiest Regional Cuisines

Many regions of the world are less reliant on processed, convenient foods and instead have amazing regional foods and customs that keep people healthy.

“Diets evolve over time, being influenced by many factors and complex interactions,” according to the website of the World Health Organization. “Income, prices, individual preferences and beliefs, cultural traditions, as well as geographical, environmental, social and economic factors all interact in a complex manner to shape dietary consumption patterns.”
Africa
This large and diverse continent is home to root vegetables, leafy greens, beans and wild meats and fish. Okra and watermelon are native to Africa. The main grains found in Africa are couscous, sorghum, millet and rice. Researchers found that North Africans were possibly making yogurt around 7,000 years ago. Pottery shards were discovered with traces of fat from a fermented dairy product, and scientists believe this method made it more digestible. Traditional Central and Western African meals are often based on hearty and aromatic vegetable soups and stews served over tubers or grains. Fufu is a dish made from starchy foods like cassava or yams usually served with grilled meat. Eastern Africa serves up more whole grains and vegetables, especially kale, cabbage and maize (cornmeal). Ethiopia and Somalia feature flat breads like injera (made out of teff or sorghum) and spicy beans like lentils, fava beans and chickpeas.

Australia/New Zealand
Traditionally, the diets in these island nations took their roots from the English diet with stewed meats, puddings and pies. Dinners typically consisted of lamb, beef, or chicken with potatoes or root vegetables. Seafood is certainly abundant in coastal areas. The indigenous Aborigine in Australia enjoyed meat from kangaroo, crocodiles and turtles, along with shellfish and native fruits like wild peach or riberry, similar to cranberry. The Maori in New Zealand took advantage of the many wild plants and roots like kumara (sweet potato) and taro. The world knows these areas for Marmite and Vegemite, food pastes made from yeast extract and used to spread on toast and sandwiches. With an intense flavor, these spreads are rich sources of B vitamins, niacin and folic acid.

Caribbean
Many local fruits and vegetables offer tons of nutrients and energy to the Caribbean lifestyle. Guava is a small oval-shaped fruit with a rough outer skin but with a sweet and sour taste inside that’s high in fiber, potassium and vitamin C. Breadfruit can be boiled or mashed much like a potato and is an excellent source of fiber and potassium. Beans are another staple in the
Caribbean diet including lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans, black-eyed peas and split peas. Callaloo, the national dish of Trinidad and Tobago, consists of a stew made with green leafy vegetables, usually some kind of spinach variety.

India

India is famous for its aromatic cuisine. The country has some of the lowest rates of Alzheimer’s disease in the world, thanks in part to some of its healthy spices. Curcumin, the yellow color in curry spice, continues to be studied for its health benefits that include cancer prevention and anti-inflammatory properties that help ward off the onset of Alzheimer’s. Other spices like ginger, chilies and cardamom are also great for you. Indian dal is made with lentils and veggies, full of magnesium and can even help stabilize blood sugar. In a 2006 survey, about 40 percent of the population was found to be vegetarian, but demand for meat seems to be rising in recent years and with it, more of the health issues associated with it.7

The Nordic Region

Citizens of Sweden, Denmark and Norway boast some of the lowest obesity rates in Europe perhaps because their diet is full of cold-climate veggies like kale, cabbage and cauliflower. Their bread is made with rye grain, which is easier to digest than wheat and has more soluble fiber, helping to lower cholesterol and glycemic load. A small randomized study from 2010 tested the health of the Nordic diet using local foods like herring, rapeseed oil and berries on people with metabolic syndrome (a precursor to diabetes). Researchers found that those eating the healthy Nordic foods had significant improvements in their bad cholesterol/good cholesterol ratio and a marker for inflammation, which could result in a 20 to 40 percent decrease in developing type 2 diabetes.8 While scientists felt confident the diet had health benefits, they also recognized it might be hard to replicate the diet outside of Nordic countries. It’s just another testament to the power of local, whole foods.

The Middle East

Another region of the world known for its spices and healthy dishes is the Middle East, including countries like Turkey, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon,
Palestine, Jordan and more. Some of the most common ingredients here are olive oil, chickpeas, sesame seeds, dates and herbs like mint and parsley. This region is known for hummus and other healthy dips served with plenty of vegetables. Sumac, a dark red spice made from wild sumac berries, offers a tart flavor used as a rub on meats and kebabs, as well as marinades, dips and stews. Traditionally, the spice had medicinal purposes, too, helping promote good digestion, easing stomach pains and even reducing fevers. Sumac berries contain antioxidants and antimicrobial properties. The spice is also used in a spice blend called za’atar, which also includes wild oregano, thyme, toasted sesame seeds and salt. This health food dates back to the 12th century when the Spanish Jewish philosopher Maimonides is said to have used it with his patients to treat many ailments.9

Philippines

The Filipino diet includes rice with almost every meal, along with lots of fresh seafood and local vegetables like water spinach, eggplant and bitter melon. People tend to eat three meals a day along with a morning and afternoon snack. The food prep is usually quite simple—grilled, steamed or raw. Fish and veggies typically receive a marinade of vinegar or lime juice. More recently, American-style fast foods like hamburgers and pizza have become more popular, creating a similar rise in overweight and obese people as in the U.S.10

Japan

Japan is another place where obesity rates are low and people who live in the Blue Zone region of Okinawa live to be 100 or more. Food prep is usually light steams and quick stir-fries with fresh vegetables and fish. Of course, sushi is also easy to digest and can be high in heart-healthy fish oil. Some of the staple foods that contribute to that health are calcium-rich greens like bok choy, shiitake mushrooms, seaweeds and antioxidant rich green tea. Miso, tempeh, soy sauce and other fermented soy products are easy to digest and offer increased nutrition as rich sources of iron, magnesium and zinc.
South America
Another diverse continent, the 12 countries of South America make use of fresh vegetables, beans and fruit. A high protein seed that cooks up like a seed, quinoa is a superfood that grows abundantly here. Some areas like Brazil and Argentina are known for steaks and meat but also have healthier dishes like ceviche—a mixture of raw seafood, citrus juice and tomato. And the most basic South American meal of rice and beans with fresh cilantro and chile peppers is another healthy dish.

Southeast Asia
Fresh herbs, vegetables and fish prevail in this area. Using more water and broth for cooking is an easy healthy habit to take from Southeast Asian kitchens. Flavorings like cilantro, mint, ginger, tamarind, and chilies are all great for digestion and help fight inflammation in the body. In Vietnam, you find pho, an aromatic noodle soup full of antioxidant rich spices. Researchers at Thailand’s Kasetsart University have studied the immune-boosting qualities of Tom Yum Goong, a soup made with shrimp, mushroom, coriander, lemongrass, ginger, and other herbs and spices. Incidences of digestive tract cancers are lower in Thailand than anywhere else in the world.11

Spain
Spain is synonymous with tapas—small plates of veggies, fish or meat. The rest of the world could certainly benefit from this ritual of eating smaller portions during a long, leisurely meal. Spanish food features fresh seafood, vegetables, and olive oil, a darling of the Mediterranean diet. Particularly healthy dishes like gazpacho are full of antioxidants and lycopene—known for its cancer-fighting properties. Paella is another great meal with seafood, rice, veggies and spices.

Wherever you are in the world, it’s important to look at the whole picture and find balance with both primary and secondary foods. Healthy ingredients are great, but many people who eat relatively healthy still don’t have the energy and zest for life as people who feel truly fulfilled in their lives. It’s not
just the food but also the lifestyle that contributes to the health of families, the environment and ultimately the planet.

Superfoods of the World

As I mentioned in chapter 1, many unhealthy habits get exported around the world. But a new trend has emerged around superfoods, or foods that are nutritionally dense and thought to possess super immune-boosting properties. It’s a relief to see more nutrient-rich foods getting imported, exported and integrated throughout markets in the world. But like any trend, be curious about where your food comes from and don’t forget your unique nutritional needs. We are all bio-individuals, even when it comes to superfoods. Some exotic berries or seeds might contain super nutrients, but the foods that grow right in your neighborhood usually contain the best nutrients for you.

The word “superfood” is not a scientific or regulated term. You might notice that many lists rate the top superfoods in the world with as many as 50 or 100 foods with everything from blueberries to seaweed. Don’t forget the basics. Any food can become a superfood if it gives you energy and vitality. Eating a glamorous superfood every now and again cannot make up for nutritional or lifestyle mistakes happening day in and out. Right? You can’t get by on a few hours of sleep and hope that a shake of superfoods will repair the damage. So don’t get too swept away by these foods and remember to always listen to your body.

Technology today has allowed for the exchange of information and ideas at a more rapid pace than ever before. People learn about superfoods and nutrition from articles on the Internet or a friend’s recommendation on Facebook. We have seen some of the disadvantages of exporting certain foods, as the SAD diet has increased heart disease and obesity to the areas of the world that have embraced it.

But we also have the potential to improve the world’s health by spreading more positive messages about food. If children in low-income families, for example, were taught about (or at least had access to learn about) superfoods, regional diets and concepts like the Blue Zones or the Jungle Effect, we could begin to make positive steps toward a healthier, happier world. Perhaps
Global Superfoods

**ACAI – Region: Brazil**
From the rainforests of Brazil, this small, bright purple berry is one of the most nutritious foods found on the planet. It’s packed with antioxidants, amino acids and healthy fats. You can find it in powder or frozen form, which you can add to smoothies and juices for an extra punch of nutrients.

**BEE POLLEN – Region: Worldwide**
Found wherever bees roam, bee pollen is used throughout the world as a holistic remedy and superfood. It’s the result of the accumulation of flower pollen, nectar and bee’s salivary substances. It’s rich in amino acids, B-complex vitamins and folic acid.

