



The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed

EPISODE #15

TITLE: The Healing Power of 'Savoring Flavors' in Food

The idea of savoring flavors and taking the time to taste and delight in the food before us has traveled through the centuries in most cultures worldwide. Today, modern nutritional science is verifying that nourishing your senses when you eat is linked to a bevy of health benefits.

TRANSCRIPT

Hello! Welcome to The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. TODAY'S TOPIC: An Ancient and New, Science-Backed Weight-Loss Secret: Nourish Your Senses!

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 'Sensory Disregard' Overeating Style

Written more than 200 years ago, here's a quote by French author Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, who, hundreds of years ago, became celebrated for his writings on the craft and science of cooking and the art of eating.

"The truth is," Brillat-Savarin wrote, "at the end of a well-savored meal both soul and body enjoy a special well-being . . . the spirit grows more perceptive . . .,"

I want to take a moment to PAUSE AND REFLECT on what Brillat-Savarin means by "a well-savored meal" that imbues "soul and body" with "a special well-being."

Here's what it brings up for me: How often do you focus on the aromas, colors, or flavors of food? Do you eat with your senses by appreciating the presentation, "tasting" the textures, or being grateful for the life-giving gift inherent in food?

In research I did with behavioral scientist--and my husband--Larry Scherwitz, PhD on our Whole Person Integrative Eating (WPIE) program, we found that the **Sensory Disregard** overeating style is a dependable predictor of overeating and weight gain, meaning, if you're not enjoying your food—indeed, if you're not savoring and flavoring food with loving regard, and infusing pleasure into the dining experience—which is what Brillat-Savarin is suggesting--you're likely to keep eating until you finally do feel a sense of satisfaction.

'Flavoring' Food with Love

In Episode 4, "Lost...Now Found: The Healing Power of the '4 Facets of Food,'" I told you about the first time I made the connection between food and loving regard. It was while I was interviewing cardiologist Dr. K. L. Chopra, father and mentor of integrative medicine pioneer Deepak Chopra, MD, for a magazine article I was planning to write about yoga and food. During our discussion, I lit on Dr. Chopra's comment, based on Hindu scripture from the *Bhagavad Gita*, when he said that "*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, you transfer the love into the food and it is metabolized . . .".

Food and love. The idea so contrasted with today's traditional nutritional science that it launched my nutrition journey around the world to discover what other world religions, cultural traditions, and ancient Eastern healing systems (such as India's Ayurvedic medicine) had to say about eating with loving regard.

When Larry and I put this rich repository of ancient food wisdom together, one of the things we discovered is the overeating style of Sensory Disregard and its antidote: the ancient-food-wisdom-based guideline--now part of our Whole Person Integrative Eating program--of nourishing your senses by both eating with loving regard for food, plus taking the time to savor flavors, aromas, colors, and more when you eat.

In other words, Larry and I discovered that specific elements of the Sensory Disregard overeating style are powerful predictors of overeating and weight gain, because if you're not enjoying your food—indeed, savoring it and “flavoring” food with loving regard when you eat—you're likely to keep eating until you finally do feel a sense of satisfaction.

As illuminating, our research with more than 5200 participants revealed that *those who ate the most actually enjoyed their food the least*. This is a staggering finding because we discovered that when you eat with the Whole Person Integrative Eating guideline of *nourishing your senses*, filled with pleasure and enjoyment of food, you'll likely eat less.

The WPIE Training Effect on Sensory Disregard

As a matter of fact, out of the 7 new-normal overeating styles Larry and I identified, Sensory Disregard is associated with the *largest number of food-related behaviors that lead to overeating and weight gain*. How many eating behaviors? We identified 18 statistically significant--meaning, dependable measures--of Sensory Disregard items from our “What's Your Overeating Style? Self-Assessment Quiz.”

And each one was closely linked with one another, meaning that if research participants did *not* prepare food with, say, gratitude, they were also more likely not to practice other positive elements of this overeating style, such as preparing food with care and appreciation; feeling grateful for the food before them; experiencing the uplifting feeling of loving regard for the food; awe at the mystery of life in food; savoring the meal with their senses; or reflecting on the meal after eating.

What's key to our findings is this: Those who completed my overeating styles quiz both before an after taking my 6-week, 18-lesson, Whole Person Integrative Eating e-course, significantly and substantially improved their scores on each of the 18 items in the Sensory Disregard overeating style. And it was these research participants who lessened their overeating and who lost weight. This means that when you improve--and enrich--your sensory relationship with food and eating, you also lower your odds of overeating and becoming overweight or obese.

