



## Demystifying Food Workshop

### Introduction to Healthy, Whole Foods Eating

***“Eat food. Mostly plants. Not too much.” Michael Pollan***

#### **Real Food (Whole Food)**

Real food is what your grandmother would recognize. It doesn't come through a drive through window, it doesn't contain artificial ingredients, flavors or preservatives. It isn't made in a factory. It doesn't have a list of ingredients that you can't pronounce. Processed food has become a staple in the American diet - and as that has happened a whole generation of people have grown up thinking that food comes from a box, bag or drive-through. Real food grows from the ground - the only processing is done by Mother Nature herself.

A whole foods diet means eating foods in their natural state complete with all their rich natural endowment of nutrients. They have not been highly processed nor do they contain synthetic, artificial or irradiated ingredients. And whenever possible, these foods should be organic since they not only promote your health, but also the health of our planet.

Foods should also be nutrient-dense. Nutrient density is a measure of the amount of nutrients a food contains in comparison to the number of calories. A food is more nutrient dense when the level of nutrients is high in relationship to the number of calories the food contains. By eating, whole fresh foods, you'll get all the essential nutrients that you need for excellent health, including vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, essential fatty acids, fiber and more for the least number of calories.

#### **Plant-Based Diets**

Scientific research shows that *health benefits increase* as the amount of *food from animal sources in the diet decreases*, so vegan diets are the healthiest overall. They are naturally low in saturated fat, high in fiber, and replete with cancer-protective phyto(plant)chemicals—help to prevent cancer. Meat and dairy products contribute to many forms of cancer, including cancer of the colon, breast, ovaries, and prostate. Vegetarian diets also help prevent heart disease. Animal products are the main source of saturated fat and the only source of cholesterol in the diet.

#### **Organic**

What you eat becomes a part of you. Did you know that if you consumed an average apple you would be eating over 30 pesticides even after you have washed it. Organic farming is safer for the environment because it doesn't use synthetic fertilizers that pollute our soil and water. Organic also means no toxic pesticides which means it's safer for YOU.

#### **Local**

The average fresh food item on our plate travels 1,500 miles to get there. That's a lot of fuel-



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guzzling travel to get from farm to table. When you eat local you are helping to reduce global warming. Eating local also helps the local economy. Large agribusiness has taken over farming from the local farmers. As that has happened our food sources have become more centralized - which is a dangerous position for all of us. Think back on recent cases of E.coli outbreaks and how pervasive they were. When farming is decentralized, so are the risks. There are lots of reasons to eat local and thanks to a growing trend, there are more local farms to patronize.

### **Conclusion**

The closer you get to eating a fresh, whole foods diet, the more vitality you will have, higher potential for improved longevity and overall an improved sense of wellness. It's not one lesson that will get you there...or one book...or one year. Consider it a life journey with more to explore and learn every day, if you choose. Once you begin a healthier relationship with food, your curiosity will drive you to know more and before you know it, you'll be the person your friends and family turn to for information and advice. Go slow, enjoy the ride, let your curiosity and desire to be well pull you along at the beginning. Some of these topics may be new territory and we are always a little overwhelmed with new things and change. Don't be discouraged, and don't give up. You truly are what you eat!