

“Staying Alive”

Eating to Live



by Michael Erlewine

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2017 FALL

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INTRODUCTION

This is not intended to be a finely produced book, but rather a readable document for those who are interested in my particular take on dharma training and a few other topics. These blogs were from the Fall of 2017, posted on Facebook and Google+.

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MY HEALTH STORY: “STAYING ALIVE”

My interest in staying healthy is not just another hobby. For me, it's necessary if I want to remain on the planet. I will explain why.

2016 was a watershed year for me as far as ill health is concerned. I got slammed with all kinds of bad news, everything from a small stroke that affected my eyes and vision, major heart issues resulting in heart surgery, serious inner-ear balance-problems that took a year to solve, and last, but not least, kidney trouble. And along the way it was determined that I had survived three silent heart attacks that I never knew I had and the prognosis was that they could do nothing about my condition.

In fact, they backed out of minor heart surgery in the middle of a catheterization procedure right on the operating table because there was nothing to bypass to. That was fun news. It was a reckoning, one thing after another for almost two years.

After many X-rays, endless panels of blood tests, dyes injected into my veins, Echocardiograms, Ultrasounds, electrocardiograms, very painful muscle tests, multiple CT-scans and even a few MRIs, I feel I've been scanned; and I hate walking around hospitals with my bottom threatening to hang out. LOL.

Finally, I was told (after my return from the operating room and to consciousness) that my condition was inoperable and that the only thing that could keep me alive is diet and exercise. That was a lot to take in and absorb. And yes, I heard them about the diet, exercise, and staying alive.

I'm used to writing about things I actually know something about, but here in this blog (and perhaps a few more) I am approaching topics that I don't know that much about, but nevertheless have to learn as if my life depends on it. I'm still in the middle of the learning process.

So, if I write about it here (which I will), keep in mind that I'm new to all this, but that does not mean I won't talk about it.

The possible benefit to some few of you is that I have paid a lot in time, pain, and money to find the right doctors, remedies, brands, supplements, etc. Sure, there are hundreds of kinds of Vitamin C supplements, but which ones can the body actually absorb and use? Specifically, which ones, by name, brand, and a link on the web. That's what I propose to share some of here in the next few blogs.

I know I'm not the only one in this predicament, because the hospitals I have been to are full of similar cases. So, that's my prolegomena, my back history that I will be talking from here. Now I would like to begin by getting down to the nitty-gritty.

To start off, here's a tough one: try living on whole grains and only food that has not been processed in any way. The motto is something like "Whole Grains or No Grains." And "whole grains" and "whole wheat" are not synonymous. Whole grains includes the whole grain, while whole-wheat may or may not be the same. Whole wheat these days often includes processed white flour. And it is not always clear and even the labels often are not correct.

This is particularly clear when trying to find bread that, while it may have some whole (or sprouted) grains in it, also has a lot of what is labelled as "whole-wheat" flour, but very often there is some whole wheat with a bunch of added white flour thrown into the mix. And the label does not always make this clear. It's very difficult to determine correctly. Processed foods are ubiquitous these days. Searching out foods that are unprocessed almost limits us to the raw foods themselves.

These days, on the advice of my doctors, I have come to eat what could be called a super-Vegan diet, although I don't like the term "Vegan" because I am not from Vegas. But for reasons of health circumstances, I have come to eating this way. I was born before the word "Vegan" was even coined and came into vegetarianism on my own. I don't like to be lumped into a group, even if I fit the specs, which I do. Anyway, so I tell myself, vegans eat sugar and processed flours and oils, etc.; I don't, so what am I?

I would call my diet, as mentioned, an unprocessed-foods diet of organic "whole" foods, with an emphasis on whole grains, which means the entire grain, everything but the outer hard hull, if there is one. In our home, we do not eat refined sugar or any processed sugar substitutes. Sugar substitutes are, IMO, another problem waiting to be discovered. Also, we avoid products that contain chemically-based nutrients, additives, preservatives, and anything that can accumulate in the body that is not naturally healthful. We don't eat food from which anything is added or removed. Then, stir all of this with my training (some 45 years) in the macrobiotic principles of balancing foods by type and season and you are pretty-much where I am.

And certainly, for the most part (and when we can) at our house we eat an organic diet. So, I eat an organic vegetarian diet (with no dairy, meat, fish, nor fowl) and only whole or sprouted grains. And this means no bleached or processed grains (like pasta), such that any nutrients have been removed (or chemicals added). Foods that have been fortified with chemical vitamins are to be avoided. The endless kind-of-fancy, heavily-spiced, recipes in most vegetarian and vegan cookbooks are fine for some folks, but are not what we eat. Our recipes are simply the food itself, with no (or few) spices. Of course, everyone is welcome to eat whatever they want, and they do. I am not a fundamentalist except in what I eat. I still like all the foods I used to eat; I just don't eat them anymore.

In short, I eat only vegetables, whole grains, and fruits, nuts, and seeds. I don't eat any dairy, aside from a dollop of milk in my grain coffee. I don't eat sugar or sugar substitutes and not any processed or "bad" oils. I read labels and reject bad oils,

additives, corn syrup, and preservatives that I don't need in my system. Asking my body to endlessly try to store all of these chemicals, additives, antibiotics, and sub-standard fillers, etc. is something that I no longer care to do. I drink only water that has been filtered by reverse-osmosis.

