

The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed

EPISODE #2

TITLE: The Integrative Eating *Dietary Lifestyle* for Weight-Loss and Well-Being

Did you know it's possible to overcome overeating and overweight by tapping into what host, Deborah Kesten, calls a dietary lifestyle—a way of eating our ancestors followed for millennia? In this groundbreaking episode, discover the “7 pillars” of the ancient, time-tested dietary lifestyle for weight loss, health, and healing—that is consistently recommended, today, by scores of scientists.

TRANSCRIPT

Hello! Welcome to The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. TODAY'S TOPIC? The 'whole person' *dietary lifestyle* that leads to weight loss and well-being.

Welcome to The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. I'm Deborah Kesten—nutrition researcher and award-winning author—and I'm on a mission: To give you the science-backed, weight-loss wisdom you need to eat less and weigh less. Without dieting.

In each episode, I'll translate cutting-edge weight-loss research into actions you can take that can make a real difference in your weight and well-being.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What's a *Dietary Lifestyle* Anyway?

The science-backed weight-loss wisdom you'll be discovering in each episode is based on overeating and overweight research that behavioral scientist—and my husband—Larry Scherwitz, Ph.D., and I have done over the past twenty-plus years. It's research that shows, for the first time, it's possible to overcome overeating and lose weight simply by tapping into what I call a *dietary lifestyle*—a lifetime way of eating—that our ancestors followed for millennia. And it is this time-tested way of eating that modern nutritional science is verifying as *the* optimal way to eat for weight loss and well-being.

Here's what I mean: In 2024, this year—the 5,000-year-old Mediterranean diet has been voted the #1 best diet for weight loss and well-being for the seventh consecutive year by *U.S. News & World Report*. And this ancient, time-tested way of eating—what I call a *dietary lifestyle*, is not not a traditional diet you go on, then off; that doesn't work for the long-term. Rather, it is a most-of-the-time way of eating that is consistently recommended by scores of scientists—including Larry and me—for weight loss, health, and healing.

In other words, I am revealing a major healing secret of food today, which I describe as “ancient food wisdom meets modern nutritional science.”

THE ROXANNE SWENTZELL STORY **What's a dietary lifestyle anyway?**

It's story time.

To give you a good understanding of what a *dietary lifestyle* is—and its link to weight loss, health and healing—such as halting heart disease, diabetes, depression, and more—I want to tell you the story of Roxanne Swentzell, an artist whose sculptures are featured in the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., and in her Gallery in Pojoaque, New Mexico. Roxanne's story is a perfect example of an ancient dietary lifestyle that led to health and healing—today—not only for her, but also for her native American family and friends.

Roxanne's journey to weight loss and well-being began in 2012 when she and her family and friends realized they were all facing a multitude of health problems. For instance, Roxanne was overweight and had high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and other diet-linked health problems; her son was obese with heart disease; her eight-year-old grandson was diagnosed with pre-diabetes; and other native ancestors had diabetes and were battling obesity, autoimmune diseases, chronic fatigue, and depression.

Porter, Roxanne's son, wondered if they would be healthier if they ate the way their indigenous ancestors ate instead of eating today's standard American diet (please note that S.A.D., SAD, is the acronym for standard American diet), which includes mostly fast, processed, denatured food.

Inspired by her son's idea about eating the way their indigenous ancestors ate, the question Roxanne asked was this: What would happen if we—Native American Pueblo people—ate like our ancestors in today's time? The "we" Roxanne was referring to is her tribe, the Santa Clara Pueblo people, who have lived in the Santa Clara Pueblo, near Santa Fe, New Mexico, since about 1550. For almost 500 years.

This is when Roxanne decided that Puebloans *and* descendants of the original Spanish settlers, who had also lived in this area for hundreds of years, would be included in her "return-to-our-food-roots" culinary health experiment.

The first step: Deciding who would participate in the project and deciding the time period. After Roxanne and 13 friends and family members from pueblos across northern New Mexico agreed to go back to their basic, pre-European foods, they committed to try out their new ancient diet for three months.

