



Simple Reasoning Solves Dietary Confusion

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I understand if you are frustrated and unsure about who is telling the truth. We in the United States, and many other parts of the world, live under what is called freedom—freedom of speech, choice, and trade. Unfortunately, this luxury often translates into unregulated business practices by the food (and all other) industries. Even when I believe that I hold the truth, and even when I find that my diet-therapy results are consistently successful with my patients, the meat, dairy, egg, fish, and other food industries usually win "the information game" because they have millions of dollars to push their products using television, newspapers, books, radio, and online. The saying, "all is fair in love and in war" applies even when the casualties are consumers and their families, with consequences being as extreme as loss of life.

Four of My Own Eye-opening Experiences:

1. Dr. [Denis Burkitt](#), MD, former head of the ministries of health of Uganda, Africa, explained to me, during a noontime medical conference in 1971, that over a period of 17 years, supervising 1,000 hospitals, caring for more than 10 million

people, he saw no obesity nor anyone suffering from diseases that are epidemic in all modern regions of the world: heart disease, cancer (of the breast, colon, and prostate), and arthritis, just to name a few. [Spend one hour](#) watching Dr. Burkitt to better understand that gaining excess weight and developing disabling diseases are not inevitable "normal" aging processes, and that a "well balanced diet," as promoted by the meat and dairy industries, is deadly.

2. [My personal experience](#) of caring for 5,000 Hawaiian Sugar Plantation patients between 1973 and 1976 confirmed for me the central role that the nearly vegan, starch-based (no dairy and little meat) diet played in the health of Dr. Burkitt's Ugandan population. During my three years spent as a general medical practitioner, I observed that my elderly patients—mostly those who had migrated from Japan, the Philippines, Korea, and China, and continued to follow their traditional diet of white rice and vegetables with no dairy and little meat—were trim, strong, and free of disease. Whereas, their genetically similar children and grandchildren, born and raised in Hawaii, who broke tradition by drifting toward the typical American diet of meat, cheese, and other junk foods, became overweight and sick.
3. [Walter Kempner](#), MD, from Duke University, "cured" obese patients and those "nearly-dead" with failing hearts and kidneys with a diet of white rice, fruits, fruit juice, and sugar. Before I was born in 1947, Dr. Kempner had disproven concepts that are still held as true by many medical doctors and dietitians today, such as: "diet has little to do with heart disease," "additional protein improves health," and "carbohydrates cause diabetes." His published work also showed me the power of diet-therapy and that nutritional deficiencies do not occur with simple plant-based diets (even when they consist mostly of refined white rice with the addition of lots of sugar). [Read for yourself](#) the classic scientific research published by Dr. Kempner.
4. [Nathan Pritikin](#), world-respected diet researcher, confirmed for me everything I had learned so far about the human diet when we met in 1978. With a diet similar to the one Dr. Burkitt's Ugandan population followed, Pritikin helped cure hundreds of thousands of overweight, sick people. Especially important for me was his assurance that animal muscle (meat) and their secretions (milk) were not essential to get adequate protein and calcium. [Take an hour](#) to listen to him.

Consuming animal flesh does add more protein to your body, however this excess is unnecessary because [protein deficiency is unknown](#), and in today's world, diseases of protein excess (like osteoporosis, kidney stones, kidney and liver damage) are universal among my patients. And yes, consuming mammalian milk does add more calcium to the diet, but this is also superfluous because [calcium deficiency is unknown](#) and milk is a leading cause of heart disease, obesity, and inflammatory arthritis.

Last Step: Changing My Mind

Years of brainwashing from the food industry, using every means at their disposal, was hard for me to completely erase, even after the above four experiences. However, I was left with the conclusion that the best diet for human health and healing was based on starches with the addition of a few vegetables and fruits. In the seventies, this belief was heresy that was punishable, by at the very least, loss of my credibility in the medical and dietetic communities. I was actually afraid. To be on the safe side, I wondered if maybe I should include a little skim milk and skinned chicken (Nathan Pritikin did).

But I made the decision to not compromise what I knew to be necessary to attain excellent human health. I took a stand for my patients' welfare. Now, 40 years later, most educated people accept the scientific truths about protein and calcium. Yet, the challenges continue with "new discoveries that improve upon Nature's basic designs," revealed weekly at the news section of your grocery checkout and seen on popular TV shows. News sells products.

