

# FOOD AS MEDICINE & OUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

## Natural Medical Perspectives and Kitchari



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## OUR NATURAL DIGESTION

We are an ecosystem.

Every one of us human beings is a walking, talking, and breathing ecosystem! All of the naturally occurring bacteria and microorganisms inside of our tissues make up who we are. The number of actual human cells that comprises our physical bodies equals approximately 1 trillion cells. Now keep in mind that there are 10 trillion different microorganism cells inside of us. That's a one order-of-magnitude greater number of cells that co-exist with us! These inhabitants have all kinds of different names like *Saccharomyces boulardii*, *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Enterobacter* spp. and more. How amazing, right? Yes, there are more microbes in our system in number as compared with the number of human cells that make up a person. Our human cells are much larger than those of the microorganisms residing with us in our bodies. These populations of bacteria, viruses, and single celled organisms that co-exist internally mostly live in our intestines, yet can be found throughout our entire system, including the brain. These little critters can have an effect on how we make choices and we will talk more about this in the Cravings section ahead.

We eat food to sustain life. Food gives us nourishment and energy to be active in our lives. Our stomach receives the foods we ingest and starts the process of breaking down this food with the help of enzymes and stomach acid. As food is broken down into carbohydrate-sugars, proteins, and fats, the microbes in our intestines assist in the metabolism of these nutrients and we benefit from their work. It is important to have a healthy internal environment with diverse micro-flora, -fauna, and -funga in the gut. Probiotic foods like krauts, yogurts, and kimche offer rich diversity and a balanced internal environment by helping us establish and maintain these populations internally. These foods should be consumed every so often, especially after the use of antibiotics or harsh anti-parasitic herbal prescriptions.



## Enzymes

Have you ever eaten just a salad for lunch and felt more energy compared to when a heavy meal is eaten and a nap is desired afterward? We receive enzymes from fresh foods that are vital and alive and these enzymes can energize us!



Enzymes are responsible for a large part of digestion and how food is broken down in the gut. Enzymes are catalysts that initiate the breakdown of food particles in our stomach and intestines. They help our bodies receive energy from the foods that we eat. Enzymes are generated internally in addition to being found in the foods we eat. Internally, they are produced by our salivary glands, stomach, pancreas liver and small intestine. External sources of enzymes include Papaya, Hydrochloric acid (HCL), and Pineapple to name a few.

## Cravings & Addiction

Have you ever been shopping for produce at the supermarket and the smells from the bakery overwhelmed your senses – enough to where you stopped what you were doing to go and find out what was being baked? Many people hear little voices inside that are calling out for sugar and starches, and those voices would belong to the yeast inside of us that create the craving sensation foods that make us lethargic and sluggish.

Somehow, we always seem to crave those things in life that are the worst for our health. When we succumb to these cravings repeatedly over time a pattern is created. The inability to break an old pattern is called addiction. Even a good thing in large amounts can be bad for us. Have courage to break old patterns and habits. A small amount of courage and a moderate amount of moderation can lead to a large degree of satisfaction in life.



## Imbalances, Allergens, and Auto-Immune disorders

When there is a breakdown in our digestive function, our gut will tell us something is off. Foul smelling persistent gas, stomach aches or abdominal discomfort can all be symptoms that something has gone awry. Any bleeding is a sure sign that the digestive tract has been damaged and medical attention is needed.

Just as our skin can be scraped and start to bleed at the surface of our body, so too can the lining of our gut be injured by inflammatory substances such as chemical pesticides, gluten containing foods, pasteurized dairy, and even refined sugars. These are all known irritants to our digestive tract and over time the lining of our gut can become rash-like and bleed. At this point, our immune system is engaged to handle any infection that may be caused by these inflammatory foods. When food particles enter into our blood stream in damaged areas of the gut, white blood cells can begin attacking these food particles and allergies are created. Corn, wheat, lactose, and GMO soy are barely tolerated by our digestive system these days. Many people have become “allergic” to these once enjoyable foods.

Problems may persist if precautions are not taken. The white blood cells of our immunity begin attacking damaged cells destroyed by these known irritants in our body and hence an auto-immune disorder is created. Most people do not realize that auto-immune disorders originate in the gut. These illnesses can become systemic. This is a bad scenario.

