

Eat Well | Age Strong

WHAT SHOULD I EAT?

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*"As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to
remake the world . . . as in being able to remake ourselves.*

Ghandi

Why has food become so complicated?

Do you feel like I do, that trying to figure out what to eat has become a job in itself? We talk about it and write about it endlessly. We agonize about what to eat and what not to eat, and there's so much contradictory information out there that no one seems to know what's right any more.

Living well, free of disease and without a boatful of meds, seems like a pipe dream today. Chronic disease has become something we expect as we grow older... when is the other shoe gonna drop? When will my thyroid crash, or diabetes hit, or blood pressure skyrocket, or some autoimmune disease take hold?

We all just wait...

And yet sickness is not a natural consequence of aging. Before our industrial food system (literally) consumed us, we lived quite well into our older years, free of the diseases that have become epidemic in our time. In fact, we now know that about 90% of all disease is a result of the lifestyle choices we make.

How have we become so dysfunctional around this simple, crucial aspect of our lives?

- Our food system has changed – food isn't the same today as it was 50 years ago. In fact, many of the things considered food today aren't food at all – but chemical concoctions that our body doesn't even recognize or know what to do with.
- We have been poorly advised by “experts” and agencies that continue to base their advice on old myths and outdated science, and have some dubious conflicts of interests.
- Our lives have become fast and crazy. No one has the time or patience to sort out all the contradictory information that exists around this subject. So we eat what's convenient and easy without understanding the long-term impact.
- Everyone is unique and there is no one system that works for all. What is food for you, can be like a poison to someone else. It takes some experimenting and paying attention to our bodies' cues (think acid reflux, indigestion, mood swings, acne....) to learn what your body wants and needs. We need to listen and heed the signs.

Michael Pollan, journalist, food activist, and author of several books on our food system advises us to eat this way:

“Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.”

Here are some of the general guidelines I try to follow:

1. Eat real food in its most natural state.

If your great grandmother wouldn't recognize it as food – like anything with a long list of ingredients you can't pronounce or don't recognize, don't buy it and don't eat it! Most of the ingredients that are unrecognizable on a food package are concentrated sugar derivatives from corn, soy or wheat. These ingredients are highly addictive (our food producers want repeat customers) and even alter our taste buds so real foods no longer taste as satisfying.

2. Eat organic, grass fed, sustainable meat.

Factory farmed animals are routinely injected with hormones and antibiotics to keep them from getting sick and to fatten them up - fast. Plus, our whole system of factory-farmed animals is hideously cruel.

The injected steroids, antibiotics, stress hormones and sometimes disease that these animals experience become part of the meat that makes it to your plate.

Seek out natural, grass-fed, and organic sources at your local farms and CSA's. There are a growing number of sources online. And yes, I know it may be a little inconvenient at first and you might worry that it's more expensive, but consider...

1) This is *your* body. You are either going to pay now to care for it and feed it well or later to cure it.

2.) Most of us eat significantly larger portions than we need or than the body can handle. This extra is the stuff that settles around your middle as fat. An appropriate serving of meat is about 5-6 ounces (35 to 42 grams of protein). Unless you're a 200-pound body builder this is perfect serving for most. Trimming your serving size will save money that you can invest in better quality foods.

3.) By supporting producers with healthier and humane practices, we can bring change to a system that is badly broken. *(To learn more, check out the resources at the end of this article.)*

(One source, Butcher Box, provides 100% pasture raised, grass fed meats - approx. 20 servings of 5-8 oz. are about \$7/serving.)

3. Eat vegetables & fruits with every meal.

I know you've heard this a million times but we easily forget. Plants are our natural medicines, curatives, cancer fighters and disease inhibitors. They are rich in the nutrients your body needs to fight off disease and remain strong.

Try to include vegetables on every plate you put in front of you – some raw, some cooked. (Raw have the highest level of nutrients). And if you're not crazy about their taste, go [here](#) and try some of my simple and unique salads.

(Idea for an easy daily ritual: buy organic celery – one of our best detoxifying vegetables, cut off the base, place the whole plant in a container of water in your refrigerator. Eat a couple stalks daily. You can even smear on a little almond butter.)

(Tip – Start your plate with a layer of raw greens (spinach, arugula, chopped romaine, etc.) and a drizzle of olive oil. Place the protein of your choice on top of the greens – a sautéed chicken breast, fried eggs, even chili or a stew. The greens soften and slightly cook from the heat of the meal. Great way to get more greens in.)

4. Eat organic & pastured eggs.

For years we have been told that eggs increase the bad cholesterol in our arteries. A solid body of [research](#) now indicates that for most people, cholesterol in food – eggs in particular – has a much smaller effect on blood cholesterol levels than before believed. And, in fact, it is now believed the 13 nutrients found in egg yolks may help lower the risk of heart disease.

Egg yolks are one of our best sources of choline – which is crucial for liver, brain, muscle, energy, and detox functions, and it is even

believed to act as an anti-aging neurotransmitter, slowing the aging process.

