



The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed

EPISODE #4

TITLE: Lost...Now Found: The Healing Power of the '4 Facets of Food'

For millennia, humankind turned to food to nourish physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being. Today, modern nutritional science is verifying food is, indeed, a 4-part gift with the power to heal multidimensionally.

TRANSCRIPT

Hello! Welcome to The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. TODAY'S TOPIC: The healing power of the '4 facets of food'.

I'm Deborah Kesten—nutrition researcher and host of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed, 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!

Meet the '4 Facets of Food'

Today's "big picture" healing secret of food is this: There's more—much more—to optimal eating than a balanced diet. Rather, for thousands of years, our ancestors knew food is a 4-part gift with the power to heal 'all of you,' meaning, not only physically, but also emotionally, spiritually, and socially. And today's modern nutritional science is verifying that food is, indeed, a 4-part gift. Here's what I mean.

In his book, *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, physician and thought leader Deepak Chopra writes, "The most significant breakthrough is not contained in isolated findings but in a completely new worldview." Our current nutrition worldview encourages us to look at "isolated findings" about food with binoculars. For instance, one moment we point the binoculars at protein, the next at carbohydrates, and then at fat—both in food and on our body. Viewed through this restricted field, we see food solely from a singular, biological perspective of what Chopra calls "isolated findings."

When I tossed away my "single binocular view" of nutrition and food—and instead, looked at food and nutrition through a kaleidoscope—in place of a binocular view of food—with its focus on singular nutrients—stunning new nutrition insights emerged.

What I mean is this: After years of research on ancient food wisdom from world religions and Eastern healing systems—sources humankind turned to for millennia for guidelines about what and how to eat prior to the discovery of nutritional science about 100 years ago—I realized that food has the power to nourish us physically, but also emotionally, spiritually, and socially.

These are the **Four Facets of Food** that lie at the core of research I did with behavioral scientist, and my husband, Larry Scherwitz, PhD. And because it became clear that food is a 4-part gift that nourishes the 'whole self'—all of you—we called our program 'Whole Person' Integrative Eating®.

Ancient Food Wisdom Meets Modern Nutritional Science

Here's what the 4-facet, 'whole person' nutrition model means to you for weight loss and well-being: Thousands of years ago, our ancestors discovered that food is a 4-part gift that influences body, mind, soul, and social well-being. And today, scores of studies by scientists worldwide support each facet of food as a powerful "nutrient" that can lead not only to weight loss, but that can also enhance other aspects of your mind-body well-being.

For instance, most of us know the food you choose influences physical wellness or illness, but it can also balance emotions, or conversely, lead to anxiety and depression. And we know that *how* you eat—the eating behaviors Larry and I identified—also have the power to satisfy the soul. And connect us with others. Ergo, food provides ‘whole person’ nourishment for ‘all of you’.

An “Old /New” Nutrition View

Right now, I’d like to invite you on a nutrition journey around the world with me, so you can discover, along with me, the richness of ancient food wisdom. And then I’ll tell you about some fascinating, state-of-the-art studies, based on today’s modern nutritional science, that are verifying the healing power of ancient food wisdom and the 4 facets of food.

I vividly remember the moment that inspired my search that led to the discovery of the four facets of food. I was in New Delhi, India, where I had been invited to give a workshop on “Demystifying Healthful Eating” at the First International Conference on Lifestyle and Health. And my husband, behavioral scientist Larry Scherwitz—who is Co-Founder of Whole Person Integrative Eating—was the keynote speaker at the conference.

Many esteemed scientists from throughout India had presented, but one of the most intriguing was Hindu cardiologist Dr. K. L. Chopra, father of the well-known author Deepak Chopra. After his presentation, I talked with Dr. Chopra in the cavernous auditorium, interviewing him for a magazine article I was planning to write about yoga and diet.

When I asked him about his orientation toward food, his response was immediate: “*Prana* is the vital life force of the universe, the cosmic force...and it goes into you, into me, with food. When you cook with love,” he continued, “you transfer the love into the food and it is metabolized...In former days—based on the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*), the tradition was for the mother to cook with love and then feed it to the children; only then would she eat.”

A brief aside: Is the idea, ‘cooked with love,’ familiar to you? It is to me. Clearly, the link between food and love has traveled through the centuries into today’s cultures, worldwide. But I digress...