When we use food as medicine, our choices become very important. We can transition to a state of health and then make the step toward a life that is comfortable. At this stage, we begin to thrive!



## OUR FOOD

### Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) Explained

Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) can be defined as foods whose genetic material has been altered using genetic engineering techniques. These plants and animals are the product of mainstream conventional agriculture and are “designed” to be resistant to chemical pesticide sprays. These foods are particularly troublesome for our digestive systems because they tend to contain the toxic sprayed pesticides when they enter the marketplace and the chances are very likely that we will be ingesting these harmful chemicals, thus injuring our digestion. Most of the food grown conventionally in the United States has been spliced with synthetic chemical components within the DNA and are unhealthy to consume. Please choose only foods that are known to be non-GMO or are labeled as such.

Let’s face it, our food comes from the earth. If we damage our food and the soils where they grow, our health will suffer. Modern mainstream agricultural techniques have left us in a deficient and toxic state of being. Gluten and lactose have become allergens in recent times with the advent of large scale scientific agribusiness and monoculture farming. Conventional wheat gluten and pasteurized dairy lactose are highly susceptible to the use of genetic modification, antibiotics and hormones. These foods act as glue in our digestive tract and cause havoc due to the unnatural processing methods before our consumption.

### Whole foods vs. Processed food

Whole foods are by far preferred over processed and refined, “value-added” nutrition. The term “whole food” comes from the pure nature of how they are free from processing and refined sugars, and come mostly direct from the source with minimal human interference. Which means that the nutrition gained comes from a stable healthy source and not from manipulation by our practices of enriching, bleaching, or dying. They are the most natural state of food. Examples include grains, vegetables, fruits, and even meat is healthier when unprocessed. Processed means that it took some machine or chemical to change the natural state of each food before we find it at the grocery store.

We will talk more about the differences between Organic and conventional farming methods in the next section. As seekers of wellness, we must eliminate obstacles to our health. Avoid foods that make you feel ill and make the wise choice to consume only those foods that help you to thrive.

## OUR CHOICES

### Organics

The organic standard of farming in the United States and beyond ensures that these foods are being grown without the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. They are more sustainably grown and harvested in a way that does not strip the soil of microorganisms and nutrients; instead there is more harmony with the land and the people who farm. Ultimately, we are able to enjoy the healthy foods that



have a richness of flavor because they are more diverse in their nutrition. Again, we see the importance of balance with diversity and the need for an ecosystem of microorganisms. We exist within the community of our internal and our external environments. Let natural living lead you back to a good relationship with yourself and with the earth.



It is always a good idea to choose healthy produce and natural grocery products with organic labels. Organic foods are grown without the use of toxic chemical pesticides, and are therefore healthy for our consumption. It is also a good idea to choose restaurants that serve organics whenever possible. But, sometimes we travel and there are limited options. I am going to show you a way for you and your loved ones to enjoy organic, delicious-tasting meals for under two dollars each.

#### Carbohydrates, Proteins, and Fats

##### Sugars

First, avoid all sugars unless they are naturally derived from fresh fruit. Dried fruit can be consumed after fresh fruits or on its own. Dried fruit can generally be avoided altogether because the sugars from these foods become highly concentrated during the dehydrating process. If you must consume things like ice cream, soda, and other products - be sure that they are made with real cane sugar. Ideally, these sugars are raw and unprocessed. Alternatives to sugar include unfiltered, unheated raw honey and agave. Maple syrup has a good mineral index and is a great substitute for processed sugar in most recipes. Stevia is a natural herbal substitute sweetener, too.



## Beans

Mung Beans are my favorite for making kitchari! Lentils can also be used because of their small size and ease of use in cooking, within our digestion, and they taste great. Use a split mung or lentil for optimal digestion; reduce cooking times or add more water with this type of legume. Pinto and larger beans are more difficult to cook and are therefore more difficult for us to digest. A sure sign of improperly digested bean proteins is flatulence. Undercooked beans or pressure-cooked beans can cause gas. Pressure cooking beans does not actually “cook” the bean, it destroys the bean without properly slow-cooking it. Sometimes there are no shortcuts, slow cooking beans is best. This is our health we’re talking about; let’s find the value in taking time to do things well.

