

Beyond Dietary Shoulds and Should Nots

In our affluent society, we have endless dietary options. Books and podcasts promote an ever-expanding array of dietary plans,



most of which do help a certain number of people. While many people are intrigued and committed to these diets, some are baffled. **Increasingly, we see patients suffering from great anxiety as to what it is that they should be eating.**

Wise food choices are a good thing, and there are some simple guidelines with which most health minded people would

agree. Particularly when considering the "dirtier" fruits and vegetables, **choose organic when available and when it is financially feasible to do so. Increase the variety and quantity of fresh fruits and veggies. Eat wild, not farmed fish if you eat fish; choose free range eggs, poultry and meats that are certified hormone and antibiotic free. Limit fried food. Avoid artificial sweeteners. Reduce sugar, simple carbs and processed foods. Emphasize pure water and herbal and green teas, avoiding sugary drinks (including excess fruit juice!). And so on.**

Simple becomes not so simple in an imperfect and polluted world. What is pure water when water is chlorinated, fluoridated, recycled, or stored in plastic? We suffer to some degree both from circumstances beyond our control and from an overload of information, exacerbating dietary concerns. While it is critical for celiac patients, for example, to absolutely avoid gluten, many

people who consider themselves to be allergic to gluten are merely sensitive to gluten. While these people may want to generally avoid gluten, there is a personal and social cost to obsessive avoidance.

It is helpful to remember that, throughout history, people have sustained themselves, through feast and famine, on whatever food was available to them.

It is also quite helpful to remember the energetic aspects of food and food preparation. **The consciousness with which food is grown, prepared, and offered is in an ultimate way more important than the food itself**, and influences the consciousness of those who eat it. Movies such as *Babette's Feast* and *Chocolat* illustrate this truth. Aware that food that is prepared in love and service has a beneficial effect on the body, independent of biochemical effect, *Brahma Kumari* yoginis eat only food prepared by one of their spiritually uplifted own.

The attitude in which the food is received and eaten has a profound effect. It is said that if you knew the transformative effect that offering gratitude and blessings for your meal has on the food itself, you would never eat food that had not been blessed. Not only is the food changed, but we ourselves are changed. When we come to that quiet space from which we can effectively bless our food, our bodies, minds and spirits are brought into balance.

The meditation meals of the Japanese monks, and the famed kaiseki meals, through beauty, change the nature of one's interaction with food. (Click <http://kichisen-kyoto.com/en/> to read of a kaiseki chef's training, philosophy and restaurant in Kyoto) As is true in the mindful participation in the tea ceremony,

the mind is brought to stillness by the exquisite artful and intentional presentation of the food.

Honoring the energetics of our food, the simplest available ingredients can nurture and sustain us and enhance our well-being, regardless of the diet we choose.