**CACAO – Region: Mexico and the Americas**
Native to the Americas, the cacao bean was first cultivated in Mexico in 1500 B.C. Now people use it to make raw chocolate or cacao powder because of its antioxidants and high amounts of magnesium, fiber and iron.

**CHIA SEEDS – Region: Mexico and the Americas**
Aztecs and Mayans used chia seeds to gain strength and stamina starting around 3500 B.C. The health benefits of these small, dark seeds include antioxidants, fiber, calcium and more omega-3 fatty acids than salmon.

**GOJI BERRIES – Region: China**
This berry is also known as the wolfberry and is a small, red berry known for its high level of carotenoids, which can help boost the immune system. It has been used in traditional herbal medicine for about 2,000 years and in China they hold a strong belief that this fruit can significantly extend life.

**HEMP SEEDS – Region: Central Asia**
The hemp plant originated in Central Asia as a food crop, but today it is grown all over the world except for the U.S. where it’s banned. The seeds come from a variety of Cannabis plant, but it contains very little THC—the part that is considered a drug in most countries. It’s similar to the amount of opium in poppy seeds. Hemp seeds are very high in Omega-3 and Omega-6 essential fatty acids and an excellent source of protein.

**QUINOA – Region: South America**
The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) declared 2013 as “The International Year of the Quinoa.” This seed is very high in protein, but cooks up like a grain, making it a great option for those looking to cut back on carbs. It’s full of antioxidants and vitamins like manganese, magnesium and fiber.

**MANUKA HONEY – Region: New Zealand**
This honey, native to New Zealand, comes from bees that pollinate the Manuka bush. Honey has a healing reputation, but Manuka honey has been effective in scientific studies when used on top of wounds. It’s also effective in fighting infection and promoting healing.

**MORINGA – Region: Africa/Asia**
The leaves of this tree are thought to be a superfood because it’s one of the world’s most nutritious plant species with more than 92 types of nutrients and 46 types of antioxidants. It also contains protein and is a great source of iron, containing more iron than liver or roast beef. It’s usually available in powder or capsule form and can be brewed into a tea or added to a smoothie.

**SPIRULINA – Region: Africa**
This microalgae gets its name from its spiral shape, thriving in fresh and salt water throughout the world. It’s a complete protein containing all essential amino acids and is one of the richest sources of B vitamins and iron.
TEDx says it best with their mission of “ideas worth spreading.” Understand that just one person—one person reading this book, just like you—can make an enormous difference for the health of yourself, your family and your community.

U.S. President John F. Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” Well, it’s time to expand this thought as we are so well connected. It’s time to think about what you can do for your world.
Exercise

1. Think Globally, Act Locally

   With a global mindset, we can create better health and greater happiness for all.

   Consider how your actions impact the world and think about what you can do to get more of your food locally. Look into any farmers’ markets, CSAs and food co-ops in your area. The more you know about how to find healthy food in your own area, the better impact you’ll have on the environment and planet.

2. Become a Locavore.

   What foods are local to your country or community? Create a recipe using as many local ingredients as possible. Recreate a favorite dish or try something new. Entrees, side dishes, smoothies and juices all count.

   How do you feel after cooking with local versus store-bought, out-of-season ingredients? How do local ingredients affect the taste?

3. Experiment with Local Superfoods.

   Superfoods add variety and color to your diet, in addition to providing an extra nutritional pop. What local superfoods do you have access to?

   Experiment with what’s available and add them into your daily diet.

   Keep in mind, just because something is labeled a superfood, that doesn’t mean you have to eat it every day. Rather than incorporating superfoods into your diet as a new food group, think of them as seasoning to compliment an existing healthy dish.
Deconstructing Cravings

All I really need is love, but a little chocolate now and then doesn’t hurt!

—Lucy Van Pelt
FROM PEANUTS COMIC BY CHARLES M. SCHULZ
Chocolate, bread, steak, eggs, french fries, candy bars, ice cream—it really doesn’t matter what you crave. The important thing is to understand why you crave what you crave. Most people believe cravings are a problem, but I have a different perspective. Once we realize that the body is a reliable bio-computer that never makes mistakes, it’s much easier to conclude that cravings are critical pieces of information that help you understand what your body needs.

I’ve been craving ice cream since I was a child, with a special sweet spot for Ben and Jerry’s Cherry Garcia, the perfect blend of dark chocolate, sweet vanilla and tart fruit. I once noticed that on Sunday nights, after teaching class all weekend, an alien force would take control of my body and drive my car directly to the convenience store to buy a pint. As I watched myself eat all this ice cream, I wondered, between delicious mouthfuls, “What am I doing in my life that might trigger such an extreme craving?”

At the time, I was teaching many hours, eating a primarily macrobiotic diet and drinking hot peppermint tea throughout the day to stay grounded and focused. When I started investigating the craving, I noticed that my body felt hot and tense when I had the tea, and shortly after, I began to daydream about chocolate-covered cherries smothered in rich, cold vanilla ice cream. The hot tea was causing my craving for cooling foods. I started drinking more water, stopped asking for water without ice at restaurants, and increased my intake of vegetables, which have a cooling and relaxing effect on the body. I also realized that after gorging on ice cream, I felt extremely satiated. Knowing that fat is what makes us feel full and that my macrobiotic diet did not con-
tain much fat, I incorporated more olive oil into my cooking to provide an alternative source of fatty satisfaction. Long hours of teaching can be stressful, and the fact that I was having these cravings on Sundays indicated that I was using the ice cream as a reward or de-stresser after teaching all weekend.

Lo and behold, within a few weeks of making these changes, my cravings passed and my Sunday night ice cream binges ended. Of course, I still look forward to a few bites every once in a while, but the days of empty pints in the backseat of my car are long gone. By observing my own behavior and trusting that my body needed something from the ice cream, I was able to modify my diet and lifestyle to get what I needed in a more health-supportive way.

Sugar Addictions

Many years ago, a successful female dentist came to me for help with her sugar cravings. She confessed that all day long she told clients to avoid sugar, but every afternoon she would sneak into her back office and secretly binge on sweets, particularly candy bars: Butterfingers, Snickers, Milky Ways, Twix bars. She was a sincere, intelligent woman who knew that consuming large amounts of sugar destroys teeth, but was helpless when it came to her own cravings. She was puzzled and felt helpless, not for a lack of understanding or discipline, but because willpower is not enough when it comes to food dependencies, especially those involving sugar.

“I’m addicted and I feel like an absolute hypocrite,” she told me.

“You’re not a hypocrite,” I said. “Humans naturally crave sweet flavors, but there is something you can do about it. Let’s get some milder sweet foods into your diet on a more regular basis to avoid these afternoon binges.”

I explained the distinction between simple and complex carbohydrates, advising her to reduce processed foods—except pasta, which she loved—and increase grains and vegetables. I knew, however, this alone would not be enough to beat her intense sugar cravings. So I introduced her to two new products, rice cakes and rice syrup. Rice syrup is a sweet syrup made from rice that contains many complex, as well as simple, sugars. It has a milder impact on the body than standard sugar, candy bars, donuts and other processed, sweet foods. Rice syrup is delicious on rice cakes, which are made of puffed
brown rice, and also rich in complex carbohydrates. I told her to buy a big supply of rice cakes and rice syrup and put them in her back office for when she was craving something sweet. In two months, her sugar cravings had diminished remarkably. Months later, she was urging her own clients with sugar addictions to switch to rice products as a substitute for chemicalized sweets.

These days, a lot of natural options are out there to help you transition from refined, processed sugars, and more research is addressing how much we all need to make the leap. At the forefront of the research is Dr. Robert Lustig, a pediatric endocrinologist from California, who believes sugar is downright toxic and addictive. He’s authored dozens of scientific articles, but in May 2009 Dr. Lustig made headlines with a lecture he gave called “Sugar: The Bitter Truth,” which was later posted on YouTube and has been seen by more than 3 million people. In it, he argues that sugar is the primary cause of our worldwide health crisis due to its potential for abuse, its toxic nature and its growing prevalence in the Western diet. He brings to light that sugar is hidden in almost all processed foods today from bread to peanut butter to canned sauces and dressings, especially in the form of high fructose corn syrup.

Dr. Lustig says evolution has taught us that sweet things are safe to eat. But fructose, the naturally occurring sugar in fruit, comes with fiber and other important nutrients, which is a far cry from the sweet stuff we are consuming today. A study published in 2013 linked increased sugar consumption with increased rates of diabetes in 175 countries worldwide. Researchers found that increased sugar in a population’s food supply was linked to higher rates of diabetes. As sugar has become a bigger part of the daily diet around the world, so have chronic diseases.

**Simple and Complex Carbohydrates**

Nearly everyone craves sugar. When experiencing such cravings, most people go right for the most accessible sweet treat: candy, chocolate bars, cake or cookies. But what these people don’t realize is that many healthy alternatives can help alleviate sweet cravings.

A sugar craving is simply the body asking for energy. When sugar is digested, it becomes glucose. Glucose is fuel for all of the body’s cells.
When you eat sugar, it enters the bloodstream and is converted into glucose at different rates, depending on the type of sugar you consume. All carbohydrates contain sugar, but depending on their chemical structures—simple or complex—they are processed differently. Most simple carbohydrates are highly processed, contain refined sugars and have few vitamins and minerals. Processed foods contain short chains of sugar, which enter the bloodstream almost momentarily after they are ingested. This causes a rapid rise in the glucose levels in the body—a sugar rush. The rush is shortly followed by a crash. The body sees the high level of sugar as an emergency state and works hard to burn it up as quickly as possible. Then blood sugar drops precipitously. Other natural foods, like fruit, contain naturally occurring simple sugars. Fruit is high in fiber, which helps slow digestion, limiting the amount of sugar that flows into the cells.