A Nutrition Journey Around the World

As a nutritionist trained in the scientific method, it seemed incredible to consider that how we think or feel could actually alter food in some way, but Dr. Chopra’s comments wouldn’t let go. My thinking? Here’s a clinical cardiologist talking about cooking with love. And along with ‘cooking with love,’ Dr. Chopra was also talking about Hinduism and scripture that dates back 3,000-plus years. Surely, I thought, if Hindus believe that loving awareness is somehow transmuted into food—and that we “ingest” this vital force when we eat—then it’s possible other world religions have similar teachings.

Inspired by this possibility, I began what I call my ‘nutrition journey around this world.’

At the time, I realized that nutritional science, as we know it today—is only a little more than 100 years old. Prior to today’s nutrition guidelines and food pyramids, for thousands of years, human beings turned to what are called ‘wisdom traditions’ for guidelines about what and how to eat. This included (1) major **world religions** (such as Hinduism and Judaism); (2) what I call ‘**cultural traditions**’ (such as yogic nutrition, called *anna yoga*, and today’s very familiar 5,000-year-old Mediterranean diet); (3) and especially **Eastern healing systems** that include nutrition—which are still practiced today. I’m referring to, for instance, India’s Ayurvedic Medicine and traditional Chinese medicine.

I want to take a moment to repeat that it is only in the last 100 years or so, that we have turned to nutritional science, as we know it today, for recommendations about optimal eating.

Discovering the Four Facets of Food

When Larry and I put all the ancient food wisdom we researched, together, we discovered that, for millennia, humankind has known that food is more than an amalgam of nutrients; that it is a four-part gift.

Along with healing us physically (I now call this **Biological Nutrition**), ancient food wisdom tells us food also influences emotions (my term is **Psychological Nutrition**); it connects us to the mystery of life inherent in food (this is **Spiritual Nutrition**); and food can create connection to others (my term is **Social Nutrition**). Today, modern nutritional science is verifying food is, indeed, a 4-part gift with the power to heal body, mind, soul, and social well-being.

Welcome to the paradigm-shifting, well-researched message in my Whole Person Integrative Eating program—which is about the power of food to heal multidimensionally.

Restaurant critic Patricia Wells, writing in “A Gourmet’s Recipe for Culinary Bliss,” might describe the 4 facets this way: “Part of me wants to go back in time...creating a golden world of fresh food, gorgeous ingredients, wholesome food with flavor. Where people laugh and are really happy as they eat.”

Ancient Food Wisdom, Modern Nutritional Science

Here are some intriguing stories about the ancient food wisdom I discovered, and some amazing state-of-the-art studies about the multidimensional power of food to heal—physically, and also emotionally, spiritually, and socially.

Let’s start with **BIOLOGICAL NUTRITION**.

Have you ever chosen a particular food after calculating its calorie or carb content —perhaps with the intention of losing weight? Or maybe you made a special smoothie because you’ve heard it has health-enhancing nutrients, such as antioxidants. If so, you’re familiar with **Biological Nutrition**, one of the four facets of food that are the foundation of my Whole Person Integrative Eating® (WPIE) program.

This is the facet that’s most familiar to us.

And it’s familiar because **Biological Nutrition** explores the influence of nutrients in food (such as protein, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants)—and their influence on enhancing, or harming, our health. Let’s take a closer look at food that leads to wellness; or conversely, illness.

Biological Nutrition, and its link to health or illness, is pivotal for you to understand, because—along with my research on Whole Person Integrative Eating—scores of other studies make it unequivocally clear about what to eat for weight loss and well-being.

Lunch on the Island of Crete, Greece

To find out more, let’s visit a family on the Island of Crete, in Greece.

Imagine it’s lunchtime on Crete, home of the original Mediterranean diet. Because schools are closed during lunch hour, two children—and their dad who is a farmer—are home for lunch. The simple fare on the family’s typical Greek table consists of an array of small, savory, colorful plates of food that will be enjoyed and shared over the next hour or so.

The main course: a **vegetable** casserole made with **wild greens** and other seasonal produce, supplemented with a **salad** and *paximadi* (a twice-baked **bread**, traditionally composed of 90% **barley** or **chickpea** flour and 10% whole wheat).

