

The Slow Down Diet: Eating for Pleasure, Energy, and Weight Loss By Marc David

The Metabolic Power of Quality

The discovery of a new dish does more for the happiness of mankind than the discovery of a new star.

-Jean Brillat-Savarin

The biggest and most urgent nutritional question of our time—“What should I eat?”—happens to have the greatest assortment of confusing and contradictory answers. Fortunately I have a very practical suggestion on how you can become your own dietary expert and be assured of consistently making excellent nutritional choices, if not the best choices. If you allowed me the honor of being your personal nutritionist for just one dietary change, if you asked me “What’s the one simple nutritional strategy that could give me the biggest bang for my metabolic buck, improve my health and weight more than any other change, and make a positive impact on the lives of others and the Earth itself?” here’s the guideline I’d urge you to follow.

Elevate the quality of your food.

Quality is everything. In every major nutritional study that’s ever been done comparing the diets of industrialized nations—mostly consisting of refined, mass-produced, poor-quality food—with the diets of traditional cultures—fresh, whole, locally cultivated and vibrant—those on traditional diets fare drastically better in every major health category. Elevate the quality of your food and you elevate metabolism.

Quality means any or all of the following: real; fresh; organic; gourmet; lovingly crafted; homemade; locally produced; heirloom varieties; nutrient dense; low in human-made toxins; grown and marketed with honesty and integrity; tasteful; filled with true flavor, not virtual ones

that mask the absence of nutrients and vitality. *Quality* means that care and consciousness permeate a food, and that the food itself has a good story to tell.

As it is with cars and other durable goods, with food you get what you pay for. Would you expect a car manufactured with the cheapest parts, hastily assembled and designed without any care for the needs of the driver to give you the ride of your life? Science doesn't have a way to measure the value and effects of the quality of food on the human body because we still have our training wheels on in the nutrition business and can only maneuver ourselves around nutrient values. When we nutrition experts lay down the law about how the value of a food is gloriously revealed in its nutrient profile, it all sounds so scientific. And it is. Except that this measure of a meal's true worth is woefully limited and scientifically incomplete.

When the artistry of food is finally elevated to its rightful place, then the science will speak with more wisdom and clarity. What I'm talking about is not so much a different way of seeing food and nutrition as it is a whole new approach to the world and our place in it.

When science studies food, nutrition, or a supplement, it rarely looks at quality. That's a hidden reason behind why the results of food studies often conflict and why you're invariably fed contradictory messages about eating. Recall the famous "French paradox" discussed in the previous chapter—and how Europeans can eat a significantly greater amount of fat without the same rise in cholesterol level and heart disease that we Americans experience. Not only is this a function of the benefits Europeans receive from the metabolic power of relaxing, breathing, and taking their time with their meals, it's also about quality. Much of the European cuisine is of a level that is worth aspiring to. This higher quality means a healthier metabolism. The only "paradox" here is why researchers couldn't see the big picture.

There's still another very important rationale for choosing high-quality foods that most of the experts tend to overlook, and one that certainly deserves your attention if you are concerned about weight. The poorer the quality of our food, the more quantity we'll consume.

The problem with overeating in our nation is not that we have a collective willpower disorder. Yes, many of us eat too much. But we do so, to a great degree, because our food is nutrient deficient. It lacks the vitamins, minerals, enzymes, and all the undiscovered x-factors and energies we require. The brain senses these deficiencies and wisely responds to this absence of vital chemistry by commanding us to undertake the most sensible survival strategy: eat more food. If a movie or a party you attended lacked substance, you'd walk away feeling unfilled and wanting more. It's the same with food.

By choosing organic foods, your diet becomes more nutrient dense. That's because pound for pound, organic foods have more vitamins and minerals than their inorganic and mass-produced counterparts. They also have less xenotoxins—human made substances and disease agents. Organic simply means "real."

Of course, it's easy to become apathetic when hearing endless messages about the carcinogens in our food, the evils of carbohydrates, or the mercury in fish. I often hear people

lament “Everything’s bad for you.” But now you have a powerful tool to help bust through such nutritional confusion:

No matter what food you eat, choose the highest quality version of that food.

This gives you the best Las Vegas odds that the food will be healthy, whether you’re eating bacon, bananas, bread, or birthday cake. Yes, quality foods are definitely more expensive. But this is the *real* health insurance. It’s your life we’re talking about, your and those of the loved ones you feed.