I do sometimes have a very small amount of maple syrup (when I make banana bread or eat pancakes), but that is seldom and I would eat honey too, but generally don't. I mostly use organic olive oil, but sometimes organic sesame oil. I try to keep the oil down to a minimum, but if I have an Achilles Heel, it would be oil.

And I generally do not use spices other than some Tamari, fresh black or cayenne pepper, and a few other condiments. I'm still looking for a good salt substitute. I like the taste of simple foods without spices. I do use seaweed, mostly when we make gomasio by roasting sesame seeds or cooking soups/beans with a piece of kelp in them. And, of course, Nori rolls and so on.

Some of the foods we eat were not all that easy to find and to sort out from the many brands that look similar, but are not the same. If there is interest, I could provide a list of some good quality brands and perhaps a link as to where you can read more about them or purchase them. I'm happy to do this if even a few of you would benefit from sorting out the good brands from the ones that don't work so well. Let me know here, please.

I am willing to share the info I have on food and supplements if you are interested.



SUPPLEMENTS: “STAYING ALIVE”

Let's talk about nutritional supplements. When I was in the hospital for the heart operation, at one point I was surrounded by a small group of doctors who were amazed that that I was not on prescription drugs. They had never seen a 75-year-old (I'm 76 now) who was not on prescription drugs. As for me, I had never thought about it. I just don't like being on drugs of any kind. It felt like I was on exhibition, a throwback from a bygone age.

And, over the last two years, constantly in and out of the hospitals for tests or procedures, I was temporarily on one kind of drug or another for a day or a week or so for this or that reason. However, when all the procedures were finished, I was not asked to take any prescription drugs. And don't get me wrong; I would take them if it was clear that I needed them for this or that reason, but as it turns out I don't need to. So, what kinds of vitamins, supplements (and whatever) do I take each day?

VITAMIN C

I forgot to mention in the previous blog that I was diagnosed with COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) before these last two years of health onslaught came on. This was due (so I was told) to earlier smoking and scar tissue on my lungs from having pneumonia as a child. So, the basic idea for me is NOT to get sick if I can help it. Therefore, one of my general doctors suggested that I take a fairly high dose of

Vitamin C each day to protect my immune system and help ward off being exposed to this or that bug. However, there are ALL KINDS of vitamin C. Which brand should I be taking?

The particular form that the doctor came up with is called “QBC Plex” by Solaray. I take two of these a day, which about to a total of 1250 mg, which is a little higher than you might need. If you have no special problems (like COPD), 1000 mg or less a day is suggested. This has been a real help.

Here is the link:

https://www.amazon.com/.../B000.../ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage...

OMEGA-3

We all need Omega 3s and I take supplemental Omega 3, but not in animal form (like cod liver oil), but rather in a vegetable (algae) format from Nordic Naturals called “Algae Omega.” I take more than most folks (three of these a day as 715 mg each) because it’s hard to get enough Omega-3 in our system. This supplement is kind of expensive; however I feel is very important. Here is the link:

https://www.amazon.com/Nordic-Naturals-A.../.../ref=sr_1_4_s_it...

MAGNESIUM

Many people, especially older people don’t get enough magnesium into their body as a supplement. It helps with anxiety, sleep, and especially muscle aches, spasms, and jumpy-legs. Magnesium is tricky, however, because it can be hard to absorb and many magnesium supplements just go in one end and out the other, without being assimilated. The kind I was recommended to take is by Pure and is called “Ionic-Fizz Magnesium Plus.” It has a number of other vitamins, etc. in it and is taken in water. It fizzes, but is more easily absorbed. I take one scoop of this power each day. There are several flavors, none of which thrill me, but there it is. Here is the link:

https://www.amazon.com/.../B001.../ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage...

VITAMIN B12

I'm a vegetarian, so I need more B12 supplements than meat eaters. We all need B12 and they say we can't take too much of it but, like many supplements, getting one we can assimilate can be difficult. There are two main types of vitamin B12 supplements, cyanocobalamin and methylcobalamin. You want to use the "methylcobalamin" type because it is more easily absorbed. Choose a sublingual form. The one I am currently using is by Natural Factors and called "B12 Methylcobalamin" and that "Methylcobalamin" is the type everyone says to get. This version goes under the tongue and dissolves into your bloodstream instead of trying to get in through the stomach. Here is the link:

https://www.amazon.com/.../B004.../ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage...

VITAMIN D AND K2

Vitamin D (the "sunshine" vitamin) is needed to maintain healthy teeth and bones, for our immune system and nerves, and other functions. We need it and it is best taken in liquid form. I take it along with Vitamin K2, all in one bottle. Vitamin K2 is just beginning to be more appreciated and it is crucial to protect bone and artery health. It works synergistically with Vitamin D to help move calcium into the proper areas in our body. I take three drops a day of these combined vitamins. Vitamin D is very important and so is the form you take it. By all means, everyone should read about vitamin K2, because we should be taking it. In this liquid, we get both vitamin D and K2 in one dose. This is from Thorne and called "Vitamin D/K2." Here is the link:

https://www.amazon.com/.../B003.../ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage...