## Rice

White Basmati rice is mentioned in the video because it is easily digested, however brown rice is classically known for its gluten-free properties and the flavor works nicely in most dishes. Whichever you choose, be sure that it has been grown without genetic modification and with organic land management practices.

## Oils

Use only raw organic, cold-pressed, extra-virgin oils because they have the highest enzyme and living properties of all oil options. Coconut, olive, and sesame oils are very delicious and can be found at any health food store or Co-op. There are many oils, the list is too big to name them all. Chose simple single-ingredient oils and find out what works best for you.

## Raw versus Frozen or Cooked Food

The optimal temperature range for enzyme activity is between 32 - 115 degrees Fahrenheit. If our digestive system is healthy and natural enzyme activity is allowed to be released from the food we consume, our digestion will flourish and we are happy because of the high levels of energy that results!





If any enzymes are exposed above or below this temperature range they immediately start to decrease in metabolic activity. This decrease can present a challenge for our bodies as we become more dependent on our internal organs for the production of the necessary enzymes for proper food digestion. Foods that have been exposed to below freezing temperatures or are prepared at high temperatures contain less enzymatic metabolic activity.

All enzyme activity will be beneficial for those individuals that have an impaired digestive function. But some people cannot digest raw foods...why is that? Digestive function can be impaired with improper diet and lifestyles with too much stress. The internal digestive fire needs supporting for these folks.

Enzymes or herbal supplements can be taken for those that have an impaired digestive function and still wish to enjoy cooked foods above 115 degrees. Herbs and spices in meals are a wonderful way to stimulate our pancreas and liver to produce digestive enzymes in our bodies when foods are heated, steamed, cooked, or baked. For those folks that have a severe digestive impairment (i.e. symptoms of gas, bloating, acid-regurgitation, loose or constipated bowels), steamed vegetables and rice can be used as a foundation for healing along with herbs, as prescribed by a Natural healthcare practitioner.

#### Acidity and Alkalinity

An acidic condition can be created by consuming food and substances that over-stimulate or over-heat our bodies. Examples of these types of irritants are excesses of caffeine, smoking, refined or processed flours and sugars, alcohol, and red meat.

So, what's the remedy for balance with an overly-acidic inflammatory experience in our bodies? Alkalinity is the answer! And the biggest source of alkalizing foods comes mostly from green leafy herbs and vegetables, especially cabbage. Some people have an aversion to foods like cabbage, but it's important to have the right attitudes about eating foods that are healthy for us. Often the foods that are best for us are not sweet or salty, they are usually bitter and sour. Try to be creative with these types of food, they offer us balance in today's world of grab-n-go fast food that may taste good but leave us feeling ill.



## LOCALLY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTED

### Farmers markets

Farmers know food because they are intimately in touch with the needs of the crops in relation to sun, air, soil, and water. Get to know local farmers near where you live and find out which produce is in season. They can help you learn about ways to enjoy your favorite fruits and vegetables. The best part about choosing food from local farms is that you will be consuming the food that is grown on the same land from the same environment where you live. It does not make much sense to consume foods from other areas with a different climate; in addition the carbon-footprint & cost of bringing in these outside resources can be detrimental to the health of our ecosystem in the long run. Local plants have all of the wisdom of how to thrive in the climate of your local region, therefore offering you the same nutritional information of how to exist and thrive where you live. Ask farmers about Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) involvement. This is where you can invest in a local farm and they will provide you continuous fresh produce, sometimes year-round!

### Food Co-operatives

Food Co-ops are also an essential market place to know about. Not only will you be informed about the healthiest foods that are grown locally but you will inadvertently become part of the community. Co-ops serve communities with healthy and convenient options. Become a member and learn about the classes and opportunities being offered surrounding a sustainable natural food system.

## FOOD COMBINATIONS

### A Brief Mention of Ayurveda and Kitchari...

For this aspect of the booklet, I have chosen the ayurvedic methods of healthy food combining but, I am admittedly not holding strictly to these methods exclusively. Today kitchari is recommended as part of a cleansing and detoxifying diet. It originates from the Vedas, which are ancient Sanskrit texts that teach Ayurveda - a medical science documenting a spiritual path of life. Ayurvedic medicine is considered one of the first forms of natural medicine passed down from our ancestors on how to live in a health and balanced way.

### Raw Fruits and Uncooked Vegetables

Let's start simply now. Raw vegetables, fruits, and salads should be eaten first – before other types of foods each meal.