Carbohydrates that appear in nature, in whole foods like vegetables and whole grains, are complex. Complex carbohydrates are composed of long chains of sugars. These long chains are bound within the food’s fiber. The body processes the sugars by breaking the chains and releasing fiber into the bloodstream. This process is relatively slow; therefore, the sugars are absorbed into the bloodstream at a steady rate for many hours, providing long-lasting energy.

If you eat a whole grain—a complex carbohydrate—for breakfast, you will likely have energy throughout the morning and then experience a mild dip around noon, just in time for lunch. If you eat an Oreo cookie, a candy bar or white bread—all simple carbs—the bloodstream will be suddenly flooded with sugars, providing a quick burst of energy. But shortly after, your blood sugar will drop and you will be hungry again. Your body wants to maintain balanced blood sugar, so it is telling you to eat something to bring your blood sugar back up. Most people go for more sugar, and this experience of sugar ups and downs continues throughout the day. Blood sugar often drops around 3 p.m., a few hours after lunch—the time when most people seek sugar or caffeine to get them through the rest of the afternoon.

In today’s modern nutrition world, high-protein diets are fashionable and “carbohydrate” has become a dirty word, associated in many people’s minds with the obesity crisis. This is absurd. Carbohydrates provide much of the energy needed for normal body functions—such as heartbeat, breathing and digestion—and for exercise. Carbohydrates are in everything from candy
bars to grains and even vegetables. The problem is that people are not eating the types of carbohydrates nature intended. They’re eating carbohydrate-rich foods that have been deformed and denatured. Simple sugars can lead to weight gain because our cells do not require large amounts of glucose at one time, and the extra sugar is stored as fat. The anti-carb movement should really be an anti-simple-carb movement.

Overconsumption of simple carbohydrates has led to an abundance of hypoglycemia in America. Hypoglycemia is the body’s inability to handle large amounts of sugar. It’s common among people with diabetes but can also be caused by an overload of sugar, alcohol, caffeine, tobacco and stress. Hypoglycemia is triggered when the pancreas secretes too much insulin in response to a rapid rise in blood sugar, which in turn causes blood sugar levels to plummet, starving the body’s cells of needed fuel. A person with hypoglycemia may feel weak, drowsy, confused, dizzy and hungry, especially around 3 p.m. when blood sugar is naturally at its lowest. When your blood sugar is low, you are vulnerable to cravings because your body urgently needs something to spike its glucose. If a hypoglycemic episode hits you between meals, a healthy choice would be to nibble on a carrot or celery stick, not grab a bagel with cream cheese or wolf down a chocolate chip cookie.

Sugar cravings are as natural as our desire for air. Throughout two million years of evolution, humans have been programmed to desire sweet-tasting foods. Long before food processing, the only source of sweet tastes was plant foods such as squash, tubers, roots, grains and fruit. In order to get the sweet taste their bodies desired, people had to eat plants. It is no coincidence these sweet foods are also great sources of nutrients, energy and fiber—everything we need to maintain our health. So, the best way to curb or alleviate intense sugar cravings is to provide the body with the sweetness that it needs by regularly eating naturally sweet foods.

**Hungry for Nutrition**

A student of mine once talked to me about her “problem child,” Kevin, who was addicted to processed foods like sugary cereals, peanut butter and jelly on
white bread, pizza, fast food and all kinds of sodas and salty snacks. The more Kevin ate, the hungrier he got. This ravenous 11-year-old was clearly eating too much, and was overweight as a result.

“Maybe he’s not hungry for calories,” I said to her, “Maybe he’s hungry for nutrition.”

“What do you mean?” she asked. “I’m feeding him all day long. I would think he’s getting too much nutrition.”

I explained that the food he was eating was all processed, and rich in simple sugars but deficient in nutrients. Sugar is fuel for cells, but they need vitamins and minerals to do their jobs properly. He was fueling his body, making his cells work, but not giving them the raw materials they needed. Kevin was craving more and more food because his cells were starving for vitamins and minerals. He was suffering from malnutrition.

“He’s on a very inefficient diet and needs to eat a lot of food just to get enough nutrients to operate his body,” I told her.

“But what can I do?” his mother asked, looking a bit stunned.

“He’s got to reverse the formula,” I said. “Eat foods that are rich in nutrients and low in calories, the exact opposite of what he’s doing now.”

I then laid out a program for her son, which did not take out any of his foods, but rather added nutrient-rich foods, especially vegetables and whole grains to his diet, suggesting leaner choices of meat and plenty of exercise. I spoke to her about making home-cooked food that might appeal to her 11-year-old. He could still have his favorite peanut butter, but on a celery stick instead of white bread with sugary jelly. He could still eat pizza, but homemade pizza with vegetable toppings. She had to take it slowly. Kevin wasn’t going to immediately start wolfing down collards and brown rice. Getting a child who is hooked on sugar and processed foods to eat natural foods can seem impossible. His taste buds were accustomed to artificial flavors. Natural foods would probably taste bland.

I sometimes tell students to pour chocolate sauce on greens at first, if it will get their kids to actually eat them. Do whatever it takes to get kids accustomed to natural foods. It takes most people, both children and adults, three times of trying a food before they really begin to enjoy it. I suggested that Kevin’s mom make greens and have him eat just a few pieces the first time,
Before Integrative Nutrition I was a new mother with a dream of healing others but I had no real map for how to harness and achieve my vision. I knew that I wanted to work in the wellness arena but didn’t know exactly how to go about it. I had seen the Integrative Nutrition catalog in a health food store over a period of years, then one day I visited the website and felt a strong urge to learn more. Something about the school resonated with me and I knew that if I was going to make a difference I had to invest in myself and go!

Today I am a full-time prenatal wellness expert, speaker, and author. My practice, Tender Shoots Wellness, is a boutique holistic lifestyle practice for women during the childbearing years. Based in New York City, we offer culinary services, nutritional coaching, yoga, and birth doula services. I work with clientele that inspire me every day and love that I am making a huge difference in the lives of so many. My personal mission is to help women feel empowered, experience optimal wellness—by feeling and looking their very best, and prioritizing self care as a daily practice. I hope to constantly evolve and heal through my work with women in transformation.

My book, Mama Glow, is a modern holistic guide to pregnancy and was published in the Fall of 2012. I also am starting work on my follow up book and DVDs. I have been featured twice on the Dr. Oz Show, NBC, ABC News, and Fox News LIVE. As well as in publications that I love, including Martha Stewart’s Whole Living, Vogue and The New York Times.

My life is grand! I’ve designed a lifestyle and career that I love. We all have that power within us to create what we desire. I’m able to spend time with my son, take vacation when I want, and work with my ideal clientele. My work has been endorsed by my mentors who are giants in the wellness community: Dr. Christiane Northrup, Dr. Mehmet Oz, and my sister Kris Carr.

I am so grateful for the work that Joshua and Integrative Nutrition does to grow wellness professionals into wellness warriors. My experience at Integrative Nutrition ignited a spark in me and now I’m trailblazing!
the second time and the third time. After that, he was helping himself to the greens. Six months later, Kevin had lost 30 pounds.

Like a lot of people, Kevin was stuffing himself with sugary foods and becoming sick and overweight. He kept eating because his body was craving nutrients, not simply food mass.

The body is smart. It tells you when you are not feeding it properly. If you feed it fats, oils and sugar, it is going to send you messages that it needs more food. It needs protein; it needs vitamins; it needs minerals. But if you are not accustomed to eating vegetables, whole grains, and other nutrient-dense foods, you’re not going to decipher this message as a specific craving for something healthy. So Kevin, for example, was just getting the hunger signal and grabbing the foods he’d been brought up on: meat, pizza, bread, sugar, Big Macs, or whatever.

Kevin was lucky that his mother sought help. A heartbreaking number of children in this country are struggling with their weight and obesity. They are addicted to sugar and processed food. Most people don’t realize that they keep eating because their bodies are hungry for nutrition.

Contracting and Expanding Foods

Your body naturally wants to be balanced. The food you eat is a major contributing factor to the overall balance of the body. Certain foods, such as vegetables and whole grains, have mild effects on the body. Other foods, such as meat, milk, sugar and salt, have more extreme effects on the body, throwing off its natural balance. This struggle eventually leads to a craving for whatever the body needs to regain balance. I call these foods extreme foods and I divide them into two categories: contracting and expanding.

Contracting Foods

The most common and powerful contracting food is salt, which many of us consume regularly in large quantities. Salt is used commonly as a preservative, especially in artificial junk food. Other extreme contracting foods are animal foods, including beef, pork, ham, hard cheese, eggs, chicken, fish and shellfish. The main benefit of animal foods is that they are rich in protein
**The 8 primary causes of cravings**

1. **Dehydration**  The body doesn’t send the message that you are thirsty until you are on the verge of dehydration. Dehydration occurs as mild hunger, so the first thing to do when you get a strange craving is to drink a full glass of water.

2. **Lifestyle**  Being dissatisfied with a relationship, having an inappropriate exercise routine (too much, too little or the wrong type), being bored, stressed, uninspired by a job or lacking a spiritual practice can all contribute to emotional eating. Eating can be used as a substitute for entertainment or to fill the void.

3. **Yin/Yang Imbalance**  Certain foods have more yin qualities (expansive) while other foods have more yang qualities (contractive). Eating foods that are either extremely yin or extremely yang causes cravings in order to reestablish balance. For example, eating a diet too rich in sugar (yin) may cause a craving for meat (yang).

4. **Inside Coming Out**  Oftentimes, cravings come from foods that we have recently eaten, foods eaten by our ancestors or foods from our childhood. A clever way to satisfy these cravings is to eat a healthier versions of one’s ancestral or childhood foods.

