

Energetic Rocket Fuel: Using Food and Drink as Medicine

When I was first diagnosed with my autoimmune, I knew I had to clean up my diet. Having been born and raised in Switzerland, our breakfast (and dinners) consisted of a wide array of whole grain breads, butter, jams, honey, yogurt, and cheeses. While none of those foods are unhealthy, my American lifestyle (driving more, walking less and less easy access to the highest quality foods) mixed with the inflammation I was experiencing in my body called me to change the way I nourished my body. I gave up bread for a lengthy period of time. You can imagine what it felt like, given that bread had been an important staple of my diet for over forty years. But I can attest to how beneficial it was to simplify my diet, starting with breakfast, to include more plants. Replacing my grain-heavy breakfast with green smoothies helped me in lessening water retention, improved my digestion, and gave me more energy. On top of that, the green smoothies I make are delicious. I crave one shortly after I wake up. While I have integrated an occasional breakfast inspired by those Sundays with my family back into my life, more often I would rather have a produce-rich morning.

I chose to go completely plant-based, gluten and dairy-free for a few years, which I believe to be the key to healing my entire body throughout the years when I was sick. Because I eliminated many types of food, and had a pretty serious reason to do it, I consider it one of the main reasons my integrative doc in Germany pronounced me free from the toxins and food allergies that caused my autoimmune condition. I believe that many of the autoimmune dis(eases) and chronic conditions we have today are treatable.

It's difficult to get a diagnosis when there's not a lot known about many autoimmune and rare diseases. Using food as medicine helped me choose foods that were healthier for me.

Given the way healthcare is run in the US, it takes patience, perseverance, and unfortunately quite a bit of money to confront our personal health, especially when we get sick. Detox services like the one I went through in Germany, although now starting to be available in the US, are seldom covered by insurance. Most Western doctors are unaware of the lab tests available for heavy metals and pesticide poisoning in the US, which is why I often felt like they thought I was nuts when I would ask about alternative treatments. When I was diagnosed in 2016, none of those tests were available to me, and I had to travel to Europe for treatment. The good news is that we're progressing in integrative healthcare, and many fantastic medical doctors are now more equipped and dedicated to providing holistic treatment plans. The bad news, as I said, is most of those services require someone to pay out of pocket, which means, unfortunately, these services are out of reach for many. Healthcare equality is a long way away. Hence I've dedicated my life to changing how we think about healthcare in the Western world. My aim is to bring more awareness to people, in hopes it becomes easier to gain access to other pathways to heal.

In the meantime, there are easy ways to stay and/or get healthy. I found that even though food costs are expensive, they are much more affordable than prescription medication and unexpected medical bills. Starting with viewing food as medicine has been a game-changer for me. With that, I beg you to ditch those sugary drinks you are

drinking (if you are drinking them), examine the types and the amount of overly-processed food you are consuming, and revert to healthy fats (in moderation) versus fast-food burgers and fries. Nutrition is a complex subject because every single one of us responds differently to different foods. There is no one-size-fits-all nutrition plan, so I hope in sharing my approach you might be inspired to create a new way of nourishing your body that will support your long and healthy life. There is emerging research that suggests that a calorie-poor, nutrient-rich, plant-based diet is the way to go, so that's the route I took.

I do not go hungry and I don't do diets. My focus is on lifestyle change and mindset. When I found out that Tom Brady and Rich Roll, two top-performing athletes of our time, were on completely plant-based diets, I no longer worried that I would lack energy. While I have stuck to a heavily plant-based diet (about 80% of the time), I did add some lean animal protein back into my diet (think grass-fed beef and happy chickens that were free to roam, or wild-caught salmon) a few times per week.

One of my good friends happens to be a pastry chef *and* a health coach. She has given me some great advice, including the recommendation to treat myself to a dessert I love once or twice per month. What initially sounded like a complete contradiction has become an inspiring way for me to build a sustainable and healthy connection with food. Her advice has been that, keeping in mind portion management is important, your attitude towards what you're eating is a way to support a more mindful and satisfying approach to eating. I no longer eat if I think something is bad for me or if I don't like something. If you're eating with an attitude that your cells are being fueled and that it is

good for you, then the idea is that it changes the energy of that food. This doesn't mean to go gorge on potato chips. It means that you might just decide not to binge, and instead take your time and appreciate them, because you are not guiltily shoving them into your mouth. Try it out, play with it, and see how your body responds.

To stretch myself to be adventurous, especially with produce, I ignore the inner aisles of the supermarket where so many processed foods are located, and roam the outer sections where the fresh stuff lives. One of my favorite pleasures is to go to the farmers' market and get ideas from the vendors and inspiration by buying what's in season. In my opinion, there's a huge difference in flavor eating farm-fresh whole foods. I challenge you to bite into a carrot picked that day and see how different it tastes versus one that has been produced in massive quantities, traveled for thousands of miles, and stored for long periods in a plastic bag. Eating fresh vegetables out of his grandmother's garden is what inspired renowned chef Daniel Humm to become a culinary arts expert and ultimately transfer one of the top restaurants in the world – Eleven Madison in NYC – to a completely plant-based experience. Even more impressive, he retained the restaurant's 3 Michelin Stars and proved all skeptics wrong.

