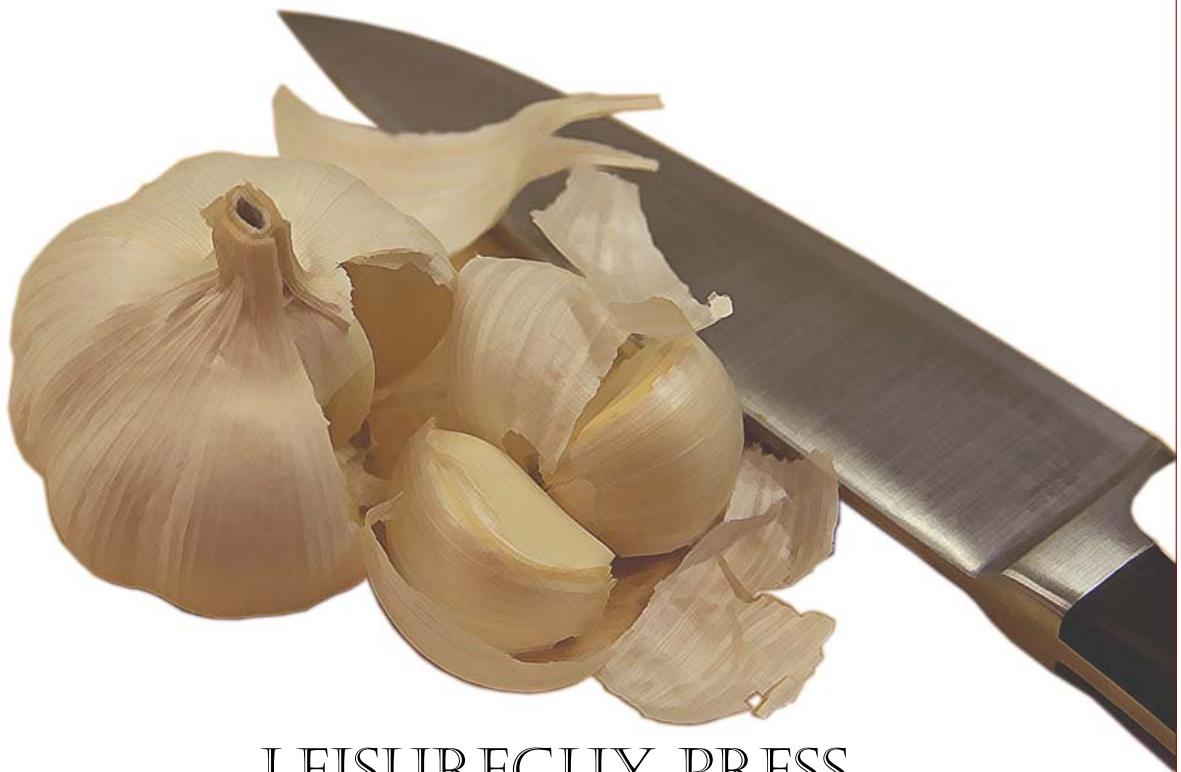


LEISUREGUY'S  
COOKING  
COMPENDIUM  
OR, COOKING DECONSTRUCTED

BY  
MICHAEL HAM  
"LEISUREGUY"



LEISUREGUY PRESS

To my three children, all of whom are fine cooks;  
To their mom, who made sure that they were good cooks;  
To the grandsons, who will probably be good cooks;  
And to K★, yet another fine family cook

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Book can be purchased at [www.lulu.com/leisureguy](http://www.lulu.com/leisureguy)

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## Introduction

This is not a cookbook but a book *about* cooking. It contains a few recipes, but primarily it's a deconstruction of cooking. It describes the tools, ideas, techniques, foods, and requirements involved in cooking so that you can then pick and choose among them to create your own recipes and your own style of cooking. I write from my own knowledge, experience, judgments, tastes, and preferences, but I do include links to references so you can confirm what I say.

### Who you are

The reader I have in mind enjoys experimentation and exploration. This reader may or may not be experienced in the kitchen, but is willing to try new approaches and to learn, with an aim not to amaze friends with exhibition cooking but to successfully prepare satisfying and nutritious meals without a lot of bother. The ideal reader is willing to try new foods.

By treating the elements of cooking separately, I believe the purposes of the elements can be more easily understood, so that you can then apply them appropriately in creating a new dish, cooking a new food, and the like.

### Cooking for one & two

I cook mainly for myself, though the recipes I give are easily increased. The equipment I use generally will serve for any small family. All recipes are (for me) a pleasure to make and to eat.

### My experience

I started cooking early—I recall that I burned my little finger cooking a steak (with my mother's guidance) at around age 4. My mother's family were all cooks, and I remember from an early age watching my mother and uncle sitting around a jar of prepared dressing, dipping their forks into it and tasting as they deconstructed it. "There's a little mustard in this." Taste. "Yes, mustard and some cayenne." And so on.

They taught me to taste, and that's the basis of cooking: being able to taste what you're fixing and deciding what it needs or would profit from. I recall another scene, me with my kids in the garden, giving them each a leaf of basil to chew. "That's basil." Chew, thoughtful looks. "And this is mint." Chew, more thoughtful looks. "And this is parsley." Chew. Etc.

I encourage you to become more aware of tastes and flavors and to taste and try new foods regularly. Part of dining in a family of cooks is that all foods are of interest and worth trying. To this day, if I'm in a restaurant and spot something on the menu that I've never had, I'll order that. And for a long time I tried to buy a fruit or vegetable new to me on every trip to the supermarket.

I continue my food and recipe explorations and blog about them from time to time in my blog: <http://leisureguy.wordpress.com> You can search the blog entries by category—either by clicking the category in the category list at the right, or by including the category in the URL,

as <http://leisureguy.wordpress.com/category/recipescooking/> (See below for how to make these links clickable as you read.)

## **My tastes**

My own tastes now incline toward the spicy and the savory. I don't much care for the sweet, though certain desserts can still lure me. I enjoy—as who doesn't?—the taste of cooked fat: the succulent rib-eye, the exquisite pork roast, and so on. I love vegetables of all sorts, cooked in various ways: steam, roasted, sautéed, raw, and the like. And I enjoy an occasional touch of the bitter: lemon slices cooked with chicken, bitter melon in a stir-fry.

An omnivore, I like meats, particularly those with a strong and distinctive taste: beef or lamb shank or oxtail, for example; and I greatly enjoy offal: tongue, heart, kidney, tripe, sweetbreads (thymus), mountain oysters (testicles), and the like. Meats such as shank and oxtail, which require long, slow cooking, can make dishes that taste wonderful.

## **My dietary requirements**

I am diabetic (type 2) and overweight, and that shapes much of my diet: I avoid high-glycemic foods, which would quickly raise my glucose. I skip desserts, use no sugar, and take care to get 40-45 grams of fiber a day. I also prefer whole grains, but that I think is as much a preference of taste as a necessity: whole grains have a good flavor and a chewy mouthfeel.

I eat treyf, so if you keep kosher or halal, you'll have to make the appropriate adjustments. I tend toward eating generous amounts of fruit and vegetables, and I like a vegetarian chili—in fact, it's vegan, now that I think about it, though I often have it with grated cheese or yogurt (non-vegan).

I try to follow the law of the kid's plate: servings sized to fit the little compartments, with the large compartment (one-half the plate) filled with vegetables, one small compartment (one-quarter the plate) with a carbohydrate, such as whole-grain pasta, and the other small compartment (one-quarter the plate) with a protein, such as a piece of chicken or fish.

## **Your contributions**

As you read, you may occasionally find things omitted, unclear, misleading, or just plain wrong. It is also likely that, over time, some of the links will stop working due to link-rot. Let me know of any such problems, and I'll make the necessary adjustments and put up a new version. Thus the book will evolve, with your help.

The early readers—Mel Orwig, Ethan Ham, Joel Steenis, and The Wife—have already contributed significantly to the book. Their suggestions regarding format and content and their eagle eyes spotting errors and omissions have greatly improved the book. I appreciate their help and thank them for their help. In some cases, I have gone my own way, but for what I accepted, I (and you) owe them many thanks.

Any remaining problems with the book and the text are solely due to me, and your comments and suggestions will help me polish the book further.



## How to use the links in the text

You'll notice that links (colored blue) appear in the text. **You can click these links to go directly to the Web site** (or, in the case of email addresses, to start an email). **Adobe Reader** offers this:

Note: ... You must have the "Automatically Detect URLs From Text" option selected in the General preferences [under Edit] for a link to work correctly.

Choose the Select tool .

Position the pointer over the linked area on the page until the pointer changes to the hand with a pointing finger. A plus sign (+) or a w appears within the hand if the link points to the web. Then click the link.

If you, like me, use **Foxit PDF Reader** (free at <http://tinyurl.com/4a4a6>), it's very much the same: go to Edit, Preferences, General, and make sure that "Create links from URLs" is checked. Then click the "Hand" button in the reading screen, and when you position the hand on a blue link, you can click it to go to that URL in your browser (or to start an email if the link is an email address).

The Table of Contents is hyperlinked, enabling you to click an entry in the TOC and jump directly to the appropriate place in the text.

From time to time, check my blog at <http://tinyurl.com/yr5uy> where I will post any updates or additional thoughts.

## Thank you

Thank you for purchasing this book. I hope that you will find it enjoyable and useful. If you feel so inclined, please post a review. If you want to recommend the book to your friends—and I hope that you will—send them the URL ([www.lulu.com/leisureguy](http://www.lulu.com/leisureguy)) where they can buy the book if it appeals to them.

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## Measuring

The first step in cooking is measurement, and here I list the tools I have found most useful, including links to sources. Since estimating is useful, I'll speak also about that.

### Estimating

In many cases you will find it easier to estimate than to measure accurately, and with experience you'll know whether you can get away for it. If you're making a small terrine that calls for 1/4 teaspoon Tabasco, you probably should measure. If you're making a 4-quart stew that calls for the same amount, be skeptical and dash in as much Tabasco as seems right.

So read recipes with a skeptical eye, looking for changes that will make the recipe more appealing to you and also for possible errors—if the recipe calls for 2 cups of curry powder, it's wrong: 2 teaspoons or 2 tablespoons is probably the amount intended.

You can practice estimating by measuring 1 teaspoon (tsp) or 1 tablespoon (Tbsp) of (say) salt into the palm of your hand before adding it to the dish. You will quickly get a sense of that amount and can skip using measuring spoons in many cases.

### Time

Time is a basic measurement, and the one measurement which it's unwise to estimate without a measuring device—especially if the dish you're cooking will cook for a long time. It's no fun to be notified via the smoke alarm that time has gotten away from you and your dinner is ruined. So get a timer.

The timer I like best is shown at right: the Pyrex Programmable Timer, \$20 at <http://tinyurl.com/2famyn>. This timer has four times—T1, T2, T3, and T4—and that's extremely useful: it's common to need multiple timers, since you will often have something cooking in the oven and one or two more things cooking on the range.



### Temperature

Temperature is a basic measurement, especially for roasting, when two temperatures are of interest: the temperature of the oven, and the internal temperature of the meat being roasted.

Oven temperatures are indicated on the oven control, but that may or may not be accurate. It's a very good idea to check, and an oven thermometer makes that easy. This one, for example, is only \$5 and is easy to read (see <http://tinyurl.com/ynokx5>). It can be hung from the oven rack or placed upon it. You should check the accuracy of your oven's temperature control periodically and also at different temperatures. For example, the control may be accurate at 275° and inaccurate at 400° or vice versa.



For checking the internal temperature of the meat being roasted, I have found the talking thermometer to be unparalleled: you no longer have to worry about measuring the time—instead, you can see the degree of doneness directly by looking at the temperature, without opening the oven door or pulling out the roasting pan. Moreover, the talking thermometer will announce when the meat is done. Wireless models are available, but I like the solidity of the direct cable connection, as in the one shown, which is \$25 at <http://tinyurl.com/yogux2>. It's very nice to be able to relax with a book and hear from the kitchen a voice saying that the roast will be done in 20 minutes. (Wireless may work fine; I'm just exposing my own biases. Check reviews.)



From time to time you have to determine the temperature of some fluid (syrup, fat, water, etc.), and a quick-reading and accurate digital thermometer is very handy. A properly designed thermometer can also quickly take the temperature of (say) a roast that you're cooking covered on an outdoor grill. There's quite a variety of these, but I've had a Thermapen for years and like it a lot. It's highly accurate over a great range, is quick-reading, stores well, and is durable. <http://tinyurl.com/3ex2tl>



## Length

A 6-inch ruler is generally adequate for cooking measurements—a steak 2" thick, slices 1/2" thick, eggplant cut into 1" cubes, and the like. You will find that you will quickly be able to estimate such measurements, but an occasional glance at a ruler is helpful.

## Weight

Strangely enough, it is not unusual to find a kitchen that lacks an accurate scale, even though a scale is a basic measuring device. I like a digital scale that is accurate to 0.1 oz, which allows it also to be a postal scale. (Avoid scales that read in fractional measurements.) The one shown measures up to 11 pounds in 0.1 ounce increments, and it can also measure metrically in grams. It uses 2 AA batteries, a convenience when the batteries must be replaced: you don't need a trip to Radio Shack to get new batteries. It's \$25 at <http://tinyurl.com/26w2bk>.



## Volume

Volume is the most frequent measurement in cooking: the teaspoon, the tablespoon, the cup. The "ounce" in volume measure is the fluid ounce, not the avoirdupois ounce (weight). And despite the name "fluid ounce," the volume measured is often of dry ingredients: spices, sugar, salt, flour (also measured by weight, especially in Europe), and the like. Some equivalences you should know so well that they are second nature:

1 tsp	=	1/3 Tbsp
3 tsp	=	1 Tbsp
2 Tbsp	=	1 fluid ounce (fl oz)
4 Tbsp	=	1/4 cup (US)
8 fl. oz	=	1 cup (US—Imperial cup is 10 fl. oz)
2 cups	=	1 pint
2 pints	=	1 quart (qt)
4 quarts	=	1 gallon

Because I measure both liquid and dry ingredients, I have two sets of measuring spoons. That way, when I measure 1 Tbsp of oil and then 1 Tbsp of curry powder, I don't have to clean out a spoon: I just use the other tablespoon, which still is dry. And if 2 Tbsp of coconut milk is next called for, I use the spoon that just measured the oil (and no need to clean it out before measuring the coconut milk).

If you go looking at stores like Williams-Sonoma, Sur la Table, Chef's Catalog, and Bakers Catalog, in person or on-line, you will find a great variety of spoons. I prefer stainless steel to plastic (which breaks and melts). I suggest that you acquire two sets, each with the following spoons:

1. 1/4 tsp
2. 1/2 tsp
3. 1 tsp
4. 1 1/2 tsp (usually labeled "1/2 Tbsp")
5. 2 tsp
6. 1 Tbsp
7. 1 1/2 Tbsp
8. 2 Tbsp

You may not find a set with all of those, but some sets are designed to fill the gaps—for example, I got a set that consisted of three measures—2 tsp, 1 1/2 Tbsp, and 2 Tbsp—that completed the set I already had.

Some sets include 1/8 tsp, which is unnecessary—for that measure you can use a pinch. I have a couple of sets of the sizes listed above, and I find that I use the odd ones—2 tsp, 1/2 Tbsp, 1 1/2 Tbsp, 2 Tbsp—more than you would think. For example, when a recipe calls for 3 Tbsp of something, it's much easier to measure twice with the 1 1/2 Tbsp spoon than to use two different spoons. (For the same reason I like the 1/2 Tbsp measuring spoon: it's easier than using the 1 tsp and the 1/2 tsp spoons.)

