

KAI BROCKELT



EMBRACING CHANGE

YOUR COMPANION
FOR LIFELONG WELLNESS THROUGH INFORMED NUTRITION CHOICES

The official book preview
Read the first chapter free!



Embracing Change

Your Companion to Lifelong Wellness Through Informed Nutrition Choices

If I cling to the notion that something's not possible,
I'm arguing in favor of limitation.
And if I argue for my limitations, I get to keep them.

Ultimately we have to ask ourselves,
“What’s the payoff for arguing forcefully for our limitations?”

Gay Hendricks, PhD

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Intro

EMBRACING CHANGE FOR LIFELONG WELLNESS



Intro:

Embracing Change for Lifelong Wellness

Hello! Thank you for picking this book.

What you hold in your hands is an approach to building a healthy lifestyle that lasts. It's your tool for self-efficacy and making healthy choices around diet autonomously.

Why is this important?

The answer lies in a problem that we can't afford to ignore. A staggering 74% of deaths worldwide are non-communicable diseases. While not all these deaths can be attributed directly to lifestyle choices, the correlation is evident.

The health and wellness landscape has become a dense jungle filled with non-scientific misinformation. The correct information is often drowned out by an avalanche of quick fixes, crash diets, and "miracle" products. Learning to make informed choices is critical in a world cluttered with confusing claims.

What this book is

This book aims to be your guiding light in the jungle of misinformation around the huge topic of dieting and health. Ultimately, I want to support you in finding your way on a journey towards a healthier and happier life. But what's the catch with my approach?

The catch is that I will not tell you what to do.

Instead, we aim to shape a good nutritional understanding that helps you make smarter picks autonomously, no matter your life goals or diet style.

You will build up a solid understanding of food's various effects on your health. You will find answers for "why" proper recommendations are what they are and how they link to

the choices you make in your diet. You will learn about carbs, protein, fats, vitamins and minerals. You get the complete package of what's important to know – as scientific as necessary and as simple as possible.

On the other hand, you will learn how to apply that knowledge in your life, through food in particular. You learn systems and guidelines that help you create flavorful dishes from scratch, without the need to rely on products and dirty little helpers.

This book balances scientific insights with practical knowledge. You learn to make good choices for yourself and how to implement them in your life autonomously.

What this book is not

This book is not a guideline for any diet. This is not your promise to lose many pounds in weeks. This book is neither a recipe collection nor a diet plan. This book is about education.

How this book is structured

This book follows several dimensions.

Between the why and how of scientific recommendations:

Many bits of knowledge swarm through the bubbles. We know saturated fat is bad, as well as too much sugar. We know we should eat our greens. However, isolated, this information is neither helpful nor practical. By connecting the bits, you develop a deep understanding of how things affect your health once you put them in your mouth. Through this, you can make better choices automatically without making them feel like torture.

By purpose:

Each chapter is divided into five topics with each topic aiming for a certain purpose:

- **Mind:** Things that you should be mindful about come to this category. This is the stuff that is "more than good to know", and you can use it directly in your choice making.
- **Knowledge:** Hard-ass facts that explain you how things work under the hood of nutrition. Building this understanding is the foundation for both good mind-setting and habit building.

- **Habit:** These are the topics that you can build your habits around. Be it reading shopping labels, or ways to prepare your food in a nutrient saving way.
- **Skill:** The mastery of taste, aroma and texture allows you to get creative in the kitchen. Here, I teach you the most practical, real life tricks that enable you to cook healthy dishes that burst with flavour.
- **Practice:** This closing section applies the lessons learned into a practical exercise in the form of a recipe. First, you learn the new tricks, then you put them to practice in your kitchen.

By complexity:

We start off easy and build up knowledge once the solid foundation is set. While each chapter can be used as a reference, I recommend reading from the start.

By type of dish:

With each dish you encounter at the end of a chapter, you learn to cook a new type of dish. You will do soups, stews, bowls, finger food, pasta dishes and oven dishes.

What those recipes are meant for

At the end of each chapter you will find a dish that invites you to put your learned theory to practice. While the actual recipe fits on one page and can be copied from there, each recipe is surrounded by an entire section explaining the reasoning to come up with the recipe. You will learn about why and how this dish came to what it is, ways to change it and how to combine theory and practice.

These recipes are meant to be inclusive. They are meant to be cookable by anybody, no matter their dietary choices or restrictions. The base of each recipe therefore is vegan and plant based. I do however also talk about ways to introduce meat or other animal products into this dish.

Keep in mind – you are the expert on yourself

The knowledge shared is general knowledge aimed at building deep understanding. It assumes the reader is healthy and without allergies, conditions, medications, etc.

That's why you should know best what knowledge applies to you and where to better not to listen to it. If you have doubts about your diet or choices, you should talk to your doctor to clear them.

Mind

HEALTHY GOALS



1.1 Mind:

Healthy Goals

Life is your journey. Crossroads are your choices.

When I look at life as a whole, I see it as a band of the time. We start with nothing, and we end with nothing. But we have all the room to fill between those two points. This band is yours to fill. This is your life; this is your journey. It was your life yesterday; it's yours today and will be it tomorrow.

Depending on how you decide to live your life, your day-to-day may turn out quite differently. The time we experience is the consequence of our choices on how we want to live and see life.

Happiness is no destination but a perspective you can find as your point of view. It's nothing that you have, nothing you need to hold on to, or work hard for. It's instead a worldview rather than an achievement. It's time well spent.

If you apply this thought to health and health goals, the question should be, "How can we fill as much time as possible with health and happiness?"

I am not just pointing at the prevention of disease. A good body feeling and well-being through a proper supply of what we need are crucial to enjoying life to the fullest.

This, however, only works if reaching for it won't stress you or wear you out. If correctly done, you can work on changes with ease.

Why is this important?

All information in the world can only be helpful if applied correctly.

It is crucial to start a change with a clear perspective in mind. Challenging goals and an approach that feels like work to do often end up creating stress instead of a positive outcome.

To succeed, you must set the right direction before starting to walk. This chapter teaches you how to set a realistic goal and what to expect from a dietary change.

What is this course about?

This course is designed to help you take a holistic approach to nutrition and health without imposing strict rules or instructions about what to eat or how much. We will look at the scientific recommendations for a healthy diet, as the World Health Organization stated. By understanding these principles, you can make informed decisions about your diet and overall health, tailored to your lifestyle.

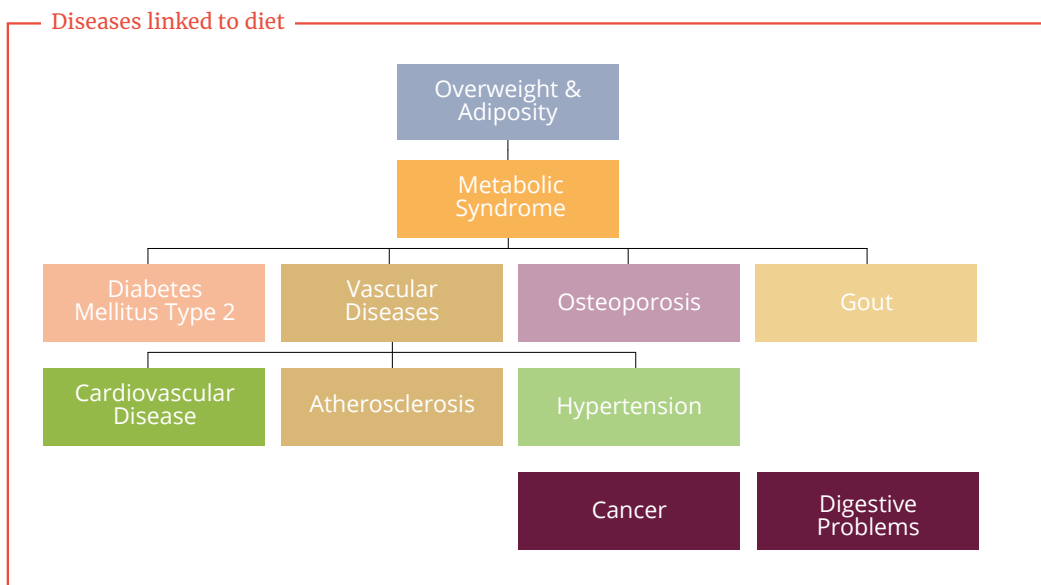
The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy lifestyle is not through following a fixed diet plan but rather by developing a deeper understanding of the principles of nutrition and cooking. This knowledge will empower you to make healthier choices and prepare enjoyable and nutritious meals.

Throughout the course, I will provide you with the knowledge and tools to make healthier decisions and bring those choices into reality. The course is structured into six chapters, each focused on different areas of nutrition and cooking, with each chapter divided into five sections. The final section of each chapter combines the learned knowledge into practical instruction in the form of a recipe.

Initially, we will cover the basics to set sails and a direction before we go in-depth, starting in the second chapter. By the end of the course, you will have a solid understanding of the principles of nutrition and cooking and the practical skills needed to prepare delicious and healthy meals. You will be equipped with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions about your diet and health and empowered to control your well-being.

Diseases linked to diet

Many chronic diseases have been linked to poor diet and lifestyle choices. Making positive changes can improve your overall health and reduce the risk of developing such conditions.



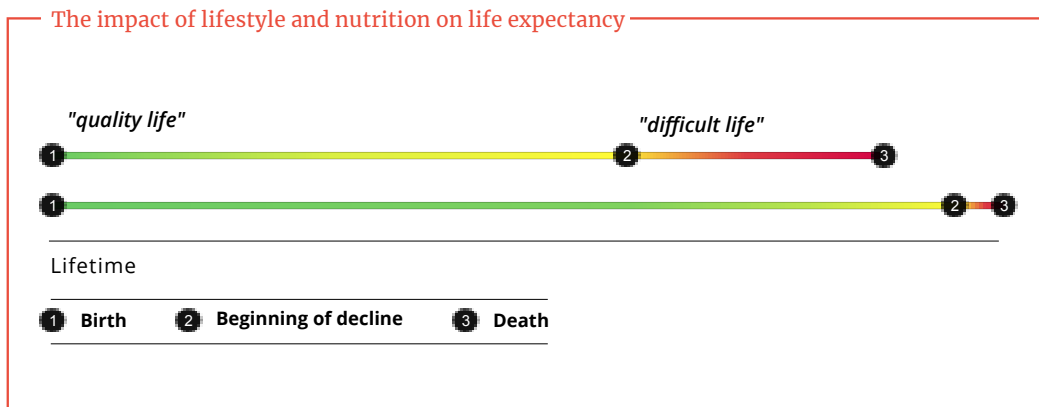
1.1 Mind: Healthy Goals

While it is true that there are factors out of our control, like genetics or exposure to unhealthy environments, with nutrition and lifestyle, we still got a big lever to change the odds of being impacted by one of those diseases.