Because treating food as medicine has made such a positive difference in my life, I am sharing a few of my favorite recipes with you. Some of them are my own creations, and others are inspired by culinary professionals and doctors. P.S. – Don't forget to buy organic if your wallet allows, and thoroughly wash your produce (even with a skin or peel like oranges and avocados) to remove most of the pesticides if you choose to eat non-organic fruits and vegetables.

Here's to good health, activating your personalized food-as-medicine journey, and launching your longevity rocket.



BREAKFAST

Smoothies and Juices

Smoothie with Kale, Avocado and Pear

(Loosely adapted from the original recipe of Seamus Mullen)

In a Vitamix (or other high-performance blender), mix for about one minute or until all ingredients are well blended. Add some ice cubes and blend again if you desire a colder drink:

3 cups of water (or coconut water for enhanced flavor)

~2 inches of a ginger root (peeled - I like to scrape the skin off with a spoon so not to waste the root)

Juice of 2 lemons

1 Pear cored (I sometimes use one grapefruit, fresh peaches or whatever else is in season instead)

A handful of parsley

1-2 tbsp of nut butter (such as Almond or Macadamia Nut)

1-2 cups of kale or swiss chard

½ of an avocado (if desired for extra creaminess)

Florida Fennel Refresher

(Created by Jen Hansard & Jadah Sellner in their book “Simple Green Smoothies”)

In a Vitamix (or other high-performance blender) mix for about one minute or until all ingredients are well blended. Add some ice cubes and blend again if you desire a colder drink:

1 cup water

1 fennel bulb, halved and cored

2 cups spinach

2 oranges, peeled

1 green apple, halved and cored

Juice of ½ lemon

Wild Blueberry Protein Smoothie

(Created by Mark Hyman)

In a Vitamix (or other high-performance blender), mix for about one minute or until all ingredients are well blended. Add some ice cubes and blend again if you desire a colder drink:

1 cup water

½ cup almond milk (or other non-dairy milk unsweetened)

1 cup wild blueberries

1 banana, peeled

2 tbsp almond butter

1 heaped spoonful of Coconut Fat

3 brazil nuts

2 tbsp pumpkin seeds

4 walnuts

2 tbsp chia seeds

2 tbsp hemp seeds

Avocado Smoothie with Dates

(From a German version of *Eat Smarter Magazine*)

In a Vitamix (or other high-performance blender) mix for about one minute or until all ingredients are well blended. Add some ice cubes and blend again if you desire a colder drink:

2.5 cups almond milk (unsweetened)

2 avocados

Juice of 1 lime

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup dried, pitted dates

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of almonds

Decorate with a slice of lime and sprinkle with a dash of cinnamon

Celery Juice

(Inspired by Anthony Williams aka the Medical Medium)

Wash 1-2 stalks of fresh organic celery thoroughly.

Separate the stalks and run through a cold-pressed masticating juicer

Keeps in refrigerator for maximum one day, but best to drink fresh!

*For those of you who don't like the taste of it, you can experiment with adding:

1 apple, washed and sliced

1 lemon

$\frac{1}{2}$ bunch of parsley or cilantro

4 sprigs of fresh mint

LUNCH

Stone Fruit Caprese

(by Ali Slagle - New York Times Cooking)

Ingredients:

2 lbs ripe but firm stone fruit (such as nectarines, peaches, plums, cherries or a mix)

1 Tbsp lemon juice, plus more as needed

2 tsp granulated sugar, plus more as needed

Flaky sea salt

8 oz fresh mozzarella, at room temperature

About 20 basil or mint leaves, or a combination, torn if large

2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, plus more as needed

Freshly ground black pepper

Method:

1. Pit the stone fruit and cut into irregular pieces. Transfer to a serving platter, then sprinkle with the lemon juice, sugar and ½ teaspoon flaky sea salt. Toss with your hands, then let sit until juices pool on the platter, 5 to 10 minutes. Taste and adjust sugar, salt and lemon juice until the fruit tastes perky and bright — like the greatest stone fruit you've eaten.
2. Tear the mozzarella into bite-size pieces and nestle it among the fruit. Tuck in the herb leaves. Drizzle the platter with olive oil. If the cheese looks dry, add a little more oil. Sprinkle with a few grinds of black pepper and a pinch of flaky salt, and serve.