ASPIRIN

You don't need this unless you have heart problems, but I take one baby aspirin (81 mg) each day to keep my blood a little bit thin. This is from Sunmark and is called "Aspirin." I also have to carry nitroglycerin tablets with me all the time. I have them in a tiny cylinder attached to my car keys and keep in in my pocket.

https://www.amazon.com/.../B00G.../ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage...

That's it for my daily supplements. I also take a couple of other supplements that are peculiar to me, perhaps and they are:

BIOTIN

Biotin is another supplement you may or not benefit from. It is to strengthen my fingernails, which tend to get weak. It is from Nature's Bounty and is called "Biotin." I take one a day. Here is the link:

https://www.amazon.com/.../B01A.../ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage...

GINKGO

I also take some Ginkgo, which no doctor prescribed or even suggested, but when I told my cardiologist that I took it, he just laughed and said that is fine. There is no reason for you to take it unless you find that you benefit from it. I take one a day. Here is the link:

https://www.amazon.com/.../B003.../ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage...

SUMMARY

So, that's what I take each day as far as supplements, and they are all available over the counter. I sometimes have trouble remembering if I took them on a given day, so I am trying to use one of those little compartment boxes that has Monday, Tuesday, etc. on it. It is a little embarrassing, but one day bleeds into the next for me and I forget if I have taken my supplements... sometimes. Yes, it has come to that. LOL.

Aside from the above, everything else that I need I get from food and exercise, which I will start to detail tomorrow, if there is interest. Let me know if you want to read this stuff, because I have lots of other things I could write about, but these are important to me. They may be for you too.



THE STAPLES: “STAYING ALIVE”

What to eat? That is a question I ask myself every single day. One thing I know is that I cannot trust processed food to protect my health. Even labels are not always honest, although they should be. If we walk back the processed food to the raw food itself from which it was derived, we have a better chance of staying healthy. Also, if we can afford to shop and buy organic, we are protecting ourselves from who-knows-what kind of sprays, poisons, hormones, antibiotics, and whatever else they were doused with. The residues from pesticides and chemical fertilizers can often remain and be assimilated into our bodies, where they have no place to be. For me, these days, non-organic food is just another form of Russian roulette.

I don't need to tell readers all of this, but we best keep it in mind. Just read food labels, some of which are paragraphs long, filled with chemicals, extenders, dyes, and sometimes harmful substances. And I like to remember that the government is not a prophet. What is heralded one day as good for us is decreed five years later as harmful to our health. Who are we to believe? The government is being dismantled by the Trump administration, especially any regulatory procedures that are supposed to protect us. What a nightmare!

So, I feel we are well advised to walk back all processed foods to their raw sources and see if I can find organic forms of those that WE CAN SAFELY EAT! That's what we do here at my home.

So, we have at least two major considerations to keep in mind, the poisons in our food and foods that, even if pure, will harm us health-wise, like give us too much cholesterol and ruin our arteries, etc. We all should be aware of this by now. And we ignore it at our peril. And every little bit of poisonous or unhealthy additives add up. They are incremental, killing us slowly, but certainly killing us.

THEREFORE

I'd like to share with you what we have come up with as far as food and diet goes. Yet, we are not experts in this, but are still learning each day how to live better. However, if you compare us to someone who lives off McDonalds food, I guess we are experts by comparison. It's amazing how we can drift out of health and into dis-ease a day and a mouthful at a time. It's incremental, so we never see it coming until the X-ray points out that it is a "fait accompli" and that we are in serious trouble. This is exactly what happened to me.

So, at the risk of offending those of you on other diets, please don't be offended. This is not about your diet, but my diet and I have shared the reasons earlier why I have to eat naturally and organically. It's not because I am sophisticated or better-than-others, but because I will die otherwise. So, those of us who may need to get back to basic foods, this is for us. I am sharing what I know, as best I can.

A brief story may help to point out what I am getting at here. Many years Margaret and I were able to meet the Dalai Lama in person. This was before he was rock-star famous. And like so many Westerners, we offered him the traditional white scarf (Katah) as the Tibetans do. And we have offered these white scarfs to many, many Tibetans over the years.

It was only years later that a close personal friend, a Tibetan translator, pointed out to us that the white scarf is what an envelope is to us. You have to put something in it. And here were all of offering to these great Rinpoches an empty

envelope. I know. Empty envelopes have become an acceptable habit here by now and the Tibetans understand.

In food, the equivalent of the white-scarf or empty envelope is whatever staple (usually bland) grain that we use as a base for what we eat. For me, it's Lundberg Organic Short-Grain Brown Rice. Or for Mexican food, it is the corn tortilla. For Ethiopian food, which we like to eat, it's the Injera (their sour flatbread made from teff flour), for Italian food it might be pasta or polenta, and of course for many of us it is whole-grain bread, and so on.

The point being that, just as in Tibetan meditation, we have the base meditation called Tranquility Meditation (Shamata), upon which everything else is based, so with food we also have the basic "Give us this day our daily bread" kind of food that everything else relates to. For me, as mentioned above, it is short-grain organic brown rice as grown by the Lundberg Company. There are many other kinds and brands of rice (Basmati, wild, etc.), but in my case it all comes back to short-grain brown rice. It goes with almost everything.

We also eat pasta, polenta, and tortillas, and of course whole-grain breads. I would like to comment on all of these, but let's start with rice.

