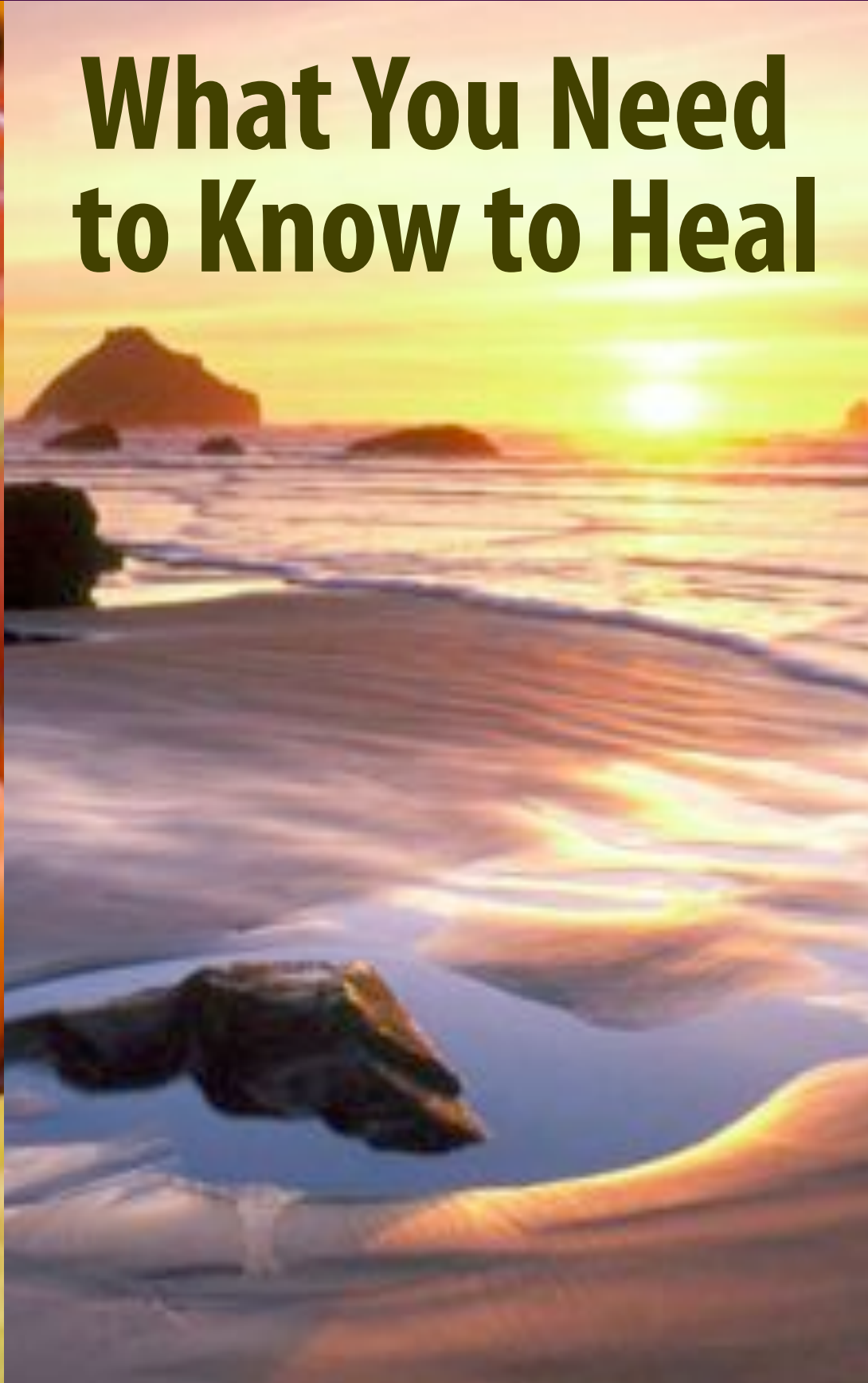


**A Cliff Notes Guide to Nutrition and Cancer**

# **What You Need to Know to Heal**



**Mark C. Bricca, ND, LAc & Bodhicitta Healing Arts**

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

## A Cliff Notes Guide to Nutrition and Cancer: What You Need to Know to Heal

© 2010 by Mark C. Bricca, ND, LAc & Bodhicitta Healing Arts  
[www.bodhicittahealingarts.com](http://www.bodhicittahealingarts.com)

Please share this guide freely with whomever it may serve.  
I only ask kindly that you include my contact information in case folks have questions.

This work is dedicated to my beloved patients, who are some of my greatest teachers.  
May all beings remember the depth of their interdependence...  
With each other, with the food that nourishes them, and with the earth that sustains us all.

