

Spice up that Sweet Tooth - Part 2

by Micah Elconin, NE

The first half of this article can be found in last month's edition of The Educated Vegetable

If last month's introductions to mint, cinnamon and cayenne weren't enough, the three spices highlighted this month will surely help liven up your favorite holiday dessert.

We've all undoubtedly eaten plenty of *Ginger* in savory dishes. Ginger, however, deserves to be used much more often in sweet preparations. Yes, it does require some fore thought to properly utilize ginger in sweets, but when integrated gracefully, the final product can be exceptional. Chocolate and fruit based desserts are both wonderful choices for the inclusion of ginger. Of course ginger takes on the leading role in the timeless favorite candied ginger, where pieces of whole ginger root are simmered in a

simple syrup until soft and sweetened just enough to balance the pungency of the fresh root. Whenever possible use fresh ginger. In liquid preparations whole slices can be simmered and removed before mixing with other ingredients or serving. Otherwise peel the ginger (try doing it with a spoon) and mince it as finely as possible. Ginger has been added to food for thousands of years in Asia, because of its numerous health benefits. It dramatically improves digestion, lowers cholesterol, properly controls inflammation, exhibits high levels of antioxidant activity, and protects the (oh so important) liver and heart.

Nutmeg is used very often in many common western dessert preparations, especially ones that highlight fruit or cream. Fall fruits like pears and apples seem to blend especially well with fresh ground nutmeg. Another classical use is the addition of nutmeg to cr me anglaise and other pastry creams. When used sparingly nutmeg helps bring our more depth of flavor in sweets, but too much will make a dish taste bitter. Freshly ground nutmeg is much less likely to impart bitterness than pre ground powders. Don't throw whole nutmeg in a spice grinder. Instead, grate small amounts off the seed using a fine zester or nutmeg grater. Nutmeg is the seed of a fruit that grows on a tropical evergreen, and you can taste that in its flavor which might best be described as "piney". Nutmeg is anti viral and is often used to dispel infection in the intestines.



Above left: A Ginger flower in bloom

Above right: Fresh whole ginger root

Last year, a monthly cooking magazine surveyed respected chefs all over the country. The chefs were asked many questions including which spice they believed was the biggest underdog in the kitchen. The most voted underdog spice was whole **Cardamom**. Cardamom is most often used in Indian and Thai sweets (as well as some savory applications). Whole cardamom is a peppercorn sized seed that grows inside a peanut sized green pod. One can either buy the whole green cardamom pods or the separate seeds that grow within. The whole pods are great in teas and other wet preparations where the pods can infuse their flavor and be removed before service. For dishes where ground cardamom is required, the seeds are a better option because they grind quite easily. I always prefer to grind my own spices. Cardamom's flavor is often described as floral with a hint of menthol, but as with most spices, words don't do the complicated flavors the justice they deserve. It's soft tones pair well with cream and starch based dishes. Like many spices cardamom seems to improve digestion. It also protects the lungs and can help relieve asthma and bronchitis.

The herbs and spices highlighted by this article are really just the tip of the iceberg. There are so many other flavor and health enhancing choices that really deserve to be discussed and utilized. To learn more about spices and how to successfully integrate them into desserts or savory dishes in your home, contact the Educated Vegetable for a private cooking class. For now, try out this Coconut Cardamom Rice Pudding:



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Above: Whole cardamom pods and whole cardamom seeds.

Coconut Cardamom Rice Pudding **4-6 servings**

- 3/4 cup Arborio rice**
- 1 3 inch cinnamon stick**
- 6 whole cloves**
- 1/4 teaspoon salt**
- 1.5 cups milk**
- 1.5 cups coconut milk**
- 1 tsp vanilla extract**
- 1 tsp ground cardamom**
- 1/2 cup maple syrup, or to taste**
- 2 bananas , sliced (optional)**

Simmer the rice with the cinnamon stick, cloves and salt in 2.5 cups of water in a small sauce pan until all of the liquid is absorbed (15 -20) minutes. Add both milks and the vanilla extract. Then stir in the maple syrup. Bring back to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer, stirring frequently until desired consistency is achieved. Check for sweetness and add more syrup if necessary. Stir in the cardamom and remove the cinnamon stick and cloves. Stir in the banana (optional) and serve.