Starting with raw fruits and uncooked vegetables allows these highly enzymatic foods to move through our digestive tract first, they are quick to metabolize and because they also release beneficial catalytic enzymes into the digestive system – they can be helpful for the denser foods we consume afterward.

**Raw fruits and vegetables, including salads, are best eaten before heavier, more dense or cooked foods.**



If there is a digestive weakness, ginger and warming spices can be utilized to “heat-up” the digestive fire. Please see a licensed healthcare practitioner for personal recommendations or read my Recipes and Practices booklet for more detailed information on this.



Watermelons and other melons need to be eaten alone or avoided when combined with other foods. I find that some cucumbers are similar in nature to melons and therefore can be eaten by themselves. Cucumber and watermelon with a dash of salt are great for a dehydrated person and are perfect for exhaustion from summer-heat. These foods are wonderful for rehydrating yourself.

#### Dense Fruits & Hearty Vegetables

We talked earlier about fresh fruits as the best option when sweets are desired. Foods like bananas, avocados, and yucca fruit are considered more dense, even when eaten raw, so it is best to consume less of these or they can be eaten after lighter, juicier fruits and vegetables.

#### Steamed or Cooked

#### A Note on Water

I am highlighting water here because of it's huge significance in human health around the globe. It is our most precious resource, and sustains life on planet earth. If you are not already protecting pure water sources in your area, I encourage you to take an interest in where your supply of water comes from and be sure you are consuming the highest possible standard for you wellbeing. Wild water is the most natural form and flows up from underground sources like springs. Some people consider well-water to be wild, too. Clean river water sources are only viable if there is no agriculture or adverse bacteria &



viruses, this can only be found with testing. Public tap water should be filtered first before drinking or used in food preparation. Now that we've discussed pure water, let's start cookin'.

Steaming vegetables can assist with an impaired digestion. There is less enzymatic activity if cooked over 115 degrees Fahrenheit, yet the nature of slightly cooked food assists the process of breaking it down. Herbs & spices offer some support to our digestive fire and can stimulate the organs that produce enzymes to be more active, ultimately continuing to assist the body in "cooking" or breaking down ingested food. This idea that the digestive fire within our gut will be supported by the assistance of herbs and spices originates from an eastern medical perspective. Raw food enthusiasts agree that enzyme activity is lost above 115 degrees Fahrenheit, so our bodies lose the vibrant freshness that raw food has to offer by decreasing enzyme function before ingestion. I believe that we have an ability to properly digest cooked foods based on our body's innate ability to create enzymes internally. Slightly cooked and steamed foods, when combined with digestive herbs, can be helpful for a person whose immune system is compromised.

We benefit from the enzymatic activity of raw uncooked foods AND our bodies have an innate ability to generate enzymes from a healthy-functioning liver and pancreas.



### Baked and Fried

Baking your own food is a nice way to monitor how much oil, salt, and processed ingredients you consume. I will be sharing an amazing squash recipe, and a delicious preparation that includes combining Asian pears with herbs and spices warming and tonifying the spleen and lung systems for healthy immunity. Please stay tuned, and look for my "RECIPES AND PRACTICES FOR HEALTHY LIVING" eBooklet coming soon!



Please remember that poor digestion starts with improper diet and lifestyle choices. I know that most people believe they are making decent choices when it comes to lifestyle habits. And, I want to encourage you to do the best that you can. Alcohol, smoking, pasteurized dairy, excess gluten, and foods contaminated with toxins all weaken a normal healthy digestion. Toxins in our environment come from conventional agricultural practices of chemical pesticide use and genetically modified foods. Toxicity can also come from heavy metal contaminants that have been released into our environment by commercial resource extraction practices that leave waste and fill byproducts into our water, soil, or air. In this eBooklet, we will only focus on toxicity in our food supply. But, an awareness of the ways in which our environment becomes adulterated is important.

Fried foods are considered toxic to our digestive system because of the distorted fats and high temperatures these foods are exposed to, our immune system is definitely required to figure out and break down these foreign foods that the body has a difficult time recognizing. I believe these foods to be so unlike anything found naturally, that the body is thus challenged and our immunity pressured to find a way to convert these substances into something useable for our benefit. Mostly, these indigestible by-products are stored as fat with our body.