Food Is...

Before we look at specific suggestions on how to include quality foods in our diet, let’s better understand the true metabolic power of quality by examining closely what food really is.

Most people would say that food is a collection of vitamins, minerals, macronutrients, and other chemicals. To determine the value of a meal, we’d measure the amount of nutrients it contains—read any product label and you’ll see this philosophy in action. But it’s time to catch up with the new millennium. This view of food is no longer adequate in describing nutritional reality. Food is much more than a bunch of chemicals. Food is energy and information.

This definition applies to any substance we consume, be it water, an herb, supplement, a drug, caviar, or cotton candy. Whatever metabolic effect the body receives from any of these happens because that substance communicated a specific message to our cells. The caffeine in coffee literally tells the heart to beat faster and our blood pressure to spike and instructs the nervous system to accelerate its functions. The fiber in your oatmeal actually chats with your intestines, telling them to contract, and has a side conversation with your liver, pancreas, and bloodstream, asking your LDL cholesterol to drop and your blood sugar to stabilize. The bioflavonoids in your berries instruct the body to keep tiny blood vessels strong and supple, to reduce cellular inflammation, and to slow down the aging process of specific tissues such as the macula of the eyes. Food talks to your body and your body talks back.

This is most a fanciful notion about metabolism; it is a scientific reality. With his simple formula $E=MC^2$, Einstein proved that matter and energy are one and the same and could shape shift to and fro. And both are loaded with information. Indeed, every speck of creation—from a humble particle of dust to a galactic sun—holds vast quantities of information, also called memory. Simply because we can’t always perceive with our five senses this hidden library within all matter doesn’t mean it’s not there.

Consider, for example, the tomato. If the soil it grows in is depleted, then the tomato has measurably low mineral content, less natural sugar, and the more acids, which means it will be tough, tasteless, and nutritionally inferior. If it is sprayed with pesticides and herbicides, it will

carry instructional messages to your body that are carcinogenic, mutagenic, and neurotoxic. If it is grown on an impersonal factory farm, the tomato will be lifeless and have no charm. If it is picked by an underpaid migrant worker who's given no benefits and few worker's rights, then the tomato is hypocritical and lacks integrity. If it is chopped by machine along with thousands of other tomatoes, delivered to a fast-food joint, and slapped together with a bun and meat from a cow who suffered even worse traumas, then our tomato is now suicidal, or even murderous, because it has lost its soul and has no reason to live. I think you get the picture.

Ancient healing systems such as Ayurveda and Chinese medicine have long recognized the energetic nature of food. Rather than describe the chemical elements of a meal, these approaches look at the "archetypal" elements. They see earth, water, wood, fire, and metal; kappa, pitta, and bata; yin and yang. None of these elements are seen under a microscope but they are plainly observed in action, much the way our character is revealed for all to see yet is nowhere to be found. Yin and yang are as real to the Chinese as proteins and fats are to us.

The true worth of a food, then, will never be discerned from a label. Its real value is in all the energy and information it contains. Yes, that includes vitamin, mineral, protein, fiber, and fat content. But it also means how the food is grown, handled, transported, manufactured, advertised, cooked, served, and eaten. All this information lives inside a food as surely as you live inside your body.

So if we want to truly quell the rise of heart disease with the help of diet, then it's time to put more heart into how we create food, eat it, and share it with the hungry. If we want to slow the unchecked growth of cancerous cells in the human family and limit the amount of carcinogens in our food, then it's time to slow down the world, take stock of *our* unchecked growth, and rethink the manic way that we manufacture our nourishment.

Many people want food to provide them with health, happiness, and all the blessings of beauty. Well, the only way food can possibly deliver such a huge bounty is if we create it in that image. When the energies of love and beauty are cultivated into a foodstuff, such will be our harvest.

Limiting the Antinutrients in Your Diet

When it comes to empowered eating, it's as important to ease off of the antinutritious foods as it is to include the healthy ones. Antinutrients literally break down the body's metabolic machinery at the cellular level. The most potent antinutrients to limit are:

- Poor-quality fats
- Poor-quality sugar
- Poor-quality white flour
- Poor-quality dairy
- Poor-quality meats

Poor-quality fat means any food that contains hydrogenated oil, partially hydrogenated oil, hydrogenated palm kernel oil, margarine and any margarine-like spreads with hydrogenated oil, cottonseed oil, Olestra (a synthetic fat), and most commercial supermarket-bought cooking oils. Poor-quality fat also includes most fried foods—french fries, chicken, chips, and so forth.

