

# SOME PRINCIPLES OF EATING



**SEASONALITY.** Eat in season, when food is at its best, i.e., ripest and freshest and hasn't travelled half-way around the world or been in atmosphere-controlled storage for months. It tastes better, is more nutritious and will more than likely keep you healthier. For instance, cucumbers, which grow in the warmer months, keep you cool. But it's unlikely you'll be attracted to them in the depths of winter when you want to be warm. Likewise, root vegetables such as swedes and parsnips that are the foundation of hearty winter meals don't grow in summer and we aren't drawn to them when it's hot.

**KEEP IT LOCAL.** That which grows around you or nearby or could grow in your locality is what's best for you. Obviously, growing as much as you can in your back garden, on your balcony – particularly herbs and so-called weeds (such as dandelions), leafy greens, pumpkin, zucchinis etc – is the best, but not all of us can do that. So the aim is to get as much as you can from within a 500km radius. It keeps food fresh and food miles – how far your food travels – to a minimum.

**ORGANIC.** That is, food grown without pesticides, herbicides and artificial fertilisers. Some of the benefits of organics include

- Anecdotal evidence suggests it **tastes better** than conventionally-grown food. It is reasoned organic farming nourishes the soil, which nourishes the plant and, ultimately, our palate.
- Organic food production helps **reduce the body's burden of artificial chemicals**, potentially enhancing our lives as well as our children's and theirs. Ground water contamination is also reduced as is insect resistance to pesticide-dependent crops.
- While it is disputed, proponents of organics argue and some studies show that organics have **higher vitamin and mineral levels**,

especially in antioxidants, vitamin C, iron, magnesium, calcium, and phosphorus. They also argue organics have higher levels (up to six times) of salicylic acid, which is produced naturally in plants as a protective compound against stress and disease and acts as an anti-inflammatory in humans, helping to combat hardening of the arteries.

- Organic farming methods prevent soil erosion and build healthy soils. By constantly adding organic matter, it **mimics natural systems** rather than forcing crops to grow with synthetic fertilisers. Organically-farmed soils have been shown to have less nitrogen leaching, better nutrient holding ability, more efficient biological nutrient cycling and less runoff and erosion.

- Organic food is **free of artificial additives, including preservatives, colourings and flavourings** that can cause health problems such as heart disease, osteoporosis, migraines, asthma and hyperactivity. The use of antibiotics, anti-microbials, hormones and other growth promoters are prohibited in organic production. Animals treated with veterinary drugs or chemicals, can't be sold as 'organic'.

- Organic food production uses **less energy**. More energy is now used to produce synthetic fertilisers than to till, cultivate and harvest crops. Smaller organic farms are still labour-intensive, for example, employing hand weeding and adding green manures and cover crops instead of chemicals.

- **Genetically modified organisms are not allowed** under strict organic certification standards.

- Organic farming practices **maintain or enhance biodiversity**. Organic farming uses traditional seeds, often non-hybrid and heirloom, and focuses on a diverse range of plant species and varieties, which increases

seed and crop biodiversity. Conventional farming relies on monocultures and chemicals to eradicate other plant and insect species, reducing biodiversity. One of the side effects of the use of toxic pesticides is the inadvertent killing of non-target animals and insects, which may also worsen pest resistance. Polluted soil and waterways affect all lifeforms in the ecosystem, further reducing biodiversity.

- When we buy organic food we **support traditional farming systems**. Most organic farms are small, independently-owned family farms of under 50 hectares. Many conventional family farms have been sold-up during the last few decades because of economies of scale and are no longer profitable under conventional farming systems.

- Organic food is **not irradiated**.

**FRESH.** Always the best, followed by sun or low-temperature dried or freeze-dried or dehydrated foods. Frozen can be acceptable, especially if there's no alternative.

**RAW/LIVE.** The raw food diet is based on eating mostly whole, live, uncooked and unprocessed foods. Heating food above 47°C (118°F) is thought to destroy enzymes in food that help in digestion. Cooking also diminishes a food's nutritional value and causes chemical changes in the food that may create carcinogens, mutagens, free radicals and other toxins that add to the daily body burden.

Raw fooders say that a mostly raw food diet is 'alkaline-forming', while cooked and processed foods are 'acid-forming'. The pH balance of our blood is an important element in human body chemistry. The term pH stands for 'potential hydrogen', and refers to the number of hydrogen ions in a substance. A reading of 7.0 plus means a substance is more alkaline (absorbs more hydrogen ions); below 7.0 means a substance is more acidic (less potential for absorbing hydrogen). Human blood is usually around 7.0-7.2, just above neutral or slightly alkaline. The pH level of our bodies is directly influenced by what we eat and drink. So foods that help maintain a more alkaline body chemistry are called 'alkaline-forming'; likewise with acid-forming foods.

Raw fooders are usually vegan, favouring vegetables and fruits; soaked and/or sprouted grains, nuts and seeds; and seaweeds. Some also

eat a range of fermented foods such as seed yogurts, miso, sauerkraut, kefir and tempeh, which are referred to as live foods, even though some of them (miso, tempeh) have ingredients that were initially cooked (soya beans).

Generally, the raw food diet will stabilise one's weight over time, and although there's often some weight loss to begin with, this varies from individual to individual. I made my transition to mostly raw food over a couple of years, experimenting along the way. I'd been macrobiotic vegan for about twenty-three years before that and I didn't lose weight when I made the change. In fact, I gained a little bit of weight. However, we all have different dietary histories, so it would be wise to take your time and allow your body to adjust incrementally.

