In the United States, in the 40’s, a correlation between high fat and high cholesterol was examined leading to the belief that a low fat diet might reduce cholesterol and this lower the risk of heart disease. At this early stage, low fat diets were also associated with fewer calories and were also adopted by those seeking to lose weight for aesthetic purposes. By 1960, the low fat diet was believed to be beneficial in every way. With no clear evidence of its health benefits, in the 1980’s it became the diet promoted for health by physicians, the food industry, and pretty much every vein of the American culture. There were no adequate studies to prove it was of any true health benefit. At the same time, the obesity epidemic began but for years nobody made a correlation with this diet. (1)

Fats and especielly saturated fats were seen as evil and the killer leading to high cholesterol and heart disease. By the 1980’s, fats were being replaced by sugars in processed foods. Although weight watchers preferred low fat foods due to the lower calorie content of carbohydrates versus fats, these new processsed low fat food foods contained the same calorie content as the former fat containing products. This led to what was called the “snackwell phenomenon” in the 1990’s.

In 1988, the AHA started promoting low fat foods and created their “heart healthy” seal of approval on processed foods. This was a heart with a checklist. People began buying products with this seal believing they were promoting great personal health by eating these processed foods. Non processsed foods, not having this label, lost interest as healthy foods to the general population. Then by 1992, the USDA released their food pyramid depicting fats as a contributor to poor health, and for decades this would become the nutritional guideline for healthy eating in the United States. (2). Mind you, nothing had proven this diet as beneficial to health and adequate studies were not performed.

People wanted a quick answer of how they could live the longest healthiest life. For example, one day the US reported the health benefits of blueberries, that they are full of anthocyanins and contribute to health and wellness. The benefits for cancer and heart disease prevention, weight loss, fiber intake were outlined at length and were advertised across numerous popular magazines. There was a sudden surge in the consumption of blueberries. Our country has always and still follow these trends. We Americans are always looking for a quick fix, but that is not how it works.

I have noticed many common threads in the cultures noted for longevity, the "blue zones".  Typically the diet in the blue zones consists of herbs, vegetables, legumes, and little to no meat.
These blue zone are Icaria Greece, Okinawa Japan, Nicoya Peninsula Costa Rica, Sardinia Italy and the seventh day adventist community in Loma Linda California.  Yes, the diet consists mostly vegetable based but not entirely. While they eat a mainly vegetarian based diet in these regions, following the Blue Zone diet will NOT lead to longevity.

One can assume these cultures are primarily vegetarian but not entirely.  All except one does eat meat but the quality of the animals eaten here is of primary importance. Loma Linda is the blue zone region that is completely vegetarian yet all the others do eat a small portion of meat. It is not a large part of the diet. In Sardinia, shephards lead their sheep through the mountains. There is a love for their animals as if they are part of the family, and in fact, in Sardinia, they are. When one is sacrificed for their meat, it is performed with love and grace for the life they lived and have given. Their lives are greatly appreciated and they are raised to have a high quality life hiking mountains and eating beautiful natural grasses surrounding them.

I have visited the Greek Isles but not Icaria. In the article about Icaria, “The island where people forget to die,” the animals are also raised in a loving respectful way. When they sacrifice a pig, it is eaten slowly over the year. They are not a predominantly carnivorous culture as the United States has become. They raise their animals in a caring way without drugs and hormones to inflate their size and make them cost effective for frequent consumption as is done in the United States.

Animals in the United States are pumped with antibiotics and steroids and locked in cages to live stress filled lives. When I was a kid, there was an advertisement that preached, “You are what you eat.” The burden of stress our animals carry becomes a part of our cells and tissues. I am certain they don’t live a good life.   When we eat those animals, we become what they are. Loma Linda is the only region I the United States and it is strictly vegetarian. The animals eaten in the United States are not treated in a loving way.  For this reason, I believe it is best to be a vegetarian in the United States. There is little to no control of our food sources, how they are grown and raised. We have become completely detached from our food.  Unless that changes, we are better off eating a vegetarian diet.

