

Holistic Nutrition:

A 40 Year Review with a Glimpse Forward

by Edward Bauman, M. Ed, Ph.D.

*Judge not each day by the harvest you reap, but
by the seeds you plant.*

- Robert Louis Stevenson

Beginning

In 1970, I purchased a 160 acre organic farm in Western Massachusetts with four other urban refugees. Here, I sowed my first seeds, tended my first garden, brought in my first harvest, and canned tomatoes and raspberry applesauce. Deeper learning about nutrition and the earth came from local farmers, and from direct studies with Ann Wigmore, mother of raw foods and wheat grass; Michio Kushi, father of macrobiotics; Dr. Paavo Airola, European naturopath; Dr. Jeffrey Bland, biochemist; and Dr. Bernard Jensen, who searched the world to prove that for every ailment, nature has a remedy. It was here that my journey into holistic health and nutrition began.

Holistic Nutrition

Holistic nutrition suggests we build our diet around unprocessed natural foods rather than a diet of commercial, packaged, processed foods endorsed by the American Dietetic Association and built into the USDA Food Pyramid.

- Edward Bauman, Ph.D (2010)



Eating a yummy homemade dinner –such as a dandelion-based spring salad with a lemon artichoke heart dressing, fresh caught wild salmon with backyard dill and thyme sauce, and baked yam topped with yogurt and nutmeg – is an example of eating local, whole, fresh, colorful foods, grown in soil enriched with manure and compost rather than fertilizer and pesticides. Sadly, the current generation did not grow up eating real food – grown the old-fashioned way. They grew up in the midst of a culture littered with soda, Frosted Flakes, cheeseburgers, french fries, and fake foods.

Nutrition, Culture and Food Trends

In 1989, when George Bush (the first) was president and Madonna was at the top of the charts, holistic nutrition was thought of as a quaint throwback to

Holistic Nutrition: A 40 Year Review with a Glimpse Forward

the days of our grandparents – a time when dinner was cooked from scratch instead of pulled out of the freezer, ready to heat n' eat.

Let's look at changes in our food supply in the past 20+ years that have contributed to the rise in obesity, diabetes, and premature, chronic illness as well as three commercial nutrition food trends and the holistic nutrition counter points.

Trend #1 – Hidden Calories

"US farmers now [2009] produce 3,900 calories a day more than they grew in the 1980's from corn, soy and wheat. As farmers produced extra calories, the food industry figured out how to get them into the bodies of people who didn't really want to eat 700 more calories a day than before. Most of those calories enter our mouths in ready-to-eat foods with processed corn and soybeans, vegetable oil and high-fructose corn syrup" (Barbara Kingslover, 2008, 14). "Corn contributes 554 calories a day to America's per capita food supply, and soy another 257. Add wheat (768 calories) and rice (91 calories) and you can see there isn't a whole lot of room left in the American stomach for any other foods" (Pollan, 2009, 117). "About a third of all our calories now come from what is known, by community consent, as junk food" (Kingslover, 2008, 14). Eating foods with more calories and less nutrients is a recipe for fatigue and weight gain.



Trend #2 – Plant Species Vanishing from Our Food

"Humans have eaten some 80,000 plant species in our history. After recent precipitous changes, three-quarters of all human food now comes from just eight species, with the field quickly narrowing down to genetically modified corn, soy, and canola" (Kingslover, 2008, 49). "Garden seed inventories show that while about 5,000 non-hybrid vegetable varieties were available from catalogs in 1981, the number in 1998 was down to 600" (Kingslover, 2008, 52). The loss of plant varieties affects us in several ways. Large corporations own the seeds that grow the plants that most people eat. These are altered to create greater crop yields, greater shelf life, and to be more pest resistant. This may sound good, but often these plants are less tasty, less juicy and are more allergenic. As a backyard gardener, I love to grow heirloom fruits and vegetables, which are native to my region, and are far more delicious and nutritious than lifeless commercial varieties. Compare a home grown, heirloom tomato or Gravenstein apple to an import. The native varieties win hands down. More plant choice widens our taste, appreciation, and desire to cook rather than be cooked for.

Trend #3 – Diet–Disease Connection

"Today, heart disease causes at least 40 percent of all US deaths...During the sixty-year period from 1910 to 1970, the proportion of traditional animal fat in the American diet declined from 83 percent to 62 percent, and butter consumption plummeted from 18 pounds per person to four...During the same period the percentage of dietary vegetable oils in the form of margarine, shortening and refined oils increased about 400 percent while the consumption of sugar and processed foods increased about 60 percent" (Sally Fallon, 1999, 5).