A lot of people often ask doesn't it take longer to prepare a raw meal. Well, no, it needn't. It takes me about 10 minutes to prep breakfast and about 15 minutes to make my evening meal. I usually have two meals a day, late morning (brunch) and about 6-7pm, with a snack of fruit or raw chocolate or a handful of activated nuts in the afternoon. That suits me, but of course, we all have our own preferences. My superfood-based brunch (aka The Goop) keeps me going for hours and often I'm content with just the two meals. And it won't hurt the budget, even with all those superfoods. Perhaps surprisingly, I find it cheaper to eat raw organic food because it's more nutritious and filling, so I end up eating less.

I'm about 90% raw/live these days, occasionally adding solar-infused pumpkin, kumera, parsnips or other winter root vegetables and solar-warmed marinated tempeh to a winter salad. I avoid gluten, though I'm not allergic to it; I just feel better and have more energy without it. And, of course refined sugar, which is very addictive.

**VEGAN.** Adopting a vegan diet is an important step toward healthier eating and living. A varied vegan diet is a perfectly beneficial way of eating, provided the diet is well-balanced and designed to get sufficient essential nutrients. It's also associated with a reduced risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer and obesity. Particular attention must be paid to vitamin B12, vitamin D, iron, calcium, iodine, selenium, protein and omega 3 fats, which can sometimes be lacking in a vegan diet, as well as in diets that

include meat! Here are some pointers.

- Plant **protein** sources include activated nuts and seeds (almonds, walnuts, pecans, sunflower, hemp, pumpkin, sesame) and tempeh.

- **Vitamin B12** is needed for the formation of red blood cells, proper digestion and maintenance of a healthy nervous system. Low B12 can cause problems, such as anaemia, depression, chronic fatigue and digestive problems. B12 is therefore an essential vitamin and as it is not naturally found in a bio-available form in any food, deficiency can cause problems for people in general. Foods such as mushrooms, miso, and algae are often reported to provide some vitamin B12 due to contamination by bacteria. However, any B12 they may contain could be in a form the body can't use (analogues) and it may in fact prevent the absorption of utilisable B12. Much more testing is needed. In the meantime, it is worth having your blood tested for B12 and supplement if you are below 340-405pg. [MORE](#)

- Foods rich in **calcium** include dark green leafy greens, tempeh, parsley, sesame seeds and prunes.

- Plant sources of **iron** include green leafy vegetables (spinach and broccoli), dried figs, raisins, prunes, activated nuts and sunflower seeds. To help maximise absorption, eat foods rich in vitamin C (most fruit and vegetables, especially oranges, peppers and berries) at the same time as iron-rich foods. Some compounds, such as tannins in tea and coffee can also inhibit iron absorption, so if drinking tea or coffee have them away from meals.

- The best plant source of **iodine** is from sea vegetables, such as kelp and nori.

- Plant sources of **selenium** include brazil nuts, mushrooms, lentil sprouts, brown rice.

- The best source of **vitamin D** is via sunshine.

- **Omega 3** sources include hemp seed, linseeds (flax), activated walnuts, chia seeds and spirulina. Omega 3 fats are very heat sensitive and therefore shouldn't be used in cooking, but can be added to salads, smoothies and breakfast dishes.

**NUTRIENT-DENSE.** Certain foods, often referred to as superfoods, have a higher nutritional profile than many common foods. For instance, such superfoods as spirulina, chlorella, barley grass and wheatgrass powder, maca, camu camu, gubinge, macqui berry and acai, when

compared to grains, cereals and pulses punch well above their weight. In other words, you won't need so much of them to get your minimum daily allowances of various vitamins and minerals. The vitamin and mineral profiles of such lower nutritive dense foods as grains, cereals and pulses, as well as many fruits and vegetables, are dramatically reduced after cooking.

**MACROBIOTIC.** This doesn't mean going all-Japanese and adopting the Japanese diet, although the concept of macrobiotics came to the West from Japan in the 1970s and many practitioners do include numerous traditional Japanese foods in their diets. The essential elements are simple and can be applied universally and are covered in the first two principles: eating locally and in season.

There's also the idea of eating according to what you do – what activities make up your day – and matching what you eat with your lifestyle and work. For instance, if you're doing a lot of manual work (say, labouring), you'll need more protein than if you have a desk job.

**FOOD COMBINING** is based on the principle that specific combinations promote digestion and nutrient absorption. Good food combining can also dramatically reduce the energy required for digestion, thus leaving you with more physical and mental energy, improved digestion and overall better health.

**SUPPORT FOOD COOPERATIVES AND FARMERS' MARKETS.** When you buy from a co-op or farmers' market not only are you frequently buying direct from farmers and giving them a better price for the produce than they would receive from the major supermarkets, you're also supporting alternative economic structures, which is ultimately helping to create a more diverse and stronger economy. Co-ops are modelled on principles that promote fair trade, care for the soil and land, ensuring all who work along the food chain are treated well and ethically, and, above all, where members have a greater say in where their food comes from and how it's produced.

**SNAPSHOT  
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A MIX OF RAINBOW  
COLOURS IN YOUR  
DIET EVERY DAY.**