Mushy or Miraculous?

by Jennifer Walsh

You'll either love them or hate them, but this winter be sure to try out a persimmon. Of course there are many types of these cinnamon sweet treats. Three of the most common in our neck of the woods are the Hachiya, the Fuyu, and the American persimmon. The oriental persimmon is native to China, where it has been cultivated for centuries and more than two thousand different cultivars exist. It then spread to Korea and Japan many years ago where additional cultivars were developed, but it wasn't until the mid 19th century that the plant was introduced to California.

Store persimmons in a fruit bowl on the counter. Normal refrigerator temperature (~40°F), will actually deteriorate them faster than if stored at room temperature (55°F +).



Above: *Hachiya's softening*

The *Hachiya* is astringent until completely ripe. Biting into an unripe Hachiya persimmon is like drinking six cups of extra strength tea. The astringent flavor is due to the high level of tannins in the fruit. The

bitter flavor of an unripe Hachiya is so strong that it might stop one from ever trying a persimmon again. This would be a shame because ripe persimmons have an exceptional flavor and provide us with important nutrients such as beta-carotene, Vitamin C and potassium. Once ripe the gooey flesh can be enjoyed fresh, added to cookies and cakes, or frozen for future use. I like this variety best when dried whole. They make an excellent chewy snack that fulfills my sweet cravings.

My favorite persimmon is the *Fuyu* or 'apple' persimmon. This delicately flavored sweet fruit can be eaten crunchy or soft with no funny after taste. When selecting Fuyu persimmons, look for ones that are yellow-orange in color and firm to the touch. Fuyus can be used like apples and pears in

fruit salads, cobblers, or crisps, and are sturdy enough to be used in stir-fries as well. Fuyus do not darken when cut, so they can be sliced and made part of a vegetable or fruit tray. Fuyus will stay firm for two or three weeks at room temperature. Eventually, after about three weeks, they will soften somewhat like the Hachiya. It's at this stage that some people feel the Fuyu's sweetness reaches its peak.

The *American Persimmon* is also sweet and tasty, but loaded with seeds. Native persimmons are more cold-hardy than Oriental varieties. The native varieties may survive temperatures of 20-25 °F below zero, while Oriental varieties may be killed or injured when temperatures fall below about 10 °F.

Just last week a customer brought me a *Chocolate Persimmon*. It was round like the Hachiya, but ready to eat while still firm like the Fuyu. The flesh was an ugly brown that looked almost rotten, however after one bite this persimmon undeniably became my husband Jim's new favorite. What a rich sweet flavor. We will try to get some of these for the store next year, but its going to take some adventure-some Foodies to try a slice.

Jennifer Walsh and her husband Jim are the owners of Mesa Produce, a local produce stand that features a large selection of local and organic produce. They are located at 2036 Cliff Dr on the corner of Cliff and Camino Calma.



Above: *A Fuyu persimmon ready to be enjoyed*

Ayurvedic Holiday Health Secrets

by Claudia Brachtl, L. Ac, Clinical Ayurvedic Specialist

The holiday season can be a stressful time for the body. People tend to overeat, consume too many sweets, and have meals at irregular times. There are, however, some simple steps that can be taken to help keep the body in balance.

According to Ayurveda, the actions listed above lead to the formation of ama (toxins) in the body. The result is clogged channels and a weakened immune system. If one experiences stiffness in the joints, muscle aches, colds, flu, weight gain, or digestive problems, ama is most likely the culprit.



Above: Winter Squash is an extremely nourishing cold weather vegetable

This is the time to eat nourishing warm meals. Now is not a good time to go on a raw food diet, to juice fast, or to consume huge salads. When the weather gets colder, the best diet consists of warm soups; steamed, sautéed, or roasted vegetables; and plenty of healthy fats such as olive oil, ghee (clarified butter), avocados, or sesame oil.

During the colder winter months, vata gets aggravated, which can cause insomnia, depression, anxiety, dry skin, as well as cold hands and feet. Warm meals help balance vata. They calm the nervous system, improve digestion, and combat stress.

Massaging the entire body with warm oil before a bath or shower can also help balance the system. It will help keep the skin soft, healthy, and free of wrinkles as well. In terms of the doshas (constitutions),

sesame oil is good for vata, coconut oil for pitta, and almond oil for kapha. Another suggestion is to have some whole organic warm milk with nutmeg, saffron, or cinnamon before bedtime. This makes most people sleep like a baby. Massaging the feet with some sesame oil before bedtime has the same effect.