Step two: The 14 'research participants' turned their ancestral food odyssey into an informal scientific study by working with a doctor to record starting weight and get basic blood work that included cholesterol and blood-sugar levels, and much more.

Step three meant figuring out what their Santa Clara Pueblo ancestors ate circa 1590. The conclusion: before the Spanish influenced their diet, typical indigenous fare was wild game (such as birds, elk, deer, and buffalo); fish; wild vegetables (such as spinach, and beans, corn, and squash—these are called "the three sisters"); and fruit, especially small, sweet strawberries.

Ultimately, their ancestral diet came down to a wide variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, and chemical-free meat, fowl, and fish.

Following their ancestral diet meant they would *completely* eliminate today's 'new normal,' post-European, processed food products, including sugar, wheat and white flour, beef, chicken, and alcoholic beverages.

In other words—realizing that her body couldn't handle these processed foods very well, Roxanne and her tribe members committed to an *ancestral dietary lifestyle* for three months.

Health Benefits of Roxanne's 'Origins' Diet

Here are the health benefits they discovered:

The findings: Twelve weeks after eating their origins diet, all 14 members of the Santa Clara Pueblo group had their blood tested again. The health status of all participants improved...a lot. Here's what Deon Ben, Program Manager of the Grand Canyon Trust Native American Program, wrote about Roxanne's new health status: "After years of struggling with what her doctor had diagnosed as genetic high blood pressure . . . after just three months of eating Native foods, her condition was gone."

And it gets better. Roxanne had lost 15 pounds, and her cholesterol levels normalized. And *all* other participants had similar successes: Her son lost fifty pounds during this time (you may want to know Porter continued his ancestral diet, and has since *attained* and *maintained* a weight loss of ninety pounds). All lost weight, they think better, have more energy, and most biomarkers have normalized.

And these healing mind-body benefits happened because Roxanne and her fellow ancestors returned to their food roots—to the foods their ancestors ate for centuries. In other words, they followed—and reclaimed—a *dietary lifestyle* that brought health and healing.

Now, several years later, this ancient, fresh-whole-food kind of eating has become a way of life for Roxanne. Today, she continues to follow the original ancestral food ways of the Pueblo peoples. And her health benefits also continue.

Health Takeaways

Here are three key takeaways from Roxanne's story:

Number 1.

Returning to a *dietary lifestyle* of fresh, whole foods—based on foods her ancestors ate—led to weight loss, health and healing for Roxanne, her son, and other tribe members.

Number 2.

While the specific foods and proportion of specific foods Roxanne and her indigenous friends and family consumed differ from the 5,000-year-old Mediterranean diet—which is *the #1* recommended diet for weight loss and health—both the 5,000-year-old Mediterranean diet—which is still practiced today—and Roxanne's ancient, Indigenous diet have this in common:

Scores of 21st century, state-of-the-art studies link a fresh, whole food, mostly plant-based diet (meaning, fruit, veggies, whole grains, beans and peas, and nuts and seeds) to weight loss, health, and healing.

A 'Way of Life', Not a Diet

And here's the **Number 3** takeaway: Both the Mediterranean diet and Roxanne's return to her Indigenous diet are not a traditional, restrictive diet in the way many of us have learned to think of 'diet'—as something you go on, then off. Rather, what she and her native family and friends did was return to a 'way of life'; a dietary lifestyle. Here's what I mean.

When Roxanne and her ancestors reclaimed (lived?) their traditional diet, they were more in tune with the time of Greek physician Hippocrates, who lived between 460–370 B.C.E. It was during this time in ancient Greece that the word *diet* (*diaita*) meant an entire 'way of life' that included food, drink, and lifestyle.

(A brief aside: Today, the word 'lifestyle' may mean the new medical specialty of Lifestyle Medicine and its 6 pillars: optimal nutrition, stress management, physical activity, social connection, restorative sleep, and avoiding risky substances.)

