



Food as medicine

By Jacqueline Fields, MD and founder of *Dr. Fields' Sacred Skin* | July 17, 2014

The power of food

“Food as medicine” was a term coined by Hippocrates, the father of western medicine. He taught that good food is the basis for good health. As an Italian this is an absolute truth. As a functional medicine physician this is the essence of my practice. Food has the power to heal and prevent most chronic illness. It can be used to treat illness in a safe and more balanced way than most pharmaceuticals. Although as a physician, I may need to use medicine in extreme situations, it certainly is not my first intervention.

Mindful eating

Food provides us with more than vitamins and minerals. For Italians and many cultures, food unites people and creates ceremony. Unfortunately, the American culture has never developed this tradition. Hence this is why you see people drive and eat, or watch T.V while eating. So here, this sacred event turns into an unconscious habit. In Italy and in most cultures, eating is always a ceremony. It is a sacred and a mindful event.

Food brings life force or Prana into our bodies. It is a very direct way of affecting the deepest levels of who we are. Plants have a high vibration and are very healing. This is why I love using botanicals as medicine. Plants can affect us on all levels psychologically, spiritually, physically and emotionally. Using food as medicine is holistic healing.

Concepts of food in Eastern medicine traditions

I love how Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic medicine view food. Unlike in Western nutrition, where food is measured by calories, vitamins or mineral content, these healing traditions classify food according to its energetic properties and its flavors. So in Chinese medicine foods are either hot (Yang) in nature or cold (Yin) in nature. Hot foods like garlic and beef generate heat and are best consumed in the winter. Whereas cold foods like watermelon should be consumed in the summer. Foods are always used therapeutically. During a fever (a yang hot condition) eating Yin foods will help balance the excess Yang energy. Also in Ayurvedic medicine, food is eaten seasonally and according to your constitution. They believe that we are made up of the five elements that create three predominant Doshas (constitutions). If we are out of balance in our constitution, then we use foods to balance our Doshas. Please read *The Three Season Diet*, by Dr. John Douillard, or explore his website (www.lifespaspa.com) for more information on Ayurvedic medicine. Ayurveda is a fantastic fully comprehensive model for healing on the planet.

Preparing food with love

It is fun to hear people tell me “food just taste better at your house.” It is true that a meal cooked with LOVE taste better and probably even nourishes better. I grew up with my father the physician and no doubt he was an amazing healer. But my mother, the Italian cook has healed and continues to heal her community through food.

The tragedy of today's mainstream food system

I hope people develop a shift of their thoughts that food really is your medicine. What we are doing to the food industry especially in this country is a disaster. It is sacrilegious. The fact is that Monsanto owns 80% of our seeds and is creating GMO food. This is the largest experiment on the American people. We must return to simplicity. We have to support our local farmers, and connect back to our food. We have to stop using pesticides, herbicides and all these chemicals supposedly to make more and better food. The chemicals just destroy the planet and us. Unfortunately with all these chemicals and technology in our agri-industry we have not created more food, nor have we helped world hunger. We have created tasteless chemical filled food and we throw more of it away.

Changing your relationship with food

Unfortunately, many people don't know how to grow, cook or connect to food. Fortunately, there are tons of opportunities and resources in your local communities and online. Learn and keep learning. Whether it's taking a class at The Healing Gardens Living Arts Center, meeting with a nutritionist or dietician, shopping at the farmers market, or planting an herb garden. It's time to reconnect to the food that nourishes and heals us.

Be proactive in teaching your children about food

Please teach these concepts to your children early in their lives. Show your children how to grow plants/food/medicine. Just start with sprouting or growing a plant in the windowsill. Have ceremony around meals. Take your kids to the Spring Creek Gardens or to one of our local sustainable farms, which will teach your kids to connect with food and to plants in general.

Remember my motto

*People are what they eat, what they think,
and what they put on their skin.*

—Dr. Jacqueline Fields

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