

## **Feast on Rainbow Colored Foods to Nourish Mind, Body**

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How can food nourish our minds as well as our bodies? I must admit, until I studied Ayurvedic health, I thought food only nurtured our physical bodies. I knew that eating green, whole foods yielded the best nutrition, but I never thought of telling someone that if you wanted to be more creative or emotionally balanced, watch what you eat.

I just returned from California, yet again, where I received certification in teaching The Chopra Center's Perfect Health Program. It's based on a 5000 year old holistic health system of wisdom, Ayurveda, meaning the science of life. It's pretty amazing to me that any knowledge that old has such pertinence to our current health.

Our Western health care system separates our bodies from our minds and spirits. We go to medical doctors for body treatments, psychologists for our minds and church for our spirits, as though we're separate. We go to specialists who further dissect our bodies, as if our circulatory system were truly separate from our respiratory system. And in my old field, psychology, insurance carriers "carve out" mental health and substance abuse coverage, as not part of regular health. I don't know about you, but when I last looked in the mirror I was one person.

Ayurveda integrates us. And the Chopra Center advocates integrating Western and Ayurvedic medical practices. As taught by Deepak Chopra, an endocrinologist by medical practice and David Simon, a neurologist, there are six stages of health. The first four stages of body/mind imbalance can be directly influenced by wellness practices. This is when we feel "dis ease" or vague symptoms of distress in our physiology that Western medical tests poorly assess. The last two stages of the disease process, Western medicine is best at treating.

So what does all this have to do with rainbow colored foods? Lot's. We are as healthy as the foods we ingest. The deeper the food pigments, the richer they are in vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients. When we eat colorful foods, we tap into a variety of flavors or tastes. And the more tastes in our meals, the more satisfied we are with smaller portions. What a fun way to curb our humongous American appetites, eating by colors!

And what about the impact of color and nutritious foods on our minds? I don't know about you, but my family has the motto "food is love". Ayurveda teaches that food cooked with love is even healthier to our bodies. Beyond taste, the more we involve our other senses of smell, sight, touch in the preparing, cooking and eating process, the more we nurture our bodies.

Colorful foods delight our sight and bring joy to our other senses. Even now when we see or smell the aroma of baking apple pies, our Grandmother's apple pies are remembered. We smile and our psyches are nourished. Think about your sense of smell and how your

psyche feels good when you remember the perfume of your first girlfriend or boyfriend. Now think about how you feel when you hurriedly eat a nuked meal standing over your kitchen sink vs. sitting down to a freshly made, colorful meal with nice flowers, napkins and tablecloth, soothing music and a candle. This is an anti-anxiety potion at it's best.

Here's a family game: Rainbow shopping. The next time you grocery shop, have your children and you find as many fresh vegetables and fruits as you can. Or make a list headed by colors: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue and Purple. Shopping by color can be fun. As my sister says, box macaroni and cheese doesn't count as yellow. Then, notice how you feel when you eat this food.

If you'd like to learn more about Ayurvedic health and diet, just in time for Thanksgiving, I'll be offering a workshop at the Anna Maria Community Center on Thursday, November 15, 7 PM to 8:30 PM. Cost: \$10. Please call 941-778-1908 for reservations.