

Eating for Health-Surviving the Battlefield of Nutrition

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Here in the New York countryside we live in a botanical wonderland offering the best opportunities for nutrition. The countless products packaged and marketed to people pursuing better health are only imitations of what nature provides. With a little effort we each can participate in the symbiosis of food sourcing and personal health.

Unless we harvest and store food away for the long winter months, most of what we eat are processed foods based primarily on refined corn and wheat. This food is lacking in many nutrients needed to maintain a healthy immune system and keep down disease causing inflammation.

Our botanical environment provides thousands of plant-based nutrients known as phytonutrients. Phytonutrients are bioactive plant compounds that enhance immunity, repair tissues and DNA damage from toxin exposure, support the body's detoxification processes, and promote positive gene expression towards health.

Modern science has identified three categories of phytonutrients – Glucosinolates, Flavonoids, and Carotenoids. These nutrients are known to fight inflammation, support detoxification pathways and possibly protect against cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

Glucosinolates are found predominantly in cruciferous vegetables such as arugula, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts, mustard greens and kale. Flavonoids are found in red grapes, citrus, berries and green tea. Carotenoids are abundant in sweet potatoes, squash, carrots and tomatoes. Many other plants also provide these vital health promoting nutrients.

The animal kingdom is another remarkable source of disease fighting nutrients. However, commercial production practices, factory farming and feedlot finishing has removed many of the healthy plant compounds naturally found in meat, leaving little nutrition other than protein and high amounts of unhealthy saturated fats. It is very important to know the farm source of the meats we eat.

Meat bearing animals produced in a conscientious manner in grass-finishing operations will produce meat high in health-promoting nutrients such as conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), beta-carotene, omega -3, 6, and 9 fatty acids, chlorophyll and a wide spectrum of other disease fighting compounds. Once again, it depends on how the animals are raised.

When we source foods disconnected from nature, processed, refined and exposed to chemicals we lack in getting the nutrients our bodies require to fight disease. Statistics showing a current health crisis possibly reflect this. The US rate of diabetes is 9.4 percent. That's over 30.3 million people diagnosed with diabetes or prediabetes. One in four deaths in the US is from heart disease, equating to over 610,000 deaths per year. Nearly two-million new cases of cancer are diagnosed every year resulting in over 600,000 deaths in the US alone.

No one knows for certain the cause of such grim statistic or whether diet change can have a positive impact on improving health, but it is certain that our food supply is radically changed from what mother nature intends. We each are empowered to take charge of what we eat, find sources for healthy, chemical-free farm fresh meats and vegetables and create a lifestyle that focuses on the enjoyment of healthy food. We then create a health promoting culture to pass on to future generations.