On top of the whole-grain *paximadi* is a sprinkling of **feta cheese**, chopped **olives**, **tomatoes**, **oregano**, and **extra virgin olive oil**. Dessert is slices of fresh **orange** from trees on the island. Some other families on the island are also highlighting vegetables, but are including small servings of **whole, grilled fish** or **poultry** in their meal; and fresh-made **lentils** flavored with extra-virgin Greek olive oil and a sprinkling of **raw pine nuts**, plus some **sesame** seeds. *Tzatziki* (**yogurt**, cucumber and garlic) is also on the table.

Sweets, most typically made with honey, are consumed perhaps a few times weekly and during special holidays.¹ Low to moderate amounts of mostly whole grilled fish and dairy foods—with some poultry—are enjoyed weekly, as are occasional **eggs** (maybe between 0-4) per week. Small amounts of **red meat** are included **monthly**, while refined, processed foods (cookies, cake, white bread, fried foods, etc.) are avoided. A glass or two of red wine is typically enjoyed socially during meals.

The bottom line: The Mediterranean diet—voted best diet for health six years in a row by *U.S. News & World Report*—embraces fresh, whole, plant-based foods with small servings of fresh fish and yogurt.

In other words, scores of studies link the 5,000-year-old Mediterranean diet—of mostly fresh fruit, veggies, whole grains, legumes, and nuts and seeds, and small servings of fresh fish and Greek yogurt—with weight loss, health and healing.

Health-Harming Food ‘Products’

Now, a look at foods that harm health...

The foods that are harmful to your health—and that lead to lots of chronic body-mind conditions—from overweight and heart disease to diabetes, depression, and more—are foods that are the exact opposite of the Mediterranean diet I just described for you. I’m sure you won’t be surprised to hear that scores of studies link the standard American diet (with the acronym, SAD), to major, chronic, body-mind conditions with which millions of us struggle.

What are these health-harming foods? Some say it's "snack crack." Or an "industrial artifact." Corporations may call it a "commodity." Most of us simply call it fast food and more recently, ultra-processed food (UPFs for short). I call it 'food products' or 'chemical cuisine.'

What might a mostly UPF diet of denatured, processed, chemical-laden food look like? Perhaps a donut, breakfast bar, or sugary cereal for breakfast; Chicken McNuggets or a double-cheese burger with fries and a Coke for lunch; and maybe a pepperoni and sausage pizza for dinner. Add some snacks of chips, cookies, or candy bars, and you have a profile of **Fast Foodism**, the overeating style Larry and I identified that's typical for millions of Americans; indeed, for more and more people, worldwide.

And it is a diet of mostly fast food and ultra-processed food—which the majority of children and adults in the U.S. eat each day—that lead not only to being overweight and obese, but also to other chronic body-mind conditions, from heart disease and diabetes to depression, anxiety, and more.

The bottom line: The **Biological Nutrition** facet of Whole Person Integrative Eating is currently the core focus of nutritional science. And it tells us a lot about the food we eat and its link to wellness. Or illness.

Food Facet #2. PSYCHOLOGICAL NUTRITION

In the last few decades, a major new specialty in the field of nutritional science has emerged. Psychiatrists call it Nutritional Psychiatry. Psychologists say it's Nutritional Psychology. Others call it the study of 'food and mood.' I coined the term **Psychological Nutrition** to describe the facet of food that explores how food affects feelings via hormones (chemical messengers) that are released in the brain when we eat certain foods; and conversely, how thoughts and feelings often affect food choices.

Whatever the name, be assured: The study of mind-body nutrition—which explores the food you eat and its impact on your brain and mental and emotional health, has arrived!

Perhaps today's study of 'food and mood' has caught up with ancient food wisdom. Five thousand years ago, the original yogis, called Rishis, meditating in India's ancient forests, were perhaps the first to use their own mind-body to discover what to eat so they could remain relaxed, but alert, for hours of meditation.

Flash-forward to the 1970s, when researcher Judith Wurtman, PhD, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, fed a high-carb meal (I think Dr. Wurtman used potatoes) to rats. About 20 minutes later, they released a natural chemical; a neurotransmitter called serotonin, which we now know, calms and relaxes you. With this finding, the new nutrition specialty of 'food and mood' was born.

If you're wondering why you crave carrot cake instead of a carrot when you're, say, anxious, wonder no more. The emerging field of **Psychological Nutrition**—or 'food-mood' research—tells us that cookies, cake, and donuts—made with high-carb white flour and sugar, and excess fat and salt—sends calming serotonin to your brain and in turn you get the message: relax!