Why organic? They say you are what you eat eats.

Factory raised chicks are crammed into close quarters, fed an unnatural diet to fatten them so quickly they can barely stand, and also dosed with antibiotics that you do not want to ingest. Organic chickens are raised according to the highest standards to produce the healthiest meat and eggs.

5. Choose organic produce when possible.

The heavy doses of chemical sprays that are now routinely used on our crops are hard to escape. In many cases they cannot be washed off since the chemicals absorb into the flesh of the plant. Berries in particular absorb the spray and cannot be cleaned of the pesticides by washing.

Check out the “Clean 15” and the “Dirty Dozen” on the [Environmental Working Group’s](#) site. This will help you to determine which are safest to eat. I carry my iPhone with me to the veggie counter and click on the link to remind me.

6. Include good fats in your diet.

For many years we've been told that fat makes us fat, eating cholesterol drives cholesterol levels up, and that vegetable oils are healthy alternatives to saturated fat.

All three of these "facts" are now contradicted by the latest science.

Many studies have been done on this controversial subject: One meta-analysis published in the [*Journal of Clinical Nutrition*](#) and included close to 350,000 people. Another followed 58,000 Japanese men for 14 years. Both arrived at the same conclusion and showed no significant evidence to link saturated fat to increases in cardiovascular disease. The [Japanese study](#) also found that those who ate more saturated fat had a lower risk of stroke.

Many cultures (Inuit's, Maasai) derive the bulk of their calories from fat (from 60-90%) and are almost entirely free of obesity and disease.

Also consider the "French Paradox" where a population known for having the highest intake of saturated fat has the lowest rate of heart disease of any industrialized country.

We could not exist without fat. It comprises about 60% of our brain matter. It lines every cell in our body – all 37 trillion of them, helps our nervous system function, gives us energy, and is necessary for the absorption of vitamins, which is why we dress our salads with oil.

(Researchers from the Joslin Diabetes Center indicated that the low fat recommendations for diabetics promoted by the American Diabetic Association have in fact been harmful, bad advice making diabetes worse! Mark Hyman, M.D.)

Include fats like coconut oil, avocado oil, olive oil, nuts, seeds, ghee (clarified butter), and pastured meats. Eliminate all man-made margarines, butter substitutes, and processed spreads.

7. Push in some “superfoods” every day.

There are certain foods that rise above the rest in quality. Many of these superfoods are common and readily available today. Some of my favorites include: celery, beets, broccoli, kale, wild salmon, asparagus, avocado, basil, blueberries, garlic, dark chocolate, olive oil, walnuts, pomegranate, and sweet potato.

8. Get protein at every meal.

As we get older, our muscle mass tends to diminish. This may have more to do with the sedentary life style many adopt in their older years than it does with aging itself.

(In one 8-week study, a group of frail 87-96 year-old nursing home residents were put on a weight training program. After eight weeks their leg muscle strength almost tripled and the size of their thigh muscles increased by more than 10 %.)

Protein is our body builder and repairer. It is also the most satiating food (along with fats) you can consume, so it keeps you satisfied until your next meal. It is recommended that you get about 30 grams per meal – most importantly at breakfast. The best sources of protein include meats, eggs, seafood, nuts, yogurt, and grass-fed, whey protein.

9. Vary your diet & do not eat the same thing every day.

Eating the same foods day in and day out is a surefire way to starve your body of nutrition and develop food allergies. The body needs a diverse diet. Give it that.

(Tip - When you do your grocery shopping, pick up a new vegetable each week and give it a try. We get into ruts. Pull yourself out and experiment with new foods.)

10. Eat grains in moderation and be sure to prepare them properly.

There is enough controversy around grains to lead me to a place of caution with these foods. David Perlmutter, M.D., in his book *Grain Brain*, refers to them as the brain's silent killers and links them directly to degenerative brain disorders – namely Alzheimer's, as well

as several other conditions we all want to avoid: anxiety, depression ADHD, insomnia, and intestinal problems.

Grains come with substances that are toxic to us humans (gluten, lectin and phytates) and have numerous damaging effects, causing mineral deficiencies, damaging the lining of the gut, inhibiting digestion and leading to disease.

Eat them in moderation. Be sure to properly prepare and soak them with an acid such as lemon juice or cider vinegar, and diminish or eliminate gluten entirely from your diet.

(Studies have shown that people who are gluten intolerant and even some with celiac can consume genuine sourdough bread. Make sure it's real sourdough. If it has yeast in the ingredients, it is not sourdough.)

11. Add foods that support a healthy gut.

There's a whole part of your body which I'm guessing you've never even heard of. In fact, scientists are just starting to furiously explore what they are now calling our newest organ, the "Human Microbiome". And what they are finding is changing how we look at human disease and cures.