5. **Seasonal**  Often the body craves foods that balance out the elements of the season. In the spring, people crave detoxifying foods like leafy greens or citrus foods. In the summer, people crave cooling foods like fruit, raw foods and ice cream, and in the fall people crave grounding foods like squash, onions and nuts. In winter many crave hot and heat-producing foods like meat, oil and fat. Other cravings, such as turkey, eggnog or sweets, can also be associated with the holiday season.

6. **Lack of Nutrients**  If the body is getting an inadequate amount of nutrients, it will produce odd cravings. For example, inadequate mineral levels produce salt cravings, and overall inadequate nutrition produces cravings for non-nutritional forms of energy like caffeine.
and give us feelings of strength, aggressiveness and increased physical and mental power. However, when we eat too much of these foods, we create an imbalance and quickly feel bloated, heavy, sluggish and mentally slow. The more contracting foods we eat, the tighter our bodies become. As a result of eating contracting foods, the body naturally craves expanding foods as a way of maintaining balance.

**Expanding Foods**

The predominant extreme expanding food is refined white sugar. Expanding foods provide feelings of lightness, elevations in mood and relief from blockages and stagnation. However, refined white sugar also causes rapid elevations in serotonin, followed by rapid declines. When serotonin levels fall, we typically experience feelings of depression, low energy, anxiety and loss of concentration. We crave extreme contracting foods to balance the equation and again find ourselves in the throes of the ping-pong diet, using one type of extreme food to alleviate the effects of the other.

Our bodies can enjoy a certain quantity of extreme foods without creating too much imbalance. But when we exceed our personal limit—and it varies with each individual—there are consequences. If you eat extreme foods daily, your body will become exhausted and depleted as it frantically tries to rebalance itself. To get out of this cycle, you need to deconstruct what you are craving, and seek out less extreme, healthier alternatives to satisfy you.
Hunger and Binging

Sometimes cravings come in the form of extreme hunger. You don’t know what you’re hungry for; you just know that you’re starving. Most people avoid hunger at all costs, and many develop habits of overeating and/or constant eating just to avoid ever feeling hungry. When we habitually overeat, a high proportion of our available energy is always directed toward digestion. If we eat when we are not hungry, we compromise our digestion of the food. You may want to consider the idea, almost heretical in this day and age, that it’s okay to be hungry now and then. I’m not talking about a drastic form of starvation dieting—just an experiment to see how it feels. It’s not going to kill you, and it may make life more interesting.

On the other hand, many people today try to go hungry all day, ignoring the body’s cravings for food. This habit creates a backlash, which I call the “binge eaters diet.” In an attempt to lose weight, these people skip breakfast, go off to work, maybe grab a mid-morning cup of coffee to keep going, and then settle on a salad for lunch. Somehow they make it through the afternoon, but by the time they get home in the evening they discover that they are ravenous. The hectic activity of the workday may have distracted them from urgent messages emanating from their stomachs, but as they slow down they realize, “I am so hungry!” Then they overeat heavy foods at dinner, until they feel stuffed and uncomfortable. The next morning they start the cycle over again, not eating breakfast because they feel full from last night’s binge, which is still undigested.

I do not believe in trying to override natural instincts. Of course, it helps to have discipline around food, but trying to control the body by using the mind is very challenging in the long term. For one thing, the head often makes mistakes. Remember when you went shopping for a fabulous new outfit and spent a lot of money but never wore the clothes? Remember when you met a good-looking guy and thought, “Wow! This is the right person for me!” and he turned out to be a complete jerk? Another mistake your head can easily make is to decide, “This is the right diet for me. I can handle this one.” Our bodies don’t really care what our heads think. Our bodies are built to survive and thrive. Your head can say, “I am not eating this food because it is fattening,” and your body may cooperate for a while. At some point, though,
it will start murmuring quiet messages like, “Hmm, we definitely need some more fat in here, to keep the brain thinking and make me feel satiated.” The next thing you know, you’re holding an empty pint of ice cream.

Learning to listen to your body is essential. The longer you ignore your body’s messages, the more extreme the backlash. Just as a crying child will use increasingly extreme measures to get attention, the body will heighten your cravings and create disease if you don’t listen to it.

Crowding Out

One solution to cravings that I’ve found to be quite effective over the years is to add more to your diet rather than taking away from it. For years, I did not eat bread at home. I just ate whole grains. But when I was in restaurants and they put bread on the table, I would wolf it down very quickly. I realized that bread was a part of my upbringing. It was what my parents grew up on and what I grew up on. Rather than have the white bread version at restaurants, I started to incorporate healthy breads at home. Now when I’m out eating, I can take the bread or leave it. It’s no longer as if I have a parched throat in the desert and bread is my water. Bread is now just another food.

Many dietitians and nutritionists give their clients a list of foods to avoid and foods to eat, which explains why so many people are turned off by nutrition. People think they’ll have to give up their regular diet and start eating things they know are “good” for them but that they don’t enjoy. Taking away people’s favorite foods is like taking heroin away from a heroin addict. The food is giving them something they need. I have found that one of the most effective methods to overcome habitual consumption of unhealthy foods is to simply crowd out these foods. It’s hard to eat five fruits and vegetables a day and binge on ice cream at the end of the day. The body can only take so much food. If you fill your body with healthy, nutrient-dense foods, it is only natural that cravings for unhealthy foods will lessen substantially.

By eating and drinking foods that are good for you earlier in the day, you will naturally leave less room and desire for unhealthy foods. This method is most evident when you increase your intake of water. Fill a water bottle or pitcher with clean, filtered water, or buy a liter of pure spring water, and sip
it steadily throughout your morning. As the day continues, you’ll have less room for coffee, black tea and soft drinks. Really, it’s that simple. You will immediately begin to cut down on other liquids if you keep yourself well hydrated. You may need a second bottle for the afternoon. People’s need for water varies, so you should listen to your body to determine how much you need to drink in a day. Not only will water crowd out more unhealthy drinks, it may also improve your health in other ways.

Just as drinking water crowds out unhealthy beverages, eating healthy foods can crowd out junk foods. Vegetables are high in vitamins and minerals, and you can eat a lot of them without gaining weight. When you increase your intake of nutritious foods, such as dark leafy greens and whole grains, your body will have less room for processed, sugary, nutrient-deficient foods. And the beautiful part is that once you start adding these foods into your diet, your body will naturally begin to crave them. The trick is to organize your life so that you have access to these healthful foods at all times, especially when you feel like snacking at work or when you are traveling. Then you can make it to your evening meal without impulsively eating junk food because that’s the only thing available. It takes a little practice to make this happen, but it’s definitely possible.

Cravings Are Not the Problem

The lesson here is to look for the foods, deficits and behaviors in your life that are the underlying causes of your cravings. Many people view cravings as weaknesses, when in reality they are important messages meant to help you maintain balance. It all comes down to trusting your body, instead of thinking of your cravings as an enemy, to be ignored or defeated.

How much do you trust your body? When I ask people this question, most tell me, “Not very much.”

“Why not?” I ask.

“Because it’s always craving foods that get me into trouble,” they say, shaking their heads sadly, disappointed at their own perceived weaknesses.

“What do you mean?” I ask.
“Well, whenever I’m on a diet my body wants foods that I’m not supposed to eat, foods that make me fat or sick.”

“Why do you think your body craves such foods?” I ask.

“I don’t know,” people say, genuinely puzzled. “I guess I’ve got some built-in flaws. I can never do the right thing when it comes to food.”

We have been taught to believe that our inability to stick with a diet is our fault, a flaw of our body and our will. This is absolutely incorrect. Diet book authors claim that if we want to lose weight and regain health we must conform to their rules and control our cravings for foods they deem unhealthy. To do this we must develop deep discipline over our natural instincts. We accept these ideas even though every other diet we have been on was unsuccessful. We start the newest program with the best of intentions, determined to make good this time. Again and again we repeat this cycle, blaming ourselves when the part of us that directs our food choices asserts itself, showing once again that it cannot be disciplined, controlled, suppressed or denied.

Increasingly, we find ourselves craving “illegal” foods until one day we fall off the diet, giving in to our cravings for bread, chocolate, meat, sugar, whatever foods have been forbidden. Afterward we feel guilty and worthless, and blame ourselves for failing to stick to the diet, which seemed so simple, so promising just a few weeks ago. It’s never the program’s fault; it’s always our fault. Or so we think. It never dawns on us that there’s nothing wrong with us, that maybe the diet itself is flawed—that it actually sets us up to fail, and then unfairly lays the responsibility on our shoulders when we do.

Why is the human instinct that determines food choices so powerful and unruly? Why can’t it be easily controlled and disciplined? And what motivates these choices and cravings? Clearly, this is not a cerebral process. So what is it?

In my experience, the part of us that cannot be controlled is actually our inner guide to health and happiness. This innate wisdom is always trying to make us feel better by urging us to eat foods that will dissipate, at least temporarily, our physical tension, give us more energy and lift our moods. In essence, this part of us is always monitoring our physical, emotional and psychological conditions and struggling to create balance, harmony and happiness. Cravings are the body’s solution to underlying imbalances, and food becomes a kind of medicine to regulate our current inner state.
Let me give a few examples. When we don’t sleep well and wake up feeling lethargic, we often crave coffee to boost our energy and clear our minds. If we experience loneliness or mild depression, we often reach for chocolate or some other sweet food to boost our mood. After a stressful day, many of us want to eat something sweet or drink an alcoholic beverage to release tension. Afterward, we often feel weak and empty, and want something nutritious and strengthening. We crave eggs, steak, chicken or fish, which can leave us feeling bloated and heavy. It’s a vicious cycle as we ping-pong from sweet, processed foods to excessive amounts of animal foods, from one extreme food group to another. Our minds, bodies and spirits are drained of energy with no apparent way out.

