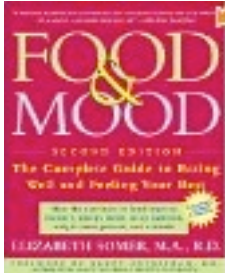


Food and Mood for 2009

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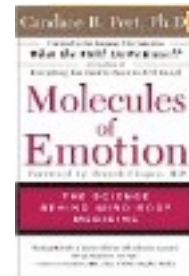


Let's face it--- we'd all like to eat something to brighten our mood....and it doesn't at all brighten our mood to hear that we should cut out sugar, though many in the field of nutrition agree that added sugar in any consistent quantity is ultimately a depressant.

Sugar, when first consumed, picks you right up, as digestion turns dietary sugar into blood glucose, which fires the brain. But then the pancreas responds with insulin to bring the blood glucose into healthy bounds, whereupon your mood droops – and you get a little fatter into the bargain. In fact, too much sugar is rather like an economic bubble. **It feels great at first but "Buyer, beware!"**

So for a better mood in 2009 we will want to be vigilant about keeping our blood glucose levels stable.

How to do that? Slow digesting, complex carbohydrates, especially those like **oats** which provide soluble fiber; proteins, especially from omega-3 fatty-acid-rich **fish**; and healthy fats are the answer.



NEVER eat trans fats or hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fats or oil. I recommend organic **coconut oil** (high and medium heat) and **olive oil** (low and medium heat). Three meals a day – never skip breakfast – and a scheduled snack should keep us and our blood sugar on an even keel.

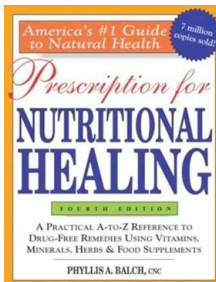
We have heard that even overfed people in the U.S. can be malnourished. **How is it possible?** One of the things that contributes to malnourishment in the face of obesity may be the added sugar in our diets. Because sugar requires magnesium and B-vitamins for its assimilation, but as *refined sugar* contributes neither nutrients, eating sugar may rob the body of those nutrients, producing a net deficit.

Why would this matter? Well, magnesium and the B-vitamins are heavily implicated in mood, especially B-1, B-6, B-12, and folic acid. Some food to improve mood via these vitamins are:

- **Vitamin B-1 (thiamin):** whole grains, egg yolks, oatmeal, peanuts, milk;
- **B-6 (pyridoxine):** chickpeas, fish, wheat germ, oats, walnuts; **for B-12: (cobalamin)** organ meats, clams, turkey;
- **Folic acid:** dark green leafy vegetables, egg yolks, cantaloupe, and avocados.

Among the important mood lifting minerals, besides magnesium (**whole grains, figs, almonds, bananas**), be sure to get enough:

- **Potassium:** (citrus, mushrooms, tomatoes)
- **Zinc:** (oysters, liver, pumpkin seeds)

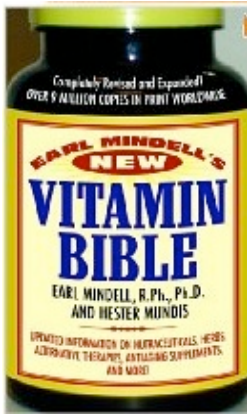


The feel-good neurotransmitter serotonin has made a splash in the popular press. Some of you may know that the amino acid tryptophan is required for the production of serotonin. **Tryptophan**, mostly from carbohydrates, has a see-saw relationship with another amino acid, tyrosine, which is mostly found in the protein we eat. When one is up, the other is down. This in part explains why we love refined carbohydrates: they can help boost serotonin, and do so more quickly than their slow-digesting relatives. **Tyrosine** is needed to produce neurotransmitters associated with alertness, whereas tryptophan gives us serotonin and we relax, and maybe feel like a nap after lunching on refined carbohydrates. Siesta anyone?

It's reasonable to suppose that **mood follows health**. If you are lacking in any particular vitamin, mineral, enzyme, etc., providing your body with it will make you feel better and thus improve your mood.

Considering the population at large, consuming more omega-3 essential fatty acids will have this effect because, for most of us, omega-6 dominates and the imbalance causes inflammation. Omega-3s reduce inflammation. So be sure to eat your share of **wild-caught oily fishes**,

preferring small ones like **sardines** as being lower on the food chain and thus less contaminated with mercury or dioxins. If you don't eat fish, try **flaxseed, walnuts, and pumpkin seeds**.



Antioxidants make up another important group to improve health and mood. If you are puzzled as to why, the explanation is that they bind with and thus neutralize free radicals. Free radicals are molecules whose electrons are not all bespoken and they are looking to bond, rather like a stag at a dance, looking for a partner.

Free radicals are produced by oxidation, a normal biological process. The problem comes when they outnumber the antioxidants we provide through diet. **Berries** top the list of antioxidants, which come in many forms: vitamins A, C, and E, the **onion family**, and the **cabbage family**

Herbs and spices, some of which are also mood boosters, like **Ginger** and **turmeric** can reduce inflammatory pain; **cayenne** pepper stimulates endorphins; **cardamom, cinnamon, cloves**, and **nutmeg** can help mask that reduction in added sugar you're determined to make!

And, only if you need it, a reminder to end with: for greatest happiness from food, you should eat it at table, slowly, chewing and savoring each mouthful. You will get more nourishment, as well as more pleasure, if you relax when you eat!

Books for further reading:

Earl Mindell's New Vitamin Bible, Earl Mindell and Hester Mundis, (Warner Books)
Food and Mood: the Complete Guide to Eating Well and Feeling Your Best, Elizabeth Somer (Henry Holt)
Molecules of Emotion, Candace B. Pert (Scribner)
Prescription for Nutritional Healing, James and Phyllis Balch (Avery)

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