Back to the ancient meaning of *diet*...

Over the centuries, *diet* evolved from its original ancient meaning of "way of life" to reflect the Old French (*diète*) definition of diet—please listen carefully to this Middle English definition of 'diet': "restricting oneself to small amounts or special kinds of food; or to eat sparingly to lose weight, or for medical reasons" (familiar, isn't it?). This definition is closer to today's meaning of the word *diet*, which most of us connect to counting calories, deprivation and restriction.

A 'Whole Person' Dietary Lifestyle

When Roxanne and her ancestors reconnected to their food origins, instead of approaching food, eating, weight, health, and well-being with today's sense of dread, worry, and anxiety because they were "going on a diet," they connected to food based on its original meaning in ancient Greece: a way of living that could help them achieve a healthy weight and other health benefits.

But their odyssey also helped them to accomplish even more, for by continuing their new/old way of eating, they turned their newfound relationship to their ancestral diet into a *dietary lifestyle* that nourished them four ways:

- **#1.** not only **physically** (for example, they lost weight and high blood pressure normalized);
- **#2.** but there was also **emotional** healing (an example: project participants reported more mental clarity);
- **#3.** they were **spiritually** nourished (after all, eating ancestral foods infused meals with deep, personal meaning);
- **#4.** and they were **socially** enriched—not only because returning to their 'food roots' was a group project, but also because it meant connecting to fresh, whole, ancestral foods with others.

What I'm saying is this: For health and well-being, modern nutritional science encourages a *dietary lifestyle* that nourishes 'all of you'; the 'whole person': physically, and also emotionally, spiritually, and socially.

This multidimensional power of food to heal 'all of you' is the foundation of the healing secrets of food I'll be telling you about in today's program—and in all episodes. Why? Because scores of state-of-the-art scientific studies support the 5,000-year-old Mediterranean diet, and Roxanne's 'whole person' native ancestral way of eating—as a path to weight loss and well-being.

I'm excited to tell you that I created The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed podcast you're listening to, because Larry's and my science-backed Whole Person Integrative Eating program (Integrative Eating, for short), puts all this ancient food wisdom I'm telling you about, together with modern nutritional science.

Why does this matter to you? Because—as with Roxanne's return to what I call her 'food roots,' our research has revealed that the ancient/new Integrative Eating *dietary lifestyle* we discovered leads to eating less and weighing less. Without dieting.

Getting Started: The 7 Pillars of Integrative Eating

Where the past and present mingle comfortably.

So you can get started on the path to success, here are the seven, action-filled pillars of Integrative Eating Larry and I discovered that lead to eating less and weighing less. In each episode, I'll be telling you lots more about each element of our optimal-eating dietary lifestyle. And lots of studies that support each element.

For now, though, think of each pillar as a key 'ingredient' of Larry's and my Integrative Eating *dietary lifestyle*, where past food wisdom mingles comfortably with present nutritional science.

Let's get started.

The Basics: The 7 Pillars of Integrative Eating

Here are the seven pillars of our Integrative Eating dietary lifestyle.

WHAT TO EAT: Your guide for your most-of-the-time Food Choices

The first pillar is your **what**-to-eat guideline for weight loss and well-being.

#1. GET FRESH. The Whole Person Integrative Eating guideline for **what to eat** for weight loss and well-being is: *Choose fresh, whole food in its natural state as often as possible.* This means choosing mostly plant-based foods (fruit, veggies, *whole* grains, legumes, nuts, seeds), with small or few servings of fresh, unprocessed animal-based foods (dairy, fish, poultry, meat).

If you look closely at the "Get Fresh" foods I just told you about, they're similar to the foods in the Mediterranean diet and Roxanne's native foods that led to weight loss, health, and healing. But...you also may have noticed they're the opposite of the standard American diet (SAD for short) that most of us eat, which includes lots of fast food and ultra-processed food, and meat and cheese and chicken that's often fried.

Here's a concept for you to keep in mind: Because the 'fresh food' way of eating is so opposite of SAD, I describe it as "inverse eating."