So you can get the same benefits as our research participants when they nourished their senses while eating, later in this episode, I'll give you the step-by-step guidelines you need to integrate the Whole Person Integrative Eating family of sensory ingredients into your everyday eating, so you can practice--and benefit from--all the elements of these powerful team members.

Feeding the Senses with the '6 Tastes'

Right now, to give you a better sense of what it means to 'feed your senses' when you eat, I want to share a personal example of the first time I experienced "nourishing my senses" when eating. And then I'll link it to the ancient, thousands of years old practice of savoring the '6 flavors in food.'

Larry and I experienced the power of nourishing the senses, especially with taste but also with the color of food, long before we identified savoring and flavoring food with loving regard as the antidote to the Sensory Disregard overeating style. It was while we were having dinner in a beautiful Thai restaurant, where we had ordered a salad with which we weren't familiar. Called *miang kham*, the dish that arrived at our table wasn't the familiar American salad of mixed vegetables. Instead, we were presented with a platter that held six small bowls filled with finely chopped and colorful ingredients: lime, peanuts, red onion, red pepper, ginger, and toasted coconut. In the center were a bunch of fresh spinach leaves and a bowl of a very thick and sticky sweet-and-sour paste.

The presentation was enchanting, but because it was also unfamiliar, we asked our waitress how we should proceed. Patiently she showed us how to take a spinach leaf, spread a little paste on it, and sprinkle a tiny portion from each bowl over the paste. Then she created a small food-filled tube by rolling up the leaf. When we tasted the handmade tubular salad, our taste buds burst with flavor. With each bite, an implosion of flavors was released, so much so that we instinctively kept our attention and our anticipation focused on the fantastic flavors and tantalizing tastes that each new bite of *miang kham* released.

With each new bite of *miang kham*, I thought of the "six flavors of food" that Eastern healing systems—India's Ayurvedic Medicine, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), and Tibetan medicine—have espoused for millennia to signal optimal eating and complete nutrition. I had been familiar with the role of the six tastes in Ayurveda and TCM, but I discovered their place in Tibetan medicine during a lecture by Tibetan physician Dr. Namgyal Qusar. In response to a question from the audience about optimal food preparation and nutrient preservation, Dr. Qusar responded by clarifying the Tibetan concept of nutritional balance.

An Ancient View of 'Complete Nutrition'

First Dr. Qusar addressed consuming food from all food groups—both plant- and animal-based. Then he added that for complete nutrition, he recommends consuming a meal that includes all six tastes: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent. In other words, Tibetan nutrition uses a finely honed sense of taste to ascertain whether a meal is balanced—and to find out, you have to focus your attention on the flavors inside your mouth as you chew.

The six tastes are so integral to health and well-being in India's Ayurveda--another ancient Eastern healing system--that some Ayurvedic schools encourage a sequence of tastes in a meal, progressing from sweet to salty, sour, pungent, bitter, and then astringent.

In my opinion, Larry's and my dining experience with the *miang kham* 'rolled salad,' was an exceptional example of how fresh food, prepared with care and savored by the diner, can fill the senses and satisfy the soul—two key ingredients lacking in the Sensory Disregard overeating style. In other words, when you nurture and nourish yourself—and in turn feel fulfilled by the dining experience, you're likely to eat less and enjoy food more.

A New Weight-Loss Secret: Feed Your Senses!

Today, modern nutritional science is verifying that 'feeding your senses' while eating can lead to eating less and weighing less.

For instance, Larry's and my original research revealed that those who eat with awareness of scents in food, plus discernment of **flavors** and other **sensory delights**, are less likely to overeat and gain weight. An additional clue that aroma in food can play a part in eating less emerged when Dutch scientists

discovered that intensely scented food seems to prompt people to take much smaller bite sizes and consume less throughout the meal.

Now two groundbreaking study have taken the Dutch study a step further: researchers in Germany have linked an aroma—specifically, the scent of olive oil—to eating and weighing less. Here's a closer look at these breakthrough studies.

Olive oil. It's the crown jewel of the Mediterranean diet—long linked with many health benefits, including reducing the risk of heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, blood pressure, even breast cancer and weight gain. With the latest findings about health benefits of its aroma, the elixir that is olive oil promises yet other advantages: not only does extra-virgin olive oil increase your sense of satiety, its aroma too may help you stay slim.