And...

*“May I be like a guard for those who are protectorless,  
A guide for those who journey on the road.  
For those who wish to go across the water,  
May I be a boat, a raft, a bridge.”*

—Shantideva

It is my sincere hope that this small eBook will serve you well on your healing journey.

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

**What do you think... Can your food *really* prevent and even treat cancer...  
(Oh, and still taste good, too)?**

**It sure can be challenging to know what to eat these days, can't it?** It seems that every few years a new diet comes out that's purported to be the "right" one. Add to that the aggressive marketing by the food industry and the myriad ways our culture has grown ever more disconnected from production and consumption of natural foods, and it's no wonder so many folks are confused about what's truly healthful to eat. It used to be that we instinctively knew what nourished us; we could trust available foods and our culinary traditions to be life sustaining. Now most of us are mired in a tangle of confusing advice about diet that has supplanted our instincts, and it's grown increasingly challenging to know where to look for tasty, real, vital food.

Well, my sincere hope is that this little booklet will be like a Cliff Notes guide to help you discern what to eat—what to eat to promote your long-term vitality, or to heal if you're facing a chronic illness such as cancer. While the recommendations that follow are not meant to be exhaustive or perfect for everyone, they represent a powerful nutritional foundation that I've seen help many people. In practice I frequently modify them a bit to best suit each individual's needs, and I'd be happy to do that for you, too. That said, if you're able to incorporate even some of these dietary guidelines into your life I promise that you'll reap significant rewards in your state of well being as well as heal more deeply if you're ill.

**So, what should you eat?** What kinds of foods and dietary habits will help you prevent or heal from cancer, as well as a host of other chronic illnesses like heart disease, diabetes, depression, digestive disturbances, hormonal imbalances, and weight issues? For those of you who might appreciate a condensed version of even this relatively brief guide, let me share a few key points that you can easily grab onto now... before I dive into it all in a bit more detail (because, unlike rocket science, knowing what to eat is supposed to be easy!):

*Eat fresh, real food that your great-great grandmother would recognize, food that you could pull from the ground, pluck from a tree, gather, hunt, or easily prepare. If a food's ingredients sound too much like tongue twisters, have too many syllables, or if you can keep it "fresh" in your pantry for months and months, then it's probably not real food. Include a rainbow of colors in your diet each day (except for Skittles) to benefit from nature's pharmacy of phytonutrients, and eat as many vegetables as you can. Don't be afraid of quality fats! Rather, include them in you daily fare in ample quantity and watch your health improve. Just avoid the 'junk' fats (read below for more on that) and reduce your consumption of carbohydrates, especially sugars, sweets, and soft drinks. Remember to start your day with breakfast, include a little protein at each meal, and eat foods that you enjoy in a relaxed environment among good company. Most of all, offer yourself*



# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

*grace as you attempt dietary changes. I know how challenging it can be to create new habits, and this is not about getting anything “right.” Allow these suggestions to spur you on a creative exploration of new gastronomic pleasures, and be sure to ask for support if you need it.*

Okay, for those of you who'd like (a little) more detail, let's explore the question of what to eat in a bit more depth. For starters, I'd like to share a few important principles that underlie the following recommendations. I find that it helps to have a basic sense of these ideas, because they provide a useful context for understanding the rationale behind the dietary suggestions I'll be making. So, I invite you to put on your science caps (fear not... just for a few harrowing seconds, and then you can take them off) and follow along as we seek to understand how and why diet can be such a truly potent determinant of your health...

It's widely accepted that **inflammation** is a common thread unifying virtually all disease states, including cancer. Moreover, **impaired sugar regulation and insulin resistance** both favor a hormonal milieu that supports the genesis of cancer as well as most other chronic, degenerative diseases. Why is this so (you may be wondering...)?

Well, when it comes to inflammation a little bit is good, but a lot can be quite bad. It's crucial to your ability to heal following injury and to mount an effective immune response, among other important physiological functions, and without a certain amount of inflammation you actually wouldn't survive very long. But, when too much inflammation is present it ceases to be beneficial and instead becomes harmful and destructive. You can imagine inflammation to be like a fire burning inside you—a fire that, when it's well tended and contained, provides essential warmth and energy for digestion, metabolism, and cellular repair. However, just as with a fire in nature, if it's not controlled or if it grows too large it can easily wreak havoc and cause lots of damage. So, we want to foster just the right amount of baseline inflammation in your body—a little, but not too much.