During the day a good beverage choice is masala chai tea:

Masala Chai Tea

1.5 cups water

1 English tea bag (or any black, green or roibush tea)

2 pinches saffron

2 whole cloves

1 pinch nutmeg powder

1 cinnamon stick (or 1 pinch of powder)

2 green cardamom pods

2 slices fresh ginger

1/4 cup whole organic milk

honey or sugar to taste

Bring the water along with tea and spices to boil in a small sauce pan. Then reduce the heat and simmer for 10 -15 minutes. Add the organic milk and simmer for another 3 minutes. Strain into a mug and add honey or sugar.

Integrating more herbs and spices into ones cooking is also very useful. Herbs and spices are the soul of the kitchen. Not only can they protect one from evils such as diabetes, heart disease, senile dementia and digestive problems, but can they can turn an ordinary dish into a potential aphrodisiac. Did you know that cloves, saffron, and nutmeg are nature's Viagra?

One of the most therapeutic spices is *Turmeric*. Turmeric is nature's Lipitor due to its cholesterol lowering, antioxidant, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory qualities. Turmeric's benefits have been known for centuries and are an important part of Chinese herbal medicine and also the Ayurvedic



Above: Turmeric powder ready to be added to yet another health promoting dish

medicine of India. This natural food is believed to support liver health, lower LDL (or bad cholesterol), and is being studied for its ability to block tumors. There is also evidence that turmeric prevents Alzheimer's. Diets rich in curcumin (a compound found in turmeric) may help explain why rates of Alzheimer's disease are much lower among the elderly in India compared with their Western peers.

Use turmeric in small amounts. Please do not consume the raw turmeric root that is sometimes available in health food stores. Turmeric needs to be processed into a powder. Otherwise it can be very hard on the liver. Also, I don't recommend taking turmeric supplements since the best way to add turmeric to one's diet is to consume it as part of a spice mix. Combining turmeric with other spices greatly enhances its health-promoting properties.

And even if you do go a little bit overboard with your diet, don't worry. My article next month will discuss how to get rid of ama and detox the body safely and gently so the New Year can get started in a healthy way.

For those in need of inspiration on how to prepare delicious, healthy, and flavorful Ayurvedic dishes, sign up for an Educated Vegetable private cooking

class. They are fun and educational at the same time.

The following spice mix is tridoshic, which means that it is well suited for any constitution. Use it like curry powder. The fresh ground spices are much more flavorful than the store bought pre ground varieties.

Tridoshic Spice Mix

- 6 parts fennel seeds**
- 1 part cumin seeds**
- 1 part black pepper corns**
- 6 parts coriander seeds**
- 1 part turmeric**

Grind the whole spices in a coffee grinder and mix them with the turmeric. Put the mixture in a jar and store in a cool, dark place. Sprinkle over food or sauté in ghee or olive oil and then add to vegetable dishes.



Claudia Brachtl is a Licensed Acupuncturist and Clinical Ayurvedic Specialist with a private practice in Santa Barbara. She specializes in nutrition based on the principles of Ayurveda, Chinese Medicine and the latest Western research. She specializes in Ayurvedic therapies, detox cleanses, acupuncture, women's health and chronic pain management. Find her on the web at www.beyondacupuncture.us

Organic, Ethical, or Good?

by Mark Tollefson



Above: A fully stocked display ready for another big day at the local farmer's market

On any given Saturday in Santa Barbara, one can leisurely walk through the parking lot on the corner of Santa Barbara and Cota Street. I was just there a couple of weeks ago and was mesmerized by the people, sounds and the pulse of one of Santa Barbara's treasures: our local Farmers Market. I love to walk through the stands of local fruits and vegetables, marveling in the different textures, sights, and tastes. I consider myself to be very lucky. I live in a part of the country where even December I can find fresh produce that was picked that morning! It is not enough for me anymore to be able to rest on the fact that "at least I'm buying organic food...." I need to know who grows my food and how and where it is grown.