LUNDBERG ORGANIC SHORT-GRAIN BROWN RICE

There is nothing like short-grain brown rice. As mentioned, it's like the envelope in which we mail a letter. And we cook it two ways:

We always rinse the rice and drain it before cooking.

The first method involves combining two-cups of uncooked brown rice with 3-3/4 cups of water, brought to a boil, then turned way, way down and left to finish cooking for exactly 45-minutes. Then, remove from the stove.

Another way we eat brown rice is to soak two-cups of water overnight, drain it, and then cook it for 30-minutes with three cups of water, brought to a boil and then turned way, way down to cook. The first method is crunchier and the second softer.

With either method, as mentioned, we first rinse the uncooked rice to remove any dust or natural sediments. If you can't find it in your local food coop, you can order it here:

https://www.amazon.com/Lundberg-Family-F.../.../ref=sr_1_8_s_it...

Fresh-cooked organic short-grained brown rice soon becomes a staple, a touchstone for health, and the accompaniment to just about any food. When I'm sick, it's always back to short-grained brown rice as the fiducial. It's like the plate we put the rest of our food on and the envelope that contains the letter.

I'm not going to tell you what to do with brown rice once you have cooked it, but there are thousands of recipes out there. You can eat it with a little Tamari or soy sauce, a little olive oil, or any other condiment you happen to like. We used to make our own Tekka and sprinkle it on brown rice and the same goes for gomasio (roasted sesame seeds with some wakame seaweed). I don't eat butter, but butter on brown rice with some condiment, especially if you are feeling a little off, is divine.

OTHER FORMS

A good substitute for short-grain brown rice are tortillas. And you can find corn tortillas where the only ingredients are corn and water. Anything else is not essential and may be harmful. I don't eat flour tortillas anymore because most of them are processed flour filled with additives, preservatives, etc. If you can find flour tortillas that are whole-grain flour and water, that would work too. I don't know of any that are any good tasting.

Another rice substitute is polenta, which should contain nothing but coarse-ground corn and water. Polenta can be made in a short time, refrigerated, and eaten in many ways. I had some today. My favorite way is the brush a little organic olive oil on them and fry them up, with a little Tamari on them. They are plain, but good in themselves or with a little something spicier.

Yet another brown-rice substitute is whole-grain pasta. The big companies are starting to come after this market and I see more and more whole-grain pasta available. You CANNOT count on pasta labelled "whole wheat" being whole-grain.

They should be, but the marketplace is currently in transition, such that labels that do not state “whole grain” may not be. Also, some of the whole-wheat pastas are pretty bad. So hunt out one that actually does not taste like cardboard.

Here is one that I use and like. It is organic, whole-grain, and tastes very good. It is called Bionaturae Organic Whole Wheat Spaghetti. Here is the link:

https://www.amazon.com/.../B001.../ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage...

One pasta that I am currently experimenting with is the Japanese Udon Noodles, typically as part of a bowl of noodles in an Asian broth of some kind. If you go to China and to Tibet, a bowl of noodle broth (with or without meat) called Thukpa is what everyone eats.

However, finding an Udon noodle that is whole grain is very, very difficult. There is one that is available from Eden Foods, that I recommend. You can also get it in single packages, but here is a box that I just bought. Here is the link:

<https://www.edenfoods.com/.../udon-organic-100-whole-grain-12...>

BREAD OF LIFE

When it comes to bread, I have to be very, very careful. They are often not labelled properly and the label “whole-wheat” typically includes processed white flour mixed in. Many times I thought we had found bread that we could eat, only to find some “gotcha” waiting for me. This may be the toughest area to find something healthy.

There is the popular brand “Ezekiel” that offers whole and sprouted grains. They can be found in the frozen food section of most mainline grocery stores. I don’t much like their taste (or texture), but they are healthful. In a pinch I can find them even when traveling. Their “Original Sprouted-Grain” and “Sesame Sprouted-Grain” breads are good.

https://www.amazon.com/Food-Life-Ezekie.../.../ref=sr_1_15_s_it...

In summer, I exclusively eat their “Ezekiel Original Sprouted Grain Cereal.” It is like “Grapenuts,” only better. I buy it by the case of six, but you can order them individually too.

https://www.amazon.com/Food-Life-Baking-.../.../ref=sr_1_2_s_it...

Luckily, I have hunted down and found a really good source of whole-grain bread in Grand Rapids, Michigan, about an hour's drive from where I live. My local organic-foods can order them, but I have to buy 12 loaves at a time, which we do. Then we cut them in half and freeze them. Here is the place that makes it, called "Field & Fire." The particular whole-grain breads of theirs that we use are two, "Spelt" and "Kamut." These are like (pardon me) the steaks of the bread world. You have to slice them yourself, etc.

<http://www.fieldandfire.com/>

Let me know if this kind of information is useful please and I can provide more.



BASIC FOODS: “STAYING ALIVE”

Not sure how best to go on with this series. For now, let's just keep talking about different foods that we depend on for a bit and see how it goes.

We live in Big Rapids, Michigan on the edge of 900,000 acres of the Manistee National Forest, which is wonderful and we have very clean air. Since the weather moves from west to east, our air is filtered by passing over Lake Michigan and then further filtered through the vast Manistee Forest before it arrives in our town; so, it's pretty clean.