Chronic diseases can cause suffering over a long time once developed before ultimately killing us. By improving your diet and lifestyle, you can enhance the chances of both quality of life in the now and longevity and health in high age.

In short, when you care for your health, you improve your life quality today and in the future.

- **Feeling better today:** whether you sleep better or have a better feeling looking into the mirror - living a healthier life can boost your overall life quality today, through confidence and a healthier body.
- **Overall longevity:** If we prevent chronic disease, we rule out the most common causes of death. Living healthily improves your chances.
- **Prolonged healthy life:** With a healthy lifestyle, you can delay the point of life when things get more challenging.



Changes you can expect when adapting to a healthier lifestyle

When changing to a healthier lifestyle and diet, you can expect a range of positive changes in your overall health and well-being. Here are some of the changes that may occur:

- **Improved energy levels:** Eating a healthy, balanced diet and exercising regularly can help improve energy levels and reduce feelings of fatigue.
- **Weight loss:** A healthy diet and lifestyle can help individuals achieve and maintain a healthy weight, positively affecting overall health.
- **Reduced risk of chronic diseases:** Eating a healthy diet and regular exercise can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer.

- **Better digestion:** A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can help improve digestion and reduce digestive problems such as constipation and bloating.
- **Improved mood and mental health:** Eating a healthy diet and engaging in regular physical activity can help improve mood and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- **Better sleep:** A healthy diet and regular exercise can help improve sleep quality and reduce the risk of sleep disorders such as insomnia.
- **Stronger immune system:** Eating a healthy diet rich in vitamins and minerals can help support a healthy immune system, reducing the risk of illnesses and infections.

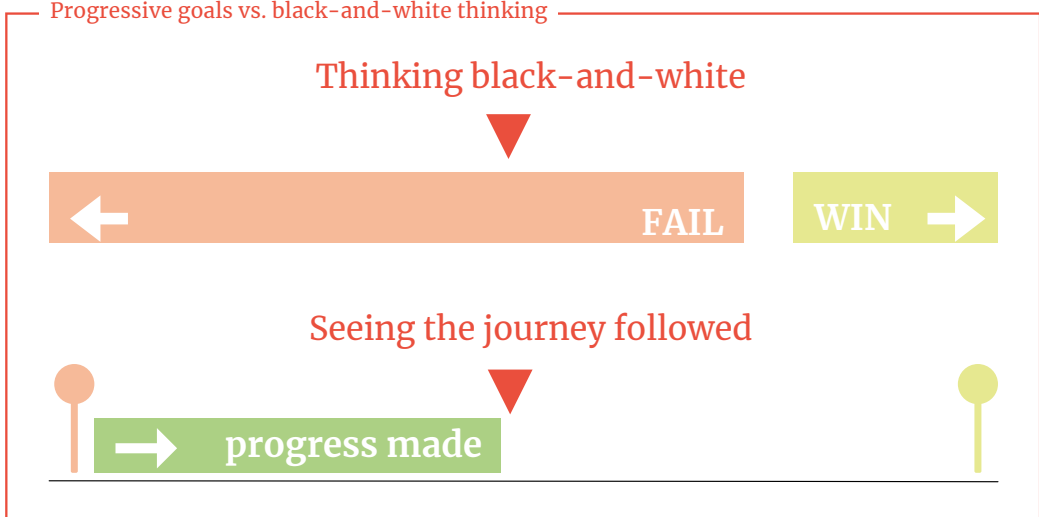
These are just a few examples of the positive changes that can occur when you change to a healthier lifestyle and diet. By understanding the principles of nutrition and cooking and making informed decisions about your diet and overall health, you can experience these and other benefits and improve your overall well-being.

Black-and-white thinking leads to perfectionism.

It is way too easy to compare yourself with what is being published on social media these days. You see perfectly happy, perfectly fit, and healthy people. You are presented with a positively filtered image, painted picture-perfect with the help of professional photography, lighting, filters, and photoshop.

If your goal is defined by being like that, you likely will face many challenges and disappointments. You may have learned a lot on your journey already. You may have gained a good share of knowledge, started changing your cooking, and got motivated to do some work. But still, you won't be that person. With every reality check, you might realize that the goal still is not reached.

Progressive goals vs. black-and-white thinking



1.1 Mind: Healthy Goals

What's archived when you compare yourself? Nothing. You still see yourself as not fitting the perfect picture. This can leave you unsatisfied and quickly kills the motivation to move on. Each time you do that, this is an ideal invitation to throw the towel.

Falling into black-and-white thinking removes the perspective from what you have already archived and points toward what you are missing. If you aim for perfection, you will see that you will always need to improve.

Progressive goals

If you bring your goals onto your life roadmap, you can shift to a more meaningful perspective. Instead of having a plan as a measure to compare yourself to, use it as a perspective or direction to move forward. Inspiration shows you the possibilities of where you go from where you are.

Once you start walking the road you choose, you can quickly see progress. You can look back on the path taken and gain strength and motivation based on the things already archived. I like to refer to this perspective as progressive goals. A progressive approach focuses on the steps taken. It allows you to review your progress and adapt to new learnings. You may figure that your original idea is not fitting perfectly. Good! Let's reshape this idea in a slightly different direction.

You could define your progressive goals like the following:

- Instead of the definite goal, *"I want to eat five portions of fruit per day,"* formulate something like *"I will introduce more fruit to my diet."*
- instead of saying, *"I will cut refined sugar from my diet,"* go for, *"I am improving my sugar consumption by consuming fewer or healthier sweets."*
- Instead of aiming for something like *"I will lose XYZ pounds,"* define your goal as *"I will aim for less caloric food to support weight loss."*

The goal should never be a hard number, a black-and-white status you do or do not fulfill. Consider where you came from, where you are, and where you are going. If you only look forward to the end goal, you will only see what you still need to include.

But if you focus on how you are doing on your journey, you can account for all the progress made so far. If you come 50% closer to your goal, that is still a massive improvement you can feel good about. Don't ruin this for yourself through black-and-white thinking and a too-strict self-evaluation.

Adapt your goals to your lifestyle.

When thinking about your goals, be realistic. Aiming for a lifestyle that - let's say - contains 2 hours of sport almost every day, fresh cooking in every meal, and shopping 100% organically and locally can be done if your life allows it.

But most of us have to work, have families, raise kids, volunteer, and meet friends. The time available could be more extensive and conflicts with other interests.

If your goal competes with your life, it is not a good goal. When stepping towards it feels like a trade-off or painful, you won't be happy following that road.

Focus on what you can change with ease. One change at a time. Eventually, that slight difference becomes a habit and defines the new normal — from here, rinse and repeat. And then focus on your progress made - and yes - be proud of it!

Try identifying areas where there is room for improvement. If your daily routines don't allow fresh cooking for every lunch, try changing some of your snacks or drinks for something better.

If you aim for more sports but have a morning-to-evening schedule, try going stairs instead of taking the elevator. Move smaller distances by bicycle or walking. If you crave sweets intensely, allow them. Change them for something that fits the need but is objectively better.

The sum of all minor adjustments can make a significant change without overhauling your complete lifestyle. Allow yourself to acknowledge these minor changes and see the significant impact they contribute to. Each small change implemented will have an effect; if you stick to it. The big picture then slowly changes bit by bit.

Your environment and your journey

Change is often something that is not only impacting yourself. You may have friends you go out with regularly. Your colleagues from work may want to share their lunchtime with you. Back home, there may be a family waiting for you.

Embracing change, therefore, can also affect your relationships. Especially if you want to change your dietary habits, you might run into resistance.

Does that mean you can no longer go out with us on the weekends? Will you now start cooking for yourself instead of joining the family dinner? Should we not invite you if we want to go to [Insert random junk food place]?

Where food comes with relations, a change can spark doubts and questions. To prevent resistance, I recommend sharing your plans and reasons for your journey. This gives people a base for understanding. It's not about defending your standpoint but only sharing your thoughts. You don't have to convince anybody; you are doing this for yourself.

1.1 Mind: Healthy Goals

It's good if you have ideas for potentially affected situations. Yes, we still go out. We find places that fit both our tastes. Yes, we still cook and eat together. We cook a joint base and add the extra alongside. And yes! You can always ask me. And if it doesn't fit: here's an alternative offer.

And also, cheat days are okay. More to that later.

Don't fall for control

This is how most of us learn it. To make a change, you must be strict, unforgiving, and stick to a plan. But this will lead to failure.

Yes yes! It is possible to take every nutrient seriously, count it, calculate it, and then fill the gap with a fitting food or supplement. This will bring you top-notch results if only you can sustain this mode for a long.

This is different from what a healthy diet or lifestyle is about. It's not about creating a plan and sticking to it strictly. This form of self-torture leads to not listening to what you need, stress, and failure.

Healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle are understanding and adapting to the principle. If your foundation is built right, there is room for sweets, fries, and more. But in moderation. It is more about getting the concept right than controlling everything perfectly.

In this course, I will introduce you to tools that you can use to track your changes, inspect nutrient profiles of foods, calculate protein contents, and many more. I ask you not to use them to control yourself all the time.

Instead you should use these tools to discover and learn. To check information for making intelligent decisions. Anything that helps. Use these tools in your interest, but not against yourself.

Let's start walking – slowly and steadily

With all that in mind, we can set sail and start slowly. Do not pressure yourself about making everything perfect right from the start. If, let's say, you're entirely new to cooking; it might be overwhelming to produce fresh foods every day. Start doing so on the weekends or when you have time. Practice, learn, and improve.

Once you build a routine, things become easier and more fluent. You can then start cooking more frequently with ease and fill your weekly plan more and more. You can expect the same when working on nutrition and health. Take it easy and with patience, and you will improve steadily. Identify one area you can work on with ease, before moving onto the next one.

You got this!

The background of the entire page is a solid light orange color, decorated with several realistic-looking slices of oranges scattered across it. The slices are cut horizontally, showing the internal segments and the central pith.