Two sets of measuring spoons save time and make measuring easier.

Besides measuring spoons, I have two sets of measuring cups, one for dry ingredients, one for liquid. The two are designed differently: dry measuring cups are designed so that you can run a straightedge across the top of the cup to get an exact measure by pushing off the excess. And dry measuring cups are usually opaque and do not bother to mark fractional amounts within the measuring cup, unlike the liquid measuring cups.

For dry measuring cups, I suggest a stainless steel set containing these sizes:

1. 1/8 cup
2. 1/4 cup
3. 1/3 cup
4. 1/2 cup
5. 2/3 cup
6. 3/4 cup
7. 1 cup
8. 1 1/2 cup
9. 2-cup.



The 1/8 cup is not really necessary—it's the same as the 2 Tbsp measure—but it is often included in sets that contain the other sizes. (It's the size of a coffee measure.) The set of cups pictured above, from at King Arthur Flour (<http://tinyurl.com/397kp9>), comes with most of the measuring spoons you need for one set of spoons.

For liquid measuring cups, the best choice (it seems to me) are the Oxo measuring cups shown in the photo. These allow you to read the measurements from the top or the side. The cups nest and can handle boiling water. In addition to those, Oxo also makes a 1/4 cup liquid measuring cup that I find to be frequently useful. The set of three at the right are \$20 from

<http://tinyurl.com/3czeo2>



## Cutting

A basic part of food preparation is cutting, in all its variations (chopping, mincing, slicing, julienne, and the like). I'll talk first about the cutting tools, and then about their use.

### Sharpening

Regardless of your cutting tool, you'll need to keep it sharp. A dull knife is dangerous—it tends to slip—as well as being unpleasant to use. Sensible use of a steel can help the knife hold the edge (the steel straightens the edge where its thin metal has been bent over) and a good cutting board (wood or soft plastic) can also help maintain the edge. But sooner or later you'll need to sharpen the knife. I have found that the Chef's Choice International 110 Knife Sharpener (pictured—see <http://tinyurl.com/2y6mtd>) works well for me, but I also have a Japanese water stone and use that on some knives: it takes more patience and practice, but it produces a lovely edge. Sharpening a knife by hand does require that you keep the angle of the blade absolutely consistent as you work—not easy, which is why the Chef's Choice is a good thing to have: it provides angle control.



I would, by the way, avoid the more ferocious versions of the Chef's Choice sharpeners—they can quickly and all too easily grind away too much of the knife.

You can find more information on knife sharpening at <http://tinyurl.com/jnjvm> and <http://tinyurl.com/22pmxm>. The first link has excellent instructions on using the steel.

Generally speaking, a carbon-steel knife (not rustproof or stainproof) can take a sharper edge than stainless, but requires more care (wiping knife dry after each use) and more frequent sharpening—and more use of the steel between sharpening.

### Chinese knife

The basic knife that I recommend—the equivalent of the chef's knife—is the Chinese knife, shaped like a cleaver. It is, however, a *knife* and not a cleaver: intended to cut, not chop through bone. (If you want to go with a regular chef's knife, I recommend Wüsthof over Henckels, and an 8" or 9" blade is a good size. I found that Wüsthof will take and hold a sharper edge than Henckels. I use the Classic line of Wüsthof knives.)



Once I started using the Chinese knife, I discontinued using the chef's knife: the Chinese knife is as sharp, is as easy to handle, and allows you to use the side to crush (garlic cloves, for instance) and to scoop up the things you just chopped to transfer them to the pan, as a spatula. You can use the back to pound and tenderize meat. It's a great knife—and it's inexpensive: the Dexter-Russell S5198, the knife I recommend, is \$40 or less. (You can search for better prices using Google.) Here it is on Amazon.com: <http://tinyurl.com/24b9sj>.



## Boning knife

A boning knife has a long thin blade and is indispensable for cutting meat—slicing it, cubing it, freeing it from the bone, whatever. I have found myself reaching for this knife whenever I'm working with meat.

The one I use is the Forschner 6" Flexible Boning Knife with Fibrox Handle, as pictured (<http://tinyurl.com/yww7lc>). It has a non-slip handle, and the blade, though called "flexible," is stiff enough for efficient use.



## Utility knife

In addition to the two knives listed above, you will need a utility knife—something less specialized, perhaps. I really like the knife pictured, which has a carbon-steel blade (that is, *not* stainless steel and thus must be wiped clean after each use—and if you should ever see spots of rust or stain on the blade, Maas metal polish in the tube will do a great job of removing them). The knife is extremely sharp and also inexpensive: \$35 at <http://tinyurl.com/yzvk37>.



On the other hand, you might want something a little more carefree. I find that I frequently reach for my Wüsthof Classic 6" sandwich knife. But: \$70. It's available from Amazon.com and other on-line vendors. And, of course, it's always worth checking eBay.

Another slender knife is this 6" Yanagiba knife by Kershaw, a single-bevel knife: one side is perfectly straight, the other has an angle to provide the cutting edge. This design allows for precise cuts—as for cutting sushi.



<http://tinyurl.com/3a4ob5>

## Paring knife

The paring knife trims and peels things: an easily maneuvered, short, sharp blade is ideal. I like the Wüsthof Classic 2 3/4" Fluting Knife

(<http://tinyurl.com/2pmynx>). And you can see a great variety of paring knives—straight, bird's beak, thin,

thick—at <http://tinyurl.com/3bf2td>. For a carbon-steel knife, the Tosagata Hocho 4" Paring Knife (pictured)—\$28 at <http://tinyurl.com/32zfu5>—is a fine knife.



You may well end up owning more than one paring knife, finding different sizes work well for different purposes.

## Carving knife

When you serve a roast or a fowl, a carving knife is needed: its long sharp blade makes slicing easy. A carving knife is often sold as a set with a carving fork, as in the Wüsthof set illustrated. It's likely that you

will use the carving set only occasionally, but on those occasions you may well have an audience. A very sharp carving knife is definitely an asset. <http://tinyurl.com/223n34>



## Bread knife

Whether you need a bread knife depends on the type of bread you eat: uncut loaves, bagels, and the like demand a good bread knife. The one I particularly like is the Wüsthof offset bread knife with a reverse serration: the serrations are round instead of pointed. (See close-up of blade.) In addition, the blade is offset so that your knuckles don't strike the cutting board when the bagel finally yields. <http://tinyurl.com/ys9uu3>



## Electric knives

Electric knives are available. I don't think much of them: too heavy and bulky and no substitute for a well-sharpened knife wielded by hand. You might want to try one if you find it cheap at a garage sale, but don't have your hopes up.

## Mandoline

The mandoline is a cutting machine for rapidly producing a profusion of perfectly uniform slices from cucumbers, squash, carrots, or what have you. They are handy to have around, and in recent years the design has greatly advanced over the old standard. The one shown, for example, is by Zyliss and seems quite nice. <http://tinyurl.com/2b3cgd>. I have a Rösle version, the Adjustable Hand-Held Slicer, that works on the same principle and, being flat, is somewhat easier to store—but it costs twice as much. Oxo has several nice-looking models at reasonable prices, including one that's hand-held: <http://tinyurl.com/34c5hg>.



Because you're simply pushing the food across the blade, the blade must be extremely sharp to do its job. And the little handguard/food-pusher is awkward, so one tends to get in a hurry and put it aside. The danger, then, is slicing off parts of your fingers. So do what I do, and wear a **cut-resistant glove**. <http://tinyurl.com/2fug6k> You need but one glove—for the hand doing the pushing—and it works like a charm. The best cut-resistant gloves are made of Spectra, and are not expensive: less than \$17. You can see a good one at <http://tinyurl.com/yqc2hv>.

## Scissors

Many cutting jobs fall to scissors/shears—either regular scissors such as you would use at your desk or on fabric, and heavier poultry shears. For example, if I am cooking a recipe that calls for a 28-oz can of Italian plum tomatoes and asks me to chop the tomatoes, I instead remove the lid of the can and use stainless-steel scissors to slice the tomatoes into pieces. When I dump the can into the pot, I finish the job on the tomatoes that were at the bottom, again using the scissors. Also, when you are to chop parsley or cilantro over some dish, it's convenient to use the scissors to cut leaves from the bunch.

Poultry shears are very nice in preparing chicken and other poultry, in cutting off wingtips, cutting pieces apart, and spatchcocking a chicken (see <http://tinyurl.com/2tyw8y>).



## Can opener

When you open a can, it's nice not to have a sharp edge. I use the can opener pictured at the right: the Kuhn Rikon Safety Lid Lifter Deluxe Can Opener, \$25 at Amazon.com <http://tinyurl.com/2dx6r9> The opener's turning handle provides enough leverage to make the task easy, and the device includes a little gripper to help lift off the lid. The opened can has no sharp edges at all, and the lid can be put back on if you store the can in the refrigerator—the lid doesn't reattach, of course, but it still seals.



## Microplane

The Microplane was a woodshop tool—an improved rasp—but someone immediately saw its application in the kitchen, where it readily produces a pile of zest from a citrus fruit (lemon, lime, orange) and can also grate fresh ginger, horseradish root, nutmeg, Parmesan or Romano cheese, and so on. Good to have on hand. This model works well: <http://tinyurl.com/y6cnl9>

## Chopper

Sometimes having a Zyliss chopper is quite handy: for mincing a handful of peeled garlic cloves or shallot bulbs, or for reducing ginger to small (but detectable) pieces, and such tasks. <http://tinyurl.com/3c8g7b>

## Garlic Press

The garlic press is not exactly a cutting tool, but it serves in place of mincing the garlic. If you're going to sauté the garlic, it's better to mince: the crushed garlic cooks too quickly and is easily burned. But if you're adding garlic to a sauce, soup, or stew, crushing it works fine. I have found this Zyliss garlic press, with its hinged plunger, to work best of any I've tried, but recently I've read strong recommendations for the Rösle garlic press—and, based on my experience with Rösle products, I believe the recommendations. So I would definitely take a look at that one. Check them out for yourself: Rösle garlic press: <http://tinyurl.com/2tgeue> and the Zyliss garlic press: <http://tinyurl.com/3xjd7v>



## Citrus Press

So long as we're squeezing things, let me recommend this stainless citrus press by Norpro. It's \$25, and you can readily find cheaper enameled-aluminum versions—but the enamel eventually starts peeling off and breaking away, whereas the stainless stays bright and shiny forever. This Norpro is worth the money. I use it constantly to squeeze lemons and limes. <http://tinyurl.com/2nurz5>



## Corn Zipper

I like to use fresh corn in cooking, which means I separate the kernels from the cob. I've used a knife, but it's awkward and I always feeling that I left the best part of kernel on the cob—that, or the knife cuts into the cob. But then I found this Kuhn Rikon Corn Zipper, and it works like a charm. You can buy it various places, including <http://tinyurl.com/38h328>



## Other specialty cutting tools

There are a variety of specialty slicers that might find their way into your drawer of kitchen tools:

**Cheese slicer** — One reason the boning knife works better at cutting through a roast than the Chinese knife is that the Chinese knife is too wide and creates too much friction with the meat being cut: the meat “grabs” the knife and doesn’t allow the cutting to proceed. But the boning knife, with a narrower blade, is not gripped so tightly and thus cuts more easily.

The problem is compounded with cutting cheese, which can lock onto the sides of the blade with a death grip. Best would be a blade so narrow that it consists only of the edge, and that’s what a cheese slicer is: a taut wire, acting as the edge of a blade. Cheese slicers come in various formats, and if you’re a cheese eater, you’ll want one. (The same idea lies behind the use of stretched dental floss to cut a cheesecake.)

**Egg slicer** — The egg slicer also uses only an edge—that is, a taut wire—but the wire in this case is stretched into shapes that are useful for cutting hard-boiled eggs (see photo at the right). The part of the egg slicer that cuts the egg into plane slices works also as a **mushroom slicer**. This one is \$2.75 at <http://tinyurl.com/25ld88>



**Avocado slicer** — I’ve seen but not used an avocado slicer: you cut the avocado in half lengthways, remove the pit, and then use the tool to simultaneously remove the meat and slice it into long slices. Useful if you often eat sliced avocados. You can find several models. This one costs the least: <http://tinyurl.com/2zro5p>



**Peeler** — Peelers are used to strip the peeling from apples, carrots, turnips, potatoes, and the like—more efficient and effective than using a paring knife. But since I eat the peelings of apples, carrots, turnips, potatoes, and the like, I seldom use the peeler. Still: I do have one for the rare occasions when I need it.

**Mango pitter** — I received a mango pitter as a gift: it slices the mango in half and simultaneously slices the meat of the mango away from the oblong pit. It’s then easy to remove the meat from the peel. (Cut the meat to the peel but not through the peel, both lengthwise and across, and then turn the peel inside out, as it were.) Very nice if you like mangoes, which I do. <http://tinyurl.com/ywj6et>

**Egg piercer** — Not exactly a cutting tool, the egg piercer is used to make a small perforation in the large end of the egg’s shell before simmering to make hard-boiled or soft-boiled eggs. The hole permits the internal air to escape and prevents the shell’s cracking. An inexpensive tool that’s useful if you eat eggs. <http://tinyurl.com/3aulru>

## Using the tools

Now that we've looked at the tools, a few comments on their use. For some, the use is evident from above: you zip or squeeze or press or whatever. But some actions are not so evident.

Holding the knife, for example: hold the handle with your back three fingers, and hold the blade between thumb and forefinger: this gives you the best control.

Also, “chopping” sounds as though you use the knife like an ax: bring it down sharply on the carrot or cabbage or whatever. But that would ruin the edge and risk an accident. Instead, you place the knife's edge on the food and exert downward pressure *while you pull or push the knife slightly*. That is, you don't press straight down through the carrot, celery, or cabbage, but instead slide the knife a bit as you press down. This, you will find, is much easier and quicker than straight downward pressure: it exploits the sharpness of the knife.

Onions are best chopped by peeling the onion—often easiest if you cut off the top and the bottom of the bulb, and then set the onion on one of the flat ends and cut vertically through it, to reduce it to two halves. After the thin, papery outer layers are removed, put the onion hemisphere on its flat side and slice through it along the lines of latitude, at whatever width you want. Then cut the longitudinal slices, slanting the knife toward the center axis, and the onion is chopped—to be scooped up onto the flat side of your Chinese knife.

Mincing is simply chopping very finely. You can use something like the Zyliss chopper or use the knife, cutting the item into pieces and then cutting those again and again.

Slicing is straightforward: like chopping as described above, but the pushing and/or pulling of the knife is more pronounced. The boning knife is the best tool to use for slicing raw meat, as pointed out above. For example, to create strips for stir-fry or for beef Stroganov, slice the meat thinly, and then stack the slices and cut them to produce the strips you want.

A whole raw chicken (or even a turkey) can be spatchcocked (<http://tinyurl.com/2tyw8y>) to make cooking easier, especially if you're going to grill the chicken. Nowadays I almost always spatchcock a whole chicken, even for roasting in the oven (generally after marinating the spatchcocked chicken).