But the bigger takeaway is this: a diet filled with mostly processed food—which I call "chemical cuisine"—can lead to chronic depression or anxiety and other negative, unwelcomed emotions. Conversely, the nutrients in a diet of mostly fresh, whole foods up the odds of mental and emotional well-being. The choice is yours.

Food Facet #3. SPIRITUAL NUTRITION

How would you eat if you knew that infusing meals with what I call 'spiritual ingredients' could enhance your health and up the odds of weight loss and well-being?

The trilogy of timeless 'ingredients' I identified that comprise the **Spiritual Nutrition** facet of Whole Person Integrative Eating, are (1) *mindfulness*, (2) *gratitude*, (3) and *love*.

When you infuse both yourself and food with these three timeless ingredients when you eat, not only are you likely to eat less and weigh less—without dieting, many other studies suggest that each of these elements has a profound impact on the way in which food is metabolized and in turn, your weight and other diet-related chronic conditions—such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and more.

Then there's this: The three ancient ingredients of Spiritual Nutrition—infusing meals, and yourself, with moment-to-moment mindfulness, heartfelt appreciation, and loving regard—provide a broader vision of nutritional health because they offer insights into harder-to-measure 'nutrients' in food that can enhance your health.

Here's a closer look at the three 'ingredients' of **Spiritual Nutrition**—and some studies that verify their healing power. As you listen to this ancient food wisdom and state-of-the-art studies that support each element of **Spiritual Nutrition**, keep in mind that each element has travelled through the centuries into today's world, and that each should be familiar to you.

Spiritual 'Ingredient' #1: In-the-Moment Mindfulness

Here's the ancient food wisdom, modern science connection of mindfulness eating.

For thousands of years, mindfulness has been intertwined with both Hinduism and yoga. And *mindfulness meditation* has also been part of Buddhism's philosophy for millennia. It took mind-body research scientist, Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD—creator of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School—to bring mindfulness into the 20th century when he linked it to health and healing.

The Research

Here are two quick examples of research about mindfulness and weight: One study by Jean Kristeller, PhD, reveals that practicing mindfulness meditation reduces binge eating episodes, while research by Lifestyle Medicine founder Dr. Dean Ornish, MD, and his team discovered that heart patients who did the most meditation every day were the ones who lost the most weight.

Whole Person Integrative Eating 'Mindfulness' Guideline:

Within the framework of my Whole Person Integrative Eating program, here is the mindfulness guideline. It is the opposite of the new normal, Whole Person Integrative Eating overeating style of *Task Snacking*: doing other things such as working at your computer or watching TV while eating. It is:

Bring moment-to-moment nonjudgmental awareness to every aspect of the meal.

Spiritual 'Ingredient' #2: Heartfelt Gratitude

For centuries, prior to eating, people in cultures worldwide have said blessings and prayers of gratitude for the food before them. Many still do.

Recognizing and giving thanks for food—from the heart—is the opposite of the Whole Person Integrative Eating overeating style, *Food Fretting*—which I define as dieting a lot. Or counting calories. Or perhaps obsessing about the 'best' way to eat. In other words, Food Fretting means you're relating to the food before you while you're 'in your head.'

The Research

Here is some research about the benefits you stand to gain when you eat with heartfelt gratitude.

"An appreciative heart is good medicine,"¹² says the HeartMath Institute, a research lab that studies interactions between the heart and brain. Research by HeartMath reveals that heartfelt gratitude brings a bevy of benefits both to your physical and mental well-being. For instance, there's evidence an appreciative heart can lower blood pressure and improve immune function and sleep quality. And those with a gratitude outlook experience increased happiness and less depression.

How might an attitude of gratitude bring so many mind-body benefits? When you think about what you appreciate, you activate the "calming" part of your nervous system (the parasympathetic), which in turn increases naturally occurring feel-good hormones

Whole Person Integrative Eating 'Gratitude' Guideline:

Appreciate food and its origins—from the heart.

Spiritual 'Ingredient' #3: Loving Regard

Here's some perspective: 'Flavoring' food with loving regard has traveled through the centuries in most cultures worldwide. After all, haven't most of us heard the expression "cooked with love?"

The Research

I was surprised to discover the healing power that can happen when you eat with loving regard. Here's an example of an amazing study. When researcher Robert Nerem fed rabbits a high cholesterol diet to see if they would get heart disease, the rabbits that were held with care, while eating, were the ones who didn't get heart disease. Surprised at the unexpected findings, when Nerem repeated the study, he got the same results: Rabbits fed with care didn't get heart disease; the other rabbits, did.