*But why, exactly, is too much inflammation so deleterious to your health and well being?*

It's because excess inflammation acts like a profound, chronic stress on your body that wears it down and induces a catabolic (or destructive) tissue state. Cells and tissues wear out sooner than they ought to when they're battered by the increased levels of free radicals and oxidative stress that inflammation creates, much like the way rust prematurely erodes a piece of iron. The same forces that serve to mobilize your immune system and help you maintain equilibrium in the face of an acute stress or infection can exact a heavy toll on your reserves and your hormonal system over time. Though your body will try to maintain physiological balance it will gradually become depleted and lose its ability to do so. Depending on which organ systems are affected, this loss of balance can become the seed for virtually every chronic disease we struggle with in the modern, developed world.

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

The great news, though, is that diet (along with lifestyle) is an extremely powerful modulator of inflammation and the simplest means of regulating your inner inflammation thermostat. This is because every cell in your body is housed in an elegant cell membrane built of phospholipids (or fats) and cholesterol. A super-intelligent selectively permeable lipid bi-layer studded with fluid-filled pores and highly specific transport proteins, the cell membrane is a huge determinant of what gets in and out of each of each of your body's cells. (It's really quite ingenious, especially when you see an up-close electron micrograph of its surface!) You can think of the fats that compose your cell membranes as being akin to an alphabet that your cells use to construct intercellular messengers—molecules with fancy sounding names like cytokines, prostaglandins, and interleukins that they use to communicate with one another and with whole body systems. If your cells were birds in your body's inner forest, then these messenger molecules would be their birdsong and the fats in your cell membranes would be the individual notes that make up that song.

Essential fatty acids and whole, unprocessed monounsaturated and saturated fats such as those found in wild, cold-water fishes, meat and fat from grass-fed animals, full-fat dairy, nuts, seeds, green vegetables, and coconuts tend to promote what I might call cellular “resilience,” helping to keep your cells flexible and ensuring that they are able to communicate effectively with each other. Moreover, these types of fats are the *essential* building blocks your cells need to construct hormones and other “words” capable of communicating a physiological message of homeostasis, repair, and healing.

On the other hand, fats that are overly processed or simply not found in nature—hydrogenated or “trans” fats like those found in margarine, for example, as well as fats found in animals fed grain instead of grass, fried fats, certain seed oils like safflower and canola, and fats that are not stored so as to remain fresh—these fats favor the creation of molecules that convey messages of inflammation, disrepair, and chronic stress. Given that many of your body's messenger molecules (hormones) are built from fatty acids and cholesterol, it's easy to imagine how a low-fat diet or one that's rich in damaged fats can create an environment where your body must try to play its beautiful physiologic symphony without the benefit of a full orchestra. Rather than being like harmonious music your physiology falls out of tune. This “falling out of tune” is the real origin of disease, and it follows, then, that “retuning” your physiology is one of the keys to the restoration of health.

When your diet is composed of whole, fresh, unprocessed foods rich in vitamins, minerals, trace elements, and phytonutrients (nature's botanical pharmacy) it will possess all the necessary elements to keep your body-mind in well tuned harmony with just the right amount of inflammation. In contrast, a diet that's deficient in these essential nutrients will lack the necessary building blocks and cofactors required to sustain homeostasis and well being. Instead, the common thread running through all chronic disease states—excess *inflammation*—will ensue, and thus will begin a slippery slope towards ill health and diminished vitality.

Inflammation, elevated blood sugar, and increased insulin levels (as in diabetes and metabolic syndrome, for example) tend to foster each other in a physiologic vicious cycle that has huge

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

implications for conditions like cancer and heart disease. When your body is under stress it does what it knows how to do to protect you from the saber-toothed tiger it thinks may be chasing you down for its next meal (evolutionarily speaking, your body hasn't yet figured out that there is no menacing saber-toothed tiger—just your kids screaming in the back seat of the car or perhaps that looming deadline—and no imminent threat to life or limb); the physiologic stress response ramps up inflammation to prepare your body to heal in case you're injured, elevates blood sugar to supply your vital organs with high-octane fuel (glucose) in case you need to fight or flee, and increases insulin levels to make sure all that sugar floating around will be able to get into your cells ASAP for use by mitochondria (incredible little cellular power plants) to make quick energy.

The problem is... what if this is not a fleeting state of affairs in the face of an acute stress, injury, or illness, but rather your day-to-day metabolic milieu, as it is for so many people? Then these constantly high blood sugars “glycate” or damage proteins in your body, which greatly hastens the ageing process. Too much insulin acts like an inappropriate growth factor, which is why chronically elevated insulin levels are so strongly associated with the development of most types of cancer among other degenerative diseases. Moreover, after a while in the face of always-elevated blood sugar and insulin your body will begin to think that you're “crying wolf,” because it's not well adapted to face acute stress all the time; this can create a state of insulin resistance and hormonal imbalance, which is the hallmark of metabolic syndrome, type II diabetes, and many other disease states.