For slicing cooked meat, particularly fowl and roasts, the carving knife (and fork) would be the tool of choice. If the knife is sharp, long smooth slicing strokes will carry away neat slices. For carving techniques, you can find illustrated guides on the Web—for example:

Carving a chicken (video): <http://tinyurl.com/225waz>

Carving chicken or turkey: <http://tinyurl.com/cj8m8>, <http://tinyurl.com/yo33nf>

Carving a roast: <http://tinyurl.com/yqk2tn>, <http://tinyurl.com/ypx6mf>

You can readily find books devoted to knife skills, and if you're interested, it's worth looking for those. One that will be published in March 2008 looks quite promising: *Mastering Knife Skills: The Essential Guide to the Most Important Tools in Your Kitchen*, by Norman Weinstein (<http://tinyurl.com/27jsve>). *Knife Skills Illustrated: A User's Manual*, by Peter Hertzmann, (<http://tinyurl.com/27nhaa>) uses drawings rather than photographs and includes instructions for both left-handed and right-handed cooks.

## Appliances

In addition to the hand tools described above, a kitchen usually has a variety of electrical appliances. I discuss those here. Some (in my opinion and experience) are unnecessary.

### Microwaving

If you are cooking—that is, preparing food from scratch—a microwave oven can be helpful for the time-constrained. It's overkill, though, if it's used mainly to heat cups of water and cook frozen dinners (the ingredients of which are not in your best interest). Microwave popcorn is particularly foul—lots of saturated fat plus very expensive per batch. ☹ Better if you make your own microwave popcorn: much cheaper and more healthful. <http://tinyurl.com/yvxwzn> Or you can get a Whirley-Pop, which makes popcorn quite quickly and easily. See <http://tinyurl.com/2ajbo7>



If you do decide to get a microwave, observe its limitations—it won't roast potatoes, for example. It will steam them, but a *roasted* potato requires a hot, dry oven still. And you must be careful about the containers you use in the microwave—not just not using metal, but avoiding some plastics whose chemicals will leach into the food. Best would be microwave-safe glass. Watch out also for cooking foods too long in the microwave and thus destroying most of their nutrients. And be careful about hot spots.

I don't have a microwave, primarily because of its destructive effect on nutrients. As noted in *New Scientist* (<http://tinyurl.com/yr4y5f>):

Cristina Garc'a-Viguera's team at CEBAS-CSIC, one of Spain's scientific research council centres, in Murcia, measured the levels of antioxidants such as flavonoids left in broccoli after steaming, pressure cooking, boiling or microwaving. Antioxidants protect our cells from damage by mopping up highly reactive chemicals called free radicals, reducing the risk of cancer and degenerative diseases. Steaming left antioxidants almost untouched, while microwaving virtually eliminated them, the team found (*Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, vol 83, p 1511).

Microwaves probably destroy more antioxidants because they generate higher temperatures, says Garc'a-Viguera. "Internal heating is much more damaging."

Pressure cooking and boiling have intermediate effects. Neither destroys as great a proportion of the antioxidants as microwaving. But many of the remaining antioxidants leach out into the water during cooking, leaving only 20 to 45 per cent of the levels found in raw broccoli.

### Mixing

If you bake, a good mixer is important. I don't bake, so I don't have a mixer. I have had a KitchenAid, which worked extremely well and was well made. I notice that King Arthur Flour now carries Cuisinart and Viking mixers, so perhaps these have improved over the years.

*Consumer Reports* at your local library rates mixers, and you might want to see what they think. *Cook's Illustrated* also tests and rates some appliances.

## Processing

I do have a food processor—a KitchenAid Model 670—and lately I've begun to use it more. Still, I would say it's not really necessary. It makes quick work of some jobs you can also do quite well by hand: slicing and grating. On the other hand, some things definitely seem to require a food processor—for example, I like to make chili-garlic paste from dried chilis, and that really requires a food processor.

My KitchenAid is very nice, but I would now get the KitchenAid Model 760 <http://tinyurl.com/2zzxsn>. That model has a large feeding tube, so bulky items don't require so much cutting to fit. (For example, I grate apples, and the larger feed tube would take an apple just cut in half.) The KitchenAid is very easy to use and very easy to clean. (I'm told that it's easier to clean than the Cuisinart, which started the product family.)

## Blending

A blender can be useful, especially if you like to make smoothies or smooth soups. They also don't take up much room, compared to the mixer and the food processor. I go through periods where I use mine a lot, but now it is stored away and not seeing much action. I like a plastic rather than a glass jar: plastic is lighter and doesn't shatter. I would say, though, that the blender is optional. If you want a brawny (and smart: it varies the speed automatically) blender, look at this: <http://tinyurl.com/ytteaz>. There are also immersion blenders, useful in blending directly in the pot or bowl (soups, hummus, etc.): <http://tinyurl.com/2dzzwz>.

## Slow cooking

A slow cooker is extremely nice for certain foods—beef shanks, for example, or oxtails, or beef short ribs. But once you know that the “low” setting corresponds to 200° and the “high” setting to 300°, you realize that you don't really need a slow cooker: you can use a covered pot in the oven, and even have the advantage of using whichever pot is the proper size and shape, whereas with the slow cooker you're limited to its crock or pot. It's true that an oven at 200° will use somewhat more electricity than a crockpot at 200°. Still, I find I prefer the oven.

## Steaming

A variety of appliances are available for steaming vegetables and for cooking rice. I've had electric vegetable steamers, and I find that for me they're not so good as the stovetop variety, where I have more control over timing. The rice cookers, on the other hand, can be very nice indeed if you eat rice regularly. The one shown (<http://tinyurl.com/2fvb82>) is a 5.5-cup model that uses fuzzy logic to determine when it's done. It will cook white rice, brown rice, rice porridge, and three other rice functions. (Note that it will also keep white rice, but not brown rice, warm for hours after the rice is done.) If you get one, consider also getting *The Ultimate*



*Rice Cooker Cookbook* (<http://tinyurl.com/yomp7m>) to maximize your use of it. It makes a dynamite risotto, for example.

## Boiling

Boiling-hot water is quite useful: rehydrating dried mushrooms and dried chilies, making tea, making coffee, making a cup of bouillon, and so on. I have two different appliances that I use to prepare boiling water. One is the Sunbeam Hot Shot (pictured), which brings a pint of water to 180° in 1 minute 57 seconds—I just timed it—and, by a happy coincidence, a pint of water is the exact amount I need for my cup of coffee: <http://tinyurl.com/24mw3q>. Unfortunately, 180° is not hot enough to brew coffee.



The other is an electric kettle—faster, more convenient, and more economical than boiling water in a kettle on the stove. I have an older Russell Hobbs model, but the Chef's Choice kettles seem better: <http://tinyurl.com/2979yd>. As you see at the link, they come in various models and sizes. I like the 1 1/3 quart size.

If you're a tea drinker—and if in particular you're a health-conscious green-tea (or, even better, **white-tea**) drinker, it's convenient to have a hot-water device that will deliver the water at the right temperature for the tea you're drinking. For a 6-oz cup of tea the guidelines are as shown in the table in Appendix 1. There are a couple of appliances that deliver water at a pre-set temperature. One is the 30-oz UtiliTEA kettle, which brings water to a selected temperature: <http://tinyurl.com/3cm6ug>.

The other option is one of the Zorijishi hot-water dispensers: <http://tinyurl.com/2gkf6b>. The computerized control maintains temperature at your choice of 175°, 195 °, or 208 ° F, with actual water temperature shown in an LCD display. One of these would be just the ticket if you drink a lot of tea and like to brew a fresh cup each time: water always hot and ready to brew, at the temperature that fits the tea you drink.

## Grinding

Certain foods are generally ground: coffee beans, for example, or black pepper. So a kitchen will have grinders of various kinds.

**Coffee grinder** — I drink coffee, and I find that buying whole beans and grinding them just before you brew the coffee does make a difference. The worst grinders are those with whirling blades, somewhat like a tiny blender or food processor: the grounds will be of uneven size and the coffee won't brew well. The best coffee grinders use conical burr grinders, which produce grounds of even size with little or no static electricity or heat. The Baratza Maestro Plus (at right) is \$150: <http://tinyurl.com/2off8p>, though with Google you can find it at a lower price. I find it to be entirely satisfactory.



**Pepper mill** — Grinding whole peppercorns immediately before use makes a significant difference: more flavor, more fragrance, more taste. The best pepper mill I have found is the Unicorn Magnum Plus (\$45, <http://tinyurl.com/2t7az7>),



but it has two drawbacks: (1) the top has no corrugations or chequering, so if your hands are damp, it's impossible to turn; and (2) the rotating door, located immediately below the top, opens in the same direction as you turn the top, so it's very easy to open the door accidentally while grinding and spill peppercorns all over the floor. Fortunately, both problems have simple solutions: wrap a thick rubber band around the top and leave it there. That will provide a grip. And apply a piece of packing tape across the door on the rotating cover. That will keep the cover from rotating accidentally. (See photo.)



**Herbs & spices** — You can buy some spices in their own grinders/mills, and of course a pepper mill can always be repurposed to grind the spice of the moment. Nutmeg grinders are readily available (and freshly ground nutmeg has it all over packaged ground nutmeg, just as you thought). But most herbs and spices get ground in a mortar and pestle, a useful accessory to have and available in most kitchen shops.

**Avocados** — Avocados are ground/crushed for guacamole, and the best for that is the *molcajete* (mortar) and *tejolote* (pestle)—photo at right. The molcajete works extremely well and you can prepare a batch of guacamole in three or four minutes. The instrument and recipe can both be found at <http://tinyurl.com/3x36m7>, but get it only if you often make guacamole.



## Making coffee

I've tried several coffeemakers. First was an automatic drip coffee maker. I liked it because it used a thermal carafe, so that the coffee once made was not constantly heated. Moreover, the coffee maker soaked the grounds in hot water for a minute before letting the coffee start to drip through. The result was very good coffee, but it also took up a lot of room on the counter. It was a Krups (at left), it's still sold by Hammacher-Schlemmer: <http://tinyurl.com/34ju5c>



I then got a French press: the Bodum Columbia 12-cup stainless-steel vacuum French press (at right). Again, great coffee, but again more than I needed. This one is available in various places at various prices, so a Google search is advised if you want to get one. Or Amazon has it: <http://tinyurl.com/2r73ke>



So finally I settled on an inexpensive plastic drip holder that sat on the cup, accepted a paper filter, and made a cup at a time. That's what I'm using now. The Sunbeam Hot Shot (<http://tinyurl.com/29jph4>) brings a pint of water to boiling within a minute or two. Grind the coffee, put holder, filter, and grounds on the cup, and pour on the water. Nothing to it.

However, Corby Kummer's article in the December 2007 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, in which he discusses the lighter and more complexly flavored roasts of coffee from

TerroirCoffee.com, and the ideal coffeemaker for them, the Technivorm, (see photo at right) has given me pause. You can find more information at <http://tinyurl.com/2a4tgs> and <http://tinyurl.com/yqq37q>.

Besides the Technivorms from Terroir Coffee, check out Sweet Maria's for a broad range of coffee roasting, grinding, and brewing equipment and many types of green coffee beans ready to be roasted. In particular, their 1-liter Technivorm Model KBTS (with vacuum carafe) looks just right for me: <http://tinyurl.com/otceq>.

If you like coffee, try this Deborah Madison recipe from *This Can't Be Tofu*:



### Iced Coffee Frappe

- 1 cup cold strong coffee or espresso
- 1/2 cup soy milk
- 1/3 cup soft silken tofu
- 3 ice cubes
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 Tbs brown sugar

Combine everything in the blender and purée until smooth.

Variations: pinch of cinnamon or nutmeg; vanilla; hazelnut or almond syrup; chocolate syrup; coconut milk; a big scoop of vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt; a banana



## Containing

Containers are essential unless you want stuff running all over the place. Some containers (bowls) you use to prepare or serve food, some containers (pots, pans) you use to cook food, and some containers (Rubbermaid) you use to store food. I'll talk about all of them.

### Prep

I use a set of six nesting stainless steel Rösle mixing bowls. The largest is used mostly for popcorn and for making salads, some of which turn out to be quite large. The others find a variety of uses and all see plenty of action. You can find them at various places, and Sur le Table sells the bowls individually, so that you can accumulate them over time: <http://tinyurl.com/3xptgw>

These bowls are deep: the hemispherical part of the bowl is at the bottom, and the straight collar extends well above that, so that whatever you're mixing in the bowl is unlikely to splash out.

You also might want a set of smaller bowls to contain chopped or minced ingredients that you prepare before you begin cooking: your mise en place (<http://tinyurl.com/2bd7zm>). You can use bowls from your kitchen, though it is handy to have a little set of nesting bowls, like these: <http://tinyurl.com/2vzg8u>



### Cooking

For cooking containers—pots and pans—I prefer stainless steel to aluminum by a long shot. I use All Clad Stainless, which has an aluminum core (though the exterior and interior surfaces are all stainless). All Clad is pricey, but on the other hand, it's a once-in-a-lifetime purchase and is extremely satisfying to use. (I bought a piece at a time over a few years.) The handles are riveted on, so there are no screws to work free and loosen the handles. The handles are metal, so the pan can be put in a hot oven or under the broiler. Not much sticks to smooth steel and, unlike with nonstick coatings, you can actually brown things. (Nonstick coatings act as an insulator that prevents good browning and searing.)

Moreover, cleanup is a snap with a stainless cleanser like Cameo, Barkeeper's Friend, or Kleen King. (These cleansers not only clean out the pot, they also remove any discoloration of the stainless from heating it too high.) I also use plastic SOS-Tuffy scratchy pads, which work like a charm—until, of course, a strand breaks free and the pad gradually unravels and dies. I like these so much that I buy them in bulk: <http://tinyurl.com/3777nq>



Use nylon or wood cooking utensils in stainless containers, including the Rösle bowls mentioned above: steel utensils scratch the finish, and although the marring is harmless, it doesn't look all that nice.

### Large sauté pan

My first large sauté pan was the All Clad Stainless 3-quart Sauté Pan with lid. (Just to emphasize: I do **not** like the non-stick pans: they won't sear meat well.) But then I decided to replace it with an All Clad Copper-Core 4-quart Sauté Pan with lid. I like the additional capacity of the 4-quart pan, but I don't see that the copper core really is worth the extra money. (I bought mine at a reduced price on eBay.) So I recommend the All Clad Stainless 4-quart Sauté Pan as your large sauté pan. Check Amazon and eBay for good buys on used All Clad pans throughout this category.



### Small sauté pan

The small sauté pan I recommend is the All Clad Stainless 2-quart Sauté Pan with lid. (Again: **not** non-stick.) This looks very like the photo above, except the 2 quart sauté pan lacks the helper handle. This is an introductory piece, so it is usually available at a good price. I use this pan almost daily. Both these sauté pans are thick and don't have “hot spots” that thinner pans suffer. The small sauté pan lid fits one of the Rösle mixing bowls above: very handy.

### Cast-iron skillet

A cast-iron skillet is useful for various things—and it's the one form of “non-stick” that's worthwhile. You can get a new one from Lodge, some of which are pre-seasoned (<http://tinyurl.com/29u7f6>). You can also explore eBay to find an old Griswold skillet. Some of those are available with lids, sometimes you buy the lid separately. In fact, I rarely use the lid. The skillet is used for steaks and for cornbread, mostly. More information on Griswold skillets here: <http://tinyurl.com/c8hpi> Go for a #9 or #10 (# roughly equals the diameter in inches).

### Oven-Grilled Steak

Heat cast-iron skillet in a 450-475° oven for 10 or 15 minutes, then drop a room-temperature, thick steak into it, preferably boneless rib-eye. Return the skillet to the oven for 4 minutes; take skillet out, turn steak over, and put the skillet back into the oven for 4 minutes more. A perfect steak with a great crust and juicy interior.