Knowledge

NUTRIENTS WE NEED



1.2 Knowledge:

Nutrients we need

You need three types of nutrients to live: water, building material, and energy. In this chapter, you will learn about the main types of nutrients you will face throughout your day.

Why is this important?

Understanding what we need to live helps identify areas of improvement.

Especially if you are trying to restrict your diet, you should be aware of essential nutrients to plan what's needed adequately.

Essential vs. nonessential Nutrients

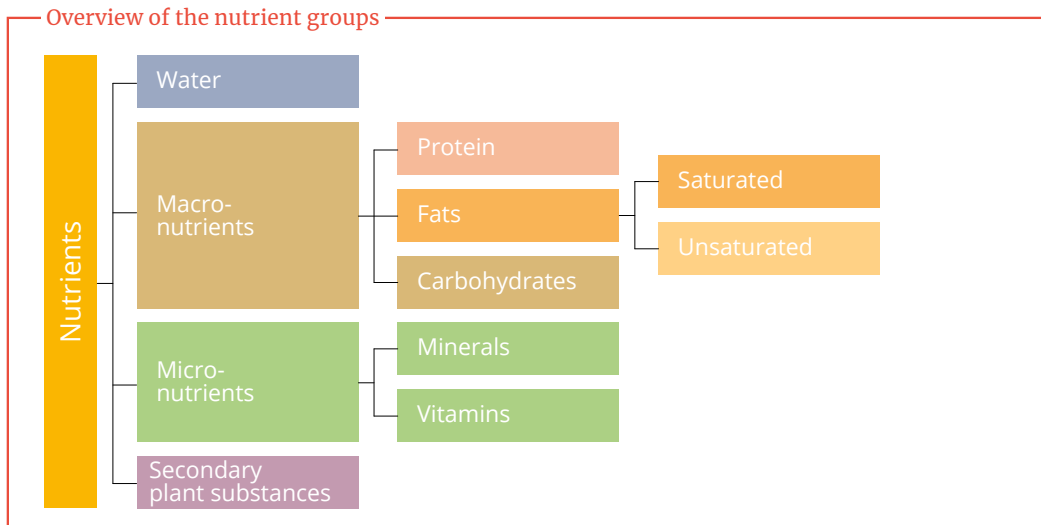
There are nutrients that you need to provide to your body through diet. Anything you need to get through food is called essential. Non-essential nutrients, on the other hand, can be synthesized through other means.

With enough building material, your body can construct these molecules on demand. Saturated fat, for example, can be synthesized from carbohydrates in our liver. There is no strict requirement to eat saturated fats.

Some nutrients are essential normally, but can be derived only from certain other nutrients or under certain conditions. These nutrients are semi-essential.

Take Vitamin D as an example - if you catch 20 minutes of direct sunlight (UV B light), you synthesize enough of your vitamin D and don't need it in your food.

Vitamin A can be synthesized from the secondary plant substance beta-carotene. You can have vitamin A directly, but your vitamin A levels will be healthy as well if you have a good supply of beta-carotenes.



Water

Under normal conditions, your body comprises 50%(Women) to 60% (Men) water. Water serves many functions:

- It's an essential nutrient for all cells
- It regulates body temperature
- It's a transport medium
- It protects sensitive tissue
- And much more

You should drink at least 2-3 liters or 11-15 cups of water daily. To get a reasonable estimate, you can multiply your body weight (in kg) by 0.033. If you do sports and sweat, you should consider drinking extra.

If your water level drops by just 0,5% from the go-to level, it is enough to trigger thirst. Be kind to yourself and listen to the signal.

Macronutrients

Your macros are called like that because you need many of them. Of course, we are talking about **carbohydrates**, **protein**, and **fat**. Carbs, fat, and protein can all be used as energy, so in this use case, they are nonessential and interchangeable. However, if we look at protein and fat as building materials, we must get them on our plates since here they are essential.

1.2 Knowledge: Nutrients we need

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates, or just carbs, are the primary energy source for your body and brain to function. Any carbohydrate combines many small sugar bits like glucose and fructose - monosaccharides. If you find anything ending in *ose, like dextrose, saccharose, or glucose,... yes! They are all sugar.

The more complex a carb is, the harder it is for the body to break it down into desired sugars. Easily digestible sugars get absorbed super fast and raise blood sugar levels fast. Complex carbs, on the opposite slowly get absorbed into your blood, which keeps you full longer and can avoid unnecessary insulin release.

If carbohydrate is too complex to digest, it's called fiber. Even though we won't be able to absorb it as energy, it helps move food through the colon and serves your microbiome as healthy food so that you can maintain a healthy flora.

You find many complex carbs in whole grain foods, alongside a good amount of minerals. I recommend swapping the white flour product for a full-grain version of it whenever you can.

Fats

Fat is our favorite form to store long-term energy and serves as building blocks of membranes or hormones. Some fats are essential because the body needs them and cannot produce them from other materials.

When talking about fat, we often mean just fatty acids. There are more lipid components like isoprene, on which many hormones build up. They, however, require little to no attention in our diet. The big lever lies in the fatty acids.

You can distinguish between saturated, mono-unsaturated, poly-unsaturated, and finally, trans fatty acids. In short, you should focus on getting unsaturated fats while keeping saturated and trans fats low.

Protein

Proteins are our body's "structure" material that gets encoded from our DNA. Your genetic code contains instructions on how to build proteins from individual amino acids. The endless combinations of 20 amino acids allow life to make enzymes, muscle, tissue, and more.

Of 20, only 8 amino acids are considered essential (9 for infants and during pregnancy). Their presence on your plate defines the quality of the protein you eat and is described as the biological value.

Micronutrients

You might have guessed it. Micronutrients are called micronutrients because you need comparably smaller amounts of them. However, this does not mean they are unnecessary, as most are essential to survival. Vitamins and Minerals play vital roles in many of our internal processes. If we lack a vitamin or mineral, the corresponding processes won't complete, which can lead to illness or even death.

Minerals

Minerals are just chemical elements, as we know them from the periodic system. We often find them in an ionized form, as many are metals. This, in consequence, has the effect that we cannot "use them up" but only lose them through excrement, bleeding, or sweating.

While minerals themselves are not organic, they get built into organic compounds. Here they fulfill their purpose through their unique chemical characteristics. Iron, for example, easily binds oxygen and is the critical component of your red blood cells for transportation.

The most commonly known minerals are often also the **typical bottlenecks** of an unbalanced diet:

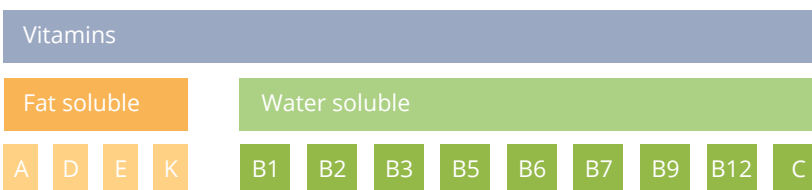
Iron, Calcium, Zinc, Iodine, and Selenium

Vitamins

Vitamins are more complex structures that fulfill vital roles in our bodies. Unlike minerals, they often get „used up“ when they meet their purpose. Some vitamins don't need to be absorbed in their "final form." Any substance that can be built into a vitamin is called a provitamin, vitamin A, for example.

You can distinguish between water-soluble and fat-soluble vitamins. Water-soluble vitamins cannot be stored long-term in our bodies. This has two effects: you must get them in more frequently, as we cannot pile them up. Practically it's very hard to overdose on any water-soluble vitamin, as your kidney filters them out if you have too many.

The vitamins we need



1.2 Knowledge: Nutrients we need

Conversely, fat-soluble vitamins must be eaten with something fatty to be absorbed. We also can store them in our tissues. Our store can provide a good supply over a longer time. However, „too much“ can be achieved more quickly, and you can intoxicate yourself with fat-soluble vitamins if you get too much over time.

Fat-soluble vitamins are **A, D, E, and K**. Take the word „**DEKA**“ as an easy-to-remember mnemonic.

One exception is the water-soluble vitamin B12. Despite being water soluble, it can be stored in our liver.

Secondary plant substances

The group of secondary plant substances is a collective term for food components that you do not need directly to survive, which, however, can impact your health in many ways. Thus secondary plant substances are not essential but can support well-being.

You find many substances in this group that are said to be:

- Anti cancerogenic
- Antioxidative
- Antibacterial
- Inflammation lowering
- Blood sugar regulating
- Cholesterol lowering

While secondary plant substances are not essential and theoretically can be skipped, their properties can positively affect our health. These are the good parts you miss completely if you try to stay healthy through supplements or an animal product-heavy diet.

As indicated by their name, secondary plant substances can exclusively be found in plant foods. The most known and important substance is Fiber.

Fiber

Fiber is a collective word for indigestible carbohydrates and protein found in plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and nuts. Our digestive system does not digest fiber. Instead, fiber passes through the digestive tract largely intact, adding bulk to stool and promoting regular bowel movements.

There are two main groups of fiber: soluble fiber and insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber dissolves in water and forms a gel-like substance in the digestive tract, which can help to slow

down the absorption of glucose and cholesterol. Insoluble fiber, on the other hand, does not dissolve in water and adds bulk to stool, promoting regular bowel movements.

Fiber is an important component of a healthy diet and has numerous health benefits, including:

- **Improving digestive health:** Fiber helps keep your digestive system healthy by promoting regular bowel movements, preventing constipation, and reducing the risk of gastrointestinal diseases such as hemorrhoids, diverticulitis, and colon cancer.
- **Weight management:** High-fiber foods tend to be more filling, which can help you eat less and control your weight. Fiber also slows down the absorption of sugar, which can help regulate blood sugar levels and reduce cravings for sweets.
- **Lower cholesterol levels:** Soluble fiber can help lower cholesterol levels by binding to cholesterol in the gut and preventing it from being absorbed into the bloodstream.
- **Lower risk of heart disease:** A diet high in fiber has been linked to a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure.
- **Improve immune function:** Fiber-rich foods contain prebiotics, which promote the growth of beneficial bacteria in the gut. This can help improve immune function and reduce the risk of infections and diseases.
- **Reduce inflammation:** Fiber has anti-inflammatory properties, which can help reduce inflammation and lower the risk of chronic diseases such as arthritis, diabetes, and cancer.