Trust Your Crazy Cravings

Whenever your body is craving something, pause for a moment and wonder, “What’s really going on here?” Whenever you find yourself impulsively reaching for something you know is not good for you, take a moment to slow down, breathe and reevaluate the situation. Consider what your body is really asking for. Start with the flavor.

Are You Craving Something Sweet?

Sweet foods vary widely in nutritional content, from chocolate, cookies and pastries, to sweet vegetables, fruit and fruit juice. As much as possible, try to satisfy your desire for sweet flavor with a milder, less extreme food that doesn’t contain refined white sugar. Like my dentist client, you might try eating a rice cake with rice syrup on it. You’ll be surprised how satisfying this treat can be and how quickly it can eliminate your need for extreme sugary foods. If something stronger is desired, try various cookies or pastries made from whole-grain flour and sweetened with fruit juice or barley malt, a sweet syrup made from barley.

Certain vegetables have a deep, sweet flavor when cooked, like corn, carrots, onions, beets, winter squash (butternut, buttercup, delicata, hubbard
or kabocha), sweet potatoes and yams. Eating a lot of sweet vegetables will satisfy your natural cravings for sweet foods, and reduce your cravings for sugary, processed junk food.

Natural sweeteners can also help with sugar cravings. My favorite, and the favorite of most of my students, is raw wild honey, which is made from the pollen of plants and trees. Unprocessed honey is one of nature’s richest sources of antioxidants with a plethora of health benefits. Due to the presence of live enzymes, raw honey is easily digestible for most humans. The sweetness comes from natural fructose that is absorbed slowly by the body, so there’s less of a sugar rush. It’s great to have around the house to use in tea or salad dressings, or when baking.

Another sweetener that has gained recognition and sparked controversy is agave nectar. Agave nectar is made from the juice of the agave cactus, the same plant that gives us tequila, and is a traditional sweetener for Native Mexicans. The controversy stems from the fact that agave nectar is typically made using a chemical process that converts the starch into a refined, fructose-rich syrup that can be compared to high fructose corn syrup. While it contains small amounts of calcium, potassium and magnesium and ranks lower on the glycemic index than many other sweeteners, it is still best to limit consumption. As with all sweeteners, I recommend to use them sparingly.

When choosing a sweetener, it is always best to understand how it got from the source to you, because often times the marketing of products can be misleading. Other popular alternatives to sugar are brown rice syrup, barley malt and stevia, an herb native to South America. All of these can be found in your local health food store. Try them and find the ones that work best for you. For a complete list of sugar alternatives, see chapter 10.

Quality also makes a big difference. If you decide to have an extreme sweet food, choose the best quality you can buy and chances are good that you’ll be satisfied with much less. Eat the food consciously, chewing it slowly and thoroughly enjoying it. Take chocolate as an example. Many of us crave chocolate and end up inhaling packages of M&M’s while on the run or during a crunch time at work. It’s a much different experience to quietly indulge in a small piece of organic dark chocolate, thoroughly chewing each morsel. If
you’re a chocoholic, check out the chocolate section of your health food store and you will find many brands of organic chocolate, with many wonderful flavors, such as ginger, currant, lime and my personal favorite, lavender.

Are You Craving Salty Foods?
Cravings for salty foods often indicate mineral deficiency. All salt originates in the sea, and natural sea salt contains 60 different trace minerals, which are the basis for the formation of vitamins, enzymes and proteins. Most of us use common table salt, which has been refined and stripped of many of these minerals. People’s diets are generally lacking in minerals because much of our food has been highly processed and chemically grown, hence the popularity of salty foods. Before you go out and have a bag of pretzels or chips, try eating a wide variety of vegetables, especially leafy green veggies, which are very high in minerals. These foods often satisfy the craving for salty foods, which is really a desire for more nutrition. You may also want to purchase a high-quality sea salt to use in your cooking and incorporate sea vegetables, which have a naturally salty flavor and are high in minerals.

Are You Craving Bitter Foods?
Remember the old saying, “It’s the bitter pill that cures you”? Well, this is a good rule to live by, especially because most modern diets don’t contain many healthy bitter foods. Bitter foods enhance digestion, so a craving for bitter flavor may actually be a craving for nutritious foods to cut through fat and stagnation in the body’s organs and digestive tract. Most people satisfy bitter cravings by drinking coffee and dark beers. If you find yourself craving bitter tastes, try eating dark leafy greens, such as dandelion, mustard greens, arugula, kale and collards. These greens will unblock stagnant organs and promote healthy assimilation and elimination.

Are You Craving Pungent Flavors?
Chinese cooking often incorporates pungently flavored foods that act as digestive aids. In traditional Chinese medicine, ginger is an herb for the large intestine and lungs. It enhances the function of, and promotes healing in, both organs. So, if you have a craving for heavy, saucy Chinese food it may
be your body asking for the healing properties of pungent flavors. When this happens, try grating fresh ginger on your vegetables or in your soup. Other foods that will quench this craving are cayenne, scallions, onions, leeks, garlic and pepper.

**Are You Craving Spicy Foods?**

Are you looking for an array of flavors, both subtle and strong, or are you looking for hot spices? So much processed food is lacking in flavor because it’s been on the shelf for such a long time and is stale, bland and tasteless. This kind of food lacks vitality, energy and aliveness and includes added fat and cholesterol. When people eat this kind of diet for years, the body can become overweight and stagnant. Blood becomes thick, or viscous, and circulation slows. As circulation weakens, organs and extremities become cool. At this point, the body may start craving spices.

When people crave spicy foods they often turn to pizza or hot Mexican spices. These extreme foods warm the body but also create a lot of stressful, chaotic energy. Instead of eating a pizza, with its dry, hard crust and heavy cheese, or refried beans and hot jalapeño peppers, try a bowl of noodles, such as soba, mixed with green vegetables and a nice marinara sauce with oregano, basil, red pepper flakes, onions, garlic and celery.

You can use a variety of spices and condiments to add kick to your food. Two popular choices are ground cayenne and hot pepper sesame oil, both of which you can find at any health food store. You can also chop jalapeño peppers and add them to a salad or stir-fry for that extra bit of spice.

**What Texture or Consistency Are You Craving?**

When craving something creamy, consider if you’ve had a lot of bread, crackers or other baked flour products recently. When eaten in excess, these foods create feelings of dryness and stagnation, and can also make us feel stuck, hard and irritable. When we reach that state of imbalance, we very often crave creamy, relaxing foods, such as ice cream, milk products or oily foods. Try eating porridge made from whole grains, such as amaranth or brown rice. You can also make cream of broccoli soup, or cream of watercress soup, and use oatmeal rather than cream to get the consistency you desire.
If you are craving chips or pretzels, it may be the crunch that you actually desire. I think when the body wants crunch it’s probably because you’re not chewing enough. The act of chewing actually enhances digestion. Instead of grabbing the chemicalized, artificial snack products, try satisfying your crunchy cravings with raw carrots and celery, or organic versions of potato chips and hard pretzels without added sugar. And don’t forget to chew all your foods to assure proper digestion of your food.

Are You Craving Something Moist or a Liquid?
When craving liquids, ask yourself if you’ve been eating an excessive amount of salty foods or dry, baked flour products. Do you feel dry or tight? Are you thirsty? Many physical problems, including headaches, urology problems and kidney stones, are the result of chronic dehydration. People typically just don’t drink enough water. Instead of quenching thirst with sugary and caffeinated beverages, try drinking water at least three times a day. Put a bottle or a cup of pure spring water on your desk and sip it throughout the day. As you drink, notice how your body responds. If you suddenly awaken to how thirsty you are, then you know you’ve been ignoring your thirst. If you don’t want the water, you will feel your body resist it, signifying that you are well hydrated.

Are You Craving Something Crispy and Dry?
If you are craving something crisp and dry, you may be drinking too many liquids. If this is the case, try to keep away from chips because they are rich in fats, especially saturated and trans fats. Avoid crackers that are highly processed and will elevate both glucose and insulin levels. To fulfill your craving for crisp and dry foods, choose rice cakes, high-quality crackers without oil or sugar-free sesame sticks. You can also bake your own potato chips or sweet potato chips, which are much healthier than the store-bought versions.

Are You Craving a Light or Heavy Food?
If you crave heavy foods, ask yourself if you’ve been eating a lot of salads or fruit. Are you cold, especially your hands and feet? Salads, fruit and other raw foods make the body feel light. They also cool the body and may give rise to cravings for heavier, warming foods, such as fish, beef or hard cheese. Fish
is rich in protein, low in fat and high in omega-3 fatty acids, which boost immunity and prevent heart disease.

Sometimes when you’re not hungry enough for a meal but need something light to eat, you’ll go for a snack. The snack food shelves at supermarkets and even health food stores are full of tantalizing items chock full of sugar. When you’re craving a light snack or meal, why not eat some raw or steamed vegetables instead of a sugary snack? If you are hungry and nibbling on a raw carrot doesn’t satisfy, try a handful of trail mix, an avocado sandwich or a fruit smoothie.

**Are You Craving a Nutritious Food?**

When I check in with my body to see what I am actually craving, I often realize that what I really want is something nutritious, something of substance, especially when I am working hard and utilizing the nutrition my body is getting from my diet. This craving also happens when I travel and my routine of eating home-cooked food becomes unavailable. At these times, I long for plain vegetables and simple foods.

**Non-Food Cravings**

Sometimes we also crave food for emotional reasons. Maybe we are looking for excitement in our lives or looking for comfort after a stressful situation. This nourishment is a kind of emotional feeding. It’s not really about the food, but about the emotion it creates.