### Small nonstick skillet

Okay, **one** nonstick skillet might be useful for making scrambled or fried eggs. The All Clad Stainless 8” Nonstick Fry Pan is nice—but \$90. (The standard version of the same pan is \$50—see what nonstick costs?)

### Dutch oven

I use the All Clad Stainless 5.5-quart Dutch Oven quite frequently. (They also have a 7-quart, but the 5.5-quart is big enough for me.) The domed lid also fits the large sauté pan, and its flat lid fits the Dutch oven: very handy. Sometimes I have a mound of stuff in the large sauté pan (for example, a lot of greens I'm steaming) and the



domed lid helps, or the Dutch oven is not so full and using the flat lid makes it fit the oven easier.

The Dutch oven is what I most frequently use when I'm slow-cooking in a 200° oven overnight: more capacity than most slow cookers and easier to maneuver and clean.

### **Small pan**

A small (1.5-quart) pan is endlessly useful: simmering a little soup, warming things up, and so on. This size seems much more useful to me than the 1-quart or the 2-quart. (For larger amounts, see the “large pan” next. Shown is the All Clad Stainless 1.5-quart Saucepan with lid. This, like the 2-quart Sauté Pan, is an introductory piece and is typically sold at a good discount. Note that if you sometimes need a 2-quart pan, you can use the 2-quart sauté pan as a saucepan.



### **Large pan**

While the 1.5 quart size is useful, you also want a larger saucepan for making a good soup, cooking some pasta, and the like. I find the All Clad Stainless 3-quart Saucepan with lid is ideal: a good size, yet not too large. And the lid is the same lid as for the 2-quart sauté pan, a minor convenience. The model shown has the helper handle. If the thing is full, the total weight is around 11 pounds, which can seem like a lot if you have only the one handle. You can get it without the helper handle for \$5 less—not worth the savings. Better to have the helper handle.



### **Small pot**

Pans are good, but one also wants pots: cooking containers large enough that it requires two hands to lift them when they're full. (That's the way I think of them, anyway). The small pot I suggest is a 4-quart. It's in fact smaller than the Dutch oven, but of a different shape. I find myself using it frequently: braising things, making soups, cooking pasta, building stews, and so on. All Clad Stainless calls this one a 4-quart Casserole Pan: <http://tinyurl.com/yuh3mw>. By me, it's a pot.



### **Large pot**

The large pot, again All Clad Stainless, is taller than the small pot and is called a Stockpot. It is available in a 7-quart version and an 8-quart version and either is ample unless you're making serious stock, when you might want a 12-quart or 20-quart stockpot. The 7-quart, which I have, is here: <http://tinyurl.com/28whyd> and the 8-quart is here: <http://tinyurl.com/yrkc85> (They didn't offer the 8-quart when I got mine. I think that, were I buying it now, I would get the 8 quart. But check the height of your shelves as compared to the height of the pot.)

### Steamer

The best way to cook vegetables, in terms of preserving nutrients, is to steam them. Although electric steamers are available, I find that I much prefer steaming on the stove top, where I can more easily check progress and where I can steam more vegetables at a time.

Two options are readily available. The first is a small expanding stainless steel basket that fits in one of your pots. These are inexpensive and moderately satisfactory. One problem is that, when the vegetables are done,

it's not so easy to get the vegetables away from the hot water in the bottom of the pot: you can lift out the basket, but you're apt to spill vegetables. Still, it's a possibility, and it's inexpensive.



The other (and better) option is a stainless steel pot with steamer inserts. This is what I use, and it is excellent: it holds a lot of vegetables, and when you judge the vegetables are done, you just lift off that particular section and set it on the edge of the sink with no lid so the vegetables can cool rapidly and stop cooking. <http://tinyurl.com/2zk9yj>

### Pressure cooker

Pressure cookers work extremely well for some dishes—cooking the foods quickly and evenly. My eldest uses her pressure cookers frequently and swears by them. I don't use one, but then I'm retired and time is not a big issue. Kuhn-Rikon seems to make the best, and this 7-liter model should be able to cook anything you might want to try—and for some reason, it's substantially less costly than the 5-liter model. See <http://tinyurl.com/285gkm>



### Roasting pan

You need a pan for roasting meat and/or vegetables. All Clad makes an excellent roasting pan. The thick metal construction is good when you're using the pan on the burners (for example, to make gravy in the pan) or when you're cooking something heavy (for example, a 15-lb turkey). I also have a lighter and more easily handled pan for smaller tasks. Again, I recommend stainless steel.

You might want to have two roasting pans: a larger heavy one for (say) a large bird or roast or a great many vegetables, and a smaller light one for (say) fewer vegetables, just one squash, and the like. If you do get a large roasting pan, check dimensions to ensure that it will fit your oven, especially if you have an apartment-sized range. The 14"x11" All Clad Petite Roti roasting pan shown here works fine for me; a larger All Clad roasting pan wouldn't fit my oven. This one with a rack is at <http://tinyurl.com/2wkoz5>.



If you are roasting whole birds or cuts of meat, get a **carving board** with a groove around the edge to catch the juices. If you don't have a carving board, you'll try carving in the pan (ouch! The edge of the knife cuts into the pan, making a deep scratch and a dull knife.) or on a plate (ouch! The knife's edge hits the plate and curls over). Avoid these problems. Carving

boards are inexpensive and easy to store. Get one without the spikes—you don't want your knife hitting those, either. Here's a nice one for \$23:

<http://tinyurl.com/yqosfb>. Because carving boards are easy to store, you may want to have several, of different sizes for different purposes: enormous for a turkey, smaller for a roast, smaller yet for cheese.



### Broiling pan

Your range may or may not have a broiling pan: a shallow pan with a grid of some sort on top that holds the item being broiled and lets the juices collect in the pan below. If it doesn't have one, you can readily find them—stainless steel, naturally—in small or large size. Although I have one that's larger, I almost always use this small one: <http://tinyurl.com/2e2yk2>

### Baking sheet

An edged baking sheet is useful from time to time. Cleanup is easier if you place on a Silpat baking sheet (a flexible silicone sheet that washes easily and can be rolled up for storage—but don't fold it). See <http://tinyurl.com/2agjl5>



### Storing

Containers are also used for storing foods—leftovers and bulk foods, such as grains, seeds, and flours. Such containers must be airtight, and it's nice if they are sufficiently transparent so that you can see the type and amount of the contents. Even so, when I'm storing grains and such, I've found it convenient to label the contents—either I cut off the identifying label from the package and put it on top of the container's contents, or I use my little label maker (<http://tinyurl.com/yuds8l>) to make a label for the container.

The containers I mostly use are Rubbermaid plastic containers, in a fairly wide variety of shapes and sizes. One shelf in my kitchen cabinets holds the empties, crammed in stacked as best I can. My only requirement is that they don't fall out when the cabinet door is opened.

### Storing knives

Because the knife's sharp edge is fragile, you should store your knives in a way that protects the edge. This also means that you do not wash your knives in a dishwasher, but rather by hand. And you do not keep your knives in a drawer where they will bang about and where you may cut your hand as you grope for one.

The best way to keep your knives safe and sharp and conveniently at hand is to use a knife rack. There are magnetic knife racks—a bar you attach to the wall—that grips your knives magnetically by the blade and holds them ready for use. For some reason I don't like those. They will, of course, magnetize the knife blade, but why that should bother me I don't know. Still, I prefer the traditional wooden block, as pictured.



A few things to note about this knife block:

- The slots are horizontal, so the knife rests on the side of the blade, not the edge.
- It has room for a steel (the square hole in the upper left corner), but if you don't need that, the slot allows you to use it for a knife.
- It has a slot for kitchen/poultry shears (large slot at bottom).
- It costs only \$20: inexpensive compared to the cost of the knives it protects.  
<http://tinyurl.com/2sa4be>
- It has no slot that will fit the Chinese knife—indeed, I haven't found a knife block that will hold the Chinese knife. On the other hand, the Chinese knife is at home on the kitchen counter, since I use it constantly. You can also place it flat across the slanting back of the knife block, with the handle holding it in place.

Another way to protect the edges of your knives is to use edge-guard knife protectors (<http://tinyurl.com/3ynen5>), which come in various sizes. The one for the 8" knife would protect the edge of the Chinese knife (and, implicitly, also protect your hand).



## Handling

Prep work involves handling food in various ways—either directly, with your hands (as in separating egg yolks from the whites) or indirectly, though the use of some implement. This section is mainly devoted to the implements, but when you handle foods directly, disposable plastic gloves are handy (and inexpensive): they're sanitary and keep you from having to constantly wash stuff off your hands. Sometimes the gloves are essential, as when handling (say) chopped habanero peppers. <http://tinyurl.com/yplqxw>



## Stirring

Probably the most common task is stirring, which frequently also involves scraping (as the bottom of the pan when deglazing—see <http://tinyurl.com/yw8nho>). The most common stirring tool is the wooden spoon—but I have finally gotten rid of almost all my wooden spoons because I found the perfect stirring tool: a cherrywood spatula from [www.Woodspoons.com](http://www.Woodspoons.com). My ideal is a plain cherrywood spatula that's 12" long and 2.5" wide. This one's not shown on their current Web site, but you can email the craftsman and he'll make one for you. Get an extra—or two extra, even: you'll use it constantly.

The spatula shape does a much better job than a spoon at stirring/mixing, and the flat end is perfect for scraping (without scratching the pan). An alternative, which *is* available on the site, is the Spootle: a spatula with a spoon depression in it. You may find this even more useful than the plain spatula. You can see it at <http://tinyurl.com/ytzqq>



If you stir in a bowl—especially if you bake—a spoon shape could work better, and he has great-looking spoons as well. In fact, take some time to look around on the site: all sorts of wonderful tools.

## Whisking

Whisking mixes liquid ingredients easily and efficiently. You can also, of course, whisk egg whites (as in making a soufflé) or egg yolks and oil (as in making mayonnaise) or cream (as for whipped cream). But quite often you simply whisk together a salad dressing, or whisk cornstarch or flour into something to thicken it—gravy, or the stir-fry sauce.

Whisks come in various sizes and shapes. Two shapes will do for most situations. First is the regular balloon whisk, shown at right. You'll probably need two: large and small.



Second is a flat whisk, useful for whisking liquids in a sauté pan or skillet. They come in various designs, and I particularly like the one pictured at the left. <http://tinyurl.com/26csy8>



## Lifting

Lifting is a common cooking task: lifting a pan or pot, lifting its lid, lifting a roasted bird, and so on. Generally the only problem is that some things to be lifted are hot or heavy or both. The heat is held at bay by the use of good oven mitts—long enough to protect the wrists and lower forearms as well as your hands. The mitts should allow you to comfortably and securely hold a heavy 500° pan. I recommend the 17" Orka Pro Oven Mitt (Elbow Length). A pair costs almost \$80, but they provide real protection and will last a lifetime. Since they're waterproof, a splash of hot liquid onto them will not burn you (and thus probably cause you to drop the pan you're grasping). Here's one source: <http://tinyurl.com/26gdso>

I have a couple of very good leather hot pads. I use these to lift the lids of the pots and pans: since the lid and the lid's handle are metal, they get hot. The leather hot pads now are permanently shaped to grip the handle, so I simply leave them on the lids as I cook.

**Important:** When you lift a lid, lift it so that it faces away from you (the trapped steam then does not puff into your face) and hold the lid vertically over the pot so that the condensed steam inside the lid will drain back into the pot and not all over the range top.

In lifting a roast or bird, you can simply grasp it with the Orka mitts, or you can with forethought have placed it in a rack that provides handles for lifting. The one shown clearly holds two chickens, so it will handle a large turkey, a nice sized roast, and so on. <http://tinyurl.com/27wusm>



Another lifting tool that every kitchen needs is a pair of tongs. I have several, but the one I continue to use most is the cheapest and smallest: <http://tinyurl.com/2g4udo> It's just six inches long, gives me excellent control, and I very seldom need one of the larger tongs. It's 75¢ and I've had mine for 30 years.

## Tying and trussing

Kitchen string is used to truss a turkey or chicken: to tie the drumsticks together at the end, and to close the cavity by using turkey lacers (long steel pins that are pushed through the skin across the cavity opening) and then wrapping the string back and forth around them, somewhat like lacing up a shoe.

You also use kitchen string to bind together a roast that has been deboned, so that the meat fits solidly together rather than falling apart. String is also used to tie together stuffed meat—a stuffed flank steak, for example, or stuffed fish.



## Mashing

Starchy vegetables, once cooked, are often mashed, and a potato masher is perfect for the job. You can also use a potato ricer (next page), but that requires more storage room. The masher shown, the Oxo, is a good size and is strong enough that it won't be bent from the pressure you exert in doing the mashing. <http://tinyurl.com/2aj69b>





One advantage of the potato ricer (at right) is that it can also be used for other things—for example, squeezing the water out of cooked spinach when you're making a spinach soufflé. <http://tinyurl.com/2crvls>



## Pouring

Pouring is straightforward, unless you're pouring a liquid from a large container into a bottle. A funnel is extremely useful in such situations and saves much cleanup. I have a couple of regular funnels and one canning funnel (very large opening), all of which find regular use.

## Shaping

Shaping is occasionally required: for example, you will shape a meatloaf if you're cooking it in a roasting pan. The common tools to shape foods are the spatula (either metal or silicone) and the hands (in the disposable gloves). If you're making meatballs, using an ice-cream scoop can be handy. And if you're making a gelatin salad or a frozen concoction, you will probably use a mold.

## Squeezing

To squeeze the liquid out of something, you can use your hands (in the disposable gloves), an implement (like the potato ricer shown above, or like the citrus squeezer), or something like cheesecloth, which I use to squeeze the liquid from soaked bulgur, or from horseradish in making this sauce:

### Horseradish Sauce

1/4 cup bottled horseradish drained & squeezed dry in cheesecloth  
1 Tbs white wine vinegar  
1 tsp sugar  
1/4 tsp dry English mustard  
1/2 tsp salt  
1/2 tsp white pepper  
1/2 cup chilled heavy cream

In a small bowl, stir together all but cream until well blended. Whip cream until stiff (the cream, not you). Pour mixture over cream and fold together with rubber spatula lightly but thoroughly. Taste for seasoning. Use with roast beef, smoked trout or eel, grilled salmon, etc. The horseradish should be a jar from the refrigerated section.

## Crushing

If you enjoy a good Old Fashioned, as who does not, you'll want crushed ice. One way is to use an ice crusher, but you can also hold an ice cube in one hand and with the other give it a sharp rap with the back of a long spoon—a tablespoon or an iced-tea spoon. With a little practice, the cube will fall immediately into fragments.

You can also crush a garlic clove to peel it: break off the cloves to be peeled, cut off the little place where the clove was attached, and crush (gently) the clove with the side of your Chinese knife. The clove is then easily peeled and part-way to being minced.

If you have a garlic crusher, you crush the cloves without peeling them, but I find I prefer minced garlic: I can taste the small pieces of garlic better than if it were crushed.

## Washing

First, obviously, you wash your hands before beginning to cook or handle food. And you also wash the fruits and vegetables you buy. For that, you can buy special liquids, but *Cook's Illustrated* tested many ways of washing fruits and veggies, including those special liquids. The best way of all: a solution of 1 part vinegar to 3 parts water. You can put it in a spray bottle for things like apples, plums, and the like: spray on, dry off. For lettuce, broccoli, and that sort of thing, put the solution in a pot or the (clean) sink and let the veggies soak a bit after you swish them around, then rinse them under water. For root vegetables, use a vegetable brush.