However, we are not near too near any major city. For example, we are 3 hours from a Whole Foods Market, almost 2 hours from a great food coop, and 1 hour from Grand Rapids, Michigan which has some natural food stores. So, we have to stock up when we can make one of these trips or order from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). We do both.

And we do our best to buy in bulk when we can, to save money and also to keep a stock on hand for when it snows as it is right now, when it is wise to stay home. There have has

been more than ten inches of snow in the last two days and more coming, so it's starting to look a lot like Christmas.

Our kitchen is filled with many large glass jars full of various grains, beans, and so on and there are even larger plastic buckets in our Michigan basement for storing quantities of things, like brown rice, flour, beans, and so on. I include some photos here. So, now for some more food talk.

BEANS

Let's start with beans, which are big around here. More often than not, I'm the one who has to put one kind or other of beans to soak overnight. I inspect them for stones by taking a large pot, turning the lid upside down on the pot and spreading a handful of beans out on the lid. I then look for stones, and then dump that lid-full in the pot, pour out some more beans and count again, until they all have been inspected.

Then I rinse the beans, fill up the pot with water, and let them soak overnight. We cook them the next day. We eat pinto beans, black beans, dried lima beans, navy beans, red beans, and many other kinds. My favorite is garbanzo beans, which go with everything. To me, they are the "meat" of beans.

In the cooler months (like now) I make a good (but not too spicy) meatless chili with kidney beans. Margaret makes a wonderful baked kidney-bean casserole with miso. Delicious. I'm not going to list recipes here, at least until I get through these basic food descriptions. Anyway, beans are something we eat often. And, indeed, they ARE a musical fruit.

OATMEAL

In Michigan's winters, oatmeal is ubiquitous and we are very fussy how it can (and should be) eaten. For example, we almost never have instant oatmeal and seldom even use regular rolled oats, except maybe in crusts or fruit crisps. And, as mentioned, we don't just cook rolled oats and call it oatmeal. I find it funny that some folks even like cooked rolled oats, perhaps only because they are used to it and not for reasons of taste or texture.

For years we sought out steel-cut oats, which basically are just whole oat groats cut up by a steel blade to make cooking them easier. The only problem is that cutting up the oats obviously exposes them to the deterioration of their insides. However, their texture and taste is far superior to the rolled variety.

And then we found that cooking the whole oat groats was very much superior to cutting them. However, to cook whole groats takes a long time on the stove and you needed to use a flame tamer so as not to burn them. We have to start them in the early hours of the morn and hours later they would be ready to eat, but they demand to be vigorously stirred ever fifteen minutes or so by kind of scraping the bottom of the pan, etc.

Then, my dear wife Margaret came up with a marvelous idea. Why not just soak the uncut whole oat groats overnight and THEN cut them up with a Nutribullet just before cooking them. And, just as important, is that cooking them this way shortens the cooking time to something like 15 minutes. We just take the soaked whole oats, put them in a Nutribullet, fill it up with water, and pulverize it. Then put it in a pan on the stove and cook it, adding water as needed to keep it from drying out. It is fast, easy, and produces the best oatmeal I have ever eaten.

This then has become for us the ONLY way to cook oatmeal around here. And the whole groats are not violated until the last moment. Try it sometime.

WHOLE-GRAIN BREAD

The bread we use are unsliced loaves of Spelt and Kamut (with sprouted grains). They are heavy loaves and very rich in taste. We almost always toast the slices. Since we do not use butter, a few drops of olive oil on a toasted slice of Kamut is delicious. Or, a little tahini and jam, peanut butter, or just jam is great too.

Other than those breads, the only other bread I use is for hot dogs. I managed to find a brand of hot-dog buns made of 100% whole grains, so for nostalgia's sake, I keep some in the freezer and break one out to use with the ersatz hotdogs I like.

HOTDOGS

Veggie-based hot dogs are many and almost all of them are terrible IMO. I have tried far too-many and held my nose at all of them, except one brand.

“Field Roast” makes a pack of six hotdogs that actually come close to the real deal, if you follow one simple rule: don’t fry them. Instead, cook them like you would ballpark franks in water and put them in a bun, add your condiments, and enjoy. They actually are good.

“Field Roast” sausages, while not perfect, are IMO as good as it gets in the fake sausage department. I love their apple-sage and Italian sausage and eat them all the time. They also make a Mexican Chipotle Sausage, but they are a little too spicy for me.

HAMBURGERS

Field Roast also makes a hamburger substitute called “Fieldburgers,” provided you like garlic. With Fieldburgers, they have the chewy texture of real meat down cold. They are great. As mentioned, the only reason I don’t use them is there is too much garlic in the mix. I have moved away from garlic in recent years, but still eat onions.

“Field Roast” products are grain based, with various vegies thrown in. They are not organic, but are pretty natural in their approach. They are good enough for me. The company also makes various grain-based roasts and even sliced deli grain-meats. And, more and more grocery stores now carry them.

TOFU

We don’t use tofu anymore. In the early 1970s, Margaret and I used to make our own tofu, which is a lot of work. Back then, there was no tofu available except some at Chinese markets, but we never could be sure what those market tofu had in them aside from soybeans. We will still eat tofu if it is served to us, but we no longer buy it, cook, or eat it at home. The reasons for this are legion, stemming from the basic indigestibility of unfermented soy products, their phytoestrogens, possible thyroid disruption, anti-nutrients, vitamin B12/D deficiencies, possible heart issues, and the fact that most soy is GMO (90% in U.S.). This does NOT pertain

to fermented soy products like Miso, Tamari, Tempeh, etc. We eat those a lot, but have to watch the salt.