Read the labels on everything you buy. Hydrogenated oils are found in many mass-produced food products, including potato chips, corn chips, crackers, cookies, prepared foods, frozen foods, baked goods, snacks, and others. Most of the oils you find in a supermarket are highly processed—heated at high temperatures and stripped of their sensitive essential fats and other nutrients.

As best as you can, replace poor-quality fat-containing products with quality oils and quality-fat foods.

These would include olive oil, sesame oil, and coconut oil—all of these oils are great for cooking. Other oils to use for dressings and dips include sunflower, flaxseed, hazelnut, pistachio, hempseed, and macadamia nut oils. Always use expertly processed unrefined organic oils—these can generally be found at a health store. (As a side note, I'm not a big fan of canola oil. It's not very heat stable and most brands are over processed. The same goes for soy oil.)

Use real butter rather than margarine—the best choices are hormone free and farm fresh or organic. Butter made from raw and unpasteurized milk is best. Ghee can be used as a substitute for butter. Ghee is clarified butter, also called separated butter; it is a traditional, time-tested food from India that is highly heat stable and so can be used for browning or light frying.

Other preferred sources of health-giving fats include:

Avocado—organic and fresh is best

Olives—emphasize variety

Fresh fish—especially those that are ocean or stream caught and not farm raised; focus on variety

Nuts and seeds—organic is always best

Nut butter—peanut butter, almond butter, sesame butter

Free-range eggs—eggs that come from a real chicken running around a real farm eating real food

Organic dairy products—especially those that are produced from raw and unpasteurized milk from grass-fed animals, including yogurt, cheese, and milk

By the way, healthy fat in your food does not translate to fat on your body. If you deprive yourself of essential fat to lose weight, you'll get the opposite result. And even if you lose weight, you'll likely suffer from some of the symptoms of clinical fat deficiency—irritability, fatigue, dull and brittle hair, dry skin, redness around the eyes, digestive complaints, constipation,

inability to lose weight, and mood disorders. So on behalf of all the nutritionists, dietitians, and doctors who have been feeding you the wrong information since the late 1960s, I'd like to apologize. It's not your fault that we sent you down the wrong road. Remember, this is the same group of well-intentioned experts that invented hospital food. We mean well but we don't always hit the mark.

Fat is essential to life to such a degree that if we could suck all the fat out of your body—the ultimate liposuction service—you'd die in an instant. Fat serves as an energy source for the heart and brain. It's a building block for many of the hormones and chemicals that keep us alive. It's a nutritional source for the central nervous system, and it lines and protects every organ. For these reasons and more, and because the body cannot produce on its own all the specific fats we require, we have labeled such important components of our diet “essential fats,” also known as “essential fatty acids” or “EFAs.” You might also have heard them called “omega-3” and “omega-6” fatty acids as well.

Fat serves a most profound structural function—it's a building block for the walls of every cell in your body. The walls of your cells are in no way similar to the walls of your house. An architectural wall is stiff, solid, unintelligent, impermeable to the elements, and can be made of anything that keeps the outside from seeping in and the inside from leaking out.

Our cell walls are the exact opposite. They are pliable, permeable, highly complex, and extremely intelligent—to the point where they must precisely control the traffic of thousands of kinds of biomolecules across their surface each millisecond. When it comes to the body, the cell wall is where the rubber meets the road, so to speak, and healthy fat is an indispensable part of the process.

Perhaps the ultimate kudos for fat is that it comprises approximately 40 to 60 percent of your brain. How's that for an unsexy statistic? So the next time you think, you have fat to thank.

In small quantities, of course, poor-quality fats are harmless to most people. But when poor-quality fats become part of our staple fare, day in and day out, our health will eventually suffer. These fats, which are chemically different from the quality kind, literally become the building blocks of our cell wall. The result is that the cell wall becomes more rigid, susceptible to oxidation (rusting or aging), and less intelligent—it loses the ability to make smart choices about what goes in and what comes out. This is a special concern when it comes to the brain, which is largely composed of essential omega-3 fat. When the poor-quality fat is incorporated into its structure, brain tissue is more easily oxidized and becomes biologically stiff (and this stupid). This will make you feel less interesting at parties, as well as increasing the probability of Alzheimer's, dementia, and other brain diseases. Including more healthy fat and cutting down on the dysfunctional ones is, therefore, a “no brainer.”