In the most recent edition of the magazine the Economist, there is a lead article on organic, fair trade and locally grown food. The article states that any of these three either potentially depletes rainforest (organic food), unsustainably inflates production through subsidy (fair trade), or increases the amount of miles that food travels (local produce). The points that the author of the article makes are all good. He says that to grow organic crops, one has to rotate crops and use organic material to build soil, both of which take

more land than using conventional petroleum based fertilizers. Organic then means less rain forests and more deforestation to keep crop production up. The second point the author makes is that fair trade organizations that help boost the income of small farmers (like coffee), encourage those same farmers to continue to produce coffee even though there is a net overproduction of these goods. This in turn drives down the price which makes things worse overall for everyone. The author's last point is that many cars driving to a small local farm or farmers market equals more overall miles that food travels compared to a large truck hauling imported food to a mega market (that is close to everyone's home). Globalizing food production allows places that produce food using less energy (like New Zealand) to move their products to places that produce food using more energy (like the United States) with a lower overall net energy output. He summarizes his article by saying that "proper free trade would be by far the best way to help poor farmers", and that "real change will require action by governments, in the form of a global carbon tax; reform of the world trade system; and the abolition of agricultural tariffs and subsidies."

As I read this article I couldn't help but think of Einstein's words, "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." To assume that a greater level of globalization will solve

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-Albert Einstein

the problems that globalization has gotten us into seems ridiculous. As Benjamin Franklin said, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

When I talk to the parents and kids that we at Wilderness Youth Project serve, they almost unanimously have the same longing for a connection to the natural world. They are uncomfortable with the level of alienation that they feel to the world around them and are trying as hard as they can to resolve those feelings of discomfort. Maybe it's time to look at things a little differently.

This September I had a chance to listen to a man

from Vietnam talk about what was happening in his home. He didn't speak English and he didn't understand western culture. However, he knew that if he wanted his village to survive, he needed to come and talk to as many people as he could about what is on the verge of being lost in his small part of the world (something that most of us have never heard of and could never find on the map). He said that big companies like Monsanto come to his village regularly and convince farmers to stray from their traditional farming methods and crops to grow sorghum, soybeans and taro. He said that those same big companies provide them with seed, fertilizer and assurances that they are part of the future. One by one the farmers that grow crops for these big companies go broke and move to the city because they can no longer afford to stay in the village or continue to farm. These companies want the local farmers to cut down the forests behind their villages so that they can grow crops there as well. This humble man from Vietnam's response is, "They don't understand that this is not just a forest to us. It is the place where our ancestors live. How can we destroy a place where our ancestors have lived for over 700 years?"

So what to do? The one thing that we have going for us that no economic theory can ever predict, is the power of relationship. No lasting or significant change ever happens without the dedication of people who know that we can do it better. We have a right and a responsibility to feel and become connected to the land we live on. It's not just a tomato, but it's a tomato that Cesar and Chava grew at Fairview Gardens, I bought from Leslie at the farmers market, and cooked in a recipe that was given to me by my grandmother. Now, it is feeding me, my wife and our child that she is carrying. That tomato is alive!

When we take our kids up Rattlesnake Canyon or to Elwood Mesa, we are all imprinting on the land. Our home ceases to be a broad generalization. It becomes

a living, pulsing entity that nurtures us and keeps us alive; filling us with a never-ending wonder of life. I wish that the author of the article in the Economist could come with us one day so he could hear the stories and see the magic. This would surely fill many of his nights with awe.

So, now I ask myself this question: Where do my ancestors live? Where is my village forest that houses them? As E.O. Wilson said,

"People need a sacred narrative. They must have a sense of larger purpose, in one form or another, however intellectualized. They will find a way to keep ancestral spirits alive."

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Mark Tollefson is the executive director of The Wilderness Youth Project. He has extensive training in martial arts, wilderness survival, tracking, and was head chef and an instructor with the Tom Brown Tracker School. Find him on the web at www.wyp.org



Above: An aerial view of extreme deforestation in Asia

Natural Skin Health

by Erik Smith, L. Ac, Dipl. OM, MSN

Everyone wants to maintain the supple, flawless skin of their youth. The secret is simple and we all have an opportunity to discover it at least three times per day, every day of the year. A balanced diet focusing on whole foods is the secret to the radiant complexion that we desire.