HOW TO EAT (The 6 **eating behaviors** that lead to weight loss and well-being.)

The next six pillars of Whole Person Integrative Eating are your **how**-to-eat guidelines for weight loss and well-being. As you'll discover throughout each episode, they're **eating behaviors** that influence food choices, overeating, the way in which food is metabolized, and in turn, weight and well-being.

#2. POSITIVE EMOTIONS. 'Positive Emotions' is the 2nd pillar of Integrative Eating.

As with pillar #1—a mostly fresh-whole-food diet—eating with “positive emotions” is also the opposite of how many of us eat—for instance, often while stressed, anxious, and distracted, which are some of the negative emotions Larry and I linked with Emotional Eating and increased odds of overeating and weight gain.

The Integrative Eating antidote to stress eating? *Be aware of feelings and thoughts before, during, and after eating.* And, commit to enjoying food while filled with positive emotions, such as gratitude, for the food before you.

#3. MOMENT-TO-MOMENT MINDFULNESS. Moment-to-moment mindfulness is the 3rd pillar of Integrative Eating.

This is the opposite of what is typical for most of us, meaning, for most of us, it's the norm to eat while doing other things, for instance, while working at your computer or watching TV or driving. Research on our Whole Person Integrative Eating program links mindless, distracted eating to overeating and weight gain. The Whole Person Integrative Eating antidote? To eat less and weigh less, *bring moment-to-moment nonjudgmental awareness to every aspect of the meal.*

#4. HEARTFELT GRATITUDE. Heartfelt Gratitude is the 4th pillar of Integrative Eating.

As with all seven pillars, eating ‘from the heart’, with appreciation for the food before you, is the opposite of how most of us relate to food. Rather, we’ve learned to ‘be in our head’ when we eat, and, for instance, count calories, carbs, and fat grams. Or to think in terms of dieting. Or be overly concerned about the ‘best’ way to eat.

To up the odds of weight loss and well-being, replace ‘in your head’, eating-by-number with the Whole Person Integrative Eating antidote: *Appreciate food and its origins—from the heart.*

#5. LOVING REGARD. Loving Regard is the 5th pillar of Integrative Eating.

This may sound unusual, but consider this: surely you’ve heard the expression ‘cooked with love’. Well, Larry and I also were surprised to find that infusing meals with love was linked with eating less and weighing less. The Integrative Eating guideline: *Savor and ‘flavor’ your food with loving regard.* You can do this by adding ‘sensory elements’ to your meals, such as enjoying colors, taste, and scents.

As you’ll discover in future episodes, infusing meals with loving regard seems to influence the way in which food is metabolized, and in turn, health and well-being.

#6. APPETIZING ATMOSPHERE. Appetizing Atmosphere is the 6th pillar of Integrative Eating.

When I say ‘Appetizing Atmosphere,’ I mean eating in both an *emotionally* and *aesthetically* pleasing environment. As with some of the other pillars of Integrative Eating, Larry and I were surprised to discover this unexpected pillar about eating environment was linked to eating less and weighing less. To do this, here’s the Integrative Eating guideline: *Eat in pleasing emotional and aesthetic surroundings* as often as possible.

#7. SHARE FARE. Share Fare is the 7th and final pillar of Integrative Eating.

‘Share Fare’ is the 7th and final Integrative Eating pillar linked with eating less and weighing less. And, again, like the other pillars I’m telling you about, eating with others is the opposite of how most of us eat today: usually by ourselves or in front of our computers or TV. The Whole Person Integrative Eating program calls this the “Solo Dining overeating style.”

This matters a lot to your waistline because Larry’s and my research on Integrative Eating—and scores of other studies—link eating alone to increased likelihood of overeating--especially fast, processed food—and becoming overweight or obese.

The Integrative Eating antidote to Solo Dining? *Eat with others as often as possible*—perhaps by taking online coffee breaks with coworkers or sharing virtual or ‘in person’ meals with friends or family members.