## HERBS & SPICES AS MEDICINE

Salt – is it good or bad? Salt can be beneficial in small amounts, and it can also be detrimental if too much is used...so, what's the proper amount? Let's go over water-regulation in our bodies to find out what amount is best for each person.

Dehydration is a condition when we are lacking water, we feel tired and thirsty when dehydrated. On the other hand, oversaturation of water in our cells makes us sluggish, heavy and dull. Salt is probably best used to assist a person with hydration, meaning that as an electrolyte – salts help cells within the



body to open up and receive fluids when we consumed them. This way our cells can become rehydrated more easily. However, overuse of salts creates a heavy and lethargic “stuck” feeling in the body.

The only time that I use salt in the kitchen is with cooked beans because it can saturate legumes by opening up the cell walls while being soaked before cooking. They become saturated with water more easily with a small amount of salt, and are then able to be cooked to perfection. I very rarely use a sprinkle of salt when dining at restaurants because most establishments add salt in all of their recipes for flavor. Please consider salt alternatives like tamari, dulse, and kelp.

Too much salt is bad for health and puts an unnecessary burden on the heart and kidneys to circulate the excess fluids out of our tissues and into urine. An additional way to minimize gas and use less salt is to soak beans with a small amount of Kombu seaweed instead.



Cumin – is used to take the gas out of cooking beans. Add this spice early on in the kitchari making process, and you’ll notice less digestive discomfort.

Turmeric – is an all around anti-inflammatory herb that is a delicious spice when used in food. In traditional eastern medicine it is used to “invigorate the blood” for all aches and pains in our muscles, organs and joints.

Ginger- a nice digestively warming herb for the inner fire of our gut. It helps to “wake up” our digestion and ultimately warms up our circulation. This herb is often used in medicinal formulations to balance digestive discomfort from other more difficult herbs & medications to digest.

Coriander- is a digestive herb that minimizes gas and therefore increases ease of digestion.



Fenugreek – makes great sprouts micro-green sprouts! This herb can have a person smelling like maple syrup! We are interested in this spice because it regulates blood sugar and can decrease high cholesterol, which is an important part of detoxification.

Anise/Fennel – can be used interchangeably and both are incredible digestive aids!

Garlic- is a classic immune boosting herb. It's sulfuric properties also assist with liver detoxification.

Hot Chile Peppers –anti parasitic, benefit the lungs, and stimulates digestive fire. Cayenne is particularly known for improving circulation. Start in small amounts if sensitive to spicy flavors.



#### KITCHARI – The Miracle Meal

Kitchari is a traditional Indian meal and is an ideal recipe for food as medicine. It features either a mung bean or a lentil dahl, which is a split bean and rice combination that is cooked slowly over low heat. This dish is delicious with some of the world's best spices from India.

I have enjoyed kitchari as a person who likes good food that does not take too long to prepare. This recipe was introduced to me as the Indian “one-pot” meal of convenience and great taste. “One-pot” literally means that all ingredients fit into one pot for simplicity and ease of preparation.

As a busy entrepreneur, who began an acupuncture wellness center on a very small budget, I needed healthy delicious food that was simple to make, affordable and organic. Kitchari is all of these and I believe you will come to love its value as a way of wellness.

PLEASE STAY TUNED AT <https://youtu.be/5Arzz3wKHgQ> for the cooking show video!



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# One Pot Kitchari Recipe

Serves 6-10 people



1 cup Brown Rice

1 cup Mung Beans or Lentils

4.5 cups Water

3 cups Vegetables

3 tblsp *Kitchari Spice Mix* to Taste or use a dash of any of these other herbs to taste –

Turmeric

Ginger

Garlic

Cumin

Salt

Garam Masala

Fenugreek

Fennel Seed

Corriander

Please see the cooking show video at :

<https://youtu.be/5Arzz3wKHgQ>

Place all ingredients in a Crockpot or RiceCooker. If using a Crockpot - Turn on low heat before bedtime, (cook no longer than 8 hours) turn off first thing in the morning for a hot savory breakfast. If using a RiceCooker, split beans are preferred - simply turn it on and your meal will be hot and fresh within an hour! Add a tablespoon of desired Oil and Liquid AminoAcids or Tamari to taste...Enjoy!