TEMPEH

The fermented soy product Tempeh we eat all the time. Most people don't like tempeh, perhaps because they don't know how to cook it and it looks weird in the package, often like it is going (or has gone) bad, which it has not.

First, make sure that you find an organic form of tempeh and avoid GMOs. Next, learn how to cook it, which essentially (the way we use it) is to steam it and then fry it. We use a marinade of things like Ume Plum Vinegar, Mirin, Brown-Rice Vinegar, Sesame Hot Oil, Tarmari, and things like that. So, we marinate it, steam it, and then fry out the water. And then we eat it with rice and vegetables or use it in sandwiches, where it can be like a meat substitute. A Tempeh Ruben is a favorite.

Well, those are a few of the foods we eat. Comments are welcome.









RECIPES, CONDIMENTS, AND MORE

You are asking for recipes, so I will show you where I get most of mine. You can change them to suit your needs. I get many of the recipes that I use from this incredible (and natural-food) set of recipes made available by Eden Foods at no charge. You can't beat them and there are tons of them. They are even easy to print out and I have a whole folder of them in our kitchen. There is no point in my retyping them for posting here, so check them out when you wish. I have them bookmarked.

<https://www.edenfoods.com/recipes/>

Now, for some more commentary on this and that, mostly condiments.

UMEBOSHI PLUM PASTE

The umeboshi or Japanese salted plum is not very well known here in the west, but it deserves use. Back in the early 1970s, we would have a small wooden keg of whole umeboshi plums in our basement along with wooden kegs of Mugi and Hacho Miso, Tamari, and so on. We would use umeboshi as a condiment, with a very small amount on a

bowl of rice to smear a little on our rice. The whole salted plum were often used when we did not feel well to help stabilize the body. They are very alkaline. These years we usually use just the umeboshi paste and putting a very little on a fresh ear of corn (instead of butter) is divine.

A very little umeboshi paste goes a long way. You can get a pure form here:

<https://www.edenfoods.com/store/umeboshi-paste.html>

Another way we use the umeboshi plum is as a vinegar to help marinate tempeh before cooking in a bit of oil. We do this often.

Umeboshi Plum Vinegar

<https://www.edenfoods.com/.../ume-plum-vinegar-raw-unpasteuri...>

ORGANIC BROWN-RICE VINEGAR

And another general ingredient for marinating tempeh or enhancing a bowl of rice and vegetables is brown-rice vinegar, a sweet and very mellow condiment.

<https://www.edenfoods.com/.../brown-rice-vinegar-organic-1142...>

EDEN ORGANIC TAMARI (SOY SAUCE)

There are many kinds of Tamari, a Japanese form of soy sauce that is made from non-GMO soy beans and aged in cedar casks for a couple of years. It is THE staple condiment in our home, but since it is salty, is used sparingly. Here is a good form of Tamari.

<https://www.edenfoods.com/.../tamari-soy-sauce-non-gmo-organ...>

Another delicious form of Tamari comes from South River Miso Company. In this case the Tamari is collected from the savory liquid that puddles and is collected from the vats of fermenting miso. To me, this is the best tasting Tamari I know of. It has to be refrigerated:

SOUTH-RIVER MISO-TAMARI

<http://www.southerivermiso.com/.../27-Miso-Tamari-Sweet-Tastin...>

MIRIN (COOKING WINE)

This condiment (along with some Tamari) is an ideal marinade for tempeh or used in a bowl of noodles.

<https://www.edenfoods.com/.../mirin-rice-cooking-wine-glass-b...>

HOT PEPPER SESAME OIL

This is unrefined sesame oil infused with hot red chili peppers. It's hot, so just a few drops in a bowl of soup or mixed with rice or in marinades is delicious.

<https://www.edenfoods.com/store/hot-pepper-sesame-oil.html>

RAY'S POLISH FIRE

We have a lot of young local musicians passing through our home and they love their hot sauce. We have several types on hand, but the hot sauce of choice is Ray's Polish Fire. Since I can't use too spicy stuff, there is a mild version of Ray's that is perfect for me. This hot sauce is made in small batches using organic ingredients including umeboshi plum vinegar, cayenne peppers, and other healthy ingredients. They also have a wheat-free version.

I am told that the staff at Eden Foods all love Ray's Polish Fire and the monks at Karma Triyana Monastery found it wonderful. Here is where you can get it.

<http://polishfire.com/content/>

SOUTH-RIVER BARLEY (MUGI) MISO

There are many kinds of miso. The kind that we use the most is the traditional 3-year barley miso. It is used as a condiment, mixed in soups, and even as part of a medicinal soup which we call (with no imagination) "Medicine Soup."

<http://www.southerivermiso.com/st.../p/2-Three-Year-Barley.html>

OLIVE OIL

Napa Valley Naturals Olive Oil

Organic olive oil is a staple for me. You can pay as much as you like for Organic Extra-Virgin Olive Oil. I can't afford the finest olive oil, so I have settled for this olive oil from "Napa

Valley Naturals” and I buy it by the case, but wait for a 10% or 15% sale, which happen a few times a year. That way we can get a 25.4 oz bottle for about \$9, with free shipping.