HEALTHY BODY
CHANGES AND
WEIGHT LOSS



1.3 Habit:

Healthy body changes and weight loss

If we start changing our diet, we naturally start changing the composition of our nutrients. What can follow is a change in our bodies. Filling up all essential nutrients continuously can benefit your overall well-being. Providing your body with fewer calories and more fiber can support being lean.

Why is this important?

Dieting done right works!

This chapter will teach you the mechanisms that kick in when you are in a caloric deficit. Understanding your body's reaction to dieting can help you steer in the right direction and avoid yoyo effects.

The right approach to dieting can help you avoid both hunger and deficits and the development of chronic disease. By understanding the importance of maintaining a healthy body weight, you can take steps to improve your overall health and well-being.

Benefits of maintaining a healthy body weight

Maintaining a healthy body weight is essential to overall health and wellness. Body weight can change over time, and being overweight or obese can increase the risk of chronic diseases and other health problems.

Being underweight, on the other hand, can lead to various deficiencies, and it's crucial to maintain a healthy body weight to support overall health and wellness.

Benefits for those who are overweight:

Reduced risk of chronic diseases: Maintaining a healthy body weight can significantly reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and certain cancers.

Improved cardiovascular health: Being overweight can strain your heart and increase your risk of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and other cardiovascular problems. Maintaining a healthy body weight can improve your heart health and reduce your risk of developing these conditions.

Increased energy and stamina: Carrying extra weight can be physically exhausting, making it harder to perform everyday activities and exercise. Maintaining a healthy body weight can improve your energy levels and overall stamina.

Improved mental health: Research has shown a strong link between obesity and depression. Maintaining a healthy body weight can improve your mental health and reduce your risk of developing depression and other mental health problems.

Better sleep: Being overweight can increase the likelihood of sleep apnea, disrupting your sleep and leaving you tired and groggy during the day. By maintaining a healthy body weight, you can improve the quality of your sleep and wake up feeling refreshed.

Study: How body weight affects the risk of hazard

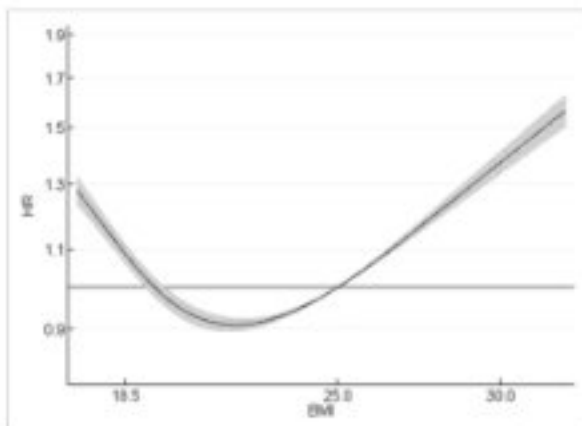


Figure 2

[Open in figure viewer](#) [Download PowerPoint](#)

Hazard ratios (HR) and corresponding 95% confidence intervals of the association between body mass index (BMI) as a cubic spline with seven knots and mortality. A BMI value of 25.0 kg/m² was the reference value, and the analysis was adjusted for strata of birth cohort and geographical area.

1.3 Habit: Healthy body changes and weight loss

Benefits of maintaining a healthy body weight for those who are underweight:

Avoiding nutrient deficiencies: When someone is underweight, it often means they are not consuming enough calories or nutrients to support their body's needs. This can lead to nutrient deficiencies, introducing various health problems.

A more robust immune system: Maintaining a healthy body weight can help strengthen the immune system, reducing the risk of infection and illness.

Improved bone health: Being underweight can increase the risk of osteoporosis and bone fractures. Maintaining a healthy body weight can improve bone density and reduce the risk of these conditions.

Better reproductive health: Being underweight can affect reproductive health in both men and women. Maintaining a healthy body weight can improve fertility and reduce the risk of reproductive problems.

Improved mental health: Being underweight can increase the risk of depression and other mental health problems. Maintaining a healthy body weight can improve mental health and reduce the risk of developing these conditions.

Increased energy and stamina: Being underweight can lead to fatigue and low energy levels. Maintaining a healthy body weight can improve your energy levels and overall life.

We are what we eat

If you aim to change your health or body weight, you should be aware that the current state of your body is mainly the sum of your actions. When you carry more weight around, you automatically burn more calories. When burn rate and body weight meet, they become stable.

If, let's say, you would start eating 500 calories over your average need without changing anything else in your lifestyle, your body will naturally build up body fat. Carrying higher body weight, you require more energy to compensate for the extra.

Once you reach a certain weight, carrying the excess fat costs enough to compensate for the daily 500 kcal extra. In other words - at some point, you will even out on a sweet spot, where those 500 extra calories will be just right to carry around what you gained before. Now your body weight stabilizes.

The exact opposite happens when you cut your calories. Your body will start sacrificing fat and muscle so that your energy burn adapts to what you have available. Less body weight and less muscle mean less energy use during the day.

A diet program won't help long term.

Considering that we always will land on our sweet spot between energy supply and consumption, **a diet program for a few weeks will not keep you happy with the long-term results.**

Your recently lost pounds might slowly return as soon as the old habits snap back in. Combine this with cravings after the diet, and you can even end up with more than before. This is known as the yoyo effect.

Dieting is strongly associated with restriction. Plenty of limitations will be in place when going for a strictly planned diet. This, indeed, is not a pleasure and will lead to cravings and may lead to mental health issues and eating disorders.

A high caloric deficit costs muscle

Blood sugar levels are one of your homeostasis's most finely regulated parameters. When your blood sugar levels run low, your body will respond to try to increase them. A steady supply of glucose is necessary for the nervous system and erythrocytes.

One process that gets amplified when in a significant caloric deficit is the so-called [gluconeogenesis](#)¹. Here, new glucose gets synthesized from protein through various pathways in the liver.

If you diet too vigorously, you risk losing muscle through protein use. To counter muscle loss, the caloric deficit should not be too significant. The lower your blood sugar levels, the faster gluconeogenesis transforms protein into glucose, so stay on a moderate caloric deficit and use your muscles to stimulate growth.

If you are not exercising, you should not create a caloric deficit higher than 15%. If you do resistance training and provide enough growth signals to your muscles, you can safely open up the gap further. In fitness centers, people typically aim for a 25% caloric gap through excess energy burned with exercise.

Long-lasting improvements need permanent change.

If you want to benefit from a diet long-term, you should instead find changes you can onboard long-term. A diet that always leaves you hungry is nothing you would enjoy in the long run. Restricting yourself too much also bears the risk of undernutrition.

It is not about sticking to a strict plan, but leaning what is good for you. The easiest way to go is not by restricting the amount of food you eat, but by replacing calorie-dense foods with better alternatives.

If you go whole, you get a bunch of goodies like fiber, which automatically makes you feel full faster. Besides, whole foods usually bring you much more vitamins and minerals than a product built entirely from sugars, starch, and fat.

Everybody is different.

How good a diet might work depends on the person, the body weight and metabolism, the nutritional habits and foods, and the duration and intensity of your physical activity. If you follow the same road, you cannot look at what one person is doing and expect the same thing to happen to you. Comparing numbers won't do the trick here. Instead, try working on your own food choices and habits.

How to get started right

You can start eating healthier and less caloric by introducing whole and fiber-rich foods into your diet. Through this, you submit vitamins and nutrients into your day-to-day. Fiber helps you feel full, and whole foods' lower calorie density enables you to consume less energy throughout the day.

Start with one thing in your pantry. Take one item you consider unhealthy, and change it. When you find a better alternative you like, you can easily stick to it. Then move on to the next item.

This approach does not imply that you must change everything for vegetables. Try to find better alternatives in their category. Do you fancy cookies? Find one with less sugar and whole grains inside. Do you like pasta? Try out a whole-grain or legume-based variant. Try picking bread with high whole grain contents and seeds.

Focus on whole foods

You benefit in many ways if you change a product for whole foods.

- The amount of fiber supports your gut health and makes you feel full faster and longer through a slower absorption and movement of feces in your bowel.
- Where there is fiber, there are fewer calories to find. Fiber cannot be broken down and absorbed by us.
- Whole foods come with decent amounts of micronutrients which are essential for healthy body function.
- Many secondary plant substances can positively impact your blood sugar, cholesterol, and gut health.
- Whole foods are unprocessed and free of chemical additives.

Persistence without pressure

When you start onboarding healthier foods and get used to them, you can easily persist in those changes. If you start feeling that keeping up is hard, you probably introduce changes too rapidly or make changes in the wrong areas.

Taking things slowly here is critical. Especially introducing high amounts of fiber to an untrained intestine can cause irritations. Work on changes gradually and allow your body to react to them to see how your feelings develop.

1.3 Habit: Healthy body changes and weight loss

Use these considerations to guide yourself into a change:

- Start by setting achievable goals for your diet change. Do not formulate them too specific and try not to link them to your scale. Instead, formulate statements like *"I focus on eating more fruit throughout the day."*
- Try to gradually introduce changes to your diet rather than making a significant bang change in your lifestyle, so that you can stay on top of your journey and not feel overwhelmed.
- Keep healthy foods easily accessible and readily available.
- Drink enough water and stay hydrated.
- Keep track of your progress and celebrate small successes.

If you have health concerns, specific dietary needs, or allergies, consult your doctor before making any changes.

Skill

TASTE



1.4 Skill:

Taste

When we say a dish is tasty, we usually look at a whole ensemble of taste, aroma, texture, spice, and presentation. If you know how to tickle all of these senses individually in a meal, you can create fascinating flavors in your cooking.

We can look at them individually to wrap our heads around them and create delightful dishes.

Taste: we can sense a total of 5 different tastes, which are sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami. In this chapter, you will learn how to create dishes full of taste.

Aroma: We sense aroma with our noses. Aromatics are chemical compounds that we perceive as usually pleasing, and it's the stuff that makes food smell good. We will learn that in chapter 2.

Texture: Giving a good thought on how the texture of your meal should be can create additional satisfaction factors. After all, we are super sensitive to texture and instantly feel if we have a sand grain or hair in our mouth. This will be part of chapter 4.

Spice/Bite: Spice is not a taste, as it activates pain receptors in our mouth, often together with temperature. Spice will be our subject in chapter 3.

Why is this important?

Food is fuel for our body to work and something enjoyable for all senses! Understanding the basic concepts of taste allows you to start creating dishes full of taste.