Study I: The Olive-Oil-Satiety/Eat Less Link

To make the amazing connection between the scent of olive oil, feeling full, eating less, and losing weight, researchers from the German Research Center for Food Chemistry first set out to discover if there were any appetite-suppressing—or -enhancing properties in four different fats: lard, butter, olive oil, and canola oil. To find out, they recruited 120 people who were split into five groups. Every day for three months, each of four groups added about two cups of yogurt—enriched with one of four fats—to their daily diet, while the fifth (control) group ate plain no-fat yogurt.

Throughout the study, the subjects were given blood tests, and in this way, the researchers discovered that those who ate the olive-oil yogurt had the greatest increases in **serotonin**, a hormone that helps you feel full. And because the participants who consumed the olive-oil-infused yogurt felt full, they adjusted their normal caloric intake by eating less—and this simple adjustment kept them from gaining weight. Not so for the canola and lard groups, however, who actually gained weight because they added the yogurt to what they were already eating each day.

Here's what Dr. Malte Rubach, a nutritional scientist who collaborated with colleagues on the study, had to say: “You could see that those who felt really satiated reduced their total energy intake.”

But wait! There's more!

Study II: The Link Between Aroma and Staying Slim

After discovering the link between olive oil and eating less, the German researchers asked this question: might there be something other than the nutrients in the olive oil that led to such different weight outcomes?

To find out, the researchers designed a simple study comprised of two groups given nonfat yogurt—but with one difference: the yogurt in one of the groups was mixed with an aroma extract infused with the scent of olive oil. Surprisingly, this one small change made a huge difference in the outcome. Not only did those in the *plain-yogurt group* show lower serotonin levels (which, to remind you, is a hormone that helps you feel full), they also experienced less satiety after eating the yogurt. And they didn't adjust their caloric intake and therefore consumed, on average, 176 more calories daily.

Meanwhile, those in the *olive-oil-scented group* reduced their caloric intake from other foods, plus their glucose tolerance tests revealed more balanced blood-sugar levels. This matters a lot when it comes to overeating and weight gain, because abrupt swings in blood sugar drive how hungry or satiated you feel.

“Our findings show that aroma is capable of regulating satiety,” says principal investigator Dr. Schieberle. Then there's this finding: the researchers attributed the stay-slim benefits of extra virgin olive oil to *hexanal*, a particular, naturally occurring compound that's abundant in Italian olive oils, with a scent that is similar to the scent of freshly cut grass.

Feeding Your Senses: The Missing Ingredient in Meals

Here's the bottom line: Imagine. Just the smell of olive oil can have a powerful effect on the appetite—so much so that it can help you feel full and cut calories. But there's even more to the scent-and-stay-slim

mystery, for it suggests there's much more to food, weight, and the experience of eating than the conventional calories-in, calories-out formula.

Researcher Dr. Rubach explains it this way: "This is the first time where we've really looked at the effects that things other than fatty acids, protein and carbohydrates have on satiety. *Everything that completes our impression of a meal can have an impact* [italics mine]," he says. In other words, "*the physiological impact of a meal is not limited to what (you) can see on the plate* [italics mine]."

I agree—especially because my research also revealed that eating with your senses, preparing meals with care and appreciation, filling yourself with sensory delights and uplifting feelings of gratitude and appreciation while eating, savoring food, and “flavoring” food with loving regard are overlooked aspects of overcoming overeating and ensuing weight gain. With this in mind, I'm especially intrigued by Dr. Schieberle's research, because it is the first study to confirm that aroma alone may have the power to regulate appetite and in turn be a key tool for overcoming overeating.

Nourish Your Senses

Here's the takeaway: The antidote to the Sensory Disregard overeating style—nourishing your senses by savoring and “flavoring” food with loving regard—does not require thought or language, just a refocus of your awareness, attention, and intention each time you eat. We have seen that Larry's and my research on Whole Person Integrative Eating—including the antidote to Sensory Disregard, plus the research of others, suggests that when you develop a meaningful relationship to food and eating by truly savoring flavors and infusing food with loving regard, overeating lessens, and so too does weight.

In other words, you increase the odds of overcoming the Sensory Disregard overeating style by taking the time to nourish your senses each time you eat.

Your 'In-Action' Exercise

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 of food 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'll 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

PRACTICAL STEPS

Today's In-Action Practical Step is twofold:

PRACTICAL STEP #1:

READ--AND CONSIDER--THE WPIE 'SENSORY DISREGARD' ANTIDOTE

PAUSE & REFLECT on the Whole Person Integrative Eating (WPIE) antidote to the Sensory Disregard overeating style. It is the WPIE guideline for nourishing your senses each time you eat. Here it is:

PRACTICAL STEP #2:

STRATEGIES to NOURISH YOUR SENSES

**Sensory Disregard Rx:
NOURISH YOUR SENSES**

Savor and "flavor" food with loving regard.