The microbiome has a profound impact on our health. It has been referred to as our second brain and is comprised of trillions of beneficial bacteria and microbes that live in and on you and are vital to your health. It is home to our immune system. It helps us digest

our food. It impacts our moods and behavior and can even contribute to anxiety and depression.

The microbiome wields immense power over our health, creating or curing disease, and is largely influenced by the food we eat. Our job is to FEED IT WELL. All of the foods mentioned in this article plus the following heavy hitters will help it to thrive:

- **Fermented Foods** – sauerkraut, kombucha, kefir, and yogurt (not the kind with sugar and additives but pure, raw, pastured yogurt). Make sure what you are buying is *fermented*, not just pickled. Fermented foods are natural probiotics that support the good bacteria in your belly.
- **Bone Broth** – This is so easy to make, just takes a little time to simmer. Check out my recipe [here](#), or you can purchase on-line or in most grocery stores.
- **Organ Meats** – We have moved away from foods like liver, kidney and other organ meats, yet these are richest in vitamins and minerals and the omega 3 fatty acids that the body craves to quiet the fires of inflammation.

Liver is easy to prepare. Slice it thin, sprinkle with salt and pepper and lightly sauté to provide an extremely healthy protein and curative.

(If you can't bear the thought of eating liver or any organ meats, there are excellent sources of liver power you can easily add to your diet.)

12. Avoid genetically modified foods.

In the last 20 years GMO's have quietly made their way into our food system with little knowledge of the consequences. Many countries have completely banned them – the U.S. is not one of them.

What we do know about GMO's: Seeds are genetically modified to enable them to survive hefty doses of chemical sprays. Traces of these toxins are finding their way into our foods. They have been found in oatmeal, cereals and boxed foods, red wine and even some organics. The active ingredient of these chemical sprays, glyphosate, has been linked to breast cancer, birth defects, autism, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's to name just a few.

Many scientific studies demonstrate concerns about GMO's such as DNA from genetically modified crops potentially making its way to human DNA. Another area of concern is the link of GMO's to health conditions that trigger various autoimmune diseases.

13. Avoid sugar & processed foods.

Sugar is a whole subject in itself. It carries no nutritional value and brings with it numerous health concerns:

- Messes with your hormones.
- Causes chronic low-grade inflammation.
- Starves the brain of vitamins and minerals (glucose uses the same channels as vitamins and minerals to move into the

cells). When sugar is in excess, it squeezes out the vitamins and minerals and they do not get absorbed.

- Feeds the bad gut bacteria and crowds out healthy bacteria required for optimal health and digestion.

14. Eat slowly & leave the table a little hungry.

Many cultures have rules that you stop eating before you are full. In Japan, they say eat until you are four-fifths full. Islamic culture has a similar rule. In German culture they say, 'tie off the sack before it's full'.

(It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to register the amount of food you have packed in. Eat slowly, take smaller bites and carry on a conversation between them.)

15. Eat just a little less.

We are a country of over-consumers, pushing in more calories than the body needs and it shows. About 70% of our population is overweight or obese. Glue yourself to your chair after your first helping and don't go back for those seconds. The body can only digest so much and the excess gets turned into fat.

16. Drink filtered water, herbal teas & splurge with a little red wine.

Sodas, soft drinks, fruit drinks, bottled teas, Gatorade & other sweet drinks are empty calories, loaded with sugar, high fructose corn syrup, chemicals and other things the body doesn't recognize or want. In fact, soft drinks are one of the driving forces behind our obesity epidemic.

Go for water to quench your thirst and always drink filtered.

17. Don't buy food where you buy gasoline.

Plan ahead and take healthy snacks with you.

Whew - that's a lot and don't even think about trying to tackle this all at once.

The key to sustainable change is in the small, consistent things you do that become part of your life and your daily rituals: adding a superfood, pushing in more protein at breakfast, switching from vegetable oil to olive oil.

Simple adjustments when consistently carried out will have major impact over time. We just need a little patience.

Take one thing that feels right and easy to do and try it for one week. If you like it, add something new the following week and so on.

Ultimately, you are the only one who can change your life and your health. No one else can do this for you – not your doctor, your best friend, your mate, your counselor. You are ultimately responsible for your life, your health, and your longevity. So jump in and join me on this journey to a long, strong life. And never hesitate to reach out with your questions or concerns at elaine@elainepauly.com.

I love hearing from you!

Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine', with a large, stylized initial 'E'.

PS – Know how your food is produced and get involved by buying from sustainable sources: co-ops, local farms, and CSAs. For more information, check out some of the documentaries that have been filmed on our food industry. Warning, some of this is hard to watch, but change occurs with each of us first, then it ripples out into the world. ♥

Food Inc. <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/food-inc/>

Tim Zimmerman: writer, reporter

<https://timzimmermann.com/2015/04/17/documentaries-about-animals-food-and-factory-farming/>

Fresh: <http://www.freshthemovie.com/>

<http://www.freshthemovie.com/resources/learn-more/>

