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# What Can Macrobiotics Do For You?

## Beginning Series, Part 1

Julia Ferré

**M**acrobiotics can change your life. It can help you feel better and awaken new awareness. Many people attest to the transformation they experience.

Some people use macrobiotics to heal from illness. Christina Pirello writes about her experience in the introduction of *Cooking the Whole Foods Way* on pages 2 to 4. Christina was diagnosed with an acute form of leukemia and after a dire medical analysis, began a macrobiotic approach to save her life. She writes, “I recovered my health completely, much to the shock and disbelief of my doctors.” Through hard work and dedication, Christina regained her energy. Now, some twenty years later, she writes books, travels, and hosts her own TV show, *Christina Cooks*.

Other people talk of spirituality. Herman Aihara writes in *Learning From Salmon* on pages 5 to 7, “I chose Mr. George Ohsawa as my life’s teacher. I went to his macrobiotic school... All his lectures were given to exercise our ability to think... During my one month stay, he never taught us symptomatic Western medicine, Oriental medicine, or treatments for sickness such as ginger compresses... His only teaching was for us to understand and acquire infinite freedom, absolute justice, and eternal love.”



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Still others use macrobiotics to promote peace. Aveline and Michio Kushi, two of the most influential macrobiotic teachers in the world, have counseled and helped thousands of people. In *Aveline Kushi’s Complete Guide of Macrobiotic Cooking*, Aveline writes in the Foreword (page x), “In January 1950... I went to Yokohama to visit George Ohsawa’s center and decided to study macrobiotic philosophy, which utilized the energy of food as a unique tool for creating peace and harmony.” One of Michio

Kushi’s goals is world harmony.

George Ohsawa, the modern-day founder of macrobiotics, worked to raise consciousness. He was born in 1893 and had a difficult childhood, seeing his mother, sister, and brother die of tuberculosis. By the age of 18, he also contacted the disease; but with determination, he re-established his health through adopting a traditional Japanese diet and avoiding sugar and refined grains. For the rest of his life, he taught the importance of food, health, and education. He set up a school, traveled to Europe, India, Vietnam, Africa, and the United States, actively resisted World War II, and was instrumental in bringing Far Eastern ideas and customs to the West.

Personally, I have been involved with macrobiotics since 1979, where macrobiotics helped me overcome addiction to smoking. While I am forever grateful to regain my health, macrobiotics has done more than help me kick the smoking habit. Over the years, I have gone through healing in mind and spirit and have come to appreciate the breadth and depth available in macrobiotic study and application. Here is a sampling:

1. Food Selection. Macrobiotics offers advice on quality foods—how to choose them and what foods con-

tribute to a healthy body, healthy mind, and healthy spirit. In addition, there is a lot of advice on foods that aren't so great. Most advice concentrates on physical healing and there is a wealth of knowledge about various foods that help one heal from diseases. If I had to put it in a nutshell, I would pose that: The idea is to eat wholesome unprocessed food prepared with thought and care. Avoid foods that create toxins, live simply, and allow the body to return to vibrant health.

2. Food preparation and consumption. Macrobiotics offers culinary techniques to make food delicious—techniques that enhance the healing and energetic quality of food and ideas on ingesting food to improve digestion and assimilation and comfort.

3. Lifestyle. Macrobiotics offers suggestions on creating healthy homes, establishing rhythm in daily activities, and incorporating bodywork, such as massage, do-in, and diagnosis into one's life.

4. Principles. Macrobiotics offers teaching through dialectics—the study of opposites also called yin and yang. Dialectics is useful in analysis and deepens understanding through comparison. Traditional Chinese Medicine uses yin and yang in a different yet complementary way.

5. Social. Macrobiotics offers suggestions about social responsibility, such as eating low on the food chain. In addition, many people have actively started businesses to promote macrobiotics that provide foods, products, and services for the public.

6. Philosophy. Macrobiotic philosophy offers a cosmology of how the universe works, that Ohsawa titled, "The Order of the Universe."

7. Spiritual. Macrobiotics is similar to many other disciplines in recognizing the need to connect with divine source.

Many self-improvement disciplines discuss the connection of body, mind, and spirit and macrobiotics stands tall among them. Macrobiotics is a holistic system that offers ideas

on healing physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Holistic systems such as yoga encompass a well-rounded approach to health and just as yoga is more than exercise, macrobiotics is more than diet. Likewise, benefits increase over time.

The effort to begin macrobiotics is worthwhile and shows you are ready to do something different in taking care of yourself. To start, it is important to take that first step. Here are some simple guidelines.

1. Be willing to try something new. A diet of grains and vegetables—without meat and dairy foods—is unusual for many people. Even if you are vegetarian or vegan, be aware that macrobiotics is different.

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2. Be realistic. One goal of macrobiotics is to cook on a regular basis for yourself. Consider this aspect and how it is practically feasible for your situation.

3. Be consistent. Apply as much routine as possible to your daily rhythm and intake of food. Eat meals on a regular basis.

4. Build on your skills. Cook what you already know and learn new methods and use new foods, as you are able.

5. Learn from others. Buy books, obtain counsel, attend classes or the French Meadows camp, and be around other people who practice macrobiotics.

6. Study. Read cookbooks for new recipes; read the lifestyle books for understanding the connection between food and health; read the philosophy books to raise consciousness

of spirit.

7. Create. Ideally, and perhaps eventually, make macrobiotic practice your own. Create your own recipes. Utilize dietary and philosophical information in a way that is unique and satisfactory. In the immediate picture, use your talents to create joy and happiness in your life.

Following is a list of books that introduce macrobiotic ideas, cooking, healing, and lifestyle. If you are brand new to macrobiotics, buy any or all of these books to get you going.

*Basic Macrobiotic Cooking*; Yours truly, 2007; 288 pp. This is a book that I wrote with the intention of teaching "How to cook whole grains and fresh vegetables." The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition came out in 2007 and has been very well received.

*Self-Healing Cookbook*; Kristina Turner, 1987; 209 pp. This book is a classic—published first in 1987 and having sold over 200,000 copies. It is a friendly book with illustrations and lettering hand-done by the author. The text explains how to heal with macrobiotics in a gentle way. There is a lot of heart in this book.

*Pocket Guide to Macrobiotics*, Carl Ferré, 1997; 128 pp. This pocket-sized book carries a large amount of information on diet and philosophy. It contains charts, discusses acid and alkaline foods, introduces yin and yang, and covers many other ideas in an easy to understand way.

*The Great Life Diet*, Denny Waxman, 2007; 152 pp. This book offers practical suggestions on how to establish a macrobiotic practice.

The world of macrobiotics is wide open—so much to read, so many things to cook, so much to experience. It parallels life itself, with so many opportunities.

Jump in and enjoy! The journey is well worth it.

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*Julia Ferré is author of Basic Macrobiotic Cooking: 20th Anniversary Edition and plans the menus at the French Meadows camp.*