
Why I Quit the Macrobiotic Diet

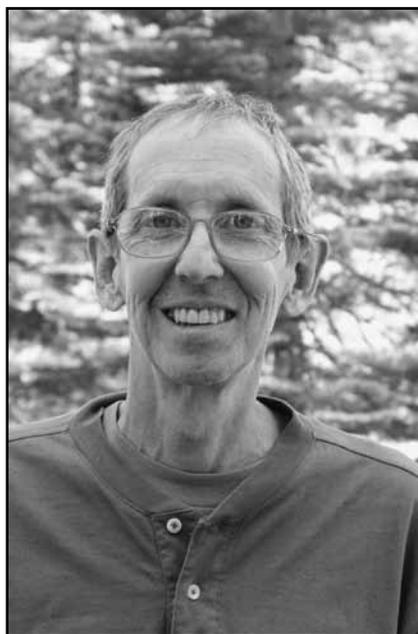
Carl Ferré

The macrobiotic diet didn't work for me. I was more faithful than most people I know. I followed the standard recommendations completely and strictly excluded foods on the "avoid" list. After several years of following a standard macrobiotic approach, however, I had little energy, couldn't run, and had several sicknesses. I was left with a perplexing question: Was my condition the result of improper practice or a diet that doesn't work?

THE STANDARD MACROBIOTIC DIET

My conclusion after years of practice is that the standard macrobiotic diet can be very helpful to one's health—or very detrimental. The standard macrobiotic diet is helpful because it is easy to comprehend and follow. Foods that are chemicalized and are overly processed, including refined sugar, are excluded. Avoiding these foods leads to better health for most people. These people then conclude that all they have to do to avoid getting sick is to eat foods from the "approved" list and to exclude those from the "avoid" list.

The standard macrobiotic diet can be detrimental when people



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avoid changing or seeking qualified help for disorders, blindly believing that continuing to eat from the "approved" list will eventually cure them. This is what happened to me. I was convinced I was getting better. The universe was sending signals that I needed to change, but I stubbornly held fast to my prescriptive standard diet. Another detriment is an overly unfounded fear of certain foods.

The standard macrobiotic diet is

to true macrobiotic practice as training wheels are to riding a bicycle. Once we know how to ride, we discard the training wheels. If we put them back on the bicycle after we know how to ride, they impede rather than help. It is the same with the standard macrobiotic diet. We adjust our choices rather than following blindly once we know how to use macrobiotic principles, and we adjust our choices rather than blindly following a prescriptive diet.

There I was, holding on to my training wheels (standard macrobiotic diet) and afraid to let go. When a child first takes off the training wheels, the parents or a friend runs beside for a distance until the child is confident enough that the adult can let go. In macrobiotics, this encouragement (holding on to the bicycle) is the job of macrobiotic educators, counselors, and friends.

Rather than continuing to emphasize the standard macrobiotic diet or the following of someone else's advice, we need to encourage people to take off the training wheels and learn to trust their own judgment. Macrobiotic principles are not hard to learn. Each of us has a highly developed intuitive power. We just need to learn it, to trust it, and to use it.

Once I quit using the training wheels (quit the standard macrobiotic diet) and learned to use macrobiotic principles and to trust myself, the fear began to fade. My sicknesses began to disappear. I continue to follow macrobiotic principles in my daily dietary and health choices, but I no longer fear any food from the “avoid” list. I’m enjoying life without the training wheels.

CANCER PREVENTION DIET

The cancer prevention diet is similar to the standard macrobiotic diet—both developed by Michio and Aveline Kushi. The only difference between the two is that the cancer prevention diet is designed for people who have, or are afraid of, cancer. In other words, the training wheels are applied to a specific condition.

One of our readers sent me a quote from the latest edition of Cancer Prevention Diet by Michio Kushi and asked me to comment on the new advice for the 21st century. Here is the quote:

“To take into account ever-changing atmospheric, environmental, and societal conditions, many adjustments in dietary recommendations, including about one hundred special new dishes and drinks, compresses, and other home care, are incorporated in this new edition. These changes, as we explain in the chapters that follow, have largely been in response to the accelerating environmental energy, and food quality crises. Global warming, pollution, GMOs (genetically modified organisms), cellular technology, and the decline in food quality (including an estimated loss of 25 to 50 percent of nutrients in most common fruits and vegetables) have necessitated major changes in macrobiotic cooking, health care, and healing. For example, as the world becomes warmer, technology further intrudes into our lives (in everything from the Internet to cell phones and

iPods). As the pace of life speeds up, people become more active, tense, and hardened in their thinking and behavior. To help offset this yangizing trend in which life is heavier, busier, and more stressful, daily food needs to be lighter and more relaxing. Hence, pressure-cooked brown rice and other grains, a cornerstone of macrobiotic cooking, is giving way to proportionately more boiled and steamed grains. Couscous, bulgur, oatmeal and other cracked grains are also used more than in the past to impart lighter energy. Fresh salad, fresh fruit, juice, oil, sweets, and other lighter, fresher foods are eaten more frequently than before. The menus and recipes in this

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edition reflect this trend.”

First, I applaud Michio for realizing that “major changes in macrobiotic cooking, health care, and healing” are needed. His analysis and conclusions are accurate in a general way as far as I can see. The main problem I see is the prescriptive nature of the advice.