You might think of each of your body's cells as having a tiny energy producing fire inside its mitochondria. (Many different spiritual traditions talk about the Divine Spark that each of us carries—I like to think that this is it. But, alas, I digress...!) You see, the problem is that when you rely on glucose (lots of carbohydrates) as your primary cellular fuel it's kind of like stoking that fire with bone-dry pine kindling that goes up in a blaze of sparks and glory—you get quick energy followed by a crash, and all those sparks are analogous to the free radicals and pro-oxidant compounds that your body generates as byproducts of this kind of cellular combustion. However, it turns out that fats, especially, as well as healthy proteins and modest amounts of truly complex carbohydrates are rather more akin to stoking your internal metabolic fires with good, solid oak logs—the kind that smolder for hours and warm up the entire house. This is what you want—stable energy that's even through the day and that doesn't create lots of extra “sparks” for your body to deal with.

**Therefore, making dietary choices that minimize your body's overall inflammatory burden and stabilize your blood sugar and insulin levels has the potential to profoundly influence both your present and future states of health.** Enjoying foods that are as nutritionally dense and rich in healing phytonutrients as possible is a powerful way to align with your cells' evolutionary biology and take advantage of nature's potent healing pharmacy. It really isn't overstating the truth to say, *“Food is medicine you take three times a day.”* Moreover (and most importantly!) well-prepared, fresh, whole foods are downright tasty, and there are some excellent books available that can help you expand your culinary repertoire if you need to. Feel free to check out the Resources page on my website if you'd like a few suggestions, and you

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

can certainly ask me as well. I love tasty food, and I never tire of talking about cooking. The Farmers' Market is one of my favorite hangouts.

I know that changing dietary habits can be pretty challenging and I have tremendous empathy for the effort such changes can take. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions or, especially, if you find that you need support in incorporating the following suggestions into your healing regimen. A few of my recommendations may seem to contradict what you hear from the mass media, from some conventional doctors, and even from the Surgeon General, but I promise you they're based on very sound science, oodles of study, and the experience of countless people who've followed them to good effect and improved health. These are the guidelines I personally do my best to follow, and they would inform how I'd feed God Himself (or Herself) were He (or She) to pull up a seat at my supper table.

And now you can take your science caps off. Phew! Here are my specific nutritional healing recommendations in a little more detail:

## **Cooked Vegetables:**

- The primary reason for favoring cooked vegetables is because cooking enhances the availability of many nutrients. Raw vegetables are best minimized temporarily while you are healing (especially during wintertime), except for salads and fermented foods (such as raw sauerkraut), which can be enjoyed fairly liberally.
- Try to eat a wide variety of vegetables (except potatoes, which promote high blood sugars and insulin resistance).
- Include plenty of dark, leafy greens and see if you can include a rainbow of colors in your diet every day in order to consume a varied array of naturally occurring phytonutrients and antioxidants.
- Cruciferous vegetables (such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, brussels sprouts, collard greens, turnips, and rutabagas) are especially therapeutic. They contain a number of phytonutrients that promote optimal liver function and hormonal balance, while they minimize inflammation and enhance detoxification. Fancy compounds called isothiocyanates in cruciferous veggies have even been found to inhibit a variety of cancer stem cell types and induce apoptosis (programmed cell suicide) in malignant cells via regulation of a critical gene called p53. All this from lowly broccoli! Note that it's important to eat only cooked crucifers (avoid the raw broccoli and



# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

cauliflower on the hors d'œuvres platter), since raw ones contain substances called goitrogens that can impair thyroid function.

- Garlic is particularly noteworthy. As a rich source of naturally occurring selenium and sulphur-containing compounds, it enhances detoxification, helps to normalize blood vessel formation in malignant tumors, and, studies suggest, even assists the delivery of chemotherapeutic agents to tumor areas that have a poorly developed (“hypoxic”) blood supply.
- Mushrooms are worthy of special attention, since they tend to support immune function and have favorable effects on hormonal metabolism in most cancers (especially breast cancers) with the possible exception of prostate cancer, where their effects may be less desirable.
- *You cannot eat too many vegetables—they’re vital to healing!* Locally grown, organic produce is often the most nutritious and the freest from harmful chemicals. I encourage you to visit farmers’ markets, and I invite you to ask me about locations near where you live.