Strategies to Nourish Your Senses

Here are strategies designed to nourish your senses each time you eat. They are simple, practical, but profound steps you can take that put the Whole Person Integrative Eating guideline--*Savor and "flavor" food with loving regard*--into action each time you eat.

Satisfy your senses. Identify the *colors* of the plate, the utensils, the food, before and while eating. Focus on *scent* in food. Do you like it? Is it whetting your appetite so that you're anticipating that first mouthful? Savor *flavors*. Does the food taste sweet? Sour? Bitter? Salty? Astringent? Pungent?

Experience textures of the food—starting with the first bite. With your eyes closed, take a bite of food and begin to chew. Focus solely on the food in your mouth. Can you taste fantastic flavors? Are you able to identify one or more of the six tastes? Simply appreciate every single flavor.

Implement olive-oil ideas. Drizzle a little extra-virgin olive oil (grass-scented, if available) on a fresh salad made with lots of fresh veggies. Or on a piece of toasted, whole-grain bread. Or in a serving of your favorite plain, unsweetened yogurt. Another option: Place a bottle—or small bowl—of your favorite olive oil on the dining table. Inhale and savor the aroma before, during, and after eating.

Infuse food with love. To turn meals into a sensory experience, "eat from a place of spirit," says clinical psychologist Michael Mayer.²² By this, Dr. Mayer means that when you eat, you access the ancient life force of *chi*. Indeed, when you cultivate *chi*, "you merge with the mysterious energy source in the world that is life itself," says Mayer.²² When you eat with such heartfelt regard, you make it more and more possible to be satisfied, and in turn you do not need to overeat.

Devout yogis—people who practice yoga—eat "from a place of spirit." They follow a philosophy of *sanatana dharma*, the Sanskrit expression for the underlying, eternal, true essence of all life. Such a philosophy complements the *Bhagavad Gita*, which encourages honoring all living things—including food—as part of an interdependent oneness. When preparing or cooking food, think positive, loving thoughts. Devout Hindus believe such a mentality may be transferred into the food, enhance digestion, and empower the food to nourish body, mind, and soul.

Bring spiritual awareness to food. Earlier I told you about Judaism's Havdalah ceremony, which focuses the senses with a "spice box" as a reminder to hold on to the Sabbath's moments of sweetness and peace during the busy work week. Bringing similar regard to food and the entire experience of dining means you're eating with what in Hebrew is called *Yetzirah*, the spiritual awareness of unity and connection. Consider holding this understanding, recognition, and perception in your heart when you eat.

Savor six tastes. Put the concept of the six tastes into practice. Begin by gathering the ingredients to make the unique leaf-wrapped Thai appetizer-salad called *miang kham* (described earlier in this chapter): one lime, small red onion, and red bell pepper; a piece of ginger; two tablespoons shredded and toasted coconut; some honey (perhaps a quarter cup); and about ten spinach leaves. (Note: The sauce is typically made with finely shredded coconut, ground peanuts, dried shrimp, fish sauce—*nam bplah*—and some water. The ingredient list for the sauce that is spread on the spinach or green leaf may be intimidating. If so, consider simplifying by using some honey only.)

Chop the lime, onion, pepper, and ginger into tiny pieces. Next, spread a thin layer of sauce or honey (perhaps a teaspoon) on one spinach leaf, then sprinkle a pinch of each chopped ingredient over the sticky honey. Roll up the spinach leaf, creating a small food-filled tube.

Engage your senses as you eat the *miang kham*: sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing. *Look* at the spinach wrap you're going to eat, and become aware of its texture and color. Is it smooth, rough, light, dark? When you take the wrap in your hands, what does it *feel* like? Is it soft, tough, grainy? Next identify the *smell* of the wrap. Is it sweet? Sour? In between? When you take a bite, do you *taste* one or more flavors? (Hint: the taste of food often changes as you chew.) Finally, how does the wrap you're chewing *sound*? Loud or subtle?

To review these strategies to nourish your senses when you eat--as well as some others--please visit HealingSecretsPodcast.com, then open the 'In-Action' CTA next to the yellow light bulb for Episode 15 with the title, "The Healing Power of Savoring Flavors in Food."

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, and read the transcript and my Article about the WPIE Mindfulness Meal Meditation. 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.