Quinoa should be washed before cooking to remove the bitter coating. Just rinse it thoroughly in a strainer under running cold water, or swish it around in a bowl of cold water and then drain.

## Straining

Frequently you want to separate the cooking liquid from the cooked contents, either to use the contents (as with cooked beans) or to use the cooking liquid (as with a good stock) or, sometimes, both. A good strainer is what you need, and I find that it helps to have several sizes: small and very fine, for straining tea leaves from tea; a little larger but somewhat coarser, for straining things out of a jar—for example, pickled jalapeños, or olives; and fairly large, as for straining pasta after it's been boiled.

The cocktail strainer is a specialized strainer, useful if you enjoy a Martini:



### The Martini

The Martini is among the best of cocktails, if not the best. (Cocktails, unlike highballs, do not include water, juice, soda, etc.)

The Martini was so popular and well-known that Ian Fleming, to characterize James Bond as a person who flouted convention, had him favor a vodka Martini (a true Martini uses gin) and had it “shaken, not stirred.” Unfortunately, the “shaken, not stirred” line lived on in the public mind as Martini knowledge waned, so that today some believe that the Martini is *supposed* to be shaken and not stirred, a major mistake: if you use the Martini ingredients and shake rather than stir, you get not a Martini, but a Bradford, a drink that resembles the Martini except that it's polluted with tiny ice chips that melt rapidly and dilute the taste.

Here's the way to prepare a true Martini:

a) Put the Martini glass in the freezer well before the cocktail hour. This is important. (I keep a Martini glass in the freezer all the time.) If the glass is not

thoroughly cold, it will immediately warm the drink. (The shape of the Martini glass is, I speculate, to make the drink seem smaller (i.e., shallower) than it is, encouraging the drinker to believe that s/he is drinking less than s/he is.)

b) Get out the refrigerated olives and spear one or two with an appropriate implement (a small bamboo olive pick, a sterling silver olive pick, or even a toothpick).

c) Fill the pitcher or shaker with ice cubes—not shaved ice nor crushed ice, which would dilute the drink excessively. Use a lot of ice compared to the amount of gin and vermouth so that the liquids will be quickly chilled. Since refrigerator cubes will adsorb odors, they should be rinsed before use. (With adsorption, the odors are confined to the surface.)

d) Pour room-temperature gin (Seagram's Extra Dry, Gordon's London Dry, Hendrick's, Bombay, Bombay Sapphire, Boodles, Tanqueray, etc.—any excellent London Dry Gin—or, *best of all*, **Plymouth gin**, which is not a London Dry Gin) and Noilly Prat dry vermouth (no substitution here) over the ice in the ratio you favor. I go for 4 or 5 parts gin to 1 of vermouth. Ratios of 7-1 or 8-1 are ridiculous. The vermouth is part of the drink. If you chill the gin ahead of time (some keep it in the freezer), you don't achieve enough melt for a proper Martini.

e) Stir—do not shake—for the time it takes to sing two verses of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”: about 21 seconds. I use a cocktail shaker with an integral strainer, and I swirl the liquid around in the shaker while I sing.

f) Strain immediately into the pre-chilled Martini glass; add the speared olive(s).

g) Twist a lemon peel over the surface of the drink and discard the peel. This puts a few tiny droplets of lemon oil on the surface to add to the aroma of the drink.

You can find a small atomizer that purports to be a way to spray a mist of vermouth over a glass of chilled gin to make a Martini. This use is a (weak) joke, but the atomizer is useful if filled with lemon oil to spray a mist of the oil over the surface of the Martini (or Old Fashioned, Manhattan, or other cocktail). Boyajian sells 5-oz. bottles of lemon oil (the oil from 355 lemons) that works well. <http://tinyurl.com/2a8wu7> Note that you want lemon oil, not lemon-flavored oil (for example, olive oil infused with lemons). Lemon oil is refrigerated once opened; the atomizer works if it's refrigerated.

## Draining

Draining is similar to straining, except that in draining the liquid is discarded. Most useful for this is a colander or a scoop colander, depending on the job. You can use a colander to drain cooked pasta, and the colander is the very thing to use when you macerate cucumbers or eggplant—“macerating” means to place thin slices in layers in the colander, with each layer salted. The salted slices are then left for an hour or so as the salt removes the liquid. This is an essential step for making a good cucumber salad, for example, or a cucumber sandwich. I also sometimes macerate summer squash before I sauté it. Some recipes also have you macerate eggplant.



## Brining

Many soak poultry (including turkeys) in a solution of brine to make the meat more moist and tender after it's cooked. I always soak shrimp in brine before cooking: a cup of salt mixed with 2 quarts of water, the shrimp left in it for 45 minutes. It works whether they're thawed or frozen, and if they're frozen, the brining will help thaw them. (Almost all shrimp you buy are frozen or have been frozen). Here's how you would brine a turkey:

### Brining A Turkey

To brine, allow 12 hours for a 10-pound turkey: In a large pot, bring 1 gallon water to a boil. Add 1/2 pound sugar, 1/2 pound salt and seasonings such as thyme, bay leaves, peppercorns and cloves. Stir to dissolve. Add 1 gallon of cold water and 1/2 gallon of ice.

Transfer brine to a container large enough to contain it and the turkey. (You can use a plastic bag, though be careful that it doesn't leak. If you use a picnic cooler, wash it thoroughly with hot, soapy water first, and a mild bleach rinse would not be amiss.) Add turkey, with breast side submerged, close the container and refrigerate overnight.

Remove turkey from the brine and drain. Pat the bird dry with paper towels and proceed to roast. Check the internal temperature earlier than you normally would.

## Skimming

When you boil bones and/or meat to make a stock, you skim off the scum that rises to the surface, so that the stock will be clear, not cloudy. A skimmer is the ideal tool—its fine mesh screen lifts off the scum cleanly, and then you shake the scum into a container and discard it.



You also may want to skim the grease off a stew—for example, braised oxtails produce a lot of grease, and you will undoubtedly want to remove the excess. One way is to chill the dish until the fat solidifies, and then spoon it off. But it's quicker and easier to use a separator like this one, which enables you to pour the fat cleanly off and then return the (non-fat) juices to the pan. The strainer catches any solids that you scoop up along with the fat and liquid, and those can be returned immediately to the pan. The spout of the separator is fed from an opening at the bottom, so as you pour the liquid leaves from the bottom while the fat floats on top. It works like a charm. <http://tinyurl.com/3bsl6k>



## Tossing

Tossing is the efficient way to coat a relatively large amount of chopped or torn vegetables with a dressing or extra-virgin olive oil or the like. You might toss lettuce with a dressing for a salad, or toss vegetables, cut into chunks, with extra-virgin olive oil, chopped fresh rosemary, salt, and pepper before they're roasted. All that is required is a couple of spoons or spatulas and a bowl

that's large compared to the amount being tossed: you don't want the vegetables spilling out as you toss them around to get them fully coated.

## Brushing

Fairly often you need to brush food. Sometimes you're brushing *off* the food: brushing mushrooms to clean them (and there are nice little mushroom brushes for this, or you can use a crumpled paper towel) or using a vegetable brush to scrub root vegetables (turnips, beets, potatoes) under cold water. <http://tinyurl.com/26fayn>

And there's also brushing *on*: barbecue sauce, melted butter, extra-virgin olive oil, or the like. The best tool for this is relatively recent: a silicone brush, available in small sizes as well as large. Pick the brush that will work best for whatever you're brushing: a larger brush to brush barbecue sauce on a rack of ribs or melted butter on a turkey, a smaller brush to brush extra-virgin olive oil on a winter squash or fish. Good tool to have on hand. I have both a small and a large. <http://tinyurl.com/2dsm5j>

## Cleaning

Though not exactly handling food, it's worthwhile to think about the cleaning direction you want to take in your cooking technique. Some charge ahead through the cooking and at the end have both a finished dish and a kitchen filled with dirty cooking tools, dirty pans, and dirty counters.

Others clean as they go: the sink is filled with hot water with a squirt of dishwashing detergent, and when they have completed measuring, the measuring tools are washed and put into the drainer—or, if they have a dishwasher, the measuring tools are rinsed and put into the washer. The knife cuts, the knife is wiped clean, the knife is returned to the rack. The mixing bowl is emptied into the pan, the mixing bowl is washed, dried, and put away.

Cleaning as you go is something learned by experience and benefits from thinking through the recipe before you make it. Cleaning as you go is the easier method in the long run. It's wonderful to put the completed casserole into the oven, wash one container and one spoon, and have the kitchen then as clean as when you started.

## Food handling safety precautions

Just like us, pathogens find food nourishing. In this case, however, sharing is a bad idea. Exercise safety precautions to ensure that the food you prepare can be eaten without causing illness. For example, *Salmonella* and *C. jejuni* bacteria are commonly found on poultry and are among the most common sources of diarrheal disease in the U.S. Millions of people become ill from food-borne diseases, and as many as 5,000 die each year as a result of microorganisms in food. So be careful.

The basics, arranged in order of food preparation:

**Buying:** Purchase only government-inspected meat and poultry products. (Even though government inspection is terribly weak these days, it is still slightly better than nothing.) Purchase dated packages only if the "sell by" date has not expired. Check the eggs you buy to

ensure that none has a cracked shell and that none seems “stuck” to the container, which indicates the shell is cracked and enough albumin has leaked out to glue the egg in place. (If you do find an egg with a cracked shell once you get home, discard it.)

**Cleaning:** Wash your hands, the cutting boards, and prep surfaces often. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, knives, sponges, and counter tops. Wash hands, utensils, and surfaces with hot soapy water and/or vinegar water (1 part vinegar to 3 parts water) before and after food preparation, and especially after preparing meat, poultry, eggs or seafood. Replace cleaning sponges frequently—because they stay damp after use, bacteria can readily grow in them.

Vegetables that will be eaten without cooking should be carefully cleaned, using a vinegar solution (1 part vinegar to 3 parts water), and then rinsed.

**Prep:** Don't allow bacteria to spread from one food to another. In particular, be careful to keep raw meat, raw poultry, and raw seafood (and juices from them) from touching foods that will not be cooked.

For example, never place cooked food on a plate that held raw meat, raw poultry, raw eggs, or raw seafood unless you have washed the plate just before the cooked food is placed on it. The same with the knife: don't cut raw meat (or poultry or seafood) and then use the same knife to cut vegetables for a salad unless you have washed the knife between the two tasks.

It's simplest to use two knives (the **boning knife** for meat, poultry, and seafood, and the **other knives** for vegetables and fungi) and two cutting boards (one used only for meat, poultry, and seafood, and the other used only for vegetables and fungi).

And—though it's perhaps obvious—don't go from handling the chicken (cutting it into pieces, putting it into the pan, and putting it in the oven) directly to tearing the lettuce for the salad: wash your hands after handling the chicken and before touching that lettuce.

**Cooking:** Cook to a temperature such that the food has been heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill any harmful bacteria. Be particularly careful with ground meats (beef, veal, lamb, and pork)—as noted elsewhere, the industry record on the safety of such meats is not good. If you buy the meats already ground, cook them to an internal temperature of 160° F. (Don't eat rare hamburgers unless you yourself just ground the meat from a whole piece of beef after rinsing it off.)

Similarly, the industry has a bad record with respect to poultry. The minimum safe temperature for ground turkey or chicken is 165° F (internal temperature). Cook chicken breasts to at least 170° F. In all cases poultry, whether whole or cut into pieces, should be rinsed well under running water and then patted dry with a paper towel. The guidelines say to cook a whole chicken to 180° F, but I can't do it: too dry for me. I go for 170°. Do what seems best to you.

**Chilling:** Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food, and leftovers within two hours. Refrigerating foods quickly keeps most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Refrigerators should be set at 40° Fahrenheit and the freezer at 0° Fahrenheit, and the accuracy of the settings should be checked occasionally with a thermometer.

**Picnic precautions:** When using coolers, remember that a full cooler will keep a cold temperature longer than a half empty cooler, so pack plenty of ice. Also, try to keep the cooler out of the direct sunlight. Only prepare as much food in advance as you are able to properly chill.

When preparing foods for the grill or picnic:

- If no water faucet is available, take some disposable, wet hand wipes, or a waterless hand cleaner with you. You can then clean your hands before working with food or when you go from one type of food preparation to another.
- To keep bacteria from spreading, wash your hands after working with raw meat or poultry before handling other food, especially food that will not be cooked.
- Use clean cutting boards and knives or use a disposable cutting board. Be careful not to spread pathogens from raw meat or poultry to raw vegetables that will not be cooked. Simplest is to do all the cutting of vegetables first, then cut the meat. (It does no harm to use a knife and cutting board first on vegetables and then on meat.)
- If you marinate your meat and plan to use part of the marinade as a sauce or dip, take that amount out and set it aside for later use before adding the raw meat to the rest of the marinade.
- Do not partially cook food the day before to finish cooking at your picnic site. Partially cooked food probably did not get hot enough to kill harmful bacteria, which then multiply in the warm meat. Either cook the food completely at the picnic, or cook the food completely the day before, reheating it at the picnic.
- The grill should be very hot before putting meat on it. Coals are ready when they have a light coating of gray ash on them. After removing your cooked meat from the grill, leave the grill rack in place so the fire will burn off any food residue. When grilling on a public grill, clean all cooking surfaces thoroughly before starting the coals, and let the grill rack sit above the hot coals to sterilize it.
- Don't re-use any of the utensils, plates, or bowls used during the preparation of raw meat to hold the cooked meat. Bacteria live in the juices of raw meat and you can contaminate safely cooked meat by putting it back on the same (unwashed) plate that had held the meat when it was raw.
- Put perishable foods back in the cooler as soon as you finish eating. Don't leave them out while you play, and don't leave them out to nibble on. In general, don't leave perishable food un-refrigerated for more than two hours. Keep the ice chest closed and out of the sun. If you traveled away from home, put the ice chest in the passenger area of the car for the return trip, not in the trunk.



## Nutrition

We eat because we must, but we have so much choice regarding the timing and content of what we eat that we can make eating a pleasure. Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755 - 1826) apostrophized Adam and Eve, “Ye, the first parents of the human race, whose gourmandise is mentioned in history, you who ruined yourself for an apple, what would you not have done for a truffled turkey?” The trick is to maximize eating pleasure within the constraint of eating so as to maintain optimum health and energy. This chapter addresses the health and energy requirements, not the pleasure part.

### Calories

The first requirement for a good diet is that it deliver enough energy to sustain life: total calories, regardless of source. Of course, calorie source is also important: if all your calories came from, say, protein, you would soon sicken. And if your calories lacked certain essential vitamins, you would come down with diseases seldom seen in the US these days—pellagra (insufficient vitamin B3, typical if most calories come from corn), beriberi (insufficient vitamin B1, typical if most calories come from polished white rice), and scurvy (lack of vitamin C, typical if the diet is devoid of fresh fruits and vegetables).

In addition to vitamins, calorie sources must provide other micronutrients: iodine, for example, to prevent goiter and other thyroid problems, and sufficient iron for good hemoglobin production. In the US, iodine is readily available through iodized salt, but other nations are only recently discovering the benefits of ensuring that their citizens obtain sufficient iodine. (See the fascinating article at <http://tinyurl.com/2f2js3>.) People who eat a fair amount of seafood—fish and sea vegetables—get sufficient iodine from their food, but those living far inland must find other sources.