**Are You Craving Entertainment?**

We often use food to distract us from boredom. It’s important to decipher true cravings from eating as a form of entertainment. If you are bored, try to deal with the issue directly rather than distracting yourself by snacking and munching to fill time. Boredom is a challenge to be more creative with your life. The prime example of this craving is at work. Many people snack or eat just to take a break from staring at the computer. The next time this happens, try taking a walk around the block with a coworker. Or close your office door and stretch for five minutes.
Are You Craving a Hug?
One of the biggest problems with diets today is that people attribute their cravings to appetite and hunger, when these cries are usually from another part of their being that is starving. These cravings have nothing to do with physical nutrition. They are for love, affection and fulfillment. Food can fill you, but not fulfill you. Touch is an important part of the human experience. Don’t be afraid to ask for a hug when you need it. Try it with your friends, your kids, your sisters or brothers or whomever you are close with in your life. You might be surprised at how many hugs you’ve been missing.

Are You Craving Movement?
Stress, hard work and lots of thinking create tension in the body, which can lead to chronic aches, tightness and constipation. Many people try to alleviate these symptoms with alcohol and sugar, which only serve to dampen their unease and anesthetize the body. Exercise is an ideal way of releasing a buildup of physical tension. Developing a regular exercise program to suit your particular body type and lifestyle will have numerous rewards. Start small. Go out for a walk or check out a gentle yoga or karate class. Listen to your body about what kind of movement it desires.

Your Body Loves You, Unconditionally
Physical health is the foundation of our lives. Once we free ourselves from extreme foods, the healing mechanisms of the body can be harnessed to overcome our deeper physical and emotional issues. That’s when healing miracles happen. When people learn how to deconstruct their cravings, they can reclaim the sense of balance and bodily harmony that they were haphazardly seeking through indulgence or willpower.

Our bodies are like crying babies. The child is crying but it can’t talk, so the mother has to figure out what has disturbed her child. Did it hurt itself, not get enough sleep or wet its diaper? Is it teething or does it have allergies? The mother goes through a process of elimination until she finds the real problem. It’s a similar situation with your body. Your body can’t talk, but
it can send you messages through discomfort or food cravings that need to be decoded. If we acknowledge and accept our cravings, they will point us toward the foods and lifestyles we need. For example, if you have a headache, try to figure out what caused it before taking an aspirin. Did you work too much in front of the computer yesterday? Did you not drink enough water? Did you drink too much wine at a party? Did you sleep with the window closed and deprive yourself of oxygen?

We can, and must, develop dialogue with our bodies. They’re talking to us all the time and their messages are too important for us to ignore. And please remember, your body loves you. It does everything it can to keep you alive and functioning. You can feed it garbage, and it will digest it for you and turn it into energy to fuel your life. You can deprive it of sleep, but still it will get you up and running the next morning. You can drink too much alcohol, and it will process it through your system. It loves you unconditionally and does its best to allow you to live the life you came here to live. The real issue in this relationship is not whether your body loves you, but whether you love your body. In any relationship, if one partner is loving, faithful and supportive, it’s easy for the other to take that person for granted. That’s what most of us do with our bodies, and it’s time to change. Working to understand your cravings is one of the best places to begin to build a mutually loving relationship with your own body.
Exercises

1. Craving Inventory

   For one week, keep a journal of every food you crave each day. Rate the craving on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the strongest level of desire. Write down your thoughts next to each entry on how that craving is a response to an imbalance somewhere in your diet or life.

   Craving rating:
   Time of craving:
   Type of craving:
   Thoughts:

2. Dearest Body of Mine

   Write a letter to your body, announcing your intention to listen more carefully to its messages and to act in a more loving way toward it. The following list of suggestions may be helpful to include, but be sure to make your letter personal to your own body. Set a specific period of time aside when you can sit quietly by yourself, undisturbed and in pleasant surroundings, and then begin to write. You don’t need to complete the letter in one session. It is sometimes helpful to come back to your letter after a day or two, review the contents and make additions or subtractions. Write from your heart, as well as from your mind.
Dearest body of mine,

After careful thought and consideration, I hereby promise to:
Accept you and be grateful for you just the way you are
Love and appreciate you for what you do
Offer you healthy foods and drinks
Overcome the addictions that hurt you
Realize that laughter, play and rest help you feel good
Exercise regularly and appropriately for my body type
Adorn you with nice, comfortable clothes and shoes
Understand that my unexpressed emotions and thoughts affect you
Listen to the messages you are sending me when you are tired or sick
Accept that I have the power to heal you
Realize that you deserve to be healthy
Honor you as the temple of my soul

I love you so much,

____________________________________
Please Sign here
Chapter 11

Cooking Like Your Life Depends on It
You don’t have to cook fancy or complicated masterpieces—just good food from fresh ingredients.

— Julia Child
I tell people to cook like their life depends on it, because it does. The food we take into our mouth goes into our stomach, where it gets digested and eventually assimilated into the bloodstream. Our blood is what creates our cells, our tissues, our organs, our skin, our hair, our brains and even our thoughts and feelings. We are, at our most basic level, walking food. Learning to cook high-quality foods for yourself and those you love changes everything. The three most important aspects of cooking are that the food be homemade, freshly made and lovingly made.

For me, there’s nothing like when I am home and in my own kitchen. I get up, make some quinoa and vegetables and a cup of tea. When I’m home it’s, “La-ti-da. Maybe I’ll add some ginger.” It’s so peaceful and so nurturing. It’s strange to me that restaurant food has become the rage today, minimizing the beauty and the value of home-cooked food. With restaurant food, people get caught up in the décor, the atmosphere and even the menu. The food itself is often very flamboyant with lots of salt and flavoring. But it’s all show. I love eating out on occasion, but the environment can be very hectic. If I was at home and 30 people were moving around and talking in my kitchen, I would freak out. I don’t want to put down restaurants, but sometimes when I’m traveling, I fantasize about homemade vegetables. I long for my simple routine and making food on my own time.

Homemade

Cooking nourishes our bodies on a variety of levels. When we put our own energy into the food, we ultimately put that energy back into ourselves.
When we cook, we have control over the quality and quantity of ingredients we are eating. Our body’s natural intelligence will fine-tune our cooking style to create meals that are just what we need. When we are in a restaurant, we relinquish that control. We do not know where the food came from, how much salt or spices were added, what kind of oil was used, or the health and cleanliness of the various people who touched our food along the way. By cooking our own food, we ultimately create more love for ourselves, more love for our lives, and therefore, more health.

As we have evolved from living together in tribal societies to living together in our extended families and living in nuclear families, meals have mostly been eaten together in groups. Not long ago, dinner was at 6 p.m. every night with few exceptions. Mom made the meal, and the rest of the family members would all come home from work or school, and sit around the table together. The food would be served and everyone would eat while talking about the various events of the day. This ritual bonded people, and the family that ate together stayed together.

Today everything has changed. People increasingly eat most of their meals out, in restaurants, delis, fast-food chains or snacking along the way. Home is often like a hotel, serving only as a place for people to sleep at night. Parents, teenagers and children wake up at different times, go in different directions, eat separately and have little communication throughout the day. It’s rare that everyone gets to have a home-cooked meal together. This schedule creates distance in family relationships, and the lack of quality, home-cooked food leads to a deficiency of primary nourishment.

Women’s important roles in the home have more often than not been underappreciated in society, and are changing a lot, too. It is important to recognize how traditional, motherly nourishment supports the whole family. It keeps everyone healthy and happy in many ways. I am not suggesting that women go back to the typical role of homemaker, but I am a big believer in people eating homemade food as often as possible. When families are dealing with two careers, longer working hours and children with multiple extracurricular activities, it is unrealistic and unfair for the woman to be responsible for feeding the entire family. Men and children can also participate in shopping, preparing, cooking and cleaning. Just as sitting and eating together strengthens family bonds, so too can preparing a delicious meal together.
Children can wash and peel vegetables, set and clear the table, and when they get older even help chop and cook. A good policy in the kitchen is that whoever cooks is free from doing the dishes. Each household will be different, so please find a routine and system that works for yours. Be sure to utilize everyone and appreciate everyone’s contributions.

Freshly Made

Food that is fresh affects us differently than food that’s been sitting out for days. Think about the times you’ve been in a restaurant and a waiter passed by who was carrying a hissing tray of freshly cooked food, piled on a hot plate. The platter has so much energy that the whole restaurant turns around to see what is happening. We take in that same kind of energy when we eat food that’s just been made.

Getting produce from farm to table is a complicated business. In chapter 3, I talked about food miles, or the distance food travels to get to your plate. Many fruits and vegetables don’t arrive in the store until weeks after they were harvested, then they sit on the store shelf for a few days and spend a few more days in the fridge at home. For many restaurants there’s a similar delay, and food sourcing has become a big issue. Many restaurants have moved to work closer with local farms to create farm-to-table or farm-to-fork restaurants. These restaurants locally source produce, meats and seafood and put a bigger emphasis on fresh, slowly cooked foods, prepared simply. Some even grow herbs and produce in the backyard or on the roof of their restaurants. When you don’t have time to make your own food, I recommend finding a farm-to-table restaurant to enjoy fresh, simple food.

Because of practical convenience, we often eat food that has been canned, frozen, sitting in a freezer or made hours earlier. Sometimes we have to do this, and I’m not against it. Canned and flash frozen vegetables can be quite fresh since they’re often packaged just after being harvested, and many stores now carry organic varieties. These foods are also a great transition for people looking to add more vegetables into their diets.

In countries where fresh food has traditionally been valued, many people go shopping and cook vegetables on the same day. Most modern consumers
prefer the convenience of shopping only once a week. Wherever you live, I would like to point you in the direction of your local farmers. It wasn’t that long ago that all food was grown locally. In the U.S. about 80 percent of the almost 2 million farms are small and family-owned businesses. Many farmers now sell their products directly to the public through farmers’ markets, food coops, CSAs, farm stands and more. At farmers’ markets the food is grown nearby, probably in the same county or at least in the same region or state. It’s more alive, and this aliveness will transfer to your body.