## **Grains:**

- *If desired*, eat one to two cups of cooked grains per day. It’s not essential to include grains in your daily fare and, for many, the most healing diet is often one that’s based on lots of vegetables, moderate protein, and ample healthy fats [see below] with only a minimal amount of grain-based foods.
- The healthiest grain choices are brown rice, oatmeal, millet, amaranth, buckwheat, and teff. Quinoa is especially recommendable, and easily prepared. Please ask me if you need recipe ideas. It’s very important to minimize or altogether avoid refined grains like white rice, since they are nutritionally poor and they contribute to blood sugar deregulation.
- Small amounts of whole-grain bread are fine to enjoy (as long as it’s truly whole-grain and, ideally, naturally leavened—the kind that is dense and brick-like). Please try to avoid all breads made from refined flours.
- Avoidance of gluten-containing grains (principally barley, kamut, rye, spelt, and, especially, wheat) if you suspect that you may be gluten-sensitive is well worthwhile. Gluten sensitivity can be evaluated with an “elimination-challenge” diet, or via laboratory testing if indicated. Non-celiac gluten intolerance is increasingly common these days, and it can set the stage for the kind of inflammation and immune system deregulation that underpins the cancer process as well as a whole host of other chronic diseases in virtually every body system.

## **Legumes:**

- You *may* wish to eat legumes in small amounts, such as split peas, lentils, kidney beans, pinto beans, mung beans, black beans, garbanzo beans, and adzuki beans. However, as a concentrated source of carbohydrates like grains, they are best consumed in moderation.
- Pre-soak legumes (except peas and lentils) overnight, and cook them thoroughly to minimize their gas-forming potential. If you are not an accustomed bean eater, it’s best to begin with small quantities in order to minimize digestive upset.
- What about consumption of soybeans, soymilk, and tofu? If you have low thyroid function, then you’ll likely feel better if you avoid these foods since they contain goitrogens that can



# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

slow down your thyroid. However, evidence is mounting that soy foods also have meaningful anti-cancer effects in addition to some other health benefits. Therefore, I now consider it wise for most people, including people with many types of cancer, to consume a small amount of soy on a regular basis. The key is to eat it how it's always been eaten in traditional cultures, which means as a condiment or as a part of your meals... not in massive quantities the way we're apt to in America. Enjoy a little tofu in a stir-fry, for example, but stay away from textured vegetable protein (or TVP), which shouldn't even really be called "food." I'm still not a huge fan of gobs of soymilk, though I consider small amounts (4 ounces or so per day) to be okay for most people, especially women. Because they are fermented, miso and tempeh are going to be your most healthful soy food choices, and everyone can consume these foods regularly. A bowl of miso soup a day keeps the doctor away... or was that an apple a day...?

## **Fish:**

- Deep-sea, cold-water fishes, such as wild salmon, halibut, black cod (also called sablefish or butterfish), sardines, and mackerel are preferred for their healing fatty acid content. *Please avoid all farm-raised fish.*
- Fish is among the healthiest of protein sources and protein is vital to healing, especially following conventional cancer treatments and surgical procedures. Moreover, deep-sea, cold-water fishes are rich in long-chain (essential) fatty acids that normalize cellular communication, minimize inflammation, and help prevent numerous chronic illnesses, especially heart and neurological diseases.
- Try to moderate your consumption of tuna, since it can contain high levels of heavy metals like mercury. Canned tuna that's labeled "light" or "chunk light" tends to be lower in mercury though, because it's made from smaller, younger fish that have had less time to concentrate heavy metals in their tissues. Even so, I think it's probably best to cap your tuna sandwich quota at no more than 2 per week.
- For a positively delicious alternative to canned tuna that's safe to eat as often as your heart desires, you might like to sample the Portuguese mackerel in organic extra-virgin olive oil that's available from Vital Choice Seafood (see the Vital Choice link on the Resources page of my website). I know most people imagine that mackerel must be fishy or just plain yucky tasting but, I promise you, you may become addicted if you try this stuff. I've even had confirmed fish-haters tell me that it's tasty. It whips up into a great "tuna" salad, and it's one of my favorite nutritious "fast" foods—ready right out of the can.

## **Poultry, Eggs, and Meat:**

- Eggs are an excellent source of protein and (if they are free-range) healthy fats. Enjoy up to a dozen or so eggs per week depending on your constitution, and try to get "pastured" eggs from hens that are allowed to forage freely.
- Lamb, grass-fed beef, bison, and wild game are all very healthy choices. Avoid meats that are not grass-fed, free-range, or wild, since meat from conventional feedlot-raised animals fed corn-silage contains an abundance of pro-inflammatory fats, exogenous hormones, and antibiotics. Also, minimize consumption of well-done and, especially, charred meats, since they contain potent carcinogenic (cancer-causing) compounds.