Total calorie intake must be sufficient to provide the energy necessary for daily life, but it also must not exceed that requirement. If it does, calories start being stored as fat. Healthy people titrate their calorie intake and expenditure to maintain a close balance between calories consumed (as food) and calories expended (as activity): they will cut back on food intake and/or increase activity so that the balance is exactly maintained over time.

The amount of calories sufficient to provide energy for daily life is much lower than one would think. If you are careful to choose nutrient-dense foods—foods that provide the necessary range of nutrients with the fewest calories—you can live a healthful life by consuming many fewer calories than one would think. Indeed, the life thus lived is not only healthful, it seems to be longer: rats fed a restricted-calorie diet have significantly (30%) longer lifespans than their more plentifully fed fellows, plus rats on the restrictive diet are more active, agile, and (apparently) healthy—also skinnier. See <http://tinyurl.com/2zn9uj>. Note the essential caveat: the calories are restricted, but not the necessary nutrients.

The problem for humans is that maintaining such a diet is almost impossible in the normal course of daily life, which includes restaurant meals, celebratory and holiday dining,



and the like. Moreover, the combination of greatly reduced caloric intake and ubiquitous advertising images of food could produce a distracting if not unhealthy obsession with food and feelings of hunger. Certainly one guy who tried the experiment found that it was not for him (<http://tinyurl.com/2qd76q>). Still, if you're inclined, you can get more information and guidance at [www.calorierestriction.org](http://www.calorierestriction.org). (It would seem unwise in the extreme—and possibly a violation of laws protecting children's welfare—to subject a growing child to calorie restriction: growing children need all essential nutrients and ample calories to build their bodies.)

A compromise measure seems to result in improved health: a good and balanced diet without excess calories, together with fasting one day a month. That seems to be something an adult could handle—it would even support some judicious bragging—and it does improve the health of the heart. See <http://tinyurl.com/28d6bt>.

The big problem with accumulating internal (visceral) fat is not appearance or agility—those are social or comfort problems, not health problems. The health problem is that fat in large amounts acts as a gland, sending chemical signals into the bloodstream that disrupt healthy functioning of the body. For example, the signals from fat have been shown to increase insulin resistance, leading in time to type 2 diabetes. And fat can trigger inflammations leading to other chronic diseases. Moreover, standard drug dosages (especially for antibiotics) are often wrong for the obese.

If you maintain a minimal level of activity—for example, briskly walking 45 minutes a day for four days a week—you can monitor your calorie/activity balance simply by weighing yourself regularly on an accurate bathroom scale. If your weight starts to increase, cut back on calories and/or increase activity until your weight returns to its regular and optimum level.

Regarding exercise, however, it should be noted that the National Academies' Institute of Medicine recommends that adults and children should spend at least **one hour each day in moderately intense physical activity**. You can read the complete reference book *Dietary Reference Intakes for Energy, Carbohydrate, Fiber, Fat, Fatty Acids, Cholesterol, Protein, and Amino Acids (Macronutrients)* at <http://tinyurl.com/2hsqn5#toc> (at that link, select by chapter).

Since fat weighs less than muscle, and since your body closes down unused systems, it's possible that a slowdown in activity could for a time result in weight loss as muscle is replaced by fat. This is clearly undesirable—any build-up in fat beyond the optimum is risky. Bathroom scales that measure not merely overall weight but also the percentage of body fat are readily available (see, for example, <http://tinyurl.com/ywro7a>). Those are helpful in avoiding the problem, but it's easier just to maintain a schedule of regular exercise, which ideally includes a range of exercise: 1) to **build and maintain muscle** (weight training), 2) to **increase and maintain stamina and cardiovascular health** (walking, jogging, swimming, bicycling), and 3) to **maintain flexibility and balance** (yoga, tai chi).

A good rough estimate of your health is the **Body Mass Index (BMI)**, computed from your height and weight: <http://nhlbisupport.com/bmi/>. Note that this is a rough measure, and will not be so accurate as the direct measurement of your percentage of body fat. Nevertheless, it's a start. Just make sure your BMI never gets into the range of obesity (30 or greater).

## Macronutrients

The first refinement beyond raw calories is the macronutrients: the familiar triad of Protein, Fat, and Carbohydrates. Highlights of the book above (<http://tinyurl.com/27ay98>):

This new report establishes ranges for fat, carbohydrates, and protein and stresses the importance of balancing diet with exercise. Highlights of the report include:

- Adults should get 45 percent to 65 percent of their calories from carbohydrates, 20 percent to 35 percent from fat, and 10 to 35 percent from protein. Acceptable ranges for children are similar to those for adults, except that infants and younger children need a slightly higher proportion of fat (25%-40%).
- To maintain cardiovascular health, regardless of weight, adults and children should achieve a total of at least one hour of moderately intense physical activity each day.
- Added sugars should comprise no more than 25 percent of total calories consumed. Added sugars are those incorporated into foods and beverages during production which usually provide insignificant amounts of vitamins, minerals, or other essential nutrients. Major sources include soft drinks, fruit drinks, pastries, candy, and other sweets.
- The recommended intake for total fiber for adults 50 years and younger is set at 38 grams for men and 25 grams for women, while for men and women over 50 it is 30 and 21 grams per day, respectively, due to decreased food consumption.
- Using new data, the report reaffirms previously established recommended levels of protein intake, which is 0.8 grams per kilogram of body weight for adults; however recommended levels for pregnancy are increased.
- The report doesn't set maximum levels for saturated fat, cholesterol, or trans fatty acids, as increased risk exists at levels above zero. However, the recommendation is to eat as little as possible while consuming a diet adequate in important other essential nutrients
- Recommendations are made for linoleic acid (an omega-6 fatty acid) and for alpha-linolenic acid (an omega-3 fatty acid)

In addition to the National Academies book, the USDA provides an on-line copy of its *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005* (<http://tinyurl.com/32mybu>). The *Dietary Guidelines* is published every five years, so this is the most recent version.

The guidelines above mentions sugar as a sweetener. I generally try to use agave syrup for sweetening (low glycemic index), but occasionally will use a *small* amount of cane sugar if a recipe calls for it (for example, one of the horseradish sauces whose recipes I provide). If a tomato sauce requires sweetening, finely grated carrots work well. If my sweet tooth is active and I want to eat something sweet, I'll eat fruit, either fresh or dried. I don't use artificial sweeteners at all. For some reason, I just don't like them. In particular, I avoid at all costs products that contain high fructose corn syrup, about which I harbor grave suspicions. Fortunately, I don't have much of a sweet tooth.

Getting the right proportion of protein, fat, and carbohydrate within your total calories is important, but it's also important get the *right* protein, fat, and carbs. Not all proteins are equal, nor all fats, nor all carbohydrates. Following are some considerations you should keep in mind while making your food selections.

**Proteins** — Vegetarians must take care to get a complete range of proteins to avoid missing any essential amino acids (those that the body cannot make and thus must obtain from food). Beans are a good source of protein, but not a complete protein. When beans are combined with dairy (for example, fat-free cottage cheese or yogurt) and/or corn and/or wheat, you do get a complete protein. (It's good, by the way, to get protein from non-animal sources, since non-animal sources are likely to be lower in fat).

Diets extremely high in protein (as a proportion of total calorie intake) can lead to problems such as kidney disease, gout, osteoporosis, and cancer. Keep protein intake proportionate to fats and calories. The US government recommendation is that 10-15% of calories be consumed as proteins. While 15% can be exceeded (and should be for children), it seems wise to stay well below 35%, the top of the range defined by the National Academies.

**Fats** — It's now known that some fats—trans fats (that is, partially hydrogenated fats, common in processed foods, pastries and the like) and saturated fats—are bad for your health. Trans fats are particularly bad, and if you pick up a food and see in the list of ingredients the phrase “partially hydrogenated,” put it back on the shelf. Don't buy it and *certainly* don't eat it. One can no longer safely use lard, which makes superb pie crusts, because the lard sold in the supermarket is partially hydrogenated (so that it doesn't require refrigeration and can sit on the shelf). If you want to use lard, it's best to buy pig fat and render it yourself and keep it refrigerated. The best is leaf fat from around the kidney, in case you're shopping for it.

**Omega-3 fats** are vital for good health, both mental (for example, preventing depression) and physical (for example, preventing type-1 diabetes in children: <http://tinyurl.com/yslowr>). Many fats have too high a proportion of omega-6 to omega-3. Soybean oil, for example, has too much omega-6 compared to omega-3, as do corn oil, safflower oil, and sunflower oil. I avoid all those oils. (For mayonnaise, I buy only that made with **canola oil**, or I make it myself.)

The fats I use in cooking consist of **extra-virgin olive oil** (primarily) and **canola oil** (occasionally). Both are good fats. Extra-virgin olive oil (oil from the first pressing) has more micronutrients (and tastes better) than oil from the later pressings. Different extra-virgin olive oils have very different tastes, so try different ones to find which you like best.

I make it a point to eat fresh or canned fatty cold-water fish high in omega-3 (such as wild (not farmed) salmon, herring, sardines, and mackerel), and I take krill- or fish-oil capsules (2 grams at breakfast, 2 at dinner) to ensure that I get enough omega-3. (Krill oil is apparently a better source than fish oil.) You can read more about omega-3, and more about the omega-3 and omega-6 content of various foods, on the Web—for example, <http://tinyurl.com/2h7nnh>.

This is not to say that I use *only* extra-virgin olive oil and canola oil. I will occasionally use **butter** in cooking (and I like unsalted European-style butter: unsalted because it tastes

sweeter, and European style because it tastes richer). When I cook poultry I save the fat to use in sautéing vegetables for more flavor: **chicken fat**, and especially **duck fat** and **goose fat**.

I also use **sesame oil**, both toasted sesame oil (dark) and plain, as well as spicy sesame oil. This oil is very tasty in stir-fry and in some salads.

Occasionally I'll have a nut oil—walnut oil, pecan oil, or hazelnut oil—or pumpkin-seed oil. These I eat on salad or (especially the pumpkin-seed oil) on mozzarella or cottage cheese.

Some (for example, Dean Ornish and Nathan Pritikin) have recommended not getting more 10% of calories from fat and they seem to have had success—but such a low percentage of calories from fat means more protein and carbohydrate: for example, 10% fat, 30% protein, 60% carbohydrate. Doable, but one would want to be very careful about the choice of carbohydrates (see next section). But with so few calories from fat, people often feel hungry and thus have difficulty staying on the diet. And fat is important for absorption of fat-soluble vitamins. For a comment on the Pritikin/Ornish approach, see <http://tinyurl.com/23apxt>.

A reasonably rigorous proportion of calories from fat is 20%, the minimum recommended by the National Academies.

**Carbohydrates** — In selecting carbohydrates, look for complex carbohydrates with a low glycemic index and high fiber. Beans, for example, are an excellent source of fiber, as well as of protein and carbohydrates. At <http://tinyurl.com/2lmqe7> you can find more information about the glycemic index of various foods as well as about the glycemic load. And the Wikipedia article on the glycemic index has useful information: <http://tinyurl.com/2bsynb>. Appendix 3 contains a list of foods sorted by glycemic index, from low (good) to high (bad).

Refined carbohydrates—potato chips, tortilla chips, white bread, and the like—have high caloric density: lots of calories in little volume, which leads one to overeat—for example, the guy who buys powdered donuts in the handy single-serving 12-pack. It's easier to maintain a healthy weight by choosing foods with low caloric density: lots of food, few calories. These unrefined foods also provide micronutrients that often are missing in refined foods.

Moreover, refined foods generally offer little fiber, and it's recommended that an adult male get at least 38 grams of fiber daily. If you have type 2 diabetes, as I do, 45 grams a day is better. That's hard with refined foods, but with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, it's easy.

So far as the proportion of calories from carbohydrates, we can at this point determine that by subtraction: if 20% is from fat and 25% is from protein, then you will eat 55% of your calories as carbohydrates. Overall, this seems a reasonable balance.

## Micronutrients

As mentioned above, micronutrients are the vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals that we need in our diet. Try to get these from the foods you eat rather than from taking supplements. I do take a multivitamin pill each morning, but of course that pill contains only those micronutrients that have so far been identified. So I try to go for food sources first, with the pill just as a backstop—for example, I eat 1 Tbsp of blackstrap molasses on my cereal. That provides 20% of the daily requirement of iron and of calcium and of potassium, for only 42 calories. I do take a calcium supplement, but I also try to eat greens (high in calcium) daily.

**Vitamin D** — Most of the essential vitamins you can get simply by eating well—a good variety of fruits and vegetables and grains and seeds—but vitamin D is a special case. Although the body will make D from sunlight, most of us spend the day indoors and, when we're outdoors, we wear sunscreen. Also, in the Northern Hemisphere above the latitude of, say, Monterey, sunlight is not strong enough from November through March to provide much vitamin D. Moreover, the 400 IU daily requirement is now generally recognized as *much* too low. This study (<http://tinyurl.com/27n3nb>) provides useful information:

**The tolerable upper intake level (TUIL), currently set at 2000 IU (50 µg)/day, is too low to permit optimization of Vitamin D status in the general population.** Actual toxicity is not seen below serum 25OHD values of 250 nmol/L, a value that would be produced only at continuing oral intakes in excess of 10,000 IU (250 µg)/day.

I now take at least 3000 IU of vitamin D daily in addition to whatever I get through my diet. I take that with my calcium supplement, since D is necessary for calcium absorption, and I take the calcium in the evening because I've read that it helps one sleep.

Note that people have taken 10,000 IU of vitamin D daily for five months with no signs of overdose. See the study at <http://tinyurl.com/23253m>.

Vitamin D turns out to be absolutely critical for all sorts of functions in the body, and you definitely don't want to run low. Do more research on the Web and decide for yourself, but I do believe that this supplement is justified.

Vitamin D does occur in some few foods: the best food sources of vitamin D include salmon, sardines, shrimp, milk (fortified with vitamin D—that is, vitamin D is added to the milk), cod, and eggs. Sockeye salmon are a rich source of vitamin D: a 4-ounce serving of sockeye salmon provides 740 IU of vitamin D. A 4-ounce serving of Chinook salmon, another good source of vitamin D, supplies 410 IU.

To get your micronutrients from your food, the best bet is to eat a good variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats. (Some will not eat meat, so they must pay careful attention to getting the proper nutrients without meat.)

It's easy to say "eat a good variety," but what exactly does that mean? David Heber gave an excellent answer in his book *What Color Is Your Diet?* (<http://tinyurl.com/2dq8cs>), which divides fruits and vegetables into 7 groups, each assigned a color name. He then recommends that you eat at least one serving from each color-group each day: there's your variety, easy-peasy. The book is worth buying. The chart in Appendix 2 lets you track foods for four persons.

Print the chart, take it to Staples, have it laminated, and use a dry-erase marker to check each category for each serving each person eats during the day. Each person should have at least one check in each box in his column at the end of each day.

Interestingly, a recent study suggests that you may be better off to focus on foods, not on nutrients (<http://tinyurl.com/yvztcu>):

In a recent academic review, a University of Minnesota professor in the School of Public Health has concluded that food, as opposed to specific nutrients, may be key to having a healthy diet. This notion is contrary to popular practice in food industry and

government, where marketers and regulators tend to focus on total fat, carbohydrate and protein and on specific vitamins and added supplements in food products, not the food items as a whole. The research is published in last month's *Journal of Nutrition Reviews*.