Chicken and Cucumber Salad

(by Everyday EatLove)

Ingredients:

2 cups cucumbers, peeled and sliced

1 Tbsp white vinegar

1 Tbsp sweet chili sauce

½ cup red onion, thinly sliced

½ cup cilantro, chopped

1 red chili, deseeded and diced

½ cup rotisserie chicken, chopped

¼ cup unsalted peanuts

1 tsp fish sauce

Method:

1. Mix sweet chili sauce, vinegar in a small bowl until dissolved.
2. Mix cucumber, red onion, chili and cilantro, and toss well to combine.
3. Mix the sweet chili sauce and vinegar, and toss to combine.
4. Place in refrigerator to marinate for at least 45 minutes.
5. When ready to serve, garnish with chicken, peanuts and fish sauce.
6. Tear the mozzarella into bite-size pieces and nestle it among the fruit. Tuck in the herb leaves. Drizzle the platter with olive oil. If the cheese looks dry, add a little more oil. Sprinkle with a few grinds of black pepper and a pinch of flaky salt, and serve.

Farmers' Market Salad with Miso Dressing

(by Mark Hyman)

Ingredients:

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 Tbsp soy-free miso

2 Tbsp red wine vinegar

2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice

1 large zucchini, trimmed

1 large yellow summer squash, trimmed

8 cups mixed greens

1 large cucumber, sliced into thin rounds

4 radishes, very thinly sliced

12 cherry tomatoes, cut in half

1 avocado, pitted, peeled, and cut into chunks

¼ cup toasted shelled sunflower seeds

Method:

1. To make the dressing, in a bowl, whisk together the olive oil, miso, vinegar, and lemon juice. Set aside.
2. Using a spiral vegetable slicer (aka spiralizer) fitted with the shredder blade, cut the zucchini and summer squash into spaghetti-size spirals. Use kitchen shears to cut the spirals into shorter lengths.

3. Divide the greens among 4 serving bowls. Top the greens with the zucchini and summer squash spirals and the cucumber, radishes, tomatoes, and avocado chunks, evenly dividing the ingredients.
4. Whisk the dressing to recombine, then drizzle it over the salad.
5. Sprinkle each salad with 1Tbsp of the sunflower seeds and serve.

DINNER

Ground Beef and Curried Cabbage Stir Fry

(The Rocket Shamans own concoction)

Ingredients:

4 cups green cabbage, chopped

1 medium onion, chopped

1 lbs extra lean ground beef

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 tsp ginger, grated

1 Tbsp curry powder

3 Tbsp hoisin sauce

2 Tbsp coconut aminos

1/2 Tbsp sriracha sauce, or more to taste

Method:

1. Chop the cabbage and onion.
2. Add the ground beef to a skillet over medium-high heat, and cook it, breaking it up with your spoon as you go along until it's just browned (about 5-6 minutes).
Remove from the pan and set aside.
3. In the same pan, add a bit of oil and stir in the garlic and ginger, and cook for about 30 seconds or until fragrant.

4. Add in the cabbage and onion, reduce heat to medium, cover and continue sautéing, stirring occasionally, for another 8-10 minutes covered, or until the cabbage is softened to your liking and the onions are cooked. Add a few ounces of water as needed to prevent burning. Add the curry powder and stir. Cook for another 1-2 minutes.
5. Take the skillet off the heat and stir in the hoisin sauce, coconut aminos, and sriracha sauce.
6. Adjust seasoning to taste.

MOCKTAILS

Don't get me wrong, the Rocket Shaman likes some fine wine and a good Old Fashioned from time to time. I was looking for a non-alcoholic alternative, and didn't like anything that you can buy in the store. So my friend Stephanie gifted me these spectacular recipes she conjured up a while back on a quest to create the most authentic mocktail version of the original.

OM-ish (Old Fashioned Alternative)

(by Stephanie Fee aka the Wild Larynx)

3 oz Numi Chocolate Rooibos Tea

.75 oz Jack Rudy Cocktail Co. Extra Bitter Tonic

1 Tbsp Runamok Maple Syrup, Barrel-Aged Bourbon version

½ dropper Dragon Herbs Goji and Schisandra tincture

20 drops Herb Pharm Wormwood Extract

30 drops Erewhon Liver Detox tincture

2 drops doTerra lemon essential oil

Method

1. Stir together in a cocktail shaker with ice.
2. Pour over a large ice cube in your favorite whiskey tumbler.
3. If warm, serve in an Irish coffee mug.

Immunity (Martini alternative)

(by Stephanie Fee, aka the Wild Larynx)

1 tsp Gaia Herbs black elderberry syrup

1 oz. Som Cordials Berry Vinegar

4 oz Perrier Sparkling Water, regular or lime

½ lime, juice

2 drops doTERRA lavender essential oil

Method:

1. Stir together in a cocktail shaker with ice.
2. Pour into your favorite martini glass.
3. For extra sweetness, add elderberry syrup or berry vinegar.
4. Garnish with a piece of blackberry.