Taste is responsible for food to either be bland or fully satisfying. If you know how to create complete taste by matching your taste buds capabilities, you won't miss out on any tasty experience, as you know how to apply the rules of good taste.

Food touches all senses

There are other factors as well that dictate how we perceive a meal. Imagine you go to a fancy restaurant and order your favorite dish, but then the waiter is rude to you. Despite the perfect dish, a small social interaction can cost you all the joy.

Other factors that define the overall experience of a meal can be:

Expectation: We have high expectations, especially when looking at a dish's texture. Something jiggly when expecting crunch, a hair in the soup, fishbone, or similar can rule out all joy.

Environment & Atmosphere: It can make a huge difference where and under what circumstances you eat. A pizza as a takeaway can be less enjoyable than having it in a fancy restaurant.

Temperature: Affects texture and intensity of aromas.

Presentation: When appropriately plated, any food can be perceived as more flavorful.

Say hello to taste

Usually, when talking about taste, people often mean the overall experience of a meal. When pointing at the entire experience, we talk about the flavor. If, for example, ice cream is strawberry flavored, we mean the combination of a sweet taste and the typical bright aromas of strawberries. When I talk about taste, I exclusively mean the senses your tastebuds on your tongue produce.

Taste is the foundation for every good meal. The more we tickle our taste buds, the more savory and satisfying a dish will be.

Taste perception is very individual and can be influenced by age, genes, and culture. If you are a smoker, your ability to taste might be limited. Your salt sensitivity can be lowered when you rely on processed foods.

1.4 Skill: Taste

To make a dish taste *taste-complete*, you should consider each of the five tastes in your dish. The five tastes that we can sense are

Sweet

Sour

Salty

Bitter

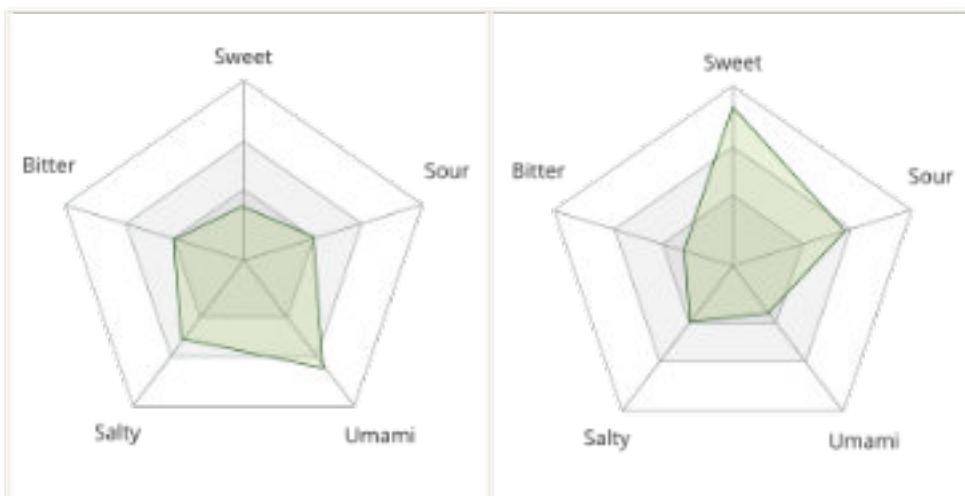
Umami

Designing a taste signature

When picking ingredients for your dish, consider their basic tastes. What dish is it going to be? Some savory main? Some light salad? A sweet cookie?

Depending on what you cook, **highlight one or two tastes to make them stand out** and give the taste a clear direction. Then try to add traces of the remaining tastes to the ensemble to round up the foundation.

Savory or sweet? How you can understand taste patterns



Always consider all tastes:

To get a mouth full of taste, make sure you cover all five basic tastes at least somewhat. A savory burger has a strong focus around umami and salty tastes, while a fruity breakfast can count on sweet and sour spotlights.

I recommend visualizing the desired taste in a star matrix to get started. Decide how you want your dish to taste and color the area you wish to cover.

From here, you can find ingredients that support your taste profile easily.

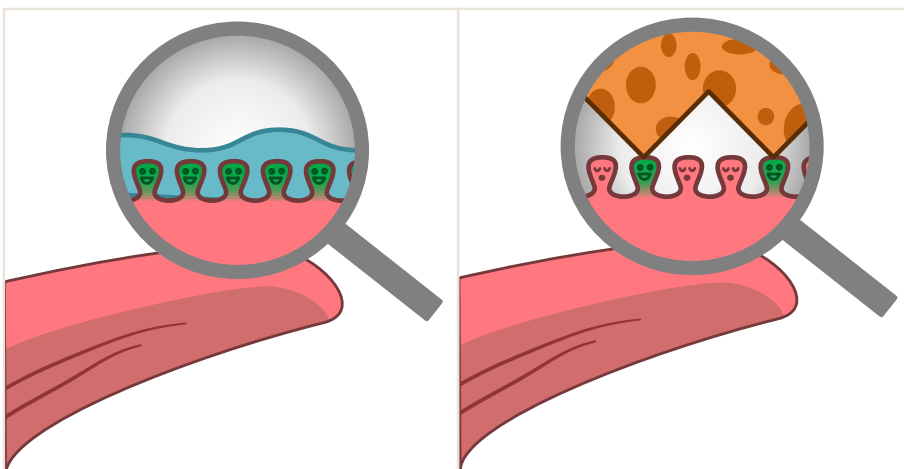
Texture impacts taste

The more taste buds activate while food is in your mouth, the stronger the taste perception. Naturally, the more tasteful substance is present, the more taste buds fire their signals.

Solid food has a hard time activating all your taste buds. Often, due to its rigged structure, solid food cannot lay flat on your tongue and therefore misses many potential contact points.

If food is liquid, it can thoroughly coat your tongue and play together with as many taste buds as possible. Take a piece of chocolate, for example. Its taste becomes more intense if you allow it to melt in your mouth.

How liquid food can reach more taste buds



Taste the difference:

Liquid food can easily wrap around all your taste buds, while solid food often only reaches a few of them. It's easier to create intense taste in liquid food.

Everybody likes sauce for a reason.

The more rough the structure of a given food, the harder it is to apply taste. Something liquid, like sauce, is an excellent companion to add an intense taste to a dish, as it can easily reach all your tastebuds.

Instead of packing all taste onto something dry, blending everything into a sauce is way easier and more convenient. You can then spread the taste on almost anything from bread, vegetables, pasta, and more.

First, think of what the main components of your meal already bring to the plate. Then try to fill the gap of taste in the sauce. If the base of your dish is neutral in taste, like plain pasta, you can go all-in on creating taste in the sauce or marinade.

If your base already bears some tastes, like salty, then you can skip this part in the sauce. Anything bland in taste can be enriched by combining it with a tasteful liquid companion. Just think of what still is underrepresented in your meal, and add it to the sauce.

Rate the taste of the overall dish, not its components

Putting each of the five tastes in each component of your meal is unnecessary. When you make guacamole, you usually find sweet, sour, and bitter ingredients in the recipe. But how about salt? If you eat your guac with some salty tortilla chips, the taste will combine into the big picture as soon as you start munching on a chip with dip. Adding salt to guacamole in this case is not necessary. If however you choose vegetable sticks for dipping, adding a dash of salt into your guacamole does make sense.

Or think of a salad: The greens come with much bitterness. The dressing can be salty and sour (for example, a plain oil and vinegar + salt and pepper combo). For some sweetness, you could add grapes or pomegranate. Umami can come from mushrooms or sundried tomatoes. Altogether, the ingredients create a full taste.

The same applies when stacking burgers. The meaty patty brings salt and umami. Tomato ketchup adds sweet and sour. Lettuce or salad add a trace of bitterness. In a single bite, every tastebud comes to play.

As long as the whole dish satisfies all taste buds, you can assume you've built a rock-solid foundation for your meal.

The five tastes in detail

Salty

Salt itself is essential for our survival. We need it to regulate blood pressure, temperature, and more. Before salt was widely available, it was crucial to taste traces of salt to ensure we got enough of it.

Historically, salt has been seen as a taste enhancer. Adding salt to a dish is often one of the key components to bringing more taste in. It can amplify the essence of any food. **A well-salted dish does not taste salty but brings out the flavor of the overall dish.**

A pumpkin soup with salt will taste more like a pumpkin; stir-fried vegetables will come out more fruity and savory with salt.

However, use salt always in moderation. Especially in processed foods with little flavor, you likely face high amounts of salt to bring some punch in. As a result, you can quickly pile up a vast amount of salt if you rely too much on factory foods.

A dish based on fresh ingredients already brings a good boost in flavor and therefore does not need too much extra salt. Besides, the recommended daily salt intake is at most 5 grams. Too much salt is associated with high blood pressure. So better be careful with salt.

Salt, fat, and sugar are the key components of processed foods. They get added in high quantities to give food its addictive signature.

Using salt correctly lets you emphasize your dish's aromas and other flavors. I recommend to **add salt to your cooking as early as possible**. It will enable you to recognize aromas and tastes better from the beginning. If you create a taste signature before adding salt, you might overshoot your goals once salt joins the plate. So get the base right, add salt, and move on from here. If the dish requires more salt on its way, carefully add a bit more.

How to know if you are missing salt

A well-salted dish can be tasted across the whole tongue. If your taste sensation is uneven, and it feels like something is missing in the center of your mouth, try adding a bit of salt.

Salt then will bridge your taste from the tip of your tongue to the very back of it. The taste will be consistent from front to back if you have enough salt.

1.4 Skill: Taste

A lack of salt can leave the perception somewhat dull. You might taste some ingredients while others are missing - the perception could be more balanced. Other tastes fight for your attention. Add salt to even this out.

Sour

Sour brings a good portion of lightness and refreshment to your dish. Since we are highly sensitive to acidity, a little dash of it can be super refreshing, but too much can ruin the picture. Too much sourness can make us perceive that something went bad (milk can get sour) or is not ripe yet.

Acidity should be part of any dish. I'm not asking you to make everything taste sour, but have some components on your plate that give that lovely energizing slap and brightness to your meal. Think of adding some pickled vegetables, a slice of lemon, or even drinking lemonade with your meal. This all adds up to the big picture.

How to know if you are missing acidity

Does your food drive your saliva production? No? Try adding something sour. A lack of acidity can be perceived as bland and lifeless. If it's liquid, you might perceive it as syrupy.