"We are confusing ourselves and the public by talking so much about nutrients when we should be talking about foods," said David Jacobs, Ph.D., the principal investigator and Mayo Professor of Public Health at the University of Minnesota. "Consumers get the idea that diet and health can be understood in terms of isolated nutrients. It's not the best approach, and it might be wrong."

Jacobs, with coauthor Professor Linda Tapsell of the University of Wollongong in Australia, argues that people should shift the focus toward the benefits of entire food products and food patterns in order to better understand nutrition in regard to a healthy human body. They focus on the concept of food synergy – the idea that more information about the impact of human health can be obtained by looking at whole foods than a single food component (such as vitamin C, or calcium added to a container of orange juice).

There's more information at the link. It's certainly true that studies have discovered that consuming, for example, antioxidants (beta-carotene and the like) in supplements rather than in food is totally ineffective. The reason seems to be that when you get these in food, the fiber and other parts of the food slow digestion and allow time for the body to absorb the antioxidants. Work to get your essential nutrients from food, not from supplements.

One exception: a woman who is pregnant, is trying to get pregnant, or is nursing should, I think, seriously consider three supplements, two of which are not generally a focus yet:

1. **Calcium supplement** — this one is pretty well known and obviously worth taking. The amount of calcium obtained from milk—if the mother can digest milk—may not be enough. And using calcium in the body requires vitamin D, which leads to:
2. **Vitamin D** — Studies have found that many newborns suffer from vitamin D deficiencies. According to the study at <http://tinyurl.com/23253m>, taking 10,000 IU of vitamin D a day for 5 months produced no measurable signs of vitamin D overdose. The study at the link is having pregnant women take 4,000 IU of vitamin D a day. See also this note: <http://tinyurl.com/2tnvgw>.
3. **Fish-oil capsules** — Omega-3 is essential for fetal brain and nerve development, and the modern diet is sadly lacking in sources of omega-3. <http://tinyurl.com/2zgnhp> and <http://tinyurl.com/28a8av>. Six grams of high-quality fish oil taken daily will provide a good amount of omega-3—either three 1-gram capsules with breakfast and three with dinner, or two capsules with breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

While it's not a supplement, it would not be amiss to consume two tablespoons of blackstrap molasses each day as well: that delivers 40% of the adult daily requirement of iron, potassium, and calcium for just 84 calories total.



## Superfoods

Some foods are particularly rich in nutrients that have been found to be factors in producing good health and preventing diseases such as cancer and arterial disease. When you're shopping or selecting foods to cook, make an effort to eat these foods regularly. More information on superfoods—as a category or for specific foods—can be found on the Web. The following list is merely a representative sample. See <http://www.whfoods.com/foodstoc.php> for another list of foods, with the health benefits of each.

**Artichokes** — Good source of silymarin, an antioxidant that may help prevent skin cancer. Plus artichokes are delicious, although they will change the taste of water (or wine) for many people. If you're serving a superb and rare wine, don't serve artichokes. But for a regular dinner: great!

### Steamed Artichokes

Fill a bowl with cold water and, holding the artichoke by its stem, pump it vigorously up and down in the water to clean it. Peel off tough outer leaves on the bottom, cut off the spiky top, and slice the stem flat so the artichoke can stand on it. Use your scissors to trim the sharp points off the outer leaves.

Put about 1 - 1 1/2 inches of water in a pot tall enough so that the artichoke can stand upright with the lid on. Add a splash of red wine vinegar, an onion cut into chunks, a stalk or two of celery cut into chunks, a crushed garlic clove or two, and a splash of extra-virgin olive oil. Cover the pot and simmer for 15 minutes, then place artichoke upright in the hot water. Replace lid and steam for 45-60 minutes, depending on size of artichoke.

Remove artichoke and hold it upside down (with tongs) so water drains out, then let it sit for 10 minutes to cool.

Dip each leaf in a vinaigrette or garlic mayonnaise, then gently scrape the fibrous covering from the meat of the leaf with your front teeth, working your way, leaf by leaf, inward to the tender heart. Once there, gently scoop the bristles (the choke) from the middle of the heart and discard them, cut the heart into sections, dip them in a little butter or lemon juice, and enjoy!

**Barley** — Barley is available primarily as **pearled barley** (hull polished away, the barley equivalent of white rice) and as **hulled barley** (hull still in place, the barley equivalent of brown rice). I greatly prefer hulled barley for most dishes, though sometimes pearled barley is nice—in a recipe I made up for veal shanks, for example, in which the lighter color of the pearled barley works well.

Barley provides both soluble and insoluble fiber, and micronutrients in barley lower blood cholesterol levels, protect against cancer and heart disease, provide vitamin E, and contribute antioxidants that protect against breast cancer.



### Veal Shanks Braised with Barley

2-4 veal shanks, depending on meatiness

1 onion, chopped

4-5 cloves garlic, minced

1 cup chopped parsley

8-10 shiitake mushrooms cut into chunks (optional)

1 tsp crushed red pepper, or two jalapeños, minced

1 tsp dried tarragon or 2 Tbsp chopped fresh tarragon

zest of 1 lemon, juice of 2 lemons

1 cup white wine

1/2 cup water or stock

1/3 cup pearly barley

extra-virgin olive oil

salt, pepper

Mince garlic and set aside for 15 minutes.

Sauté onions in olive oil for a few minutes

Trim shanks of the membrane around them. Add them to the pan and brown both sides.

Add remaining ingredients, stirring to ensure that the barley is covered by the liquid. The lemon juice provides acid as well as taste. When I'm cooking a meat such as shanks, I want the braising liquid to be acidic, and use tomatoes, lemons, or even a little vinegar. Cooked parsley is extremely high in Vitamin K

Cover and simmer 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

Check the liquid during cooking and add a little more if it seems dry.

**Beans** — Beans (also known as “legumes” or “pulses,” which include both peas and beans) are a terrific food and come in many varieties. Jared Diamond credits beans with being one of the foundations of civilization (<http://tinyurl.com/2j79yv>). Umberto Eco also has an interesting essay on how the bean saved civilization, a translation of which appeared in the *NY Times* (<http://tinyurl.com/3bfzz4>).

Beans are high in protein (though not a complete protein, so eat them with corn or cereal products such as bread or with dairy products or with meat) and are also high in beneficial fiber, an important component of one's diet. In the next section you'll find a recipe for a bean salad that allows endless variation.

**Beer** — Beer protects against the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*, known to cause ulcers and possibly linked to stomach cancer. But stick to just one beer, especially if you're female. (Recent research has discovered that alcohol is particularly hard on females.)

**Beets and beet greens** — Beets are an excellent source of both folate and betaine, which work together to lower your blood levels of homocysteine, an inflammatory compound that

can damage your arteries and increase your risk of heart disease. Moreover the betacyanins that give beets their color have been proved to be potent cancer fighters.

Eat beets fresh and raw when you can. Heating beets diminishes their antioxidant power (although they're still very tasty, especially if you roast them).

Beets are another good way to satisfy a craving for something sweet.

#### **Beet Salad for One**

Wash one beet and grate it coarsely. Toss with a little extra-virgin olive oil and the juice of half a lemon. If you have sweet onion or scallions, chop and add that as well.

You can also add to the salad the washed and chopped leaves and stems—they too are filled with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

You can also sauté the washed and chopped beet leaves and stems in extra-virgin olive oil, along with a minced clove of garlic, over medium-high heat. Sauté until the leaves are wilted and the stems are tender. Season with salt, freshly ground pepper, and lemon juice. Optional: sprinkle with freshly grated Parmesan or Romano cheese.

**Black beans** — Generally speaking, darker colored vegetables have more phytochemicals and other beneficial micronutrients than paler versions. Thus black beans have more nutritional value than white beans.

**Blackstrap molasses** — As noted above, 1 Tbsp of blackstrap molasses provides 20% of the adult daily requirement of iron and of calcium and of potassium, for only 42 calories. Eating a little blackstrap molasses daily makes it easy to get the iron you need.

**Blueberries** — Blueberries are particularly high in antioxidants and phytoflavonoids, as well as potassium and vitamin C. Eating them will lower your risk of heart disease and cancer. Since they also act as an inflammatory, they have great benefits for those who suffer from (or are at risk for) chronic diseases. The darker the blueberry, the greater the nutritional value. Frozen blueberries are as beneficial as fresh. Nonfat yogurt with blueberries makes a good dessert.

**Brazil nuts** — Brazil nuts are high in selenium, so try eating two a day. Since they are also high in fat, don't eat them casually. (In fact, you can make a little lamp from a Brazil nut: sharpen it to a point, light the point, and there's your lamp.) Selenium prevents cancer and helps cells repair their DNA. A five-year study at Cornell University and the University of Arizona showed that 200 micrograms of selenium daily — the amount in two unshelled Brazil nuts — resulted in 63 percent fewer prostate tumors, 58 percent fewer colorectal cancers, 46 percent fewer lung malignancies, and a 39 percent overall decrease in cancer deaths.

**Broccoli** — Broccoli is one of the several cruciferous vegetables that help prevent cancer.

However, cooking it in the microwave destroys its ability to help you. Steam it instead, or add it to soups or salads.

**Cabbage** — Like broccoli, cabbage (same family) is a cruciferous vegetable that fights cancer.

Good as slaw, in stir fry, and as sauerkraut, which also excels as a cancer fighter. With

sauerkraut, buy the refrigerated kind that comes in a jar or plastic bag. Try cooking it with bacon and Granny Smith apples (<http://tinyurl.com/yovmns>) or try one of these recipes: <http://tinyurl.com/26js4a>.

**Calcium supplement with vitamin D** — As I noted above, a calcium supplement is a good idea for most of us, as is a daily supplement of vitamin D (a total of 3,000-4,000 IU). (Vitamin D is required for the body to absorb the calcium.)

**Cantaloupe** — Cantaloupe is rich carotenoids, which reduce the risk of lung cancer. Buy one, cut it into peeled slices, and keep it in the fridge in an airtight container (else your entire fridge will smell of cantaloupe). My aunt and uncle regularly cut a cantaloupe in half, took out all the seeds, filled the cavity with vanilla ice cream, and enjoyed a fine dessert.

**Chia seeds** — Chia seed was one of the most important food crops of the Native Americans of South America, along with quinoa and amaranth. Wikipedia notes, “Chia seeds typically contain 20% protein, 34% oil, 25% dietary fiber (mostly soluble with high molecular weight), and significant levels of antioxidants... The oil from chia seeds contains a very high concentration of omega-3 fatty acid — approximately 64%.” Unlike flaxseed, chia seeds are digestible without grinding. The protein from chia seed is a complete protein, containing all essential amino acids. The comments at <http://tinyurl.com/2439bs> contain more information on chia, also known under the trademarked name “Salba”.

**Chile peppers** — Chile peppers (the capsicum family) contain capsaicin: that’s what makes them hot (and, in proper proportion, will make your eyes and nose water and your head sweat). Capsaicin has excellent anti-inflammatory, analgesic, anti-cancer, heart-healthy effects. Chile peppers are also high in antioxidant carotenes and flavonoids, and contain about twice the amount of vitamin C found in citrus fruits. Moreover, a recent study showed that capsaicin can be a therapeutic agent in the prevention and treatment of obesity-related inflammation and obesity-related conditions like type 2 diabetes and atherosclerosis. <http://tinyurl.com/2wlt2f>

Use hot peppers whenever you can: in stews, salads, soups, stir-fries, salsas, and other dishes. Generally speaking, the hotter the pepper, the more capsaicin it contains and the better for you it is: jalapeños are where peppers start to get interesting, and then you have serrano, cayenne, tabasco, habanero, and others. I use crushed red pepper in many dishes—not always to the point of heat, sometimes just to provide some body.

**Cinnamon** — Cinnamon (about 1/2 tsp daily) significantly reduces insulin resistance, so I have that much each morning on my hot cereal. USDA researchers found that type-2 diabetics who ate cinnamon daily for 6 weeks significantly reduced not only their blood sugar but also their triglycerides and LDL (bad) cholesterol. <http://tinyurl.com/28fs88>

**Citrus fruits** — Lemons, oranges, limes, clementines, kumquats... Citrus fruits, famously high in vitamin C, are the delight of winter, and eating them daily can cut the risk of mouth, throat, and stomach cancers by half. The peeled fruit is more healthful than the juice.

**Cranberries** — Cranberries are extremely high in antioxidants effective against cancer and dementia. The best way I’ve found to get my cranberry ration is to buy pure cranberry

juice (*not* cranberry-juice cocktail, generally sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup, but the real, unsweetened, 100% cranberry juice), and put 1 cup in a 2-liter plastic jug, fill the jug with water, refrigerate it, and drink it during the day. It's quite easy to drink a liter, and the 1/2 cup of cranberry juice this delivers is therapeutic. And if you finish the two liters, all the better.

In fact, I put in 1 cup of 100% pure cranberry juice and also 1 cup of 100% pure pomegranate juice, and then fill the pitcher with water. See below for the pomegranate story. I have two such pitchers: when one is emptied, I refill it and switch to the other.

**Dark (not milk) chocolate** — Dark chocolate turns out to be filled with anti-oxidants, but if you eat this, get as high a percentage of cacao as you can—above 80% is acceptable, above 90% is better. You get the antioxidant benefits only if you consume the chocolate consume no dairy products for four hours. <http://tinyurl.com/22lxx8>

**Dried plums** — Dried plums, the snack formerly known as prunes, fight one of the primary causes of cancer. I keep a bag of them around and eat a few each day.

**Fish** — Fish—in particular, fatty cold-water fish like wild (not farmed) salmon, herring, sardines, and mackerel—are a wonderful source of omega-3 fatty acids—and protein as well. But fish in general is beneficial: those who eat four or more servings of fish per week are one-third less likely to develop the blood cancers leukemia, myeloma, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. In addition, omega-3 fatty acids in fish lower heart disease risk, help arthritis, and seem to help with memory loss, Alzheimer's disease, and depression. Studies show that eating fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, halibut, sardines, and tuna, as well as shrimp and scallops) reduces the risk of endometrial cancer in women.

But notice that our use of the ocean as a dump for garbage and toxins has made some fish not so healthful, and our overfishing is forcing some species to extinction. In the Shopping chapter you will find links to sites that provide good guidance for which fish are most advisable to eat and whether any serving restrictions apply.

**Garlic** — Garlic contains sulfur compounds that may stimulate the immune system's natural defenses against cancer, and may have the potential to reduce tumor growth. Other studies suggest that garlic can reduce the incidence of stomach cancer by as much as a factor of 12. Garlic also lowers total cholesterol and raises HDL—"good"—cholesterol, reduces the risk of atherosclerosis and blood clots, lowers blood pressure, and reduces the risk of blood clots (cause of the majority of strokes and heart attacks).

Garlic's beneficial compounds are formed when garlic is crushed or minced, but they are initially unstable: if you crush or mince garlic and immediately sauté it, you lose the healthful compounds (though the garlic will still be tasty). After crushing or mincing garlic, ***let it sit for 15 minutes*** so that the compounds can stabilize.

**Goji berries** — I haven't noticed goji berries in the market, but they are good for you. They have one of the highest ORAC ratings—a method of gauging antioxidant power—of any fruit. Moreover, the sugars that make goji berries sweet reduce insulin resistance—a risk factor of diabetes. You can purchase them on-line: <http://www.gojiberries.us/>

**Grapes** — Red and purple grapes are good sources of resveratrol, the cancer-protecting compound found in wine. The darker the grape, the greater the benefit.