Poor-quality sugar refers to any for that contains high fructose corn syrup, fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, white sugar, glucose, Florida Crystals, or any artificial sweetener. Read product labels

to reveal these ingredients. The various forms of corn syrup are commonly found in soft drinks, juice drinks, sweet candies, and packaged snack foods and cookies, and even in the so-called “healthy” protein bars. As best as you can, eliminate products with these ingredients from your home. Let them be an occasional exception on your menu rather than the rule.

Replace commercial sodas and soft drinks with organic juices, herbal ice teas, or water. With variety as the key, use organic jams; fresh fruit; organic or fresh cookies, pastries, and muffins; organic candies; organic ice creams and sorbets.

Replace all “reward foods” with higher quality health-food-store versions that use quality sweeteners such as the following.

Raw honey: The jar must say “raw” or “unheated” on the label. raw honey is high in enzymes and phytochemicals related to plants and their pollens. It is traditionally used as both food and medicine. Raw honey is not suitable for infants.

Maple syrup: High in minerals and phytochemicals. Organic varieties of maple syrup are free of the formaldehyde used in most mass-produced products.

Barley malt: Less sweet than other sweeteners; good for baking.

Stevia: A noncaloric all-natural herbal sweetener with medicinal properties. A small amount can sweeten your beverage or tea.

Sucanat: This is a true brown sugar, made from organic dehydrated cane juice. More nutrient dense than white sugar, no chemical residues, good for all baking and beverages. Rapadura is another such product.

The scientific “party line” states that all sugars—be they white sugar, corn syrup, honey, maple syrup, and so on—are essentially the same from a chemical standpoint. Unfortunately, there is no current scientific model that is subtle and accurate enough to reveal the true distinctions between these vastly different packages of energy and information. Consequently, our collective diet is top-heavy with an excess of poor-quality sweeteners, and we suffer the consequences—obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

By the way, you might think that diet sodas and artificial sweeteners would help us lose weight because they contain no calories and no sugar to spike our insulin. But this isn’t really the case. After forty years of exposure to fake chemical sweeteners, not a single study has ever shown an every mildly convincing association between sugar substitutes and weight loss.

Instead, researchers are now discovering that artificial sweeteners—fake pleasure—may actually cause us to gain weight. As fate would have it, the artificial sweetener molecule is so crafty that it convinces the brain that it’s real sugar, so the body releases insulin to help metabolize the artificial sugar. Since there is no real sugar present, the excess insulin, with nothing to do, performs its other evolutionary task, which is to signal the body to store fat. As well, there is firmly mounting evidence that aspartame is a significant neurotoxin. So my professional advice to you is this: If you have any synthetically sweetened foods in your home, step on them to ensure you kill them, then toss them out.

Poor-quality white flour means products such as mass-produced pastas, breads, cookies, muffins, and bagels; crackers; cold breakfast cereals; sugar-sweetened oatmeal products; commercial granola bars; pretzels, pastries, and donuts.

It's only in the last century that our diet has included such a large amount of refined and highly processed carbohydrates—white flour products, breads, cookies, donuts, chips, pretzels, cereals, crackers, pasta, sweets, and so on. Our ancestors ate carbohydrate foods in their unprocessed state. When we consume these foods, which have been stripped of most of their vitamin and mineral contents, our insulin level shoots up too high, which signals the body to store weight and store fat. Excess insulin also causes the body to crave even more sugar and more carbohydrate foods. Diabetes, heart disease, and a host of degenerative diseases can follow.

An assortment of diet foods, like those espousing the Atkins diet, the Zone diet, Sugar Busters, Paleolithic diets, high-protein diets, and others, all have one common and very useful nugget of wisdom at their core—too many refined carbohydrates in our diet is problematic. So rather than concern yourself with the precise amount of carbohydrates your body scientifically needs (hint: no such assessment exists anyway), begin your exploration of the metabolic power of quality by including the carbohydrates that have a quality story to tell and limiting or eliminating as best you can those that don't. This alone will begin to curb carbohydrate cravings and significantly assist you in discerning your body's natural intelligence in determining portions, percentages, and amounts.

Look through your home and begin to replace poor-quality white-flour products with quality carbohydrate foods.