The skin is made up of millions of tiny cells. The appearance of one's skin is a reflection of the health of each of those cells, and the health of each of those cells is determined, largely, by the quality of one's diet. The most important nutrients for maintaining a clear, youthful and radiant complexion are vitamin E, vitamin A, vitamin C, carotenoids, bioflavonoids, dietary fiber and omega-3 fatty acids. With the exception of vitamin A, these nutrients are normally lacking in the processed food ridden Standard American Diet (SAD). Alternatively, whole foods provide plenty of plenty of these nutrients and can promote substantial improvements in one's skin health.

Vitamin E

Vitamin E has sometimes been described as the "lightening rod" of the cell, allowing reactive molecules to strike the cell, like lightning, without causing damage. This antioxidant function of vitamin E is particularly apparent in the case of the skin, since vitamin E directly protects the skin from ultraviolet

radiation (also called UV light). In numerous research studies, vitamin E applied topically to the skin has been shown to prevent UV damage. When the diet contains vitamin E-rich foods, vitamin E can travel to the skin cell membranes and exert this same protective effect.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A is needed to maintain the normal structure and function of epithelial tissues, which are found in the skin. These tissues, when healthy and intact, serve as the first line of defense for the immune system, providing a protective barrier that disease-causing microorganisms cannot penetrate. A telltale sign of vitamin A deficiency is hyperkeratosis, a goose bump-like appearance of the skin caused by excessive production of keratin (a protein found in skin) that blocks hair follicles. In initial stages, hyperkeratosis is found on the forearms and thighs, where the skin becomes dry, scaly, and rough. In advances stages, hyperkeratosis affects the whole body, causing hair loss.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C's roles in skin health are numerous. Like vitamin E, vitamin C functions as a powerful antioxidant and prevents oxygen-based damage to our cells. Structures that contain fat (like skin) are particularly



Can you guess which is a better option for skin health? **Above left:** Hamburger with the works **Above right:** Fresh kale

dependent on vitamin C for protection. Vitamin C is involved in the regeneration of vitamin E, and these two vitamins appear to work together in their anti-oxidant effect. The production of skin-building collagen is dependent on vitamin C. Vitamin C also boosts immunity and enhances detoxification, thereby minimizing infection.

Carotenoids

Carotenoids are largely responsible for the red, yellow, and orange color of fruits and vegetables, and are also found in many dark green vegetables. The most abundant carotenoids in the North American diet are beta-carotene, alpha-carotene, gamma-carotene, lycopene, lutein, beta-cryptoxanthin, zeaxanthin, and astaxanthin. Approximately 50 carotenoids of the known 600, are called "provitamin A" compounds because the body can convert them into retinol, an active form of vitamin A. As a result, foods that contain carotenoids can help prevent vitamin A deficiency. In recent years, carotenoids have received a tremendous amount of attention as potential anti-cancer and anti-aging compounds. Carotenoids are powerful antioxidants, protecting the cells of the body from damage caused by free radicals. They are also believed to enhance the function of the immune system.

Bioflavonoids

Another group of plant pigments with remarkable protection against free-radical damage of the skin are the bioflavonoids. They also have anti-inflammatory, anticancer, and anti-allergic properties. For skin problems which evidence with reddening, bioflavonoids can be especially helpful. They reduce capillary fragility, increase vessel integrity and block the release of histamine. Dietary sources of bioflavonoids include dark colored berries, buckwheat, onions, and the pith of citrus fruits.

Dietary Fiber

Adequate dietary fiber is a key component for optimum skin health. Insoluble fibers such as wheat bran help to promote bowel regularity, thus preventing the reabsorption of skin aggravating toxins from the colon. Insoluble fibers in vegetables, fruits and oats help to balance blood sugar levels. Elevated blood

sugar levels promote the aging process and acne. Sea vegetables have a mucilaginous fiber known as algin, which can help to clear the body of toxins and heavy metals. Hijiki, arame, wakame and other members of the kelp family are especially useful in supporting clear vibrant skin.