Many of us, based on our personal conditions and environments, along with an understanding of macrobiotic principles, gave up pressure-cooked brown rice years ago. We also began eating more fresh salads, fresh fruits, juices, and so on. Anyone who is following macrobiotic principles and trusting her or his own judgment has already made the appropriate ad-

justments. Some people need lighter foods and cooking and other people need heavier foods and cooking. And, this can change from day to day, week to week, month to month, season to season, and year to year.

How Do I Know What’s Best for Me?

This is the question we get asked the most. First, learn macrobiotic principles. Second, learn to trust your intuition. Third, learn to diminish fear.

We have been placing the main macrobiotic teachings of George Ohsawa on the back page (39) of each issue of *Macrobiotics Today*, beginning with the January/February 2010 issue. Here is a list of those covered so far:

The Order of the Universe
The Seven Laws of the Order of the Universe
The Twelve Theorems of the Unique Principle
The Seven Conditions of Health
The Seven Stages of Sickness
The Seven Stages of Judgment

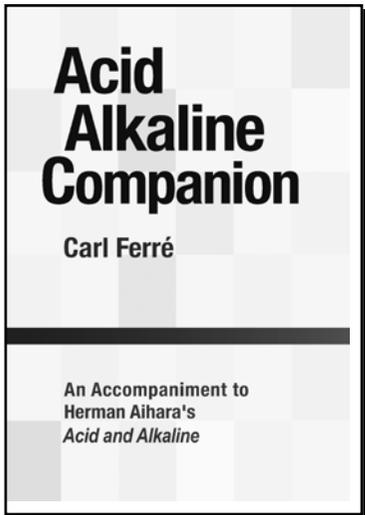
The order of the universe teaches us our origin (where we came from—the source of all things). The seven laws and twelve theorems along with the conditions or health and stages of sickness provide useful tools for living on earth. The stages of judgment illustrate our “journey” back to our origin, which we never really leave. The more we realize this connection to our origin, the greater our intuitive ability and the more we can overcome fear.

Trusting intuition can be scary. We are afraid of doing the “wrong” thing. We think of many “what if...” scenarios. One way to turn this kind of thinking around is to pay greater attention to how we are really feeling. We listen for that internal voice that warns when there is danger and encourages when we “know” we are doing the “right” thing. Developing

Acid Alkaline Companion

presents a clear explanation of acid and alkaline theory, how to tell one's current condition, and numerous tables of the acid-forming or alkaline-forming effects of various foods. Also included are lifestyle factors that contribute to or help neutralize excess acidity.

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intuition is a huge subject and Julia and I plan to write more about it in the future.

In the meantime, here is a quote from Julia about diminishing fear. "Fear is the ultimate motivator on earth. If we observe whether fear or love motivates people, we see that fear dominates every time. We incarnate to earth in order to understand this, and subsequently learn to live here without having fear dominate us anymore. Rather than being dominated by fear, we learn how to be inspired by Love."

KEEPING MACROBIOTICS ALIVE

Ohsawa's vision for macrobiotics is to help people reach self-realization. Other expressions of this goal are infinite freedom, unconditional love, supreme judgment, eternal peace, and complete happiness. A few years before his death, however, he lamented that not one of his students fully understood this teachings.

Ohsawa believed the reason for this lack of understanding is what he termed "cloudy thinking." Further, he theorized that this cloudy thinking comes from poor health from unhealthy food choices. As he realized this fact, Ohsawa's writings began to include more specific instructions about diet and health along with re-statements and reminders of his universal principles. Above all, he realized that theory (principles) and practice (diet) are inseparable without leading to danger (practice without theory) or uselessness (theory without practice).

The 1960s and 1970s saw macrobiotic theory and practice flourish. Two major changes occurred in the 1980s—the introduction of the standard macrobiotic diet and the beginning of a specific macrobiotic diet for cancer. Today, there is greater emphasis on diet and healing and little or no emphasis on theory. I believe it is up to the senior teachers (those

who began macrobiotic practice in the 1960s and 1970s) to rectify this situation.

There is movement in this direction after decades of meetings and ideas. There is now an annual meeting of senior macrobiotic teachers in Portugal each fall. There are meetings of teachers at all macrobiotic gatherings from the Holistic Holiday at Sea cruise to the Kushi conference to the French Meadows camp. Results are beginning to appear.

The health of macrobiotics as a movement is no different from our own individual health. In my personal experience, I learned the principles first, but began to follow a static, prescriptive standard macrobiotic approach without using macrobiotic principles. I didn't improve until I began a dietary practice based on macrobiotic theory and took off the training wheels (quit blindly following the standard macrobiotic diet).

Ohsawa's version of macrobiotics began with his principles in the 1920s to 1950s. A time of relative balance between theory and practice followed in the 1960s and 1970s and macrobiotics flourished. The 1980s to 2000s were dominated by practice (diet) without much theory (principles). Macrobiotic diet, counseling, and healing can be improved, but the greatest improvement for the health of macrobiotics in my opinion is a return to a proper emphasis on macrobiotic principles and the larger goals of self-realization, infinite freedom, eternal peace, and unconditional love.

Carl Ferré is author of Pocket Guide to Macrobiotics and Acid Alkaline Companion. He is the current president of the George Ohsawa Macrobiotic Foundation and editor of Macrobiotics Today. Carl can be contacted at gomf@earthlink.net.