Rather than keeping the focus on the simple (non-alternative) fact that "It's the Food," global health epidemics involving billions of people and our Planet rage on. This is in part because of dietary distractions, such as [low-carb diets](#), [GMOs](#), [gluten-free](#), [good fats vs. bad fats](#), [fish-eating](#) and, most recently, dietary [lectins](#), that cause you to ask me to justify my recommendations.

Fortunately, the foundation of a solid education based on some eye-opening, real-life experiences has kept matters simple for me. You can also end years of confusion about the best diet for you and your family by (1) trying [the McDougall Diet](#), and (2) examining the reasons that I have not changed my mind in 40 years.

I (John McDougall, MD) Have Earned the Right to Help You

My full-time profession has been human medicine for half a century, practicing mostly as a Board Certified Internal Medicine Specialist (Internist). For 40 of those years I have prescribed primarily diet therapy, with the goal of restoring my patients' health, which includes eliminating unnecessary medications. My strongest asset is that I'm a real doctor and I personally have cared for more than 10,000 patients (6,000 under a live-in, residential setting with diet). I remain in contact with many people who have successfully followed my advice since I opened my first office in 1978 in Hawaii.

In contrast, many popular healthcare "gurus" have had no formal education in the potentially life-threatening matters of your health. Almost as troubling are the credentialed healthcare/diet advisors who provide advice based solely on reading other people's research articles. The relevance of their guidance must be placed in the context that many of them haven't touched a patient since their primary dietetic or medical training.

I have also had a passion for reading the medical literature. Before access became easy via the Internet, I subscribed to 14 monthly medical journals through "hard mail." Mary, my wife, and I often joke how she reads mystery novels and I read research articles for enjoyment.

I have written 13 national-best-selling books (many co-authored with Mary McDougall).

My [website](#), [monthly newsletters](#), [weekly webinars](#) help me stay in touch with you, as well as stay current with medical and nutritional research and practice.

[I continue](#) to lecture, run weekend seminars, and care for patients at the 10-day residential McDougall Program in Santa Rosa, California.

Although conducting scientific research is not one of my primary interests, the benefits of the McDougall Diet/Program have been scientifically documented in almost 2,500 patients in peer-reviewed scientific/medical journals:

1. [Rapid reduction of serum cholesterol and blood pressure by a twelve-day, very low-fat, strictly vegetarian diet \(1995\).](#)
2. [Effects of a very low-fat, vegan diet in subjects with rheumatoid arthritis \(2002\).](#)
3. [Effects of 7 days on an ad libitum low-fat vegan diet: the McDougall Program cohort \(2014\).](#)
4. [Low-fat, plant-based diet in multiple sclerosis: A randomized controlled trial \(2016\).](#)
5. [The BROAD study: A randomized controlled trial using a whole-food, plant-based diet in the community for obesity, ischaemic heart disease or diabetes \(2017\).](#)

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE McDOUGALL PLAN

The *New York Times* National Bestselling Book *The McDougall Plan* was published in 1983 (there have been no fundamental changes in 35 years. [Order PDF](#) of the book.)

The *McDougall Plan* encourages you to adopt the diet and lifestyle that best supports your natural tendencies to heal and stay healthy. This supportive lifestyle is based on proper foods, moderate exercise, adequate sunshine, pure air and water, and surroundings comfortable to your psychological wellbeing.

The primary component, [the diet](#), is centered on a variety of starchy plant foods such as corn, pastas, potatoes, rice, and wheat, with the addition of fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables. Animal-derived foods and plant products that are refined or otherwise processed are not "health-supporting" and are placed in the category called "delicacies." Plant foods that are also considered delicacies are those high in fat, such as [nuts](#), seeds, and avocados; and foods high in unprotected [simple sugars](#): for example, table sugar, honey, molasses, and maple syrup. These delicacy foods are to be reserved for special occasions and consumed only by healthy individuals. There are relative kinds and degrees of harmfulness among delicacies. [No portions](#) are recommended for the meal plan except that a starch should provide most of the calories (about 90% by eyeball). The quantity consumed each day is variable among individuals and their activities and surroundings, and governed by our highly efficient hunger drive. Foods that support your health easily make the most interesting and delicious meals you can imagine.