Another way to have regular access to fresh, local food is to join a Community Supported Agriculture group. A CSA is when a group of people pledges to support a nearby farm in an economic partnership. The farm share model began in the 1960s in Europe and Japan in response to the rise of imported foods and urbanization of farmland. Typically, members of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer’s salary. In return, they receive shares of the farm’s harvest throughout the growing season and the satisfaction of reconnecting to the land and participating directly in food production. Members also share in the risks of farming, including poor harvests from unfavorable weather or pests. Through this partnership, farmers receive better prices for their crops and gain some financial security. More than 12,500 CSA farms are in America today.

Lovingly Made

After many years of personal observation, I’ve noticed that food prepared at home by a loving person has a different nutritional effect than the exact same food prepared in a restaurant. When we eat our mother’s or grandmother’s cooking, there’s love in the food and care in its preparation, which creates a higher quality of love and energy. Invisible forces are at work, and they have an alchemical effect on the food itself. It tastes differently. It feels differently in the body. It affects us differently.

Foods made by someone you love contain a vital nutrient, something I call vitamin L, for love. Food that is cooked by someone who loves you, who is happy to be cooking and nourishing you, can be some of the best tasting
food in the world. The energy of love is passed into the food and nourishes you in ways that go beyond micronutrients.

Have you ever been in a restaurant kitchen? It has a lot of crazy energy. Having been in the restaurant business, I know there are huge discrepancies between what goes on in the front and the back. In the front, everyone is nicey, nicey. “Oh Mr. Rosenthal, good to see you,” they say. In the back, people are throwing knives. Do you really think that energy doesn’t affect the energy of your food? The people preparing most restaurant food are underpaid kitchen workers, living on minimum wage without basic healthcare. I may be wrong, but I’m guessing most of these people are not in love with their jobs. This fact alone is bound to make the quality of the food we eat at restaurants very different from that of home-cooked food. In addition to the hectic energy, restaurant managers and cooks are pressured into reducing costs, maximizing profits and getting food out on a very tight timeline. Their priority is to sell food, not to promote your health. Of course, in today’s demanding world, we all need to eat out sometimes, we all want to eat out and enjoy a new atmosphere. Just remember that eating out every night of the week can have an impact on your health.

I feel privileged that I can make food at home that is so much better than restaurant food. It’s a myth that preparing food is a complicated thing or that it has to look like Martha Stewart prepared it. When I’m at home, I use three to four ingredients, but when guests eat my food, they’re like “Oh my God. What’s in this?”

Rituals can increase your awareness around cooking at home. You might simply wash your hands, put on an apron or take a moment to close your eyes, take a breath in and set an intention for the meal you are about to create. You may also want to light a candle or put on some gentle music—anything that helps you be more present.

The last few minutes of cooking are usually the most stressful. Everything has to be done at the same time: final flavoring, transferring from cooking pot to serving dish, getting the dining area ready. It’s helpful to have a ritual at the end of cooking too, before you dash to the table, sit down and start eating. Here are a couple of suggestions:
1. Pour yourself a glass of water and drink it slowly, to help you calm down and rehydrate. Cooks tend to become very tight—contracted and single-focused—and this simple act of drinking water helps ease you into a mellow, relaxed state of mind.

2. Serve yourself a small portion first and take a moment to smell the food and appreciate your gift of love through food.

When serving the food you’ve just cooked, please resist the temptation to apologize for imperfections. This habit will only focus your guests’ attention on the limitations that you mention, rather than on their appreciation for your efforts. Instead, you want them to think, “Wow! Someone actually took the time to prepare a meal for me.” If you are proud of your food, your family will enjoy it and appreciate you more, and it will help them remember the value of a homemade, freshly made and lovingly made meal.

Cooking with the Seasons

In many parts of the world when we buy food at the supermarket, we are not buying what’s really in season. In the U.S. we find mangoes and bananas in the middle of winter and winter squash in the middle of summer. When I pick up an apple at the store during the fall, I’m always amazed at how much better it tastes than in the winter. By following the natural harvest of fruits and vegetables, we can strengthen our connection to our surroundings. Cooking with locally grown produce is a great way to honor the natural environment in which you live. It helps you feel more at home where you are, and supports your body in adapting to changes in season. Of course, seasons are different throughout the world, but start to notice how you feel during each season and what kind of foods make you feel the best. For me, I know when it’s warm I’m drawn to more fruit and raw foods. When the weather starts to cool, I look for more hardy vegetables and whole grains. In the coldest months, I eat protein and fat to help my body stay warm, and as the weather warms again, I eat more greens to help lighten my body.
At the time I heard of Integrative Nutrition, I was running a small vegetarian kitchen in a local health food store in Connecticut. As a classically trained chef, this was a major departure from the fast paced world of working in restaurants. This new position allowed me to have a direct relationship with my customers and proved to be invaluable. Although I was motivated to help others, I wasn’t thriving in my own environment. My life was incredibly out of balance in a number of ways. I was overweight, lacking proper exercise, inconsistent with my diet, and missing deep connections with friends and family. I was in a funk and looking for a way out of it.

A great friend approached me and offered a free health consultation. She was enrolled at Integrative Nutrition and was very motivated to help me out. After my consult, I decided that I needed to be a part of IIN and see what the school was all about. Instantly, I saw the light at the end of the tunnel and enrolled. My life began to click, and I was finally figuring out how to love myself and take my health to new heights.

By the time I actually began the program, I was nearly 25 pounds lighter and began living the life I was truly meant to live. I had taken up running, and within 6 months, I completed my first marathon. Just a few years later, I would go on to complete a 100-mile race in Vermont.

The ability to share with others allowed me to open up and express my true self. IIN helped me to find my passion in leading classes and workshops. Through my teachings, I have stressed the idea that we are all unique, and we require different foods for different times in our lives. Learning so many dietary theories has allowed me to improve my work with clients and support them in achieving their goals. Since graduating, I have led several workshops around the country, and most recently conducted demonstrations at events hosting over 1000 people.

The idea of finding balance is what has resonated with me the most from my training at Integrative Nutrition. True health is measured from happiness in all areas of life. I appreciate Joshua and all the staff at Integrative Nutrition for stressing that.
Eating foods out of season can make you more susceptible to colds, flu and other illnesses.

You can also adjust your cooking methods for the time of year. During the colder months, put more heat into your food and cook your food longer. Try roasting, baking, using a Crock-Pot and making stews to keep warm. When springtime comes, allow your food preparation to become a little simpler. You can start to incorporate more raw foods, quick high-temperature sautés and steamed dishes. Or notice how your body naturally craves more fruit, salad and lighter foods during warmer months.

You may also want to consider how your lifestyle reflects seasonal changes. In the spring months, people feel refreshed, get their gardens going, start new projects or pursue new romantic interests. When it’s warm, people enjoy outdoor sports, play at the beach, go on vacation and engage in other high-energy activities, which are appropriate for the season. With fall, children return to school and people get into a kind of organizing mode. People tend to become very busy in September and October, running around, getting ready for winter. I notice during the fall that many animals also scurry around in preparation for winter. Until recently, humans did the same thing, scurrying to see if we had enough food or wood to keep us warm. No one has alerted our DNA that we now have heating in our homes or that we can drive to the store anytime we need food; we are preprogrammed to act this way. We still tap into our ancestral, cellular memories of the harvest season.

All that preparation comes to a head with an extended holiday season that lasts from the end of October through the beginning of January. Come Halloween, children scour the neighborhood and gather as much candy as they possibly can. Next come the holidays, and our actions fall out of pace, as we engage in the extreme sports of holiday shopping, partying and eating. At Thanksgiving, Americans nationwide congregate and overeat. The next day everyone complains about how stuffed they are and goes shopping. Then we’re into December, with office parties, family get-togethers and social events that usually involve lots of drinking. This season leads to Christmas and more overeating, with a final blowout on New Year’s Eve that entails even more eating and drinking. Other countries have your version of this cycle at this time of the year and others.
In North America, all this partying is happening when the normal, natural rhythms of life—colder weather, darker evenings, the end of the growing season—indicate this is the right time to turn inward. Humans are mammals, and mammals have a tendency to hibernate during the winter. They are not really sleeping; they are in a kind of battery saving mode, a state not unlike meditation. But, oddly, Americans do the opposite. Instead of going inward, slowing down and replenishing our energy for springtime, society is set up to keep us burning the candle at both ends. Then, in January and February, people feel exhausted and depressed, and the country has a widespread outbreak of colds and flu. People’s exhausted immune systems cannot cope with the demands of winter, often combined with the inappropriate food consumption mentioned above.

Doctors have given a special name to the exhaustion and depression experienced during colder, darker months. They call it Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD, and attribute it to people not getting enough sunlight. If you have been diagnosed with SAD, I encourage you to go more slowly, respecting the seasons and eating and drinking more moderately. I also recommend finding ways to get more sunlight into your life at this time. You’ll likely feel much different by the end of the season; these seasonal blues will be a thing of the past.

If you want to go to holiday parties, enjoy yourself, but be moderate with food and alcohol, and strive to get enough down time. Remember to keep up your own cooking with seasonal, locally grown ingredients and share with others during this season. If the majority of your food is healthy and homemade, the occasional party or indulgence won’t affect you. In addition, your immune system will become stronger and you’ll avoid getting sick in the wintertime.

Simplicity

One of the main reasons people don’t cook is because they think they don’t have the time. It looks too complicated, and they don’t know where to start. From the very beginning, they feel overwhelmed. They may open a cookbook and see a recipe for lasagna that looks delicious, but calls for a lot of ingredients and hours of labor. So they lose their initial enthusiasm, close the book
Chapter 11: Cooking Like Your Life Depends on It  273

and forget cooking. Don’t confuse taste with function. If you want a fancy, tasty meal, go out to a restaurant. You don’t need to be a gourmet chef at home; you need to be able to feed yourself and those you love in a nourishing, convenient way.