<http://www.napaValleynaturals.com/.../NVN-ORGEVOO&c=NapaValle...>

We also sometimes get a half-case of a better brand of olive oil for when we might want an olive oil for eating and not just cooking. We tend to get this by mail-order from Zingermans Delicatessen in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<https://www.zingermans.com/Product.aspx?ProductID=O-ZIN>

Whatever olive oil you choose, I suggest you avoid the gallon tins (or whatever) of olive oil on the shelves of your local supermarket. I read a whole book on olive oil and those olive oils, no matter how nicely designed the container is, are usually of the lowest grade.

MUSTARD

We like mustards of all kinds. I like Dijon, and I especially like Dijon Mustard with Green Peppercorn Mustards in it, like this one:

https://www.amazon.com/Edmond-Fallot-Gre.../.../ref=sr_1_2_a_it...

Yet, after many years I have come back around to plain-old ballpark-type yellow mustard, like this one from Eden Foods that is stone-ground with a little cider vinegar added.

<https://www.edenfoods.com/.../yellow-mustard-organic-glass-ja...>

KETCHUP

We tend not to use Ketchup, but often have some sort organic ketchup around that I can never coax out of the plastic bottle. I do, however, like Heinz Chili Sauce and use that where I used to use ketchup.

SALT

I have to be very careful with salt and tend to get it from condiments like Tamari or soy sauce. However, we use sea salt and sometimes the pink Himalayan salt. You can find it now in many places. As it turns out, the lower peninsula of Michigan sits on the largest single deposit of salt on the planet, some 30,000 trillion tons of salt. And ironically enough, Michigan is surrounded by 84% of all the fresh water

in North America and 21% of all the fresh water in the world. How did that happen?

PEPPERS

We are not huge pepper people, but we do keep a grinder with Tellicherry Black Pepper.

https://www.amazon.com/.../B004.../ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage

...

However, it irritated me that they make these little grinders such that you can't refill them, so I bored a $\frac{3}{4}$ " round hole in the plastic of an empty grinder and put a old olive-oil cork in the hole. I have since filled it with green peppercorns (which I also like) and now have two grinders. You would think that these companies would be kind enough to let us reuse their containers, but no.

I am also a big fan of Cayenne pepper and have been told it is one of the only hot peppers that does NOT irritate the intestines; and it is good for the heart. One of my favorite things to do is to sprinkle the tiniest dust of cayenne pepper in the oil/water I am about to steam fresh vegetables in. It is not detectable, but gives the otherwise (sometimes) bland vegetables a little heat and they taste better.

TAHINI

Tahini for us is the new peanut butter, although we use both all the time. We used to buy it in 15 lb. tubs, but lately we get it in smaller quantities at our non-local food coop that we belong to, the incredible Oryana Food Coop of Traverse City, Michigan, almost a 2-hour drive from where we live. But Eastwind organic Tahini is available on Amazon in both single and bulk sizes. Tahini and jam on whole-grain toast is a staple at our house. And some kind of tahini sauce on soba (or other) noodles is a traditional favorite. Here is some on Amazon, but not with free shipping, so look around locally to find some.

https://www.amazon.com/East-Wind-Butters.../.../ref=sr_1_1_a_it...

DAIRY

The doctors say I should not have it and I don't.