"An American born in 2000 has a 1 in 3 chance of developing diabetes in his lifetime; the risk is even

Holistic Nutrition: A 40 Year Review with a Glimpse Forward

greater for a Hispanic or African American. A diagnosis of diabetes subtracts roughly twelve years from one's life and living with the condition incurs costs of \$13,000 a year" (Pollan, 2007, 136).

Evidence and Approaches

Over the past twenty years, research has been published demonstrating that food is the primary promoter of health and protector from disease. This has given the public and the medical profession a much needed wake up call. Dr. Dean Ornish published findings in *The Lancet* (1990), the leading medical journal in England, that a low fat, vegetarian diet, combined with yoga and emotional support, reversed cardiovascular disease in 84 percent of participants who followed his program for one year. C. Colin Campbell of Cornell University reported the first batch of results from the large China Study, where it was noted that urbanites, who ate a diet higher in saturated fats and animal protein, had higher incidences of mortality and morbidity than farm folks who ate a plant-based diet with limited amounts of animal protein.

Diet programs have grown like mushrooms on a damp and shady log. For weight loss, Dr. Robert Atkins promoted a high protein, low carbohydrate, low calorie diet, augmented with an array of dietary supplements, known as the Atkins Diet. Dr. Barry Sears introduced the Zone Diet, while the concept of food combining was widely touted by Harvey and Marilyn Diamond in their book, *Fit for Life*. The Blood Typing Diet, put forth by Dr. Peter D'Amato, suggested which foods to eat or avoid depending one's blood type O, A, B, or AB.

Conflicting evidence during this time proved confusing to consumers and health providers. In the past 20 years, diet wars have been launched and persist, whereby proponents jockey for market share for a book, nutrient program, and ideological supremacy. Beyond the hubbub of these debates, however, is one common denominator: people needed to eat more fresh whole foods and minimize their intake of

processed and refined foods. This consensus pre-dated Michael Pollan's concise dictum, "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants" (Pollan, 2009, 117). The dietary supplement industry has grown in the past 20 years and is now showing signs of change as products are available on-line, at convenience stores, in grocery stores, and through health care professionals.

Certified Nutrition Educators, Nutrition Consultants, and Natural Chefs provide individual guidance for consumers who seek to identify needs and make cost-effective diet and lifestyle decisions to restore balance. Food is the foundation, while herbs and supplements work best to deal with special needs and health issues. Attitude is the crown of creating and maintaining healthy habits. A Bauman model of holistic nutrition follows.



Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets have been the brightest star on the holistic nutrition, whole food, and sustainable agriculture horizon. "Following the passage of the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976, active U.S. farmers' markets have grown from about 350 to well over 3,500 today, or an average of 75 per state" (Kingslover, 2008, 37). Buying food out of doors, in the midst of a market place with growers standing proudly behind the fruits of their labor, brings together the message of people, food, culture, and community in a vibrant way that is fun, healthy, and socially uplifting.

Holistic Nutrition: A 40 Year Review with a Glimpse Forward

Organic Standards

Organic Standards have been carefully hammered out, only to be watered down by large stakeholders in the food and farming business. "The paper trail of organic standards offers only limited guarantees to the consumer. Specifically, it certifies that vegetables were grown without genetic engineering or broadly toxic chemical herbicides or pesticides; animals were not given growth-promoting hormones or antibiotics. 'Certified organic' does not necessarily mean sustainably grown, worker-friendly, fuel-efficient, cruelty-free, or any other virtue a consumer might wish for" (Kingslover, 2008, 121).

Organic Really is Better

The biggest study into organic food has found that it is more nutritious than ordinary produce and may help to lengthen people's lives.

The evidence from the GBP12m four-year project will end years of debate and is likely to overturn government advice that eating organic food is no more than a lifestyle choice.

The study found that organic fruit and vegetables contained as much as 40% more antioxidants, which scientists believe can cut the risk of cancer and heart disease, Britain's biggest killers. They also had higher levels of beneficial minerals such as iron and zinc.

Researchers grew fruit and vegetables and reared cattle on adjacent organic and nonorganic sites on a 725-acre farm attached to Newcastle University, and at other sites in Europe. They found that levels of antioxidants in milk from organic herds were up to 90% higher than in milk from conventional herds.