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

- Favor free-range or organically raised chicken and/or turkey, whenever possible.
- Organ meats like liver, heart, and thymus (commonly known as “sweetbreads”) are particularly nutritious and were prized foods that our ancestors fed to pregnant women and people convalescing from illness. They are some of the richest sources of healing fats, fat soluble vitamins, and other “superfood” nutrients we have and it’s unfortunate that they’ve fallen out of favor as an important part of our culinary repertoire. That being said, I definitely recommend you look for organ meats from grass-fed, organic, or free-range animals since toxic chemicals tend to concentrate in these parts of conventionally raised ones. Check out the book, Nourishing Traditions, by Sally Fallon, for some scrumptious recipes that incorporate organ meats and helpful pointers on how you can include these nutritional powerhouses into your daily fare.
- In general, a 3-4 ounce portion of meat (about the size of a deck of cards) along with plenty of vegetables and ample healthy fats makes a nourishing meal.
- Stock prepared from the bones of poultry, beef, lamb, bison, and wild game is a nutritionally dense superfood that’s truly medicinal when it comes to healing many illnesses. Properly made, it’s a delicious source of essential minerals and substances called glycosaminoglycans (GAGs for short) that form the foundation of your connective tissue and the lining of your entire digestive tract. Well-made stocks have always been a staple in good kitchens because they make everything taste better—if you’re unfamiliar with how to prepare them, check out Nourishing Traditions for some excellent recipes that are super easy to make or ask me for my recipe. Your grandmother would be proud!



## **Dairy:**

- Yogurt and kefir are excellent foods to enjoy on a regular basis, unless you are sensitive or allergic to dairy products. They are great sources of probiotics like acidophilus that help to promote digestive health and support balanced immune function. I recommend that you consume whole-milk dairy products whenever possible.
- Unprocessed cheeses, especially those made from raw cow, sheep, or goat milk, are healthy choices for most people, too. (Avoid processed cheeses like American cheese, though).

## **Fruit:**

- You can enjoy a small amount (one or two pieces, or a cup of berries) of practically any fruit each day. All berries and brightly colored fruits (such as blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, cherries, grapes, and pomegranates) are especially recommendable, because they are rich sources of pigmented compounds called anthocyanins. These phytonutrients

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---


inhibit a number of the cell signaling pathways that support tumor genesis, act as powerful naturally occurring antioxidants, and support tissue repair and vascular integrity.

- Just be careful not to overdo your fruit consumption, since all fruits are concentrated sources of simple carbohydrates that can disrupt your body's blood sugar regulatory systems. In general it's best to favor whole fruits over fruit juices, which are really not too far at all from liquid sugar.

## **Sweeteners:**

- Only very small amounts of pure maple syrup, honey, rice syrup, and malted barley syrup may be used. Enjoy, but please don't overdo them, as too much sugar in the diet is a direct promoter of cancer as well as many other chronic disease processes. Stevia is a delicious sweetener as well, and it has the added advantage of not elevating your body's blood sugar or contributing to insulin resistance.
- Please do your best to avoid all processed (white and brown) sugar, NutraSweet, agave nectar, and other refined or artificial sweeteners.
- *Reducing your consumption of refined carbohydrates is one of the most powerful things you can do to support your health and well being.* Including plenty of quality fats and moderate protein in your daily fare will help with sugar cravings in short order as your metabolism rebalances, but I know how difficult it can be to curb a sweet tooth. I'm happy to support you in attaining this worthwhile goal, as there are many strategies that can make it much easier and less arduous as you're making the transition. Please ask for help if you need it!

## **Butter, Fats, and Oils:**

- Extra virgin olive oil is a mainstay of healing diets. Enjoy 1-2 tablespoons (or more if you wish), per day in all recipes (except for high-heat cooking, where coconut oil is preferred). Try it drizzled on cooked vegetables and, of course, in salads.
- Coconut oil (sometimes called coconut butter) is decidedly a "good" fat, and is especially useful in recipes where you must heat the oil (due to its stability under higher temperatures). It has a mild, pleasant flavor, is quite healing for the digestive tract, and favorably impacts cholesterol levels and metabolic function. A couple tablespoons per day are generally not too much for most people. It's a great fat to scramble eggs in, and it's delicious in many vegetable recipes, too. Full-fat coconut milk can be used in creamy soups and curries and as part of a base for nutritious smoothies.
- I wholeheartedly encourage you to enjoy butter on a daily basis, without fear of it causing heart disease; 1-3 tablespoons per day is generally a healthful amount to consume, especially with vegetables since butter enhances the absorption of minerals. Ideally, look for butter produced from grass-fed cows, since their milk contains lots of vitamin A as well as a number of important short- and medium-chain fatty acids that benefit liver and digestive functions in particular. Kerrygold is one widely available brand of butter that's made using milk from pastured cows. 
- Avocados are a good source of fats similar in composition to olive oil, as well as a rich natural source of the antioxidant vitamin E.