Above: Flax seeds are packed full of omega 3 fatty acids

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

The importance of omega-3 fatty acids for skin health cannot be overstated. Because cell membranes are made up of fat, the integrity and fluidity of these membranes is determined in large part by the type of fat one eats. Saturated fats and hydrogenated fats are solid at room temperature, while omega-3 fats are liquid at room temperature. Researchers believe that diets containing large amounts of saturated or hydrogenated fats produce cell membranes that are hard and lack fluidity. On the other hand, diets rich in omega-3 fats produce cell membranes with a high degree of fluidity. Cells without a healthy membrane lose their ability to hold water and vital nutrients. They also lose their ability to communicate with other cells. Researchers believe that loss of cell-to-cell communication is one of the physiological events that leads to growth of cancerous tumors.

Recent statistics indicate that nearly 99% of people in the United States do not eat enough omega-3 fatty acids. The symptoms of omega 3 fatty acid deficiency include fatigue, dry and/or itchy skin, brittle hair and nails, constipation, frequent colds, depression, poor concentration, lack of physical endurance, and/or joint pain.

Dietary sources of omega 3 fatty acids include cold-water fish (salmon, cod, halibut, rainbow trout and mackerel), flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds, walnuts, hemp seeds, soybeans and some dark green leafy vegetables.

It is important to remember that polyunsaturated oils, including the omega-3 fats, are extremely susceptible to damage from heat, light, and oxygen. When exposed to these elements for too long, the fatty acids in the oil become oxidized (rancid). Rancidity not only alters the flavor and smell of the oil, but it also diminishes the nutritional value. More importantly, the oxidation of fatty acids produces free radicals. Vitamin E, the primary fat-soluble antioxidant, protects omega-3 fats from oxidation.

What type of problem skin do you have?

Oily skin is a clear representation of dietary excess. The most common culprit is excess dietary fat (especially saturated and hydrogenated fat), but consuming too much sugar or white flour can also cause this problem. By lowering one's intake of foods high in fat, avoiding sugar, replacing processed foods with whole foods and making sure not to overeat, skin improvements are sure to follow.

Dry skin can be a result of dietary excess or deficiency. By far the most common reason for dry skin is an imbalance in dietary fats. This usually means an inadequate intake of omega-3 fatty acids and an excess intake of saturated fats and hydrogenated fats. This imbalance is created by the Standard American Diet (SAD), and easily corrected by a whole foods diet. Omega 3 fats help to provide nourishing moisture to our skin and excess saturated fats block this absorption. Other dietary causes of dry skin are insufficient water intake, low-fat diets, blood deficiency/anemia, and the use of soaps that rob the skin of its natural oils.

Acne is more complex and often requires a multifaceted approach. Dietary causes include excess refined sugar, refined carbohydrates, saturated fats

and trans fats. Spicy foods often worsen acne and should be avoided. In adults, acne is commonly caused by food allergy, with dairy and citrus being the most common offenders. Constipation is closely linked with acne. Studies show that when constipation occurs toxins are reabsorbed into the bloodstream and pollute the skin. Constipation can be prevented by including plenty of dietary fiber in one's diet. Some of the nutrients of particular importance in treating acne are zinc, chromium and vitamin B6. Zinc deficiency produces imbalances in testosterone metabolism, immune system activity and skin tissue repair. Adequate chromium helps to ensure blood sugar balance, a common problem in those with acne. Premenstrual acne flare-ups may be a sign of vitamin B6 deficiency.

Wrinkles are a clear sign of aging that can be minimized by avoiding sugar and consuming plenty of antioxidants. Excess dietary sugar produces wrinkles by stimulating the cross-linking of proteins. This chemical reaction is known as glycosylation and it is thought to damage the structural proteins of the skin. Antioxidants like vitamin E and vitamin C directly protect the skin from the damaging effects of ultraviolet radiation. Of course sunscreen should still be worn to minimize sun exposure. Another way to slow down the aging process is cutting back on unnecessary calories. The less resources that the body uses to digest and assimilate food, the more it has left over to rebuild and repair itself. However, don't confuse reducing calories with malnutrition. Try reducing the intake of foods containing excess fat and sugar, but continuing to eat foods full of nutrients including fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes. This will optimize one's caloric intake.



Erik Smith holds a masters degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine from Five Branches Institute and a masters degree in Clinical Nutrition from Bastyr University. He is co-owner of Points of Health where he helps people balance their health with natural therapies such as acupuncture, nutritional counseling, herbal medicine, massage and qi gong. Erik is also an active faculty member of Five Branches Institute, where he teaches classes on nutritional therapies. Find him on the web at www.pointsofhealth.org