This suggests that humans, also, may benefit by eating with a loving consciousness. Somehow, flavoring food with loving regard influences the way in which food is metabolized, so much so it may even protect against developing heart disease.

Whole Person Integrative Eating 'Loving Regard' Guideline:

Eating with loving regard, and with your six senses—such as savoring the scent and flavors of food—is the remedy to the Whole Person Integrative Eating *Sensory Disregard* overeating style.

Here is the Whole Person Integrative Eating antidote to Sensory Disregard:

Savor and 'flavor' food with loving regard.

Food Facet #4. SOCIAL NUTRITION

Do you ever eat lunch, dinner, a sandwich, or snack, by yourself? Perhaps while texting, working at your computer, or while driving? If you answered “yes,” you have lots of company. Today it's typical for millions to eat meals by themselves. For instance, children or teens may reach for a piece of packaged pizza that rests on the kitchen countertop, then eat it at the computer, while others may heat up their takeout meal in the microwave, then dine solo while watching TV.

The Research

Eating alone more often than not means you practice Solo Dining—the overeating style behavioral scientist Larry Scherwitz, PhD, and I, discovered that increases odds of overeating and being overweight or obese.

The sobering takeaway about our discovery of Solo Dining is this: Chronic social isolation while eating increases odds that you'll overeat and gain weight. And more and more studies, worldwide, are finding the same dynamic: those who eat by themselves—from children to adults—are at increased odds of being obese.

Solo Dining goes against our heritage as human beings. I'm sure most of you know we evolved eating with others—perhaps first as a tribe around a fire, then around a table with family and friends.

The scientific healing power of social nourishment was born when American physician and researcher Stewart Wolf discovered that the strong social support amongst Italian-Americans in the town of Roseto, Pennsylvania, seemed to be the “mystery factor” that protected them against heart disease—even though they consumed a super-high fat, high meat diet.

And consider this: During an interview, food writer Marion Cunningham told me, “We're fed more than food when we eat with others. It is one thing to eat,” she said, “it is another to dine on lovingly prepared food with good friends.”

Whole Person Integrative Eating 'Share Fare' Guideline

Here's the Whole Person Integrative Eating® (WPIE) antidote to the Solo Dining overeating style:

Enjoy food-related experiences with others—as often as possible.

The Healing Benefits of 'Whole Person' Nourishment

I just told you about the 4 facets of food and their power to influence your health. Here's the takeaway about the Four Facets of Food: Food is a 4-part gift that reconnects us with timeless food wisdom our ancestors discovered centuries ago. Today, Whole Person Integrative Eating—and scores of other studies—are verifying that when you nourish 'all of you'—physically, emotionally, spiritually, and socially—each time you eat, you up your odds of weight loss and well-being.

'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're discovering today about optimal eating, 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.

Consider keeping a Healing Secrets of Food Revealed journal to write about your experience with each In-Action Exercise.

YOUR IN-ACTION EXERCISE

Today's In-Action Exercise is a **Practical Step** that targets the three 'spiritual ingredients—especially the *moment-to-moment mindfulness* 'ingredient' of **Spiritual Nutrition**.

Here's today's In-Action, Practical Step.

PRACTICAL STEP. First, some context...For thousands of years, Eastern healing systems—such as India's Ayurvedic Medicine—espoused eating with the '6 flavors of food' in mind: bitter, sweet, salty, sour, spicy/pungent, astringent. Consider this: The 6 Tastes may be the original nutrition.

Sometime between today and next week's episode of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed, choose one fresh, whole food—such as an apple or raisin or favorite raw, unroasted nut (perhaps a walnut or almond).

Step 1. Look at the food you're holding.

Step 2. Take a bite and start chewing. Very slowly and consciously.

Step 3. Now close your eyes.

- Focus on the texture of the food when you first put it in your mouth.
- How does the texture change as you chew?
- How does the food taste? Sweet? Sour? Salty? Spicy? Bitter? Astringent?

Step 4. Swallow the food when you're ready.

Now open your eyes. How are you feeling? What are your thoughts about this mini-mindfulness eating experience?

Thank you...

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, read the transcript, and, please consider joining The Healing Secrets Podcast Community—where I'm looking forward to meeting you.

I want to thank you for joining me today on The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. With each show, I'll share 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.

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.