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

- Sesame oil is another healthy fat that can make a nutritious addition to your meals in small amounts. It's particularly tasty in Asian inspired cooking and stir-fries, where its content of the antioxidant sesamol helps to preserve its stability at moderately high temperatures.
- Fish oil makes quite a valuable addition to your daily diet. The long-chain fatty acids (EPA, DHA, and others) present in fish oil are potent anti-inflammatory agents that normalize cell signaling in addition to assisting in the maintenance of healthy weight and preservation of lean muscle mass. These fatty acids provide an important counterbalance to the types of fats found in seed oils like safflower and canola, and they thus help to restore a healthy relationship between omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids. Even more, they work synergistically with vitamins A and D and calcium to regulate proper mineral balance in your body. 1 tablespoon of high quality, liquid fish oil taken each day with a meal is an excellent way to begin incorporating this important food into your regimen. Well-made fish oil should not have any unpleasant, fishy odor, and most people find that they don't have any trouble at all with "fish burps" if they use a high quality oil. If you do, then taking your fish oil at the beginning of one of your main meals will usually resolve the unpleasantness in no time flat.
- It's important to keep liquid oils in a cool environment away from direct sunlight. Fish oils require refrigeration, and should not be used in cooking. All oils are best stored in dark colored glass containers.
- The vilification of fats as vital elements in health-supporting diets has been one of the most unfortunate misunderstandings in recent ideas about healing. *In truth, quality, minimally processed fats in sufficient quantity are essential to the long-term maintenance of optimal health. By minimizing excess sugars and carbohydrates in your diet and eating ample fats alongside other nutrient-dense foods you'll be doing a ton to prevent cardiovascular diseases like heart attack and stroke, not to mention cancer. Please don't be shy about including these healthy foods in your daily fare.*



## **Nuts and Seeds:**


- Flax seeds are a superb source of essential fats, fiber, and special compounds called lignans that are potent antioxidants with favorable effects on the hormonal systems of men and women alike. There are some excellent studies demonstrating that 4 tablespoons of ground flax seeds taken each day can have effects as good or better than Tamoxifen in women with some types of breast cancer. Why not enjoy some flax seeds each day to *prevent* cancer development through the maintenance of healthy hormonal balance? You can buy them whole and then grind a cup or so at a time into a course powder (they must be ground before eating, lest they pass right through your digestive system intact). Store them in the fridge to prevent them from turning rancid, and sprinkle 2-4 tablespoons of the ground seeds on just about anything you're eating each day or add them to a smoothie; they have a pleasant, nutty, slightly sweet taste.

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

- Most other nuts and seeds (especially walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds, and pumpkin seeds) make a great addition to the daily diet because they are a healthy source of fats, protein, and fiber. The key is to buy them fresh, or freshly roasted, and then to consume them while they're still fresh. If you prefer your nuts roasted, it's ideal to buy fresh, raw nuts, and then roast them lightly at home in a low oven. (This helps ensure that the oils they contain are not rancid.) A good handful of nuts is a great amount to eat every day, as well as an excellent snack to have on-hand for when you need a little something to tide you over 'till your next mealtime.

## **Miscellaneous Treats and Spices:**

 Great news—Dark chocolate is a healthy food! (But we're not talking about Hershey's milk chocolate here... no Cadbury chocolate Easter eggs; nope, it's got to be the good stuff—pure, dark chocolate with a 70% or better cacao content.) This type of chocolate is a wonderful source of antioxidant compounds similar to those found in green tea and, therefore, I encourage you to enjoy a couple ounces of it each day. (See... healthy eating is not all drudgery!)



- Brewer's yeast is a tasty source of B-vitamins as well as selenium. It's delicious sprinkled on popcorn, cooked vegetables, and salads. A couple teaspoons a day can offer a wonderful nutritional boost.
- Turmeric and cinnamon are both superfood spices to include in your daily fare, too. Turmeric has been extensively studied for its role in Cancer Care and I could write volumes on its healing benefits, while cinnamon is an excellent blood sugar stabilizer. Turmeric and cinnamon are both usually in curry powder, so this can be one great way to enjoy these delicious spices.