As well as finding up to 40% more antioxidants in organic vegetables, they also found that organic tomatoes from Greece had significantly higher levels of antioxidants, including flavonoids thought to reduce coronary heart disease.

Last summer a 10-year study by the University of California comparing organic tomatoes with those grown conventionally found double the level of flavonoids – a type of antioxidant thought to reduce the risk of heart disease. Other studies show milk having higher levels of omega3 fatty acids, thought to boost health.

Like other studies, the results show significant variations, with some conventional crops having larger quantities of some vitamins than organic crops. But researchers confirm that the overall trend is that organic fruit, vegetables, and milk are more likely to have beneficial compounds. According to Leifert [researcher], the compounds which have been found in greater quantities in organic produce include vitamin C, trace elements such as iron, copper and zinc, and secondary metabolites which are thought to help to combat cancer and heart disease.

Sustainable Nutrition

In January 2010, Michael Pollen was on the Oprah Winfrey TV show discussing the whole foods movement and explaining how the over-consumption of processed food is a detriment to health and ecology. Increasingly, consumers are reading labels, eschewing food chemicals, and spending their food money at farmers' markets. The success of Whole Foods markets around the country, for example, proves that a viable market for an organic alternative exists. There is also a burgeoning interest in organic farms, backyard gardens, food co-ops, slow foods, and home cooking. Consumers are calling for reasonably priced, local, seasonal, and fresh foods. This collective power is opening the way for fast food restaurants, such as Wendy's, to emphasize fresh, never frozen burgers and salads. Retailers such as Costco, Wal Mart, and grocery chains are stocking organic food with labels that state where the food came from. This also creates a conflict among shoppers. Should they buy cheaper organic foods at a super store, or support their community farmers? Holistic nutrition advocates supporting our small farmers, lest they disappear like the birds and the bees



Holistic Nutrition: A 40 Year Review with a Glimpse Forward

that once buzzed and chirped in our back yards.

Local food adds value and leaves a lighter carbon footprint than conventional food shipped 1,500 miles to market. Holistic nutrition is evolving into Sustainable Nutrition™, where people make diet and lifestyle choices that are good for the economy, ecology, and their health. Shopping for value rather than price and convenience shows a new level of awareness and social responsibility

What's Ahead

Whole food nutrition is making in-roads into the mainstream and exceeding the growth of commercial foods. Public schools in California and across the country are mandated to implement nutrition and physical activity programs by 2010. Non-nutritive sugar, such as diet sodas and candy, have been removed from several schools. The Garden to School movement is taking off across the country, wherein farmers are contracting to grow organic food for the schools and children are once again seeing that their food comes from a garden or pasture, not a supermarket or feedlot. In this way, children are learning about holistic nutrition. A local, sustainable culture of renewal is underway, fed by the desire by many to recover a natural vitality that has been lost. I am glad that the seeds planted over twenty years ago, tended by committed human beings, have led to the change in the awareness and behavior we are witnessing today. As more people understand that nutrition is not a diet fad or magic bullet, Eating for Health™ will be one way to bring us back to health.

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Sustainable Nutrition

Good for the Economy, Ecology & Your Health

Sustainability Self-Evaluation

| DO YOU ? | NEVER | SELDOM | OFTEN | ALWAYS |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| Shop at Farmers' Markets | | | | |
| Pay for the value of organic foods | | | | |
| Choose seasonal, local produce | | | | |
| Grow fruits, vegetables and herbs | | | | |
| Eat pasture-grazed meats | | | | |
| Select free-range chickens and eggs | | | | |
| Buy local, organic dairy products | | | | |
| Choose wild fish | | | | |
| Buy organic dry goods in bulk | | | | |
| Avoid processed foods | | | | |
| Select foods with less packaging | | | | |
| Bring your own bags to the store | | | | |
| Cook meals at home from scratch | | | | |
| Use <i>Energy Star</i> ® appliances | | | | |
| Store food in glass containers | | | | |
| Use a water filtration system | | | | |
| Make fresh juice, tea and broth | | | | |
| Make your own salad dressings | | | | |
| Make your own hummus and dips | | | | |
| Dry, can and freeze seasonal foods | | | | |

Every Choice COUNTS!

Raise your level of self-reliance and you raise your life force! In living leaner, cleaner, fresher and closer to the earth, we worry less about what's being done to us.

Take action today with an Eating For Health™ attitude and lifestyle that supports your love of life and nature.