The more savory a dish, the more likely you want to add something sour. A hit of white wine on mushrooms or some vinegar on a stir fry can make your plate go a long way. The same applies to sweet dishes. Add some sour to your ice cream, and give a chocolate sauce a contrasting spike of sourness.

Be mindful of the aromas when adding sour.

If you want to add sour to your dish, the most common sour ingredients are citric juices like lemon or lime and different types of vinegar. Each comes with different aromas, which potentially can clash with the rest of your aromatic ingredients. Use your nose and smell the aromas before adding them to your dish. Choosing lime over lemon or plain rice vinegar over some intense balsamico can make a huge difference.

Sweet

If there is one main driver in taste that we all crave, it must be sweetness. No wonder, as **glucose is the primary fuel for our brain and body**. If something tastes sweet, it signals that plenty of energy is available.

Often, we are pretty desensitized to the taste of sweetness, as it is now omnipresent in so many processed foods. If you eat many processed sweets like cookies, chocolate bars, and more, you might find the sweetness of natural foods too little. Luckily, if you cut your sweets, your sensitivity to sweetness can recover quickly, and you will be able to enjoy the natural sweetness of grown foods way better.

To add sweetness, you don't need to add pure sugar.

Sugar brings plain sweetness without adding any aromatics to your dish. You also miss many benefits like vitamins, antioxidants, and more. Sweetening your dish with more natural food brings nutrients and aromas to play.

You can add jams and marmalades, fruit, or syrups to give a sweet punch to any dish. Think of combinations like cheese with honey, melon with ham, and ketchup on fries... all those dishes are popular and bring a mix of savor and sweetness. Make use of this!

One mention worthy sugar replacement are sweet dates. Yes, they are packed with sugar, and they will raise your blood sugar too, but unlike refined sugar, dates are packed with vitamins, minerals, and fiber, too!

Strengthening the perception of sweetness without adding sweet stuff

No, it's not necessary to bathe a dish in sugar. The perception of sweetness can be emphasized by other means as well. First - **a well-salted meal supports the taste of sweetness**. Then, I recommend roasting or charring your vegetables. This can also make a dish appear sweeter without adding those extra calories.

Bitter

Bitter can be found in many foods naturally. Coffee, dark chocolate, beer, gin, greens like kale and rucola, Brussels sprouts, and more contain bitterness. Many of those foods are hated by children, as their perception of bitterness is more potent than in an adult. Over time, our perception of bitterness dies off and can be tolerated more. That is because bitterness can hint at the food being potentially toxic.

1.4 Skill: Taste

Sometimes bitter can get confused with sour. While sour is a mouth-watering and quickly passing perception, bitter can leave you a **dry and curly sensation on your tongue** for quite some time until it wears off.

Bitter promotes the release of saliva and other gastric juices in your stomach that fire up your digestion. Having this happen can make a dish more satisfactory. Many people drink a bitter aperitif after a meal to enjoy this effect. Having traces of bitterness in your food can promote similar things happening.

Vegetables, spices, fruit, zest, greens, walnuts, celery, carrots,... you find bitterness in many foods. Often you don't want to add more bitterness to a dish, but you want to focus on how to reduce bitterness to leave more space for the other tastes:

Caramelizing: if you roast or sear a food, in most cases, this will minimize bitterness and bring out its natural sweetness.

Blanching: you can wash out bitter tannins from any chopped food. Sadly, like this, you also wash out nutrients.

Fat: adding fat to something bitter usually reduces its perception as well. Think of creamer in coffee or Brussels sprouts with oil.

Warming up: Heat and cold impact how strongly you taste bitter. At room temperature, coffee can be something horrible. However, freshly brewed hot coffee or coffee on ice is perceived as less bitter.

Umami

Umami is the taste that gives the big OOMPH to any dish. If you think of a food that profoundly satisfies you, it's most likely because of umami. Be it meat, cheese, or fish - most people love animal products because they are high in umami. **Umami is a natural taste enhancer**, as it brings the play of other tastes into the foreground.

There are many misconceptions about umami. Some say a dish is "an umami" if all other tastes are present. Some think umami does not exist. Some associate umami solely with MSG and are afraid of it.

However, **Umami is a native taste on our tongue**, and we use it to identify protein-rich foods (mainly glutamate) and nucleotides (the basic building blocks of DNA). So if we break down protein-rich food, the taste we are left with is umami. It's best described as savory,

whole, and rich. It is a natural flavor enhancer and has been used intuitively in many cultures without naming it.

We can create umami on the fly by breaking down protein. Curing, dry aging, long roasting, and even fermentation does that. Fermentation is an excellent way of adding umami to anything existing.

Especially in Asian cuisine, umami is at the center of attention when creating taste. You find umami-rich foods almost everywhere. Fish sauce, Soy sauce, Miso, Bean pastes, and more. They are all seasonings that add a great punch of umami.

Foods rich in umami

Use the following umami-rich taste drivers to give your food the oomph it needs.

Mushrooms, especially shiitake

Soy sauce

Long-ripened cheeses like parmesan

Miso paste

Nutritional Yeast

(vegetarian) fish sauce

Carrots

Cabbage

Spinach

Green tea

Seaweed

Vegemite

1.4 Skill: Taste

When to add umami

If you have taken care of the other four tastes but still feel like something is missing, all fingers point to umami. Adding **umami makes the mouth feel less thin and more whole**. It brings the bit of “meatiness” that many people swear on. It can also enhance the perception of other tastes without adding more. A salty dish is not enough, despite having plenty of it already? Add umami.

Umami is one reason why people are cheese and meat lovers. You can add the satisfaction from those foods to any dish just by adding umami to it.

Do not always go for full taste, go for what’s expected.

Taste works best when it is complete. But this is not the whole story. You can enjoy food even if it does not talk to all of your tastebuds. It always depends on what you expect to taste when choosing a certain food.

Think of taking a bite of an apple. Apples mainly bear sweet and sour tastes. Even though we do not find salty or umami, chewing on an apple can be very satisfying because it hits what we expect.

On the other hand, if you encounter bitter, salty, and umami when biting an apple, you most likely will be disgusted, as it goes against your expectations.

So, when things appear dull because this is not what you expect, start thinking of missing tastes. Adding more taste on top of something already right the way it is risks overwhelming the palate and diminishing the enjoyment of the food. **The key to keeping things interesting is the balance between meeting your taste expectations and surprising your palate just enough.**

Balancing taste

You may sometimes throw in too much of one of the tastes. Don’t worry; the dish, in most cases, is not lost.

The most straightforward way to reduce a specific taste is to bulk up on the whole dish while skipping the taste you want to reduce. Add more of everything except for the ingredients that support the taste that the dish already contains too much of.

If bulking up isn't possible, adding fat softens the taste, as it coats your tongue and prevents your buds from firing excessively. A little dash of oil can dampen all tastes slightly while supporting the perception of many aromatics and spices.

If you face a situation where only one taste is out of control, you can still shift the overall taste balance by adding more to the others. Vietnamese and Thai cuisine also uses sweet and sour to distract from spice.

Too much salt

If you taste the salt on your plate, you most likely have too much on it. You can count on sweet and sour components to distract from the saltiness. For example, adding a splash of lemon to a salty dish can fully draw your attention away from salt.

Too sour

A too-sour dish makes your mouth go crazy. You both will salivate, and your mouth may feel like it's squeezing with full force. Adding a bit of sweetness can balance things out.

Too bitter

This is common, especially when cooking for kids (they can't stand bitterness). Add more salt or sweetness to the dish to completely distract from the bitterness when heating and caramelizing won't do the trick.

Too sweet

A dish too sweet may still taste good, but it can distract from all the remaining flavor. If you want to reduce sweetness, try counterbalancing it with something sour. You can add some bite to your recipe to distract from the sweetness.

Too much umami

As umami acts like a flavor enhancer, it is hard to tell if a dish has too much. But generally speaking: if most of your meals appear dull without adding a decent amount of umami, you most likely are used to high amounts. A overall reduction of umami can sensitize you again. Like sweetness, your taste sensation will change to normal once you stop over-exposing your tongue to too much umami.

Tasting tips

Even for people new to the world of cooking, learning to taste is a pretty easy, straightforward process. All it takes is a little attention to what you put in your mouth. In no time, you can learn to identify the five tastes in your dish and tell what might be missing or too much.

You can use the following tricks to perceive better what is missing in your dish.

Roll the food on your tongue and press it up against the palate. Through this, you ensure you distribute the food well over your tongue, allowing you to taste it with the full capacity of your taste buds.

Make sure to properly mix all ingredients before tasting. Otherwise, you might get a false idea of what the dish is like. This is especially important when adding salt and spice.

Close your eyes while tasting. The more senses you shut down, the better you can focus on tasting your dish.

Let the food cool a bit before tasting. Not only do you avoid burning your mouth, but heat tends to dull the taste perception. The same applies to cold.

Practice

RAMEN



1.5 Practice:

Full Flavor Ramen

Until now, we've learned how to start a dietary change. Instead of cutting your intake strictly, we can focus on replacing highly processed foods with better alternatives. Also, you now know how to make a dish that contains the complete picture of the five tastes we can sense.

Asian cuisine is focused on tastes, allowing us to practice onboarding all five tastes to a ramen dish. As we are creating a primarily liquid dish, this will enable us to represent a complete flavor profile easily.

How to work with my Recipes?

The recipes in this course are not meant to be followed with surgical precision. They are written to give direction and guidance.

Change the measurements of the ingredients to your liking. Replace, add, or remove things from the ingredients list to practice improvisation and make it yours!

Going from instant soup to gourmet

"Ramen" can be bought as a pack of instant noodles with some flavoring powder. If we take this apart, there are few nutrients in the package. The noodles are often made from cheap wheat flour. Besides some dried vegetables or meat traces, most flavors are artificial additions through a salty stock.

If we make this dish from scratch, we can uplift the quality to a new level. How's that done? Easy! We exchange junk food ingredients for the real deal.

For this ramen, I will introduce you to more options to pick from than you need. You don't have to use every single ingredient to make good ramen. Just make sure to represent all five tastes with the ingredients you pick.

Adding protein, herbs, and vegetables indeed contributes to the experience. But it won't be a show-stopper if you can not find all ingredients or want to skip some to reduce effort. Adapt, improvise, overcome.

What we aim for, in the end, is a basic understanding of how to create taste while using non-convenience foods and more natural picks. If you wrap your head around this way of cooking, you will soon pick up speed and flexibility.