## **Pure Water and Herbal Teas:**

- Try to drink 6-8 glasses of spring or filtered water daily, perhaps with some lemon added to support normal tissue hydration and detoxification. Seagull and Multi-Pure are two companies that make high quality in-home water filters that can be easily installed on your kitchen tap or under the sink.
- You may also enjoy green or herbal teas, which are an additional source of healing minerals and phytonutrients. Polyphenol compounds (the most important one being EGCG) in green tea are particularly potent anti-cancer agents, so regular green tea consumption is a great way to turn your kitchen into a healing pharmacy. Rooibos tea comes from a plant in Africa that is not related to Camellia sinensis, the plant that gives us our variety of white, green,

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

oolong, and black teas; this herbal and caffeine-free tea is especially rich in antioxidant carotenoid compounds and, therefore, is another great medicinal beverage to enjoy daily.

- On balance, it's best to avoid or minimize alcohol consumption as part of your healing lifestyle. Red wine, however, owing to its rich content of an important compound called resveratrol that is found in grape skins, can be a healthful beverage to indulge in: 1, 4-ounce glass of red wine enjoyed per day with a meal is a great way to take advantage of resveratrol's antioxidant capacity as well as its ability to normalize cellular communication and promote the turning off of malignant cells. *It must be noted, however, that there seems to be a pretty clear, direct relationship between alcohol consumption and risk of breast cancer recurrence, particularly in post-menopausal women.* Thus, if you are at an increased risk for the development of breast cancer I encourage you to limit your consumption of red wine to 3 glasses per week, at most.

## **Okay, so here's my short list of foods that are best avoided:**

- Potatoes and raw cruciferous veggies;
- Excess grains, legumes, and gluten-containing foods in addition to soy protein isolates;
- Farm-raised fish;
- Factory-raised meats and poultry, and meats that are well-done or charred;
- Milk—except for whole, raw milk from pastured cows, goats, or sheep (But whole-milk yogurt, kefir, and unprocessed cheeses are okay, unless you're sensitive to dairy);
- More than a couple pieces of fruit per day, and all concentrated fruit juices. Bananas are generally not your best fruit choice, since they are kind of like the potatoes of the fruit world—very rich in simple carbohydrates. Go for berries and brightly colored fruits instead.
- All refined sweeteners, and excess natural ones;
- Fried and hydrogenated fats (like margarine and vegetable shortening), along with most “seed” oils such as canola, safflower, corn, cottonseed, and soybean oil. (Sesame seed oil is fine to enjoy, though.);
- Peanuts and peanut butter are best avoided altogether since they can contain compounds called aflatoxins that are harmful to your liver. Peanuts are also very common food sensitivities. Almond butter makes a delicious substitute for many folks;
- Excessive coffee consumption (more than 1 *small* mug-sized cup or 1 espresso a day). This is especially important if you are experiencing any kind of hormonal imbalance or if you struggle with excessive fatigue or insomnia;
- Hard alcohol and spirits and any more than 1 glass of wine per day;
- All processed or refined foods. Refined foods tend to be nutritionally very poor. These foods are best avoided, since the goal is to make your daily diet like “medicine that you take three times a day.”
- Finally, please avoid cooking or reheating foods in plastic containers, since plastics often contain compounds that act as potent hormone disruptors. *It's preferable to store or reheat foods and beverages in glass, ceramic, stainless steel, or “BPA-free” plastic containers, whenever possible.*

**Most importantly, have fun with these suggestions!** Don't put yourself in what I like to call “food prison.” Life's far too short for that. None of this is about perfection, and each little bit that you can do will definitely matter. May these ideas open up new worlds of taste and

# BODHICITTA HEALING ARTS

---

nourishment for you and expose you to new culinary delights. Please don't hesitate to reach out if I can support you or if this information brings up questions, and remember, there are some great recommended books on diet and cooking on the Resources page of my website.

Feel free to share this information freely. I simply ask respectfully, if you choose to do so, that you include my contact information so that folks can get in touch with me if they've got questions or need support. Thank you!

**Mark C. Bricca, ND, LAc**  
**Bodhicitta Healing Arts**  
**1820 SW Vermont Street, Suite E**  
**Portland, OR 97219**  
**(503) 274-5460**  
[www.bodhicittahealingarts.com](http://www.bodhicittahealingarts.com)

**Our food should be our medicine and our medicine should be our food.**  
– Hippocrates

**The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.**  
– Laozi, a Chinese sage from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC