

# Cooking Matters

## Hot-Button Nutrition Topics

*Solid Ground's stance on common nutrition-related questions, myths, and misconceptions.*



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## Organic vs. Non-Organic

### *Example situations:*

- “Isn’t organic better than non-organic?”
- “Organic food is so much healthier and I’m not eating chemicals”

Organic: Organic is a certification that aims to promote healthy agricultural practices. It prohibits most conventional pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients, sewage sludge, genetic engineering, and irradiation. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are fed organic feed and have access to outdoor areas, shade, shelter, space for exercise, fresh air, clean drinking water, and direct sunlight. Livestock may not be continuously confined, and animals may not be given antibiotics or growth hormones.

Natural Foods: The FDA defines a natural food as one in which “nothing in the product is artificial or synthetic”. This does not guard against pesticides, pasteurization, or irradiation. The term “natural” does not necessarily mean healthier. Companies can pay extra for the “natural” logo on their packaging with no extra checks and balances. Unless each ingredient on the back of the package is listed as natural, or it is a whole ingredient, then the food is no different.

The main priority of Cooking Matters classes is to empower participants by providing them with information and skills to be able to make and eat more nutritious meals. Due to the limited time frame of this course, the curriculum is set up to provide our participants with foundational knowledge of cooking and nutrition. A deep dive into the complexities of organic vs. non-organic food may feel restricting or overwhelming at this point in time. Outside of or following the completion of the course, we encourage participants to explore nutrition topics they are interested in more deeply.

Another issue is the unfortunate truth of *accessibility*. If you are aware of local and cheaper sources of organic foods, please recommend them. But keep in mind that many of our participants receive their food from food banks and/or have limited food budgets. They may not have the privilege of being able to choose between organic and non-organic foods.

If participants are interested in learning more, please answer questions to the best of your ability before or after class. The USDA National Organic Program website has more information including inspection and certification information.

### Main points to get across:

- Nutritionally, organic and conventional products are the same
- If a lot of participants seem interested in making the switch to organic, recommend going with the “dirty dozen” list so as to not promote too expensive of a change
- Many fruits and vegetables treated with fertilizer can be washed before use



## Genetically Modified Organisms

### *Example situations:*

- “I only eat non-GMO because GMOs are unnatural”
- “Should I avoid Genetically Modified foods??”

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are foods that have had their DNA altered for agricultural advantages, such as being resistant to weeds or frost. The main government agencies involved in overseeing and determining the regulation of GM crops in the United States are the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also plays a role in overseeing safety regarding pesticides. There are 6 criteria to meet before notifying APHIS of environmental release of a GM crop:

1. The plant species must be determined.
2. The transgenes must be stably integrated.
3. The function of the transgene(s) must be known and expression must not be detrimental to plant health.
4. The transgene must not result in the production of an “infectious entity” like a virus. The transgene also must not encode for substances known, or likely to be, toxic to non-target organisms likely to feed or live on the plant.
5. Introduced sequences that are derived from plant viruses must not pose the risk of the creation of new plant viruses.
6. The plant must not contain certain genetic material derived from an animal or human pathogen.



Similar to organic foods, the topic of GMOs is complicated and does not fit into the goals or time allotment of our classes. Encourage interested participants to research the topic on their own time, or to stay after class to discuss it together.

### Main points to get across:

- Many studies have shown GMO and non-GMO products are *nutritionally the same*
- Although there is no consensus about the long-term effects of GMOs, there has been no irrefutable evidence that proves GMOs are not safe to eat.
- This article by the Huffington Post summarizes the topic well:  
([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sonimacom/gmos\\_b\\_7880026.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sonimacom/gmos_b_7880026.html))

## Where to Purchase Foods

### Example situations:

- “I would recommend purchasing \_\_\_\_\_ at Whole Foods”
- “I never shop at Fred Meyer”

Recently, we have noticed a rise in popularity of specific (and expensive) stores, such as PCC or Whole Foods, which tend to sell more “health” foods than other stores. However, the prices at these locations are usually higher than at other stores, and many participants may feel discouraged when told that they should try to shop at these locations or that they are the best places to obtain foods being used in class.

### Some affordable places to shop for food:

1. Food Banks: First and foremost, food banks remain a staple for many of our participants to get their food. Continue to reinforce our “recipes as a framework” ideology, to allow participants to continue to feel comfortable eating what they are able to access. This will also encourage our participants to feel confident in their ability to cook nutritious meals, instead of feeling the need to spend extra money they may not have the budget for. The last thing we want to do is discourage our participants from getting enough to eat because they are prioritizing buying non-GMO and organic products from expensive stores.
2. Grocery Outlet: Although their stock may not always be reliable, the prices are hard to beat! Similar to the set-up of clothing stores like Ross, Grocery Outlet is able to offer the cheapest deals by acquiring their stock from overstocked items at other stores.
3. Trader Joe’s: Because most of Trader Joe’s items are name-brand and they purchase straight from the suppliers, they are able to keep their rates low compared to other stores. However, Trader Joe’s tend to be located in more affluent areas, so access can be an issue for some of our participants.
4. Farmers’ Markets: Although this can also be a pricey choice depending on which market you choose to go to, if any of your participants receive EBT, they can double their EBT dollars for up to \$10 extra credit (creating \$20 total) to buy produce.



It is important to keep in mind the *location* of the class you are working with. Consider which stores are most accessible for the location. The best way to ensure participants do not feel left-out/discouraged is to ask where they are already shopping. Please make recommendations based on their responses.

## Fats

Example situations:

- “But I love butter ☹️”
- “I literally only cook my food in coconut oil”

Our bodies need dietary fat for energy and to process certain vitamins and minerals. There are three types of fats: saturated, unsaturated, and trans.

Saturated fats tend to be solid at room temperature due to a tightly-packed chemical structure (the carbon chains are “saturated” with hydrogen atoms). Most saturated fats come from animal products, like dairy and red meat.

Unsaturated fats tend to be liquid at room temperature due to a loosely-packed chemical structure. Most unsaturated fats are derived from plants, although certain types of fish are high in unsaturated fats as well.

Trans fats are chemically altered to be more shelf-stable. They have no nutritional value and are harmful to your health. Trans fats are most often found in fried foods, processed snacks, and baked goods. In June 2015, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced their position that partially hydrogenated oils, the most common types of trans fats, aren’t “generally recognized as safe” to eat. Food manufacturers have largely phased them out.

Saturated Fat: In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, researchers found a correlation between high levels of saturated fat consumption, high levels of cholesterol, and heart disease. However, the hypothesis that saturated fat causes heart disease was based on assumptions, observational data, and animal studies rather than experimental evidence in humans. Recently, more in-depth research is proving that saturated fats may be better for us than previously thought. Saturated fats are now thought to raise HDL (“good”) cholesterol and change LDL from small, dense (“bad”) to large (benign) LDL cholesterol. Furthermore, there is no conclusive, direct link between saturated fat consumption and heart disease.

Studies on low-fat diets do not show a reduced risk of heart disease or death. Low-fat foods are also highly processed and contain many additives. Added sugars and refined carbohydrates are often used to replace fat, which adds up to a lot of extra calories with little to no nutritional value.

Red meat is also a prominent component of this conversation, and can be controversial. If a participant likes red meat but has concerns about it, explain the benefits of choosing leaner proteins and encourage consumption of red meat *in moderation*. Red meat provides many nutrients, and bringing lean/plant-based proteins, vegetables, and whole grains into the rotation is a great way to create a healthy, balanced diet.

Cooking Matters and the USDA’s Dietary Guidelines still recommends the consumption of low-fat products. We must therefore do a delicate dance in our classes regarding what we teach, while avoiding overloading participants with complicated and conflicting information.

Coconut oil: Coconut oil has been receiving a lot of attention lately as a healthy fat. This is because it contains medium-chain triglycerides, a type of saturated fat which some research suggests may help with weight loss. However, it is important to be aware that coconut oil still contains saturated fats. 87% of coconut oil’s fats are saturated, a much higher percentage than even butter, at 51%. So, have a little coconut oil here and there, but stick with heart-protective unsaturated fats, like olive or canola oil, as your go-to.



## Cow's Milk vs. Alternative Milk

*Example situations:*

- *"I only drink Oatly"*
- *"My kids love milk, but I heard we're not supposed to drink milk anymore"*

Cow's milk: Cow's milk contains proteins, carbohydrates, fat, vitamin D, and calcium. These nutrients are especially beneficial for people in key development years (children older than two years, teens, and pregnant women), as well as older adults. However, people who want to decrease their calorie and/or saturated fat intake may want to consider alternative milk options.



Lactose intolerance is also a consideration. Approximately 65% of the human population has a reduced ability to digest lactose after infancy. For those that are lactose intolerant, alternative milks are necessary. Lactose-free cow's milk is also an option.

Many people also have ethical and environmental concerns about modern dairy farming practices. It is important to consider the privilege of being able to make the decision to abstain from purchasing dairy products due to ethical and environmental concerns alone, as alternative milk products tend to be more expensive than cow's milk products. For many of our participants, this is not an option.

Almond milk: Almond milk is made from ground almonds and filtered water. It may also contain starches and thickeners to improve its consistency and shelf life. Almond milk is a great source of unsaturated fats, contains no saturated fats, and is lower in calories than most milks, as long as it's unsweetened. Even though almonds are a good source of protein, almond milk is not. Almond milk is also not a good source of calcium. However, many brands of almond milk are supplemented with calcium and vitamin D.

People who are allergic to almonds or nuts should, obviously, avoid almond milk. Certain almond milk brands may contain carrageenan, an additive, which may cause digestive issues in some people. Also, there are some environmental concerns about the amount of water used to cultivate almonds.

Soy milk: Soy milk is made from soybeans and filtered water. Like other plant-based milk alternatives, it may contain thickeners to improve consistency and shelf life. Soy milk is a good source protein, vitamin A, vitamin B-12, potassium, and isoflavones, and it can be fortified with calcium and vitamin D. It contains as much protein as cow's milk, yet is lower in calories than whole milk and about equal to the calories in 1% or 2% milk. Soy milk also contains very little saturated fat.

However, too much soy may be a problem for people with thyroid disease or other conditions. Higher intakes of soy-based foods can also cause fertility problems and lower sperm counts. Soy is also a common allergen. People who are allergic to soy should not drink soy milk. Finally, most of the soy produced in the United States comes from genetically modified plants, which is a concern to some.



Rice milk: Rice milk is made from milled rice and water. As with other alternative milks, it frequently contains additives to improve consistency and shelf stability. It's the least likely of all of milk products to cause allergies, which makes it a good choice for people with lactose intolerance or allergies to milk, soy, or nuts. Rice milk can be fortified to be a good source of calcium, vitamin A, and vitamin D, though it is not a natural source of these nutrients.

Rice milk is high in carbohydrates, so it's the least desirable choice for people with diabetes. It's not a good source of protein. Also, consuming too much of a rice product may pose a health risk for infants, children, and pregnant women due to moderate levels of inorganic arsenic.

Coconut milk: Coconut milk is made from filtered water and coconut cream, which is made from grated mature coconut flesh. Coconut milk is more accurately referred to as "coconut milk beverage" because it's a more diluted product than the type of coconut milk used in cooking, which is usually sold in cans. As with other plant-based milk alternatives, coconut milk often contains added thickeners and other ingredients, including carrageenan. Coconut milk does not naturally contain calcium, vitamin A, or vitamin D, but it can be fortified with these nutrients.

Coconut products have become popular in recent years, partly because they contain medium-chain triglycerides, a type of saturated fat which some research suggests may help with weight loss. However, saturated fats in general are associated with increased risk of heart problems. Coconut milk is high in saturated fat, so it is not a good option for people who are trying to reduce their saturated fat intake.



Oat milk: Oat milk is made from oats and filtered water. Oat milk contains fiber, B-vitamins, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, zinc, and copper, as well as a variety of other vitamins and minerals in trace amounts. It is high in carbohydrates, however the high levels of fiber help the body digest the sugars slowly and effectively. Oat milk does not naturally contain calcium, vitamin A, or vitamin D, but it can be fortified with these nutrients. Oat milk is a good choice for anyone who is allergic or intolerant to dairy, soy, or nuts.

Oats are naturally gluten-free, but oat milk is often processed with the same machines as wheat, so there could be cross-contamination that puts those with a wheat allergy at risk. Oat milk doesn't have a significant amount of protein or fat. Oat milk is also very expensive, so accessibility may be an issue for many participants.



Ultimately, there is no one "best" or "right" type of milk. When considering which milk to buy, it is important to consider: allergies, health concerns, nutritional value, additives, financial accessibility, and ethical and environmental factors.



## Are Certain Diets Healthier?

In our classes, we work with people with a variety of dietary restrictions due to personal preference, allergies, or health-related issues. It is important that we are inclusive towards all our participants and respect individuals' wants and needs. However, we must also avoid encouraging (or discouraging) any diets that do not directly fit with the Cooking Matters curriculum.

Vegan/Vegetarian: A vegan diet or lifestyle excludes all animal products, including meat, dairy, eggs, honey, etc. A vegetarian diet excludes meat and seafood but includes other animal products, such as dairy and eggs.

Choosing a vegetarian diet, a plant-based diet, or a vegan lifestyle is a personal choice that can be made for a variety of reasons (health, ethics, nutrition). Cooking Matters and MyPlate advocate for increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables and lean/plant-based proteins consumed. Vegan and vegetarian diets, by definition, fit this mold, so in that respect they can be healthy. However, it is possible to eat a healthy, balanced diet while still consuming animal products.



Protein is an essential nutrient to build muscle and support organ health. While animal products are a great source of protein, there are many non-meat and plant-based proteins that are accessible, cost-effective, and contain many added health benefits.

Also, it is important to note that a plant-based diet may be a privileged diet choice. Some participants cannot afford to further limit the options that are available to them at the food bank. Plant-based versions of products are often more expensive than the conventional version. However, it is possible to follow a plant-based diet on a limited budget by choosing whole products and cooking at home.

Gluten-Free: Gluten is a protein found in cereal grains. Some people are gluten intolerant (Celiac disease is the most severe form), meaning their bodies respond negatively to gluten.

Gluten intolerance is the only reason an individual would need to avoid gluten. If an individual is gluten-tolerant, gluten has no impact on the digestion of nutrients. Unless a participant is gluten-intolerant and has questions regarding gluten-free eating, there's no reason to discuss gluten within the bounds of a Cooking Matters class.

Detoxes/Juice Cleanses: The purpose of a detox diet is to rid the body of toxic or unhealthy substances. Detox diets usually recommend a juice-based diet for a period of time to cleanse the body of toxins.

The liver and kidneys naturally and effectively remove toxins from the body. Maintaining a balanced, healthy diet supports the liver's detoxification process.

Juicing fruits or vegetables removes most of the fiber, which is the key ingredient that keeps you feeling full until your next meal. While juices still contain most of the vitamins and minerals of the whole plant, research shows that the best way to get those nutrients is to eat a balanced diet full of whole vegetables, whole fruits, and whole grains. If juice is used as a meal replacement, you may find that you are hungry quicker, not satisfied, and may experience fatigue. Juice lacks an adequate amount of carbohydrates and protein and does not provide enough calories and nutrients to be considered a complete meal.

Juice cleansing regimens require a person to drink a large amount of juice, which can introduce too much oxalate (a component found in plants) to the body. This can put immense strain on the kidneys.

Detoxes may also include laxatives, which can cause a significant disruption to the body such as diarrhea, constipation, and electrolyte imbalances.

There is not enough evidence to support the use of juices cleanses and detoxes. A detox diet can result in short-term rapid weight loss because of the decreased caloric intake, but when your regular diet is reintroduced, you can experience unhealthy weight gain and metabolic disturbance.

Keto Diet: A ketogenic diet restricts carbohydrate intake and maximizes fat and protein intake. The goal is to starve the body of glucose (your body's primary source of fuel) to encourage it to burn fat reserves. The keto diet is named for ketones, a byproduct of broken-down fatty acids produced by the liver when the body does not have enough glucose to convert to energy.

The keto diet was originally developed to treat young children with seizures, and some research demonstrates that it may improve insulin resistance for people with Type 2 Diabetes. This diet can cause rapid weight loss, but when your regular diet is reintroduced, you can experience unhealthy weight gain and metabolic disturbance. This diet is nutritionally imbalanced and removes your body's primary source of energy (glucose). The keto diet includes a high amount of fat, including red meat, bacon and processed meats, which we recommend being eaten in moderation.

Paleo Diet: The paleo diet aims to mimic the "Paleolithic Era" diet of pre-agricultural hunter-gatherers. It encourages wild foods and prohibits grains, legumes, dairy, and processed foods. The paleo diet involves a high-protein, low-carbohydrate, and moderate-fat diet.

The paleo diet encourages whole, unprocessed foods, but it is nutritionally imbalanced. It restricts high-fiber foods such as whole grains and legumes. Pre-agricultural societies followed diets that were closely related to their environments, and therefore varied according to geography and seasonality. They ate what foods they had accessible to them, and we cannot replicate any of these diets. A diet excessively high in protein (especially animal protein) can cause inflammation and kidney damage. Like the keto diet, the limited carbohydrates removes the body's primary source of energy.

Raw: A raw food diet consists of eating only uncooked, unprocessed food. Pasteurization kills harmful bacteria. Raw foods have not been pasteurized or treated, and therefore have a greater potential for contamination. It is especially important for at-risk populations (children, elderly, and those with a weakened immune systems) to be aware of the potential risks associated with raw foods.

Similar to a vegan diet, this is an eating choice that creates limited food source options and requires a lot of time and availability, which many of our participants simply do not have.

Overall, no two bodies are the same, so there's no single best diet. Everything from an individual's genetics to their taste preferences and even their work schedule can influence the type of healthy eating plan that works best for them. It is important to consider factors other than weight gain or loss when thinking about diet and health. Physical activity, a balanced diet, work-life balance, and mental and emotional health are equally important. While it is true that overweight and obesity correlates with health issues such as diabetes and high blood pressure, weight is inaccurate as a sole indicator of health. Additionally, too much focus on weight loss can lead to other issues, such as eating disorders and lowered self-esteem.

## Sugar

*Example situations:*

- *“I only eat honey and agave because they’re natural”*
- *“What’s the deal with that raw sugar?”*

Participants often have questions about the healthiness of different forms of sugar, such as honey, high-fructose corn syrup, white sugar, brown sugar, agave, etc. Unless you are working in a diabetes-specific course, all sources of sugar should receive the same messaging. Sugars are digested and sent into the bloodstream to become sources of energy. A high intake of simple sugars causes a spike in blood sugar. Sugar that is not used up is eventually processed into fat (triglycerides). Therefore, they should not be consumed in too large of quantities, no matter the source.

All of these sources of sugar are slightly different (brown sugar is brown because it has molasses, honey has antibacterial properties, etc.). This is not part of the curriculum and should only be discussed before or after class if someone is interested in learning more.

It is also important to consider naturally occurring sugars, in comparison with added sugars. Things like fruit and dairy contain sugars that are perfectly fine for us to consume. These sugars are naturally “packaged” with fiber, water, and an incredible wealth of protective nutrients. Findings on the negative effects of sugar are focused on added sugars.



High fructose corn syrup: High fructose corn syrup and regular sugar have similar chemical structures. High fructose corn syrup is made by breaking down cornstarch into glucose. Enzymes are then added to the glucose mixture to convert half of the glucose into fructose. The finished product is 42% glucose and 55% fructose.

Regular sugar is made out of sucrose, which is found in cane or beet sugar. Sucrose, glucose, and fructose are all different forms of sugar, and are chemically very similar. At this time, there's insufficient evidence to say that high-fructose corn syrup is any less healthy than other types of sweeteners. It is known, however, that too much added sugar of any kind can contribute excess calories, leading to an assortment of health hazards.

Artificial sweeteners: Artificial sweeteners, also called low-calorie sweeteners or sugar substitutes, are used to sweeten products like diet drinks, candy, light yogurt, or chewing gum without the use of sugar. Some of these sweeteners are 100+ times sweeter than regular sugar, so that not as much is required for the same amount of sweetness, and fewer calories are added to the food. Other types of artificial sweeteners cannot be broken down by the body, so they pass through our systems without being digested, and therefore provide no calories.

Artificial sweeteners are an especially good sugar alternative for people with diabetes. Foods that use artificial sweeteners may still contain carbohydrates or calories from other ingredients. It is important to check the nutrition facts panel, even for foods that claim “no sugar added,” “sugar-free,” or “reduced sugar.” Foods and drinks that use artificial sweeteners are an option that may help curb cravings for something sweet. But, just like sugar, they should be consumed in moderation.

## Health

The idea of “being healthy” has many implications. A healthy person tends to conjure an image of someone who runs every morning, regularly attends spin class, is following the newest diet craze, eats a lot of “superfoods”, and sticks their nose up at pizza. This image is both flawed and exclusionary.

Ultimately, a healthy lifestyle is one that is balanced. It is important to consider factors other than weight gain or loss when thinking about diet and health. Physical activity, a balanced diet, work-life balance, and mental and emotional health are all equally important.

Health Food: A common misconception is that healthy food is not appealing. In fact, it is very easy to eat healthily and still enjoy it. Food that is good for your health doesn't have to mean a kale smoothie. Offer tangible, attainable recommendations to participants. Encourage them to find a variety of foods in each food group that they like, and to start incorporating healthier options (lean/plant-based proteins, whole grains, etc.) into what they already eat.



Junk Food: The term “junk food” carries a strong moral judgement with it. We try to steer clear of categorizing any foods as bad. Instead, we can discuss healthier vs. less healthy options, or “sometimes foods” vs. “always foods”.

Exercise: Another common misconception is that if you exercise you can eat whatever you want, or, conversely, that exercise is the only way to lose weight. Many aspects of these ideas are inaccurate.

First, exercising frequently doesn't give you a “free pass” to eat whatever you want. Eating a healthy, balanced diet is important for everyone, even those who are very active.

Second, if losing weight is your goal, there are many other lifestyle choices to consider in addition to exercise. Diet is probably the most important factor, however stress, sleep, and other controllable factors play an important role in weight loss as well.

Third, as previously discussed, weight loss is not necessarily a strong indicator of good health. There are many positive side effects to frequent exercise, such as improved mental health and memory, decreased stress, increased energy, reduced risk of chronic disease, and increased muscle and bone density. Focus on these benefits, rather than just weight loss, with participants.



This article is a great summarization of many different nutrition misconceptions:

<http://www.grubstreet.com/2018/03/ultimate-conversation-on-healthy-eating-and-nutrition.html>.

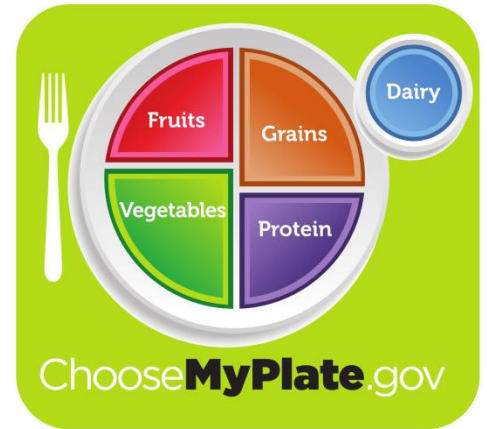
## Problems with USDA Guidelines

Example situations:

- “I don’t trust the USDA...”

We recognize that the USDA’s Dietary Guidelines for Americans is not perfect. We also recognize that there are many other dietary guidelines that better illustrate the food groups and how much of a given food group is needed. For the purpose of our classes, it is easiest to maintain the basic MyPlate model and introduce caveats or additional information depending on the participants’ interests and needs.

MyPlate is and will continue to be used as an introduction to the foundational nutrition themes that we encourage our participants to use.



## Greek Yogurt vs. Regular Yogurt

Greek yogurt is made by straining regular yogurt to remove the whey. The result is a thicker, creamier product that has less tartness and more protein than regular yogurt. However, with the whey goes a lot of the calcium, so regular yogurt has substantially more calcium than Greek yogurt does.

Both Greek and regular yogurt are nutritious and they each have their own benefits. Ask participants to think about their individual nutritional needs – are they trying to consume more/less protein, fat, carbohydrates, or calcium?

## Farmed vs. Wild-Caught Fish

Answering this question is complicated. While wild-caught fish tends to have a higher nutritional value and is much more environmentally-friendly, accessibility to wild-caught fish is an issue with many of our participants. Try to focus on the nutritional advantages of consuming any type of fish, in comparison with meat and poultry.



Similar to our lesson on canned, fresh, and frozen fruits and vegetables, discuss the pros and cons of fresh, frozen, and canned seafood with participants!

## Microwaving Food

Microwave ovens cook food using energy waves that cause the molecules in food to vibrate quickly, building up their energy as heat.

Some nutrients begin to disintegrate when heated, whether from a microwave, a stove, or oven. But since microwave cooking times are typically shorter than oven cooking times, microwaving something may actually keep more of its vitamins intact.

### Wheat vs. Whole Wheat

Not all wheat products are whole grain products. Look for “100% whole wheat” on the nutrition label to make sure you’re getting a whole grain product. Check the product ingredient lists, too. If the ingredient list starts with a “whole wheat”, then it is a whole grain product. If you do not see the word “whole”, then the product is probably made with refined grains. This means that the healthier parts of the grain have been removed, which takes away most of the fiber and nutrients.

### Multivitamins

There is no proof of benefit from taking vitamin supplements. A variety of studies have led researchers to conclude that multivitamins don’t reduce the risk for heart disease, cancer, cognitive decline (such as memory loss and slowed-down thinking), or an early death. In fact, an excess of certain vitamins can be harmful. The exception is supplemental folic acid and iron for women of child-bearing potential, or specific supplements for deficiencies or other health issues.

If you follow a healthy, balanced diet, you can get all the vitamins and minerals you need from food. In combination with a healthy, active lifestyle, diet is the strongest predictor of long-term health.

### Eating Late at Night

There is not enough data to conclusively say whether or not it is unhealthy to eat late at night.

You may encounter a hectic day and not have enough time to eat your dinner at a normal time. This shouldn’t mean that you must skip dinner completely. Our bodies fast while we sleep, which means a 7 to 10 hour fast from dinner time to the first meal of the next day. If the last meal was at lunchtime or an afternoon snack, that means a fast of more like 16 to 19 hours. This is very long time to go without food.

A helpful hint: if you find yourself hungry at night, healthy fats or protein-based snacks (peanut butter & celery, cheese and whole wheat crackers) may keep you fuller longer throughout the night.

### Tomatoes – Are they Fruits or Vegetables?

Botanically, yes. But we treat them like vegetables.



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