Base ingredients



1 Seitan

2 Cilantro

3 Carrots

4 Soba

5 Lime

6 Oyster Mushrooms

7 Garlic

8 Ginger

Picking the right pasta

Let's start with the noodles themselves. The pasta is the main ingredient for this dish and represents your caloric base. Most energy will come from here, so make a wise pick.

Instead of having cheap wheat flour noodles, we should search for whole-grain alternatives. I love picking buckwheat soba, which is based on whole buckwheat flour. They still contain the entire seed, and we can consider them whole.

If you cannot find buckwheat soba, pick another whole grain-based pasta. If you cannot find quality Asian noodles, opt for some whole-grain or legume-based spaghetti. Don't worry; the pasta you pick has almost no influence on the taste of the final dish.

Adding some protein

Next, you want to add some protein. Besides the nutritious value, you also add some chewy texture to bite on. That will uplift the whole experience as you add plenty of textural play to the dish.

For the vegan selection, I love adding oyster mushrooms and seitan to the mix. Shiitake mushrooms also work wonders here as they are high in umami.

You can go for a lean cut of beef (sliced thinly) or chicken. Adding a soft-boiled egg is also popular in many ramen dishes. Feel free to do so, too! A boiling time of 7 minutes should lead to a good result.

You can add more or different protein sources, like tofu or yuba.

Stock

You can use a simple vegetable or beef broth or go full Japanese with a daishi stock as a base for this ramen. We will add more flavorful ingredients to round up the picture, but stock is an excellent base for most soup dishes, with a strong salt and umami punch around the corner.

If you don't know which one to pick, use your nose. The most stock you can find commonly carries saltiness and umami. The main differences lie in their aromas. While vegetable stock brings a broad aroma from the ingredients used to cook it, beef stock brings a more focused aromatic profile from its meaty base. On the other hand, Daishi is built on kombu algae and brings an aromatic profile that reminds of the sea.

The choice is yours. Later we will add all remaining flavors to the stock.

Greens and aromas

Ramen gets its fresh appeal from, you have guessed it, fresh ingredients. Adding some greens to the ramen also visually makes the whole dish appear richer. I use pakchoi and carrots as a side vegetable, which I stir fry.

Grated ginger and minced garlic give a bright, warming aroma and a bit of bite. Spring onion or green onion and cilantro add refreshing aromas to the ramen. A splash of lime can add fruitiness to the dish, and I recommend serving lime slices to squeeze that extra bit of sourness on demand.

Rounding up the full taste

Let's give some thought to this dish for now. We aim to add all five flavors to the dish, so there is still some work left to do.

The natural ingredients already cover two of five tastes: Umami and acidity. We want to make sure to cover all. How to add the remaining three tastes should be the next logical question.

Going through the 5 tastes systematically

Salty

Be careful with salty ingredients, as we got plenty already. Add them gradually not to overdo the salt. As a rule of thumb, it is too much if you can taste the salt.

- Stock: use a little less than recommended on the package.
- Soy sauce: brings salt and umami. It can be a salt-reduced version of soy sauce, as we add plenty of salt through other ingredients. Again use caution due to the salt contents.
- Miso paste: brings salt, umami, and a bit of sweetness.

Sweet

A slight sweet note reminds us that we are eating fresh foods. Even in savory dishes, a bit of sweetness rounds up the picture

- Miso paste: has a slightly sweet note
- Lime: The juice brings both sweet and sour
- Sriracha hot sauce: This sauce is a mix of sweet and spicy.

Sour

I suggest you choose one of the two

- Lime juice: Brings both sweet and sour
- Rice vinegar: a pure sour component low in aroma

1.5 Practice: Ramen

Umami

Get your umami through lots of roasted and fermented stuff. These ingredients will make sure your ramen carries enough of this goodness:

- Soy sauce: fermented, umami and salt
- Miso paste: also a fermented ingredient, carrying sweet, salty and umami taste
- Stock or Daishi: Both broths are high in umami and salt
- Roasted Mushrooms: mushrooms carry umami naturally, roasting exposes that more.
- Roasted Seitan or Meats: The Maillard reaction will create more umami as you roast.

Bitter

Bitter is naturally present in many plant-based ingredients. Usually, having some ingredients with bitterness in the mix is more than enough. We add bitter notes through:

- Tahini: Sesame paste naturally has a soft bitter taste
- Pak Choi: Adding this green gives an additional bitter note to the dish.

Stock additions to round up the taste



Balancing taste

Consider the taste profile in the first place when designing your dish. If you find alternatives to the ingredients, feel free to swap them. You should be fine as long as you get a note of each taste in the dish.

Ramen wants to be a main dish, so naturally, the tastes focus on salty and umami. Those will be the main drivers of the experience. Remember to represent the other tastes as well.

It can be helpful to make a taste inventory, ensuring we pack everything we need. A small list or table like the following helps tremendously in seeing what is still missing. One X means the ingredient slightly represents the taste, XXX indicates a strong driver for the given taste.

	Sweet	Salty	Sour	Umami	Bitter
Stock		XXX		X	
Soy sauce		XX		XX	
Miso Paste	X	X		XXX	
Lime	X		XXX		
Rice Vinegar			XXX		
Tahini					X
Hot sauce	XX				
Mushrooms				X	
Seitan				X	

Variations of this recipe

There is no need to follow the ingredients list with surgical precision to achieve a similarly good outcome. You can replace many things. Use this recipe as a base guideline, but change things to create something new:

Swap the stock: As we got other sources of salt and umami as well, we can skip the stock. Try making some based on things like lemon grass, ginger, and chili. Or make a curry stock with watered-down coconut milk.

Make a firework from ingredients: Why stop with the ingredients I picked for this recipe? You can add more vegetables like broccoli, sprouts, onion, radish, and more.

Add different aromatic profiles: There is no need to go fully Japanese style to make a tasty ramen-like dish. Try using warm aromas and spices from other contexts instead.

Change the shape: What works as a soup, surely can be used in a different form. Mix miso and soy sauce and use it to deglaze a stir fry. Serve fried protein and vegetables on rice. Put the ingredients in a wrap or burrito.

Full Flavor Ramen

Equipment	Prep Time	Total Time	Servings
Pots & Pans	40 mins	40 mins	2 Bowls

Ingredients	Course	Cuisine	Calories
Calories and Protein	Main	Japanese	351 kcal

8 oz/ 200g buckwheat ramen noodles
1 cup / 200g sliced mushrooms
3.5 oz / 100g Seitan (or Meat)

Saucy parts

2 cups / 500ml vegetable broth
1 cup / 250ml water
2 tbsp soy sauce
1 tsp miso paste
1 tsp rice vinegar or lime
1 tsp Sriracha
1 tsp tahini

Aromas & Greens

1 inch ginger, grated
2 cloves of garlic, minced
1 cup sliced carrots
scallions cut into sticks
cilantro, fresh

For Frying

oil (sesame)

Optional additions

algae (wakame, nori, or kombu)
1 pak choi
chili flakes

1. Cook the Soba (ramen noodles) according to package instructions and set them aside.
2. Bring a pot with vegetable broth and water to a boil.
3. In a pan, heat sesame oil over medium heat. Add minced garlic and grated ginger and sauté for 1 minute.
4. Add mushrooms and carrots for 1-2 minutes on each side, and deglaze with a dash of soy sauce.
5. In a separate pan, fry the seitan/meat for around 1 minute on each side.
6. Add soy sauce, miso paste, rice vinegar/lime, sriracha, and tahini into the serving bowls and mix well. Add broth and stir to combine.
7. Add the cooked ramen noodles to the bowl. Pile the sautéed vegetables, mushrooms, and protein on top.
8. Garnish with green onions, cilantro, and sriracha or chili flakes if desired.

Mind

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF HEALTHY DIETS



2.1 Mind:

The basic principle of healthy diets

For our body to function, we need energy to perform and building materials to grow and repair our body. The goal should be to get enough of each while trying to keep our goals manageable without overshooting your supply. Generally speaking, a healthy diet, therefore, is *balanced* and avoids both excess and deficiencies.

Why is this important?

This chapter discusses the basic principles of a healthy diet, following the scientific recommendation of the World Health Organization. You learn where our modern diet problems originate and what processing has to do with that.

Understanding what makes a healthy diet allows you to pick the foods that are good for you.

The WHO recommendations for a healthy diet

When discussing healthy dietary patterns, most people know what science tells them quite well. We know that high amounts of sugar are bad and that too much saturated fat is not suitable for us either. We know that fruit and vegetables should be eaten plenty. And most of us know that we should not overeat highly processed foods and go low on salt.

There is surprisingly little to be found when you look at what science recommends as a healthy diet. The World Health Organization summarises its recommendation in the following way:

- Eat unprocessed foods, like **fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds**, and **whole grains**.
- Eat at least **400g of vegetables and fruits** daily, excluding starchy vegetables like potatoes.
- Get **less than 10% of your calories from free sugars**, ideally go below 5%.
- Try to get **less than 30% of your caloric intake from fats**:
eat **less saturated fats than 10% of your calories**.
avoid trans-fats (<1%).
prefer unsaturated fats over saturated and trans fats.
- Try **not to eat more than 5g** of salt.
- Salt should be **iodized**.

Most of those points seem obvious, right? I see these bullets as the answer to “What” makes a healthy diet. Yet, this alone does not help pick the right foods and make a balanced composition.

Welcome at the core of this course!

The WHO recommendation does not share the understanding and explanation behind “why” this composition is recommended for a healthy lifestyle. Neither does it share an answer on the “how” to make that lifestyle possible practically.

This course teaches both; the “**why**” things are as they are and “**how**” you can best make a healthy diet happen for yourself.

The question of “why” gets answered through scientific answers to nutritional questions. If you can understand and follow the reasoning behind a dietary recommendation, you **can make healthier choices autonomously**.

The answer to the “how” comes from a more practical, day-to-day life-orientated approach. On the one side, you will **learn how to make food flavourful and tasty**. And on the other side, you will pick up practical knowledge that helps you get the most benefits from your cooking and dietary choices.

By now, you already have a basic understanding of nutrients and dieting and know how to balance taste. We will deepen that knowledge further from here.

Everything I teach will enable you to design a healthy lifestyle that fits your needs. It doesn't matter if you consume animal products or go fully plant-based. Whether you prefer a Mediterranean-style, DASH-style diet, or something completely different doesn't matter. Each dietary pattern can be designed and executed in consent with these guidelines.