Additions and modifications of the basic meal plan include:

1. Supplementation of a non-animal source vitamin [B-12](#) after three years on the plan or if you are pregnant or nursing.
2. Addition of foods concentrated in calories (dried fruits, nuts, seeds) to the basic diet of healthy individuals with unusually [high caloric needs](#).
3. Elimination of foods that cause adverse reactions, such as an allergy, an irritation, or any other noticeable intolerance.
4. Limitation of foods high in protein (legumes) to one cup a day for most people and further restriction in persons with certain illnesses (osteoporosis, gout, kidney stones, liver or kidney failure).
5. Fruits may have to be limited in people who are very sensitive to simple sugars (those with elevated triglycerides and hypoglycemia). In general three servings of fruits a day is a reasonable amount for most people.
6. One-half to one teaspoon total of added [salt](#) over the surface of the foods is permitted in the daily diet of those who do not suffer from salt-sensitive conditions (high blood pressure, heart or kidney disease, and edema).
7. [Simple sugars](#), such as white or brown sugar, provide pleasure and can be used sparingly, such as a teaspoon over oatmeal.
8. [Gluten intolerance](#) is found in less than 1% of people. In this case, wheat, barley, and rye must be avoided.
9. [Weight loss can be enhanced by](#) several means, such as including 25 to 50% of the food as non-starchy green and yellow vegetables. Be careful, however; with too little starch, satisfaction of the hunger drive is impossible and adherence to this kind of "nutrient-dense" diet is nearly impossible.
10. There are exceptions that are not fully covered in this summary. However, even with very unusual metabolic and genetic problems, a starch-based diet should be considered before moving along to fat and protein as primary sources of energy.

Ideally, [children](#) are solely breastfed until the age of six months, and then solid foods are supplemented; but breast milk still constitutes 50-25% of the child's diet until age two. After this age, starches, vegetables, and fruits provide for the basic nutritional needs.

Featured Recipes



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RAINBOW VEGGIE SHEPHERD'S PIE

Servings: Makes twelve 3x3 inch squares

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 40 minutes

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE BOTTOM LAYER:

1 large carrot, diced

1 red onion, diced

4 garlic cloves, minced

1 tablespoon salt-free seasoning

2 teaspoons dried rosemary

2 teaspoons dried thyme

½ teaspoon black pepper

14oz can cannellini beans with the liquid

1 tablespoon rice vinegar

1 cup fresh or frozen corn

1 cup sliced zucchini, diced

1 red bell pepper, diced

FOR THE TOP LAYER:

10 medium Yukon gold potatoes

1/2 cup water



1/2 cup unsweetened, non-dairy milk
1-2 sandwich tomatoes, sliced
2 tablespoons nutritional yeast (optional)

ACTION STEPS

In a large pot with the lid on, bring 1 to 2 inches of water to a boil. While the water heats, chop potatoes. Add a steam basket to the pot and fill it with potatoes. Steam potatoes for about 20 minutes, until they split nicely using a fork. Turn off heat and set aside.

Preheat oven to 375°F. Note, it is fully cooked before it goes in the oven so baking the pie is an optional step. Baking will increase and concentrate the flavor, as well as reduce the moisture so that when the pieces are served, they hold together better. While the potatoes are cooking, add the carrots, onions, garlic, salt-free seasoning, dried herbs, and black pepper to a large sauté pan over medium heat. Keep the pan covered and stir frequently. If the veggies start to stick to the pan, then add a little water.

Once the onions are translucent, stir in the beans with the liquid, corn, zucchini, and bell pepper. Turn off the heat. Pour the bean-veggie mix into a 9x13 inch casserole pan.

Transfer the potatoes to a large bowl. Add water, non-dairy milk, and black pepper. Mash potatoes until they are creamy. Layer mashed potatoes over the veggies and beans, and layer the tomato slices over the potatoes. Lastly, sprinkle on the nutritional yeast.