Along the same vein, my good friend’s uncle grew up and resides in Switzerland in the region of Kandersteg. He is a farmer and has hiked up the mountains since he was a boy.  Gorgeous cows graze in the alps where he hikes.They are strong and healthy with colorful bells dangling from their collars. He told me that these cows are brought up daily to the mountains to graze on the grasses in the high alps.  The milk from these cows is used to make a hard cheese like parmesan.  From what I have always known, hard cheeses are typically saturated and are the ones to avoid for heart health.  Saturated fats are touted to contribute to high cholesterol and heart disease.  He proceeded to tell me that the farmers who raise these cattle eat mostly beef, milk, butter, and cheese from these cows.  Despite exorbitant consumption of animal products, they never die of heart disease  When they scientifically researched the cheese from the milk of these cows, it was discovered that despite the hardness of the cheese, it was highly unsaturated and full of omega-3’s. Omega 3’s come from grass and algae and other greens. Again, you are what you eat. If those cows consume greens from the high alps, their tissues are made up of the same constituents that greens are made of which are full of Omega 3’s. These cows also live vibrant active lives roaming in the mountains of Switzerland.  Like the blue zones where meat is consumed, these animals appear to live happy lives.

While visiting this friend in Kandersteg, I saw these gorgeous robust cows while on a hike high in the mountains. I have never seen such happy healthy cows in the United States. The majority of our cows are guant and ill appearing. Rarely If ever have I seen a happy cow in our country. I believe the animals in the United States who are treated badly, fed poorly, and rarely allowed to move and exercise develop unhealthy tissues. This is the meat we consume, and seeing that we are what we eat, we too become very unhealthy in our own structure.  Their poor health contributes to our poor health.

When I went to the Azores, I noticed numerous cows grazing naturally and freely on the grasses. Oddly I thought, “I have to eat a burger while I am here.” I am not a big meat eater but I was curious how the beef tasted here. It was lean and delicious. I have not looked at the medical statistics of the Azores but all animals should be free to live a full live and not enslaved to misery as our animals are treated in the United States. We think we are doing our country a favor by mass producing these animals to have food to eat, but we are becoming culture of obese people who are nutritionally starving.  In order to change things, we need to change at the core.

This brings me to my long standing opinion of the China Study, a book reviewing numerous studies on the effects of eating an animal versus a vegetarian based diet in those with or without a predisposition for cancer or heart disease.  The studies all showed that those predisposed to heart disease developed heart disease if they consumed an animal based diet. On the contrary, heart disease did not develop if they consumed a vegetarian based diet. The same was true for those predisposed to developing cancer. While I believe there is some truth to this, they never mention the quality of meat being used in this study. I wondered if the quality was poor stressed out animals as we consume in the United States or happy healthy animals. Without looking in depth at the quality of the animal being consumed, to me it is an inadequate study. I would like to see the same study done using high quality animal products such as the cows raised in the high alps in Kandersteg Switzerland or those I witnessed grazing on the grasses of the Azores.

While we live in a culture that has little to no control over our food, we are better off making wise choices avoiding animal products. When other cultures eat happy healthy animals, they do not seem to be predisposed to such outcomes. If you have control over where your animals come from, how happy they are, and how well they are treated, then eating animal products may not be a bad thing. Until the culture of food in the United States changes to allow for humane animal conditions, I would recommend avoiding all animal products.

Another incredibly important aspect of our food that is not considered by many is the quality of our soil.  Our food Is made up the nutrients from our soil. If our soil lacks those nutrients, we do not get them from our soil.  I have learned that we can only get the nutrients we got from eating 1 orange 50 years ago by now eating 20 oranges,  Our soil Is so depleted that is takes 20 times the amount of food to satisfy the same nutritional needs met 50 years ago. No wonder we are a culture of obese starving people. We are nutritionally depleted no matter how much we eat.

There are 2 very important things we need to do to replenish our soil when it comes to farming. One is composting our waste and the second is rotate our crops.  When I was in college, I studied tropical biology in Costa Rica. It was there that I become aware of the problems with not rotating our crops.  IN the United States, crops are generally not rotated.  If you think about it, we mass produce soy and cottonseed and corn and pretty much everything we consume. We grow these products over and over again in the same place. When I was in Costa Rica, we visited Chiquita Banana.  There I learned how they do the same thing. They grow bananas to send to the United States. I watched them go through hundreds of thousands of green unripe bananas.  They dropped them in a box in the perfect shape we find them at our supermarkets.  If one does not look perfect or a bunch does not look great, they get tosses in the trash.  None of the Costa Rican's eat those bananas. instead they choose the real bananas that grow wildly and are only picked when ripe from their trees.