What can we learn from the WHO recommendation for a healthy diet?

I recommend you read the statement of the WHO yourself if you haven't done so yet. Just search for "WHO healthy diet" or follow this link. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/healthy-diet>²

The recommendation for a healthy diet pattern is simple. Instead of categorizing individual foods as good or bad or praising one dietary trend, the focus lies on an overall dietary design.

It points out to **replace processed foods high in sugar, starch, saturated fat, and salt with whole and mainly plant-based foods**. It names the five plant-based food groups: fruit, vegetables, grains, legumes, and nuts & seeds. It sets a minimum intake for fruit and vegetables.

On the other side, it recommends limiting free sugars and overall fat contents, especially saturated and trans fats. Salt should also be limited.

Generally speaking, whole plant foods have many health benefits, while high amounts of sugar, bad fats, and salt are linked to disease development.

What about animal products?

There is no clear guideline on how many animal products, especially red meat, a diet should contain. A "too much" in animal products, especially dairy and red meat, is most of the time bound to the contents of saturated and total fat.

In some publications, you might face recommendations to limit red meat to 350–500g per week. This, however, is not a fixed number. The fat contents of your food may vary tremendously depending on the quality of what you eat.

You can improve your fat composition in animal products without cutting your overall animal product intake.

- Go for a lean piece of meat
- Prefer Fish over poultry, prefer poultry over red meat
- Pick fat-reduced milk and dairy products over whole milk products
- Choose an unsaturated oil over butter or ghee for frying

The big picture matters most.

Following this recommendation may lead to banning any food that does not match the pattern. However, this would be challenging to achieve and maintain long term.

But luckily, we don't need to care too much about individual foods as long as your dietary pattern still fits the picture of a healthy diet. This applies both to food components as well as individual meals.

Making a cake from fat, sugar, and starch is not considered healthy, but adding a bit of sweetness to an otherwise whole food-based dish won't ruin your day.

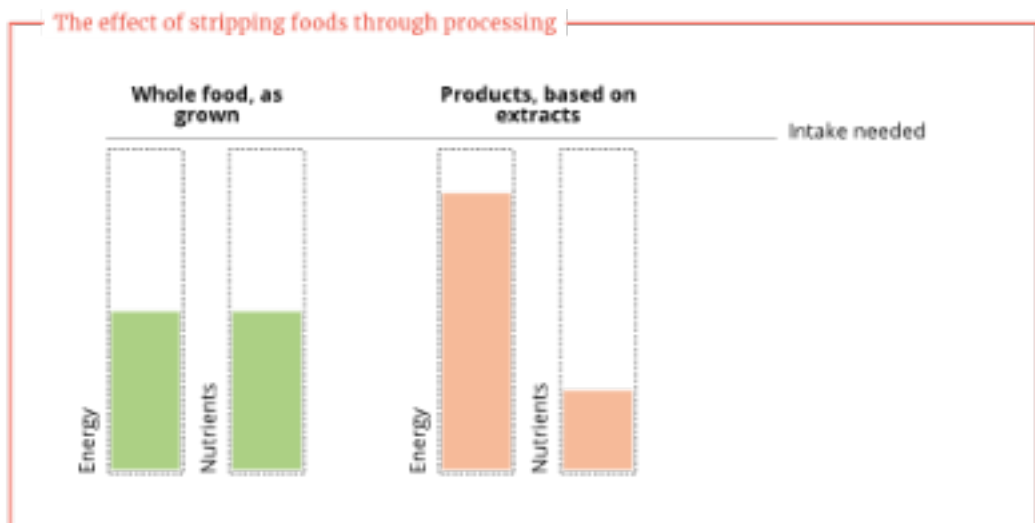
Going to a fast food restaurant daily won't fit your nutritional needs. But having a junk food meal every here and there surely won't break your pattern, if it is usually healthy.

As long as your overall pattern points towards whole foods, there is room for flaws, and they won't be game changers. You should allow yourself a treat from time to time. And remember: Even small changes towards a more healthy pattern mean progress. We should aim to introduce change at a slow pace.

Welcome to the 21st century of eating

Over 12000 years ago, humanity changed from being a hunter and gatherer to a farmer lifestyle. Since then, we have eaten what we grow. After so many years of adopting this way of growing foods, our need is tailored to how food grows on the field. If we eat various naturally grown foods, we can maintain a balanced composition of energy and nutrients.

In the mid of the 20th century, however, the industrialization of the food chain started. Since then, we have moved from foods we grow to foods we produce. Now many produced foods contain mainly extracts and lack nutritional food components. Most products nowadays are built on **sugar, starch, oil, and salt** - our four horsemen of industrial foods.



2.1 Mind: The basic principle of healthy diets

Focus on whole foods over processed foods.

When relying much on processed foods built on extracts, we naturally miss out on many nutrients. Compared to whole food, sugar, and fat are pure energy. We might quickly hit our daily energy needs, but we still need minerals, vitamins, and secondary plant substances like fiber and antioxidants.

Let’s compare 1000kcal all-purpose flour with 1000kcal of whole grain wheat flour to demonstrate the size of that gap. Both amounts hit the same calories, but the whole-food version of the same grain brings a tremendous uplift in vitamins and minerals.

1000 kcal	All purpose flour	Whole grain flour	Nutitional difference
Vitamin B1 mg	0.33mg	1.48 mg	4.5x
Vitamin B2 mg	0.11mg	0.49 mg	4.5x
Vitamin B9 µg	71.24µg	129.4 µg	1.8x
Magnesium µg	60.3µg	403 µg	6.6x
Potassium mg	293.2mg	1067 mg	3.6x
Calcium mg	41.1mg	99 mg	2.4x
Iron mg	3.2 mg	10.6 mg	3.3x
Zinc mg	1.9 mg	7.6 mg	4x
Fiber g	7.4 g	31.46 g	4.2x

You must eat more than sixfold calories to consume the same amount of magnesium through all-purpose flour if you were to aim for the same number.

This demonstrates how **the high level of processing is related to poorer nutrition** and how choosing a whole grain variant of the same product (pasta, bread, cookies...) is always a smart choice, nutrition-wise.

You can expect to find similar gaps on other products as well, if they rely massively on highly processed material.

Pick the more natural variant.

The more you rely on whole grown foods over products based on sugar, starch, oil, and salt, the better your energy-to-nutrient balance can be.

If convenience food is what you are used to, it may seem difficult to go 100% whole. But luckily, that is not even necessary.

Just because a food is “processed” does not mean you automatically end up with a stripped food lacking all-natural nutrients. Next time you go shopping, try picking a more natural version of your product:

- whole grain pasta vs. plain white pasta
- directly pressed juices vs. juices from extracts
- bread rolls with seeds and oats vs. plain white bread
- black rice, brown rice, whole grain rice over polished white rice
- Sweets based on whole flour over sweets mainly made from oil, sugar, and starch, like cookies.
- Flours from whole foods (wheat, rye, barley - but also from legumes like chickpeas and soy)

Try to avoid the extremes.

Sugar, starch, and Oil can be considered plain energy. They are pure extracts and miss all other nutrients. Having them as the foundation of what you eat daily can lead to malnutrition easily. The more you rely on refined foods, the less room you have to fill your other needs with natural foods.

Your main goal towards a healthy diet is to **find ways to replace refined foods with natural organic alternatives**, as they deliver more than just pure energy.

If you consider that, you already make a big difference. Picking whole foods means choosing nutrient-rich foods. If you make them your baseline of eating, you automatically will tick many marks throughout your journey.

Why? You will learn that throughout the following chapters.

Hungry for more?

**TAKE THE
NEXT BITE**



Hungry for more? Take the Next Bite

Hungry for more?

Take the Next Bite

Thank you for reading the opening chapter of "Embracing Change". I hope you enjoyed it and learned something helpful.

In this preview, I shared with you some of the benefits of adopting a healthy and balanced diet, as well as some of the common misconceptions and approaches that prevent people from making positive changes in their habits.

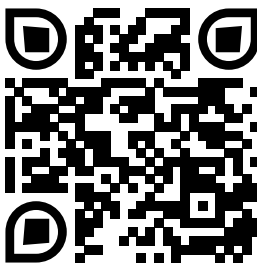
I also gave you some practical tips and strategies to help you start your journey towards better nutrition and wellness, such as setting realistic goals, understanding your basic nutrients, and how to approach body changes in a healthy manner.

You also learned how to handle and design the five tastes, which enables you to give your meals a rock-solid foundation for flavor creation.

But this is only the beginning. There is so much more to discover and explore in the rest of the book.

How to
continue
reading?

Go to <https://clean-bites.com/embracing-change>
and order your copy of the book today.



In the complete book, you will learn:

Nutritional Science

You will shape a deep understanding of:

- ✓ The scientific recommendation for a healthy diet.
- ✓ Your daily Nutrients: Water, Carbs, Fat, Protein, Vitamins and Minerals.
- ✓ How food influences diseases like CHD, Diabetes, and Adipositas.
- ✓ Critical nutrients and how to emphasize a solid supply.
- ✓ Proper food handling to profit the most out of its nutritious value.
- ✓ How you can ensure a proper protein supply

Flavor Creation

you will learn how to:

- ✓ Apply the concept of 5 tastes
- ✓ Create complex aromas through the aromatic scale
- ✓ Craft outstanding textural variety
- ✓ Replace junk with whole food ingredients
- ✓ Craft a meat-like experience from whole foods
- ✓ Handle spiciness the right way

Cooking Blueprints

Cook recipe blueprints and make them your unique creations:

- ✓ Ramen and soup dishes.
- ✓ Buddha bowls and salads
- ✓ Chili and stews
- ✓ Pasta dishes
- ✓ Döner Sandwiches and finger foods
- ✓ Roasts and other holiday dishes

Theory made Practical:

Build an understanding on:

- ✓ How food choices impact your macro composition
- ✓ How to balance your diet for a solid nutrient supply
- ✓ How to safely open a caloric deficit for dieting that lasts
- ✓ How to replace products with grown foods
- ✓ How to create dishes delivering long-lasting satiety
- ✓ How to manage your time in your kitchen

By the end of the book, you will have all the tools and knowledge you need to embrace change and achieve lifelong wellness through informed nutrition choices.

Visit clean-bites.com/embracing-change and order your copy of the book today.

Cheers!

Kai