These would include organic varieties of brown rice, beans, quinoa, barley, corn, amaranth, oats, oatmeal, lentils, chickpeas, millet (grains and beans are best when presoaked before cooking); organic and/or fresh-made pastas; sourdough or sprouted breads or fresh whole-grain breads; rye crackers; crackers free of hydrogenated oils; breads, crackers, and other products made with spelt flour; organic chips (corn, potato, and rice chips without oil or made with olive oil); organic vegetables, including squash, sweet potato, yam, root vegetables, potato; organic fruit, with variety as the key.

If you're looking to cut down on carbohydrates, your focus should be on the refined, mass-produced kind. Vegetables are fine. High-starch vegetables are also fine, just go easy on them. Fruits are also great—just make sure you focus on variety and don't limit your fruit to pineapples, grapes, bananas, and dried fruit, as these can be quite high in natural sugar. Whole grains such as brown rice are preferable to their white cousins, but as a nutritionist I will tell you that it's also no big deal to have white rice or white bread from time to time. As long as

these are not major staple foods in your diet, I've never heard of anyone dying from their occasional consumption.

Poor-quality dairy means mass-produced, nonorganic, hormone-containing cheese, milk, yogurt, cream cheese, cottage cheese, flavored milks, and snack foods with cheese by-products.

The days of the exalted position of milk and cheese in our diet is numbered. Evidence is mounting that milk's preeminence as a source of absorbable calcium is way overstated and perhaps even untrue. Look to leafy greens and nuts and seeds as excellent sources of bioavailable calcium. In addition to lactose intolerance (an inability to metabolize milk sugar), many people are sensitive or highly allergic to the protein component of milk without realizing it. When the protein in milk undergoes high-temperature heating, as it does in pasteurization, the complex protein molecule—casein—is radically altered, which can render it cytotoxic and neurotoxic. If you experience any combination of chronic sinus complaints, nasal or lung congestion, postnasal drip, digestive sensitivity, headaches, multiple allergies, and dry skin, you are a great candidate to experiment with a diet free of all milk and dairy-containing products during week 2. Even if you don't have these symptoms, I would highly recommend that you try dairy-free eating during this time and see what that change does for you.

Nutrition experts continually disagree about the merits of milk and dairy foods. That's because most of the commercially available products in this category are of extremely poor quality.

In general, I suggest you keep dairy foods to a minimum. When you do use dairy products, replace mass-produced, poor-quality varieties with the following.

Milk: Raw, organic, and unpasteurized is best. Locally produced with no hormones is a plus.

Cheese: Organic, or any high-quality locally produced or imported varieties made from raw and unpasteurized milk.

Yogurt: Full fat, organic, or locally produced when possible.

Cottage cheese: Full fat, organic, and fresh is best.

Butter: Local varieties, organic, raw milk, and European imports are generally the highest quality.

Soy cheese: A useful substitute for many people. Most brands contain casein (milk protein), but this product is often well tolerated.

You can also use rice milk, almond milk, soy yogurt, rice yogurt, and soy- and rice-based ice creams as dairy-free substitutes.

Poor-quality meat refers to all fast-food meats; processed meats such as packaged cold cuts and commercially produced hot dogs; meats in frozen prepared foods; any fresh or frozen meat that

isn't free range, hormone free, and fed real food; any meat produced from animals that are not raised and slaughtered with care and humanity.

As best as you can, replace these poor-quality meats with any chicken, turkey, beef, pork, lamb, or other meat or poultry that is labeled free range, organic, grass fed, or hormone free.

Many such products can be found fresh at your supermarket or deli. You can also find organically produced hot dogs, hamburgers, chicken soups, sausages, and other popular frozen and prepared meat items at a well-stocked health food store. Free-range eggs (sometimes called omega eggs) are the preferred quality choice. You can also replace some or all of the meat in your diet with fresh or smoked fish or vegetarian sources of protein such as tofu, tempeh, and nut butters.

It's high time that we get real about our meat eating. Humankind owes its survival, in great part, to the animals we've eaten. To argue that eating is wrong negates the sustenance that has enabled us to be here so we could have something to argue about in the first place. And yet our over reliance on animal foods is clearly imbalanced and our relation to the animal kingdom is killing us. Our drive to mass produce meat is dramatically polluting our environment and stealing away valuable land and water from developing nations. It's also making our cows "mad." The inescapable truth is that eating a creature raised and sacrificed without honor and care invokes disaster and disease upon the human family.