Put the pie on the middle rack of the oven and bake for 15 minutes. Then move it to the top rack, set the oven to broil, and broil for 3 to 5 minutes, careful not to go too long.

LEMON-GINGER SWEET ROOT NOODLES

5 cups

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

3 oz yellow onion, sliced thinly (½ medium)

1-inch fresh ginger, peeled and minced

6 oz spiralized beets (1 large)

6 oz spiralized sweet potato (1 large)

2 tablespoons lemon juice

2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoon water

¼ cup diced fresh mint



ACTION STEPS

In a large sauté pan or skillet over medium-high heat, add onions and cover. Sauté for a few minutes, stirring occasionally.

In a small bowl, mix lemon juice, apple cider vinegar, and water.

Add ginger, beet noodles, and sweet potato noodles to the pan. Pour the lemon marinade over the noodles and turn the heat to medium. Cover and sauté for 5 minutes, occasionally giving the noodles a gentle stir to so they cook evenly.

After 5 minutes, or once the noodles are tender to your liking, turn off heat. Stir in fresh mint and serve warm or chilled.

Chef's Note

I used red beets and orange sweet potatoes in this dish, but feel free to use any varieties you like. The red beet juice gave the sweet potatoes a pink color, which leads to a pretty plate of red, purple, and pink noodles.

You can also replace the beets and sweet potato with other starchy vegetables, such as winter squash, yams, rutabagas, turnips, carrots, or parsnips.

HOT-COLD ENCHILADA SALAD

Makes 5 cups, not including romaine

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 onion, diced

1 cup corn*

4 garlic cloves, minced

1-2 tablespoons chili powder

½ tablespoon ground cumin

1½ cups cooked black beans (15-oz can, drained and rinsed)

1½ cups cooked pinto beans (15-oz can, drained and rinsed)

15 oz tomato sauce, no salt added

¼ cup fresh cilantro, diced

1 tomato of your choice, diced

1 head romaine lettuce, chopped (keep cold in the fridge until needed)

1 lime, juiced



ACTION STEPS

In a large skillet or medium saucepan over medium-high heat, add the onion and corn. Cover and sauté for a couple of minutes. Add garlic, chili powder, and cumin. Sauté for a few more minutes, or until the onions become translucent. Stir occasionally.

Add the beans and tomato sauce, stir well and replace the lid. Cook for a few more minutes until the sauce is simmering and the beans are hot.

Turn off the heat and stir in the cilantro, fresh tomato, and lime juice.

Plate the chilled chopped romaine on individual plates. Pile a couple of scoops (around 1 to 2 cups) of the enchilada mix over the greens. Garnish with extra cilantro.

Chef's Note

For better and more authentic flavor, grill or roast the corn on the cob, and then slice off the corn kernels.

I love the hot-cold contrast of the warm beans and veggies over the cold romaine. However, this salad is delicious when the enchilada mix is served chilled as well.

PALAK KICHADI (SPINACH RICE & DAL)

Makes about 6 cups

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 30-45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup brown basmati rice
- 1 cup chana daal or yellow split peas
- 12 oz yellow onion, diced (about 1 extra large)
- 1 jalapeño, minced
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 2-inch piece fresh ginger, minced
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 10 oz spinach (about 5-6 cups chopped)
- 12 oz fresh or canned diced tomatoes
- 4 cups water
- ½ cup diced fresh cilantro (about ½ bunch)



ACTION STEPS

Soak the rice and dal for 10 minutes and then strain it. Alternatively, the rice and dal can be rinsed under running water until the water runs clear.

Add onion and jalapeno to a large sauté pan over medium-high heat, OR an electric pressure cooker on the sauté mode. Add the garlic, ginger, cumin, coriander, and turmeric. Dry-sauté until the onions become translucent.

Stir in the tomato, rice, dal, and water.

With a sauté pan, a lid should be added and the heat reduced to low. Let it simmer for 40 minutes, or until the rice is fully cooked. Add the spinach half-way through the cooking time.

With a pressure cooker, lock the lid in place and set the timer to 20 minutes on the manual setting. The spinach can be added before locking the lid in place, but if you prefer the spinach to be minimally cooked, stir it in after the starches cook.

When the dish is finished cooking, stir in the cilantro and serve warm.