

You Are What You Eat *by Dr. April J. Modesti*

As a society, it's pretty clear what we are: Tired. Irritable. Headache-y. What we're not aware of is what we're eating, and its effects on us physically, mentally and spiritually.

Generations before us, when people were responsible for raising and growing the majority of what they consumed, food and the act of eating were the well-deserved rewards for hours of difficult labor. People not only knew exactly what they were eating, they were profoundly grateful to have it.

Today, while we are fortunate to have farmers' markets offering locally grown produce, the majority of what we eat comes packaged, processed and/or farm-manufactured. Our food has become food-stuff; and much of what it is stuffed with isn't anything you'd recognize as edible.

Given what we're ingesting, it's not hard to understand why so many of us feel sluggish and look bloated. Our bodies are doing their best to get the nutrition they need, but the additives being put into our food aren't enough to compensate for what's been taken out.

“Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.”

— *Anthelme Brillat-Savarin*

What's the answer? There isn't a single response. But here are some simple steps you can take to change the way you eat – and the way you feel.

1. Recognize the relationship between what you eat and how you feel. Begin to notice your body's reactions to your diet. Does eating wheat put you to sleep? Does sugar make you spacey? Everyone is different. Don't just accept the party line. See how what you eat affects you. If you don't like how you feel after you eat something, see if you feel better if you eliminate it. (Eliminate it for two weeks, at least.)
2. Start reading food labels. If you can't easily identify all of the ingredients – and especially if you can't pronounce them – take a pass and eat something else.



3. Start moving down the food chain. The closer to the earth you eat, the better. Choose fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grains over dairy, meat and fish.
4. Hold the pesticides and head for the organics. It's not a happy thought, but pesticides are poison. A little bit of poison won't kill you immediately, but over an extended period, it can certainly put a drag on your system.

{Breathe}.

It's easier than it looks.

Changing your diet and your relationship to food doesn't happen overnight. As you make small changes, you'll feel more energetic, and see the light coming back in your eyes. Each step brings with it the incentive to take the next one.

When you're ready, take on these more advanced steps:

5. Be mindful as you prepare your food. Think of cooking as a pleasure, and feeding others a gift. What kind of gift do you want to give?
6. Be fully present every time you eat. Express gratefulness for the food, as well everyone and everything that worked together to bring the food to your table. Take time to enjoy every bite.
7. Realize that food reflects and transfers energy. When it is grown in living soil, and harvested with love,

that energy comes through. When it is grown in a field that has been chemically treated and mechanically processed, that energy comes through, too. (This is especially true for factory farm raised animals.)

8. Start noticing that mindfully-raised food actually tastes better. (The same way the tomatoes in your backyard taste better than the ones from the store.)
9. Aim to develop a no-suffering diet. Become aware of where your food comes from and the conditions in which it was grown. Decide that nothing will suffer in your behalf.

{And now, for the hard part}

10. Allow others to choose what they eat, even if you think it's bad or wrong. Give them the opportunity, space and time to take their own journey. The same way you'd like them to do for you.

Every day, we have a choice about who we want to be. There are many things we can't change. But by making simple, small choices in our diet, we can choose to feel healthier and more energetic.

The next time you eat, choose well.

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