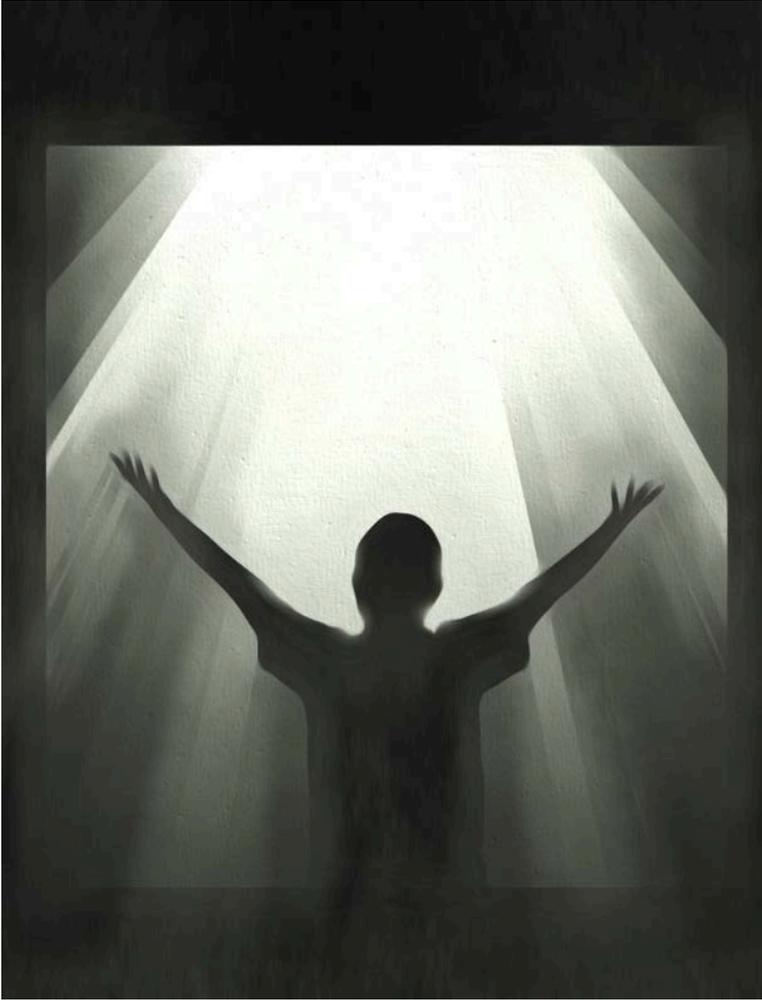
GOMASIO

Perhaps my favorite condiment is Gomasio, a Japanese word that means “Goma” (sesame) and “Shio” salt, and the salt here comes from a small amount of seaweed being added to the mix. I use gomasio on rice, for the most part. Or I just eat some by hand. It is not hard to make, but does take time.

Take a quantity of whole sesame seeds and soak them overnight. Then drain as much water away as possible, even pressing the seeds lightly. Next place them in a cast-iron frying pan and VERY slowly begin to heat the wet seeds. Stir with a wooden spatula and gradually heat to remove any water or dampness. This takes time. You want to roast the seeds to a nice brown, but not burn them. When the seeds start to dry out mix in some crumbled Dulse seaweed, which becomes the salt in this condiment. You want the dulse crumbled and flaky and you use as much as you need to add salt to your taste.

Mix the crumbled seaweed into the drying sesame seeds thoroughly and gradually roast the mixture. This means fairly constant stirring at very low heat, until the seeds are brown enough for your taste.

The mixture than can be put in glass jars and used as a condiment for salads, vegetables, and especially rice or polenta. This is a delicious and much desired condiment. We can't make it fast enough, because we are always out of it.



EXERCISE: “STAYING ALIVE”

I should say a few words about exercise, something I have avoided as much as possible until recent years. For me, exercise has been, for decades, walking, going for walks, either in nature or in different lengths of city blocks. Margaret and I have one route we call “walking the square” and we

have another route I named the "Four Elements," being four hills we climb in a nearby cemetery: fire, water, air, and earth.

And after my health troubles began in the late winter of 2016, it became imperative that I walk every day that I can, so I began going to our an indoor track at our local university, where senior citizens for one dollar can walk between 6 A.M. and 11 A.M. on weekdays. And we also for a time went to a local middle-school, where seniors were allowed to walk in the hallways in particular patterns. Of course, in summer time I would walk outside.

That was good and about 5:50 A.M. each day I would get in the car and head for the indoor track where I would fast-walk for two miles. Yet, I had this nagging feeling that this was not really enough exercise, because I never worked up a sweat or anything close to it. One harsh winter morning I slipped on some hidden black ice just outside my doorway and (wham!) fell into some sharp cement steps breaking two ribs. Now that, my friends, hurt, as they say around here, big time.

But somewhat recently, I stopped driving up to the nearby university and instead started using an elliptical machine which we have that has sat unused at our center next door to our house. I just never had used it. So these days, I trek next door about 30 feet and put in 25 minutes of exercise on the elliptical machine. The heat is kept pretty low at the center these days, because for the most part we are not using it much, so it is brisk over there, which is fine for exercise.

Anyway, I'm so glad I did this because the kind of exercise I am getting now is so much better than just walking. The elliptical machine has all kinds of monitors built into it so that I can see my heart rate and the distance I travel, etc. I exercise 5-6 miles worth, so the monitor says. And I do work up some sweat, because I can feel it at my sternum. To combat the boredom of a stationary machine, at first I listened to local FM radio, but where we live its "all country, all of the time." I don't mind country music, especially older country music like Patsy Cline, Hank Williams, Jimmy Rogers, Kitty Wells, Hank Locklin, and so on. However, some of the more modern country music sounds a little too much like whining to me. It reminds me of the old joke: what do you get if you play a

country music song backward? You get your dog back, your girlfriend back, your job back, and so on.

So, I got tired of the radio and rigged up an Internet signal booster that can pick up our wi-fi from our house next door. And using an old laptop, I now watch YouTube things. Lately, I have been watching a newer series by Anthony Bordain called "Raw Kraft," which is not like his food travelogues, where he eats everything that I can't eat, but rather short vignettes on craft persons, like tattoo artists, guitar makers, cutlery makers, and so on. They are really good.

So, what have I learned? I have learned that, at least at my age, walking is not enough anymore. I need something more cardiovascular than moving my legs by walking and aerobic enough to make my heart work faster. And running is not good for my joints, which is why the elliptical machine is so remarkable. It is easy on the joints. Anyway, I know something about running, because my daughter Anne was the fastest cross-country runner in the state of Michigan two years in a row, of all schools. She got a full scholarship to the University of Michigan when their track team was one of the best (or the best) in the nation. I have seen how hard running is on the body, first hand.

I also have some small weights that I am learning to use. Anyway, exercise is as important as what we eat IMO and I feel much better after exercising and am learning to keep myself entertained while I do it. And I'm finding out something that everyone else already knows, that exercising to music is fun!

So, that kind of wraps up this mini-series on eating to live and not living to eat, although that is a hard habit to break!