Occasionally, you may enjoy making a complex recipe, but for daily diet, you probably want to have simple, down-to-earth meals that can be prepared quickly and easily. It takes about five minutes to prepare a piece of fish or meat, another five minutes to prepare greens and less than 20 minutes of cooking time to get your meal on the table. If you decide to make a more complicated meal, make your main ingredients, like grains and vegetables, from scratch, and complement them with canned or frozen foods. With a little planning, you can soak beans overnight and reduce their cooking time for the next meal. Or if you’re crunched for time, use canned beans. Cooking simple meals on a regular basis will lead you step by step to a simpler, more relaxed and enjoyable lifestyle.

Home cooking also saves you money. Many people unconsciously spend a lot of their income on food. People eat most of their meals in cafes, snack bars and restaurants, and these outings can run about $30 a day—that’s almost $1,000 a month. Although organic produce and meats are more expensive, I think you’ll find they are still cheaper than eating out. Look for local produce markets with reasonable prices and shop for seasonal fruits and vegetables, which naturally have lower prices. Get familiar with your local health food store and the bulk foods section, where you can find many staples including rice, pasta, beans, nuts and even herbs. The bulk section not only saves money, but also reduces the amount of packaging waste.

Cooking Tips

Use a Timer

Just because a recipe takes 40 minutes to cook doesn’t mean it takes 40 minutes of your time. Using timers helps you know what’s due to be taken off the stove and frees you for other activities. People think if they make their own food, they have to follow a recipe and be in the kitchen for an hour or more.
This thinking creates a negative attitude toward cooking. Maybe we don't really have much else to do, but the idea of waiting around the kitchen seems torturous. Timers allow people to eat in a healthy way without big demands on their schedules.

Burn the Rice

Try to keep your cooking simple. In the beginning, let yourself experiment and make mistakes. It's okay to burn the rice. Remember, everything in life has a learning curve. In the beginning, it will take time and may seem difficult, and you'll likely burn some foods and maybe some pots. But as you stay with it, cooking will become easier, more enjoyable and hugely rewarding. Once you become confident, you will have a lifetime of delicious, home-cooked food for yourself, your family and friends, save thousands of dollars, and increase health, vitality and family relatedness.

Add Flavor

One of the keys to an easy life in the kitchen is to cook food in a simple way, and then use condiments, spices and other dressings at the table. Make a wide variety of flavorings available so everyone can personalize the meal to their own taste. Your best companion in this regard is a condiment tray or lazy Susan, a circular dish that sits in the middle of the table on a swivel and rotates with the touch of your hand. Stock it with your favorite condiments. Some love garlic, some love ginger and spices, others prefer more salt, less salt, more oil or less oil. A lazy Susan can hold all of these, plus other standards like nut butters, salsa and salad dressings. People love to personalize their food, and this method makes it much easier for the cook. A list of readily available condiments is at the end of this chapter.

Cook Once, Eat Two or Three Times

You don't have to start from scratch at each meal. I'm a big fan of cooking once and eating twice to increase the amount of homemade food in the diet without spending too much time in the kitchen. I always try to incorporate something fresh into my leftovers, by heating them with a little water, olive oil and some fresh herbs, or sautéing carrots and onions and adding them to the dish. This gives my old food new energy and new flavor.
Whenever you cook, make extra. Take grains as an example. You can cook your favorite grain in the morning and use some for a hot breakfast cereal, perhaps adding some sweet flavor, like fresh fruit or raisins, and something hearty, like tahini or nut butter. Then you can add some different flavor to the leftover grains, or put them into a soup and take it to work for lunch. In the evening, you can add vegetables and protein, and stir-fry the remainder with oil to give it some extra sizzle. You can also put leftover food into the fridge in small containers for a great, healthy, wholesome snack in between meals. Cooking once and eating two or three times makes you feel like your investments of money on groceries and time in the kitchen were well worth it.

Notice the Effects of Your Cooking
Cooking for yourself is the best way to understand how you are affected by food. Since you know what you are putting into the meal, you can understand the food’s effects on your body more directly. Maybe you feel sleepy after a meal and want to take a nap, or maybe you feel more active and have the urge to go somewhere and do something in order to generate energy to digest the meal. You will know if your cooking was too much for your body to handle, or if you feel unsatisfied and need more—an extra flavor perhaps or one more ingredient. I encourage you to explore, experiment, and learn to distinguish the foods and quantities that support your health from those that do not.

Healthy Restaurant Eating
Regardless of how hungry we are, we often find ourselves at restaurants ordering and eating large quantities of rich and heavy foods that we would never have at home. Most people don’t realize it, but professional menus are designed to draw your eye to the most expensive food, or foods that are most profitable for the establishment. You need to sharpen your awareness to know clearly what you really want to eat, what you habitually eat if you don’t stop to think about it, and what the restaurant owners would like you to eat.

When eating out, pause for a moment, keeping the menu closed, and take a moment to check in with yourself. What do you feel like eating right
now? How hungry are you? What are the appropriate foods for you to be eating? The restaurant menu is not designed to answer such questions. It makes food sound so tantalizing, you start thinking, “Oh my God, fudge brownie with drizzled chocolate and a few added twists of sugar-crystallized tangerine topped with whipped cream. That sounds incredible!” Your mouth is watering so much that you develop complete amnesia and forget your intention to be aware about what you are eating.

One way to avoid a few common pitfalls of eating out is to not read the menu. If you are out with friends, enjoying a social connection, it ensures you don’t suddenly cut off from each other and bury yourselves in the menus, destroying the convivial atmosphere. It also invites a direct dialogue with the waiter, as you inquire, “What do you recommend that has some vegetables and some protein, either fish or chicken?” When the waiter comes up with a couple of recommendations, you can ask, “What does it come with?”

Keep in mind that restaurants have a lot of vegetables in the kitchen that are not necessarily on the menu. Ask the waiter what vegetables are available and if the kitchen can make a side dish of steamed, sautéed vegetables in olive oil and garlic, or any way you prefer. This kind of request will help you get accustomed to building vegetables into all your meals.

**Flexitarian**

Although I strongly encourage home cooking, I am not saying we must cook all our food or never eat out. It is important to have balance and a flexible attitude. Become a flexitarian. Sometimes, it is healthier to go to a restaurant rather than stress out about preparing a meal, especially for people who work and have children. During busy times, I encourage eating at restaurants with healthy options and enjoying the food without guilt. Also, when dining at someone else’s house, eating what has been prepared for all the guests can be extremely healthy and healing, even if it is something we would never eat on our own. It can be healthier to just have that piece of pizza, fried chicken or ice cream cake, and not be singled out as the “healthy” one who always rejects other people’s food.
Being a health food addict can be isolating. People tend to cook alone, eat alone and feel alienated from society. Sometimes we just want to go out, eat whatever we want and have a great time. And sometimes this flexibility can be healthier than staying home alone and eating high-quality healthy foods and chewing well. People can become overly obsessed with eating the “right” food, something known as Orthorexia Nervosa. This condition can impede other important elements of life, including relationships, creativity and just feeling part of a community. Either we avoid others because we don’t want to see what they are eating, or they avoid us because they know we will disapprove of their undisciplined eating habits. We want to relate with people as a friend, not as a preacher, and projecting our own food concerns onto others is a great way to lose friends fast. Let others eat as they wish, and learn to accept and enjoy their company, regardless of how many spoonfuls of sugar they stir into their coffee.
1. Condiment List

Go to the store and pick up a bunch of condiments. Keep them on the table at mealtimes so everyone can flavor and personalize the food to their liking. Getting a lazy Susan to keep on your table and store your condiments in is an option. Here are some condiments to try, plus you can add your own favorites.

**basic spices**
- garlic
- ginger
- turmeric
- oregano
- cinnamon
- pepppers
- cayenne
- chili powder
- chili flakes
- white pepper
- black pepper in a grinder
- curry powder
- salts
- sea salt
- gomasio

**nuts and seeds**
- tahini
- nut butters: peanut, cashew, almond

**nights:**
- pine, brazil, cashews, walnuts, almonds, pistachios raw or toasted
- pumpkin seeds
- sunflower seeds
- sesame seeds

**sweeteners**
- honey
- maple syrup
- rice syrup
- barley malt
- stevia
- agave nectar
- natural fructose
- sweetener

**oils, vinegars, and sauces**
- extra virgin olive oil
- toasted sesame oil
- coconut oil
- chili sesame oil
- umeboshi paste
- umeboshi vinegar
- balsamic vinegar
- apple cider vinegar
- Bragg’s amino acids
- tamari soy sauce
- hot sauces
- salad dressings

**sea vegetables**
- dulse flakes
- nori flakes

**other**
- nutritional yeast
- sprouts: alfalfa, sunflower, mung
- grated daikon radish
- sliced red cabbage
- sliced cucumbers or scallions
- fresh limes or lemons
- ketchup
- mustard
2. Try a New Recipe

Now that you’ve read all about the benefits of cooking homemade, freshly made, lovingly made food, it’s time to try a new recipe. The back of this book has many to choose from, so pick one and cook it for your family or friends. Be sure to get fresh ingredients and to cook with love, thinking about what a pleasure it is to nourish those closest to you.
Love what you've read?

Learn more about the Integrative Nutrition philosophy and how the Health Coach Training Program can transform your health, happiness, and career!

Make an appointment and speak with an Admissions Representative about whether an education at Integrative Nutrition is a good fit for you. **Call (877) 780-5408.**

Want to finish the book? **Click here** to buy *Integrative Nutrition: Feed Your Hunger for Health and Happiness.*