They brought us to a room full of chemicals and pesticides. It turns out they were using the ones we had outlawed in our country and instead shipped to them so as to not waste what we would not longer use.  They used them instead.

After about 15 years of repetitively growing the same fruit, the soil was completely depleted of the nutrients needed in bananas.  The soil became acidic and useless. At this point, Chiquita banana would pick up and move to another unspoiled area of land and start over.

We followed our visit to Chiquita with a visit to an organic farm where they rotated crops to see the difference. I was completely unaware of correct farming practices and learned some basic necessities while I was there.  Here we explored farming practices that allowed one to use the same land for.a life time. The soil would never become acidic and would maintain a plethora of nutrients.  The farmers informed us that they might grow broccoli in one patch of land. They would then rotate to spinach or leeks another year in that same space. Each year they would grow something new in the space allowing for new nutrients to be taken from the soil to go into the plant that needed it.  With composting our vegetable waste, new soil could be created full of the nutrients needed to replenish the soil.  The rotation of crops and composting of vegetable waste was a sustainable farming practice. Before witnessing this, I had no idea the importance or existence of this type of practice.

in the United States, the mass production of the same fruits and vegetables on the same soil is depleting our foods. We are eating empty calories even in those foods we thought were healthy. We are left still hungry and craving something more.  We fill our bellies with sugars and junk to satiate a need, but what we really need is nutrition. We need healthy foods full of nutrition to satisfy us.  Only then will our cravings disappear, and will we live healthier longer lives.

**PESTICIDES**

**CRAVINGS**
When I was in college, I did a presentation on a book I read called, "Food and Healing" about cravings.  I was very inserted in nutrition but my school only had a joke science class on nutrition. I took it as a first year with a bunch of seniors hating science looking to complete their requirements. When I got up to speak about nutrition and this book, they knew I was no joke.

This book has laid a foundation of knowledge and understanding in myself about cravings.  I have never read another book breaking down our cravings in this way. It talked about the yin and yang qualities of foods and how fruits and vegetables are in the middle of the spectrum. Meat lies on the extreme yang side of the spectrum. When we eat it, we crave yin foods to balance it and those foods are the sweets and pastries that we eat.  This book talks about cravings and how they signify a lack of some nutrient or an imbalance of our yin/yang intake.  In the case of a nutritional deficiency we don't crave that which we lack. Instead, we crave the obvious, candy, muffins, cookies, etc.  We eat, as noted above, until we are full but we are still not satisfied. Now that even our most basic fruits and vegetables are completely depleted of nutrition, we crave all the time.

Another point regarding cravings is the fact that our soil is so depleted of nutrients that we are always left lacking what we need. For this reason, absolutely everyone must eat a multivitamin daily. Even if we eat what we are told is the most nutritious diet, we are still depleted of nutrition.  Many doctors are unaware of this fact.  I have had many patients tell me they were told by their doctor that they do not need a multivitamin since their diet is so healthy and nutritious. Sadly, that is not longer true today. Eating one orange 50 years ago gave us all the nutrition of 20 oranges eaten today. We can't eat 20 oranges and 20 of everything else without getting fat or obese. This is one of the contributing factors of the obesity epidemic.  We have become a culture of morbidly obese starving or nutritionally depleted folks. Until we revamp the entire farming industry and everyone composts and our soil is replenished with healthy nutrients, this will continue to be the case.

**VITAMINS**
As noted above, we absolutely need a multivitamin daily as our food does not give us what we need nutritionally.  Even if we eat what is a generally healthy diet, we absolutely need a vitamin to make up for the nutrition that is lacking in our foods because it is lacking in our soil.

(1)How the Ideology of Low Fat Conquered America Ann F. La Berge
Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences, Volume 63, Issue 2, 1 April 2008, Pages 139–177, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhmas/jrn001>
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