The Takeaway

Here’s a brief recap to the 7 pillars of Whole Person Integrative Eating:

(1) Get Fresh (2) Positive Emotions (3) Mindfulness Eating (4) Heartfelt Gratitude (5) Loving Regard (6) Pleasant Atmosphere (7) Share Fare

If you take a close look at the seven pillars, it's clear they are the opposite of how most Americans eat. After all, isn't eating mostly fast food and processed food—alone, while stressed, multi-tasking and not focusing on or appreciating food, and not 'savoring flavors' or our surroundings—typical for most of us?

The national study Larry and I did on our Whole Person Integrative Eating program—in which more than 5,200 people participated—revealed that those who replaced their typical food choices and eating behaviors with the seven pillars I just told you about, ate less and lost weight.

Our research also revealed that *overeating is not merely an isolated behavior*. Rather, it is part of a complex web of related food choices, feelings, sensory experiences, and social behaviors that reflect the original meaning of the word *diet* as a 'way of life'.

Here's another perspective: Psychologist and obesity expert Kelly D. Brownell of Yale University's Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity might explain the stark contrast between the '7 pillars of Integrative Eating' and how humankind ate for thousands of years—as "modern food conditions and their mismatch with evolution." In other words, today, there is a huge disparity between *what* most of us eat (your food choices) and *how* we eat (your eating behaviors), and what and how human beings ate for thousands of years.

IN-ACTION Ideas to Try

A tip, step, or reflection that can contribute to your success.

So you can reap the rewards of what you discover on each episode of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed, I close each episode with an '**In-Action**' **Idea** for you to try. This may be a **Quick-Tip** about how to implement the healing secret we just discussed; or a **Practical Step** you can take, such as ordering a size-down of your favorite coffee concoction. Or perhaps I'll suggest a **Self-Insight Exercise**, an internal-reflection that can lead you closer to achieving your food-related health goals.

I offer an In-Action Exercise at the end each episode that can contribute to your transformation from today's, 'new-normal' way of eating—which leads to overeating and overweight—to Whole Person Integrative Eating—which I describe as your scientifically sound, personal guide to eating less and weighing less. Without dieting.

Today's In-Action Exercise is a **Self-Insight Reflection** that will introduce you to how it would *feel*—yes, feel—when you follow a *dietary lifestyle* based on the '7 pillars of Integrative Eating' I introduced you to today.

You may want to keep a Healing Secrets of Food Revealed journal – either with a pen and paper (remember writing by hand?), or on your computer. The choice is yours.

Your In-Action Exercise

Here's today's In-Action, Self-Insight Reflection.

SELF-INSIGHT REFLECTION. Think about a favorite, memorable meal; one that you especially enjoyed. Where were you? Describe your surroundings. Were they pleasant? Were you by yourself? Or with others? What were you eating? Did you like it? A lot? If "yes," why? What do you remember about the flavors, aromas, and textures of the meal? How were you feeling as you ate the food? Delighted? Happy? Or not? Finally, why did you enjoy the meal? Why was it memorable?

Thank you...

I want to thank you for joining me today on The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed.

With each show, I'm looking forward to sharing step-by-step, science-backed insights you need to nourish 'all of you' – body, mind, soul, and social well-being – each time you eat. So you can thrive.

If you would like a summary of today's In-Action Exercise, please visit HealingSecretsPodcast.com. Then look for the yellow light bulb next to the "In-Action" CTA. At HealingSecretsPodcast.com, you can also listen to this episode again and read the transcript. And, please consider subscribing to the podcast, and joining The Healing Secrets Podcast Community—where I'm looking forward to meeting you.

It is with great excitement that I invite you to join me each week on this transformative journey about your relationship to food.

I'm Deborah Kesten, host of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed.

Until next week, BE NOURISHED.

Disclaimer: This transcript is for informational purposes only. This transcript is not intended to be a substitute for professional health or weight loss advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your health professional or another qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding your condition or well-being.