It might interest you to know that the most expensive and highly prized meat on Earth comes to us courtesy of the Kobe cows. These are quality bovines and their desirability has everything to do with lifestyle. In fact, if you're ever needing to feel jealous toward a group of cows, there are the ones you should focus on. The Kobe cows live in Hawaii. They enjoy perfect weather and sunshine, they eat the healthiest, tastiest grass grown on nutrient-rich volcanic soil, they breathe fresh island air and have a beautiful ocean view, and they are blessed with plenty of time for socializing and quiet reflection. They're living the dream. Is it any wonder they taste so good? You would too.

The point is that these cows feed back to the eater exactly what was given to them: life, harmony, nourishment, nutrition. Of course, when we contrast this with the dismal existence of factory-farmed animals it becomes apparent why the experts see such different results and draw so many contradictory conclusions about the relative health merits of meat.

The research varies because the quality of the meat varies. Consequently, some experts give their "thumbs up" to meat while others point the other way. To me, the most compelling research shows that countries with a high per capita consumption of commercial meat products coupled with excessive refined carbohydrates, hydrogenated fats, and poor-quality vegetable oils show the highest "meat-associated" cancer rates, whereas in traditional societies with no sugar, white-flour products, or poor-quality oils but with high-quality meats, no associations between cancer and meat eating exists. Can you see the implications?

Week 2: Your Primary Task

Week 2 is your opportunity to do the best you can in cleaning out the low-end, mass-produced, unenlightened food products from your home and replacing them with high-quality counterparts. It's a time to focus on food that is fresh or home-cooked, organic, locally grown, and is the best you can find given whatever factors may limit you—time, convenience, money, or availability. During this time, let go of your need to know exactly which foods to eat and how much.

Your primary task in week 2, then, is this: Whenever and whatever you eat, hit the target at least 80 percent of the time with quality food choices. This assures that you'll be receiving the nutrients you require to thrive while eliminating the toxic substances that pollute the food web and suppress metabolic potential. Think of week 2 as a new beginning in how you value the nourishment of your body. Celebrate this fresh start by knowing that you're raising the bar in how you honor the miracle of sustenance that connects us all. Say goodbye to the foods that fail to reflect the quality, taste, and vitality you deserve and welcome the ones that do. This doesn't mean you can never eat a marshmallow or an English muffin again. It simply means that the overall direction of your diet is quality, that you're choosing to bring a higher level of food into the sanctity of your home, and that anything other than quality is the exception and not the rule.

Let's be real. Most of us are going to stray from what we know is "healthy." At some point, we *will* eat the cake, the cookies, the pasta, and the junk. We *will* drink the alcohol. So be it. Let's just make that part of our nutritional program rather than pretend it isn't. That's the middle way, the honest way, and for many people, the practical way. And in this day and age, it may well be the healthiest way. Really. So don't waste your energy trying to be a saint and then demonize yourself when sainthood inevitably fails. If at least 80 percent of the food that passes your lips is high quality, you'll be doing fine. Anything more is a welcome bonus.

Exercise: Quality Shopping

During week 2, find out the location of the most well stocked natural foods supermarkets or food corporations in your area. Some of the big chains include Wild Oats, Whole Foods, Wild By Nature, and Trader Joes. Many of these stores have a section of freshly prepared natural foods for those of us with little time to cook.

Set aside several hours to walk through the store. Explore, read labels, ask questions, and see what foods catch your attention. Do the best you can in switching over to organic fare.

If you have young children, bring them along to shop and include them in the process. Tell them your nutritionist said that if they want to grow big and strong or have nice skin and shiny

hair, eating good food is the way to go. Give them choices from the snack sections or prepared foods and let them feel encouraged in participating in their new lifestyle.

Also, identify the best places to purchase healthy meats, fresh fruit, fresh whole-grain or sourdough breads, and locally grown organic produce. Create a shopping schedule that assures healthy, high-quality food is always at home this week. In other words, don't let shopping be a haphazard affair. Prioritize it and make it a special ritual.

Remember, you are looking to shift to the most quality choices of the foods you are going to eat anyway. If you must have potato chips, buy an organic variety that is baked and made with olive oil. If you're going to drink coffee, go organic and forget the artificial sweeteners. If you absolutely want bagels, buy the freshest. If you drink orange juice, squeeze your own oranges, buy a juicer, or purchase organic brands, especially for your kids. If you're going to use canned or frozen foods, use organic brands. It's all about making the best possible choices given the choices you're going to make anyway. Apply this thinking to anything you eat and you'll be way ahead on the nutritional curve for health.

But Please, Just Tell Me What to Eat

As you're noticing, this is a diet program that doesn't tell you exactly which foods to eat and in what amounts. This is the greatest favor I can do for you as a nutritionist. Empowering you to be in deeper relationship with food and with the genius in your body is the surest road to your most powerful metabolism.

If you absolutely insist that you must know the precise and eternally correct answer to the question "What should I eat?" I have an important piece of advice: Let it go. Save your sanity. The quest for the perfect diet that will make us happy, healthy, and glamorous forever has created some heavy burdens we no longer need carry. Many people bounce from diet to diet and from one expert to the next often feeling victimized by the conflicting messages spoken by our food gurus and clueless about what to do. It's time to understand the territory.

The field of nutrition is frontier land. It's the Wild West. That's just the way it is. Many of the nutritional assertions we experts hold dear have a brief shelf life and will soon be replaced by something more crispy and fresh. That's because the science of eating is always changing, just like you and me. We are still discovering who we are and what sustains us. Perhaps this will always be so.

So rather than feeling discouraged by the endless amount of conflicting and difficult-to-follow nutrition information that the experts put forth, relax into the middle way. Let quality be your most trustworthy guide. Yes, there are specific foods and amounts that are the best and most beneficial for you to eat. But such information is not found in any book or revealed by any expert. It's found inside you. It's a practice of attunement that comes with time. That's what this program is about.

You'll learn more about how to discover the foods and their quantities that are right for you in the next chapter. For now, quality nutrition is your first and most fundamental step. Elevating food quality is the most practical and foolproof nutritional improvement you can make. And it has repercussions that are beautiful and far-reaching. For health is not an individual issue localized to your metabolism alone. It extends outward from the body as far as we can see and well beyond. Disregarding Earth, its soil, and the food web and not thoughtfully sharing with all our fellow eaters around the planet has pathological consequences, not the least of which is recorded in our food as energy and information and fed directly back to us.

What goes around comes around. That's not a fanciful notion but a literal nutritional fact. Whatever it is you want a food to gift you with is yours to have, provided those same gifts have been bestowed upon the food. This may be, perhaps, the greatest nutritional secret of our time.

Key Lessons

- Eating quality food is perhaps the most powerful and foolproof nutritional strategy we can choose.
- Higher-quality food means greater nutritional value. When we continually eat low-quality food, the brain will register a nutrient deficit and signal us to eat more.
- Many people who think they have a willpower problem are experiencing a lack of nutrient-dense food.
- No matter what food you eat, choose the highest quality version of the food.
- First and foremost, food is energy and information.
- Every experience in the history of a food is encoded within it as energy and information. This is a significant determinant in its nutritional value.

More Tips for Quality Eating and Living

At the beginning of the week, make a list in your journal of everything that would stand in the way of including quality food in your life: "Not enough time," "It's too expensive," "My partner [or my kids] won't go for it," "No convenient healthy places to shop," "The food won't taste as good."

Then methodically and creatively uncover ways to help circumvent these concerns. Identify all the quality restaurants and take-out establishments near where you live and work. If you eat Japanese food, who has the freshest and the best? Mexican? Chinese? Who has the best salad bar? Homemade soups? If you're going to eat pizza, eat the best slice in town. If you order

food in when you're at work, make the decision to make the best choices in regard to quality and freshness.

Quality also counts when it comes to water. Invest in a water filter for your kitchen and use for both drinking and cooking.

Almost anything placed on our skin will make its way into the body. That's why I recommend using skincare products that you can almost eat. Consider changing over the following products to natural and more environment-friendly varieties: soap, shampoo, conditioner, moisturizer, cosmetics, deodorant, shaving gel, toothpaste, and mouthwash. A health food store or food coop is the best resource for natural brands.

Quality household products also support health and ease the toxic load that humans have been continuously subjected to for the last century. As best as you can, replace dishwashing soap, all cleaners, laundry detergents, bleach, drain cleaners, and so forth with more earth-friendly varieties. Again, a well-stocked health-food store or food cooperative is an excellent place to find such products.