**Green and white tea** — Green and white teas have been found to be exceptionally high in antioxidants and in particular ECGC, a powerful antioxidant that can inhibit the growth of cancer cells. White tea is actually better than green tea in this regard. **Important note:** It's been found that citrus juice (for example, a squeeze of lemon juice) greatly enhances the benefit of white or green tea (<http://tinyurl.com/34vj9n>). Upton Tea Imports is a good source of white tea: <http://uptontea.com>.

**Guava** —Guava has more lycopene (which prevents prostate cancer) than any other plant food, including tomatoes and watermelon. It's also high in potassium and fiber. You eat the entire fruit, from the rind to the seeds. It's all edible, and all nutritious. The rind alone has more vitamin C than you'd find in an orange. You can sometimes find guava in the produce section of high-end supermarkets and in Latin grocery stores.

**Human milk** — This food is only for infants is always eaten uncooked, and certainly qualifies as a superfood. Breastfeeding boosts the infant's immune system, provides a diet high in the nutrients an infant needs, and raises the baby's IQ by 6-7 points provided that the baby is among the 90% of babies with a certain gene. <http://tinyurl.com/25j39v> Given that the average IQ is 100, a 7-point increase is 7%, clearly significant. (In marketing terms: "almost 10%!".) Breastfeeding also lowers the risk of breast cancer for the mother.

As noted above, a nursing mother should ensure that she has an adequate intake of omega-3 (for example, by taking six 1000-gram capsules of fish oil daily (three with breakfast, three with dinner; or two with each meal), adequate vitamin D daily (one study suggests 4,000 IU daily), and enough calcium (by taking a good supplement). Two tablespoons of blackstrap molasses a day would help provide adequate iron in her diet.

Not all women are able to breastfeed, of course, but the benefits to mother and child for those who can are substantial. And if the mother is worried that breastfeeding may change the shape of her breasts and cause them to sag, the latest research shows that pregnancy, not breastfeeding, affects breast shape. <http://tinyurl.com/3xem5d>

**Kiwifruit** — Peel the fruit and eat it directly or put it in salads. Kiwifruit is high cancer-fighting antioxidants, vitamin C, vitamin E, lutein, and copper.

**Oats** — Oats are a great source of soluble fiber and have been found to contribute measurably to cardiovascular health. You can buy oats in several forms: instant, rolled, steel-cut, and whole-grain (oat groats). I strongly prefer the whole grain form, which (lucky for me) is the most nutritious as well. (Steel-cut is second.)

#### Leisureguy Breakfast Cereal

1/3 cup oat groats
1 Tbsp flaxseed
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
1 cup of water

Put the above in small pan on low heat and let it simmer until water's absorbed and groats are cooked—I let it go about 40-45 minutes. You could try cooking overnight in a slow cooker so it's ready instantly, or cook a week's worth in advance and dip out what you need.

Then add:

1 Tbsp blackstrap molasses

1 Tbsp raw pumpkin seed (pepitas)

2 Tbsp goji berries

2 Tbsp chia seed

1 Tbsp wheat germ

1 Tbsp English walnut baking pieces (walnuts broken into small pieces)

1 Tbsp pepper sauce (a thick pepper sauce made locally)

Stir it up and enjoy.

**Onions** — Onions, like garlic, are a member of the allium family, which also includes shallots, leeks, and chives. Onions increase the level of HDL cholesterol while reducing total cholesterol levels, help dissolve blood clots, and reduce the risk of certain cancers. Onions contain two powerful antioxidants, sulfur and quercetin, which help protect the membranes of the body's cells from damage.

Onions deliver the greatest benefits if consumed raw, so include sweet onions or scallions in your salads. If you're cooking them, generally cook them lightly—though of course caramelized onions are a wonderful treat from time to time.

Leeks have all the healthful properties of the Allium family, but leeks are also high in vitamin B6, vitamin C, folate, manganese, iron, and fiber. Leeks are a wonderful addition to most soups, and are also delicious when braised in chicken stock.

**Oranges** — Oranges (peeled and then eaten in whole sections, not as juice) are filled with vitamin C and provide excellent fiber. Navel oranges are a boon of winter, though clementines are also nice.

**Frozen peas** — Peas, another of the pulses, are good to have on hand to add to salads, pastas, stir-fries, stews, and the like. High in food value. **Dried split peas** make a wonderful high-protein soup, especially with a ham hock included.

### Split-pea soup

2 cups dried split peas

2 qt water

1 cup minced celery

1 medium onion, finely chopped

1/2 cup diced carrots

1 sprig parsley

1/2 tsp pepper

pinch of dill

1 bay leaf

1/2 tsp salt

Bring water and peas to boil. Boil gently for 2 minutes, then remove from heat, cover, and let cool. Add the remaining ingredients. Simmer 3 hours, refrigerate overnight. Heat to boil, simmer 5 minutes, serve.

Variations: use one bunch of celery, including leaves; use an entire bunch of parsley; use some thyme, cayenne; use more onion and/or carrots; add ham hock.

**Pecans** — Pecans are a good source of protein and unsaturated fats. Pecans can reduce high cholesterol by reducing the (bad) LDL cholesterol levels. In fact, clinical research published in the *Journal of Nutrition* (September 2001) found that eating about a handful of pecans each day may help lower cholesterol levels similar to cholesterol-lowering medications. Pecans are an important source of ellagic acid and a good low fat source of vitamin E, calcium, magnesium, potassium, zinc, fiber, and more antioxidants than any other nut.

**Pomegranate juice** — Pomegranate juice has been shown to greatly improve arterial health (as compared to a control group). <http://tinyurl.com/gcrka> As noted above (in the cranberry juice entry), mix 1 cup of pomegranate juice in a 2 liter container with 1 cup of cranberry juice and sufficient water to fill. If you drink just half a container a day, you get sufficient pomegranate juice to help your arterial health. You must drink it daily.

**Pumpkin** — Pumpkins and their seeds (pepitas) both have considerable health benefits.

Pumpkin is one of the best sources of carotenoids—antioxidants that reduce the risk of cancer, prevent cataracts, and boost immunity. The potassium in pumpkin lowers the risk of hypertension. Pumpkin and pepitas are both good sources of zinc, which helps your immune system and prevents osteoporosis. In addition, pumpkin is a great source of fiber. You can readily use canned pumpkin as a basis for, or a good addition to, soups. To prevent enlarged prostate, eat an ounce of shelled pumpkin seeds three times a week at least. (Try 2 Tbs shelled pumpkin seeds—about 0.7 oz—in your cereal daily.)

**Quinoa** — Quinoa is one of the three seeds most important in Central and South American diets: quinoa, amaranth, and chia seed. All three really qualify as superfoods. Quinoa is a complete protein, and you can nowadays find it packaged in good supermarkets. Quinoa helps prevent cancer and also aids cardiovascular health, particularly in post-menopausal women. Put it on regular rotation in your diet.

**Salmon** — The benefits of wild (not farmed) salmon are discussed above, under the more general heading “fish.” Still, it’s worth emphasizing again. The rap against farmed salmon is not so much lack of omega-3 (though farmed salmon do have less than wild salmon) as the high environmental cost of salmon farming, including the decline of wild stocks and farmed salmon escape and interbreed. Unlike tilapia and catfish, salmon is not a “good” farmed fish.

**Sauerkraut** — See “cabbage” above.



**Spinach** — Spinach should be bought as organic, since it's among the 12 foods with the highest pesticide residues. And it should be eaten regularly: it fights cancer and is an excellent source of iron, vitamin K, vitamin A, manganese, folate, magnesium, vitamin C, vitamin B2 (riboflavin), calcium, potassium, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine), and tryptophan. If you can find organic spinach in your market, serve spinach at least weekly.

**Sweet potato** — Sweet potatoes (also called “yams” in supermarkets) have the same valuable nutrients as pumpkin flesh. I like to roast them in their skins, chill them, and then have them for dessert (with the skin) topped with yogurt.

**Swiss chard** — Cooked Swiss chard is an excellent source of both lutein and zeaxanthin, which protect your retinas from the damage of aging. Swiss chard also provides ample amounts of vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C, magnesium, manganese, potassium, iron, vitamin E, and dietary fiber.

**Tofu, soy milk, or edamame** — Soybeans are a complete protein that comes with a broad range of other health benefits: cancer prevention, cardiovascular health, (lower blood pressure and cholesterol), and the like. It's best to eat soybeans directly (edamame) or as tofu or soymilk rather than isolate flavones. Edamame can be found fresh or frozen (also canned) and is good to include in a bean salad. Tofu can be eaten in many ways and in many dishes. Below I provide a recipe for a tofu chocolate mousse pie that is divine.

**Tomatoes** — Tomatoes are a rich source of lycopene, which helps prevent prostate cancer, but tomatoes' lycopene is available only if the tomatoes have been cooked. So canned tomatoes, tomato sauce, and tomato paste are very good to use in cooking. (Red watermelon is an even richer source of lycopene than tomatoes and requires no cooking.) Tomatoes are particularly high in vitamin C and vitamin A. Tomatoes are particularly effective at preventing prostate cancer when eaten with broccoli.

**Turkey** — Turkey is an excellent source of tryptophan, niacin, and vitamin B6, and it also provides selenium, a cancer preventive. The protein from turkey is high-quality and low in fat. Besides the holiday-oriented whole bird, you can buy ground turkey, turkey cutlets, turkey breast tenders, and other cuts.

**Turmeric** — Turmeric is a spice, used in curry powders among other things, and it's a potent cancer-preventive. We now even know the mechanism (<http://tinyurl.com/2s3z33>).

**Walnuts** — English walnuts are extremely high in omega-3, and also add fiber to the diet. Eating them (in moderation—they are high in calories) can reduce cholesterol, improve cardiovascular health, and prevent gallstones. Eat a few every day with your cereal.

**Wheat germ** — Wheat germ is the vitamin-and-mineral rich embryo of the wheat kernel—the non-carbohydrate part of the wheat. Wheat germ and wheat bran are removed when whole wheat grains are reduced to white flour. Wheat germ is an excellent source of B vitamins such as folate, thiamin, and vitamin B6 and the minerals zinc, magnesium, and manganese. Wheat germ also provides much vitamin E, a powerful antioxidant that helps protect the oil in the wheat germ from becoming rancid. Vitamin E in the human body helps protect fat-containing substances including cell membranes and brain cells

from damage. Vitamin E is also important for immune system function, cancer prevention and blood glucose control in both healthy and diabetic individuals.

You can easily incorporate wheat germ in many dishes, from meat loaf to casseroles, and sprinkle it over your cereal, yogurt, and so on.

**Yogurt** — Besides the usual benefits of dairy products—calcium, tryptophan, and the like—yogurt provides the acidopholus bacteria, which greatly help one's digestive system. Nonfat yogurt without sweeteners is quite good with berries, dried fruit, and/or nuts.

## **Tracking your calories, macronutrients, and micronutrients**

While it's easy to say "get your nutrients from foods rather than from supplements," how do you know whether your foods are in fact delivering the micronutrients you need and that the macronutrients are properly balanced? (Fat, for example, sneaks in all over the place. It's a challenge to drive fat intake down to 20% while continuing to eat foods that produce pleasure.)

An easy way to measure the macro- and micronutrients you're getting, along with total calories and fiber, is to use a program or on-line Web application developed for that task. These provide detailed analyses and reports, including graphs and charts, that show exactly where your diet is falling short (or going long).

Both programs below are used in dieting (as to lose weight) rather than diet (as in the foods that you eat—for example, the Mediterranean diet). Yet anyone conscious of eating healthfully should think about using such a program on occasion to see how things are going.

Try tracking your food carefully for one or two weeks and I think you'll be surprised at what you learn. You can then make appropriate adjustments, and repeat the exercise every three months. (The kitchen scale is essential, since you need to accurately measure your intake for the figures to be meaningful.)

The biggest surprise for me was finding that I was getting almost all the micronutrients I needed from the food I was eating. I dropped several supplements from my regimen—all the better since it turns out that some micronutrients—specifically, antioxidants—simply can't be absorbed from supplements. See <http://tinyurl.com/ynnmo8>.

### **Fitday**

You can find the program Fitday at [www.Fitday.com](http://www.Fitday.com). You can use their Web site for free, or purchase the program for a Windows machine. I purchased the program and have been using it, from time to time, for a few years. The reports are excellent, and you can easily add to the database any foods that it lacks—it offers several ways to do this, but the simplest is just to enter the values in a Nutrition Facts label format. You can define a "meal" (such as your usual breakfast) on the database and subsequently add it to the day's log by a simple click-and-drag.

### **CalorieKing**

Another program, highly recommended, is CalorieKing: [www.calorieking.com](http://www.calorieking.com). This one has some special applications for diabetics. I have not yet used it, but I trust the recommendation.

## Shopping

A critical part of good cooking is selecting the best ingredients—the freshest vegetables, for example. This was the basis for the success of Chez Panisse and Alice Waters: finding great vegetables. When she started her restaurant, good—really good—produce was hard to find, and Waters sought out local farmers to buy the best vegetables and meats. Her book *Chez Panisse Vegetables* tells the story and provides fine recipes. Your local library probably has a copy, and it's worth reading. (While you're there, also check out her book *The Art of Simple Food*.)

In this section, I'll discuss a variety of foods briefly—their taste, their use, what to look for, and so on. You can find books that will go into more detail on how to pick the best (ripest, freshest) produce. What I provide here is merely an introduction. For example, see *The Fruit and Vegetable Stand: The Complete Guide to the Selection, Preparation and Nutrition of Fresh Produce* at <http://tinyurl.com/2yna4h> and note also at that link the books under “Customers who bought this book also bought”. Then see which your library has (and which you can order inexpensively from Abebooks.com or as used copies on Amazon.com).

### Trying new foods

One thing I emphasize: the importance of exploring and learning. Make it your practice that, on each weekly visit to your grocery market, you buy at least one food (a fruit, a vegetable, a meat, a fish, an herb—whatever) that you've never before had, and take it home and prepare and eat it. You can readily find recipes for whatever it is via a Google search using the food name and “recipe,” and after looking at several recipes, you can figure out the basics of cooking it. Sometimes you don't even need to search: if it's a new kind of fish, cook it like a fish.

Sometimes you won't especially like the new food, sometimes you'll think it's okay, and sometimes you'll shout, “Where has this been all my life!” and it will become a staple. But the main benefit of this exploration is that you keep learning and tasting, and that's the key to cooking. (By the way, Grocery List Generator is a very nice little shopping-list Firefox add-on (and it's free): <http://tinyurl.com/2ba3xn>.)

### Should you buy organic?

Buying organic depends in part on you and in part on the item. If you are female and likely to get pregnant (or are already pregnant), buying organic seems prudent. If you are buying foods for a child, organic again seems safest. But if you're just a regular old adult, you can be more selective. As noted at <http://tinyurl.com/27s36n>:

To maximize your organic food dollar, the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., recommends going organic on the “dirty dozen” -- types of produce that are most susceptible to pesticide residue:

- \* Peaches
- \* Apples
- \* Sweet bell peppers

- \* Celery
- \* Nectarines
- \* Strawberries (worst of all in pesticide residues when conventionally grown)
- \* Cherries
- \* Pears
- \* Grapes (imported)
- \* Spinach
- \* Lettuce
- \* Potatoes

And which organic produce is probably not worth the added expense? The group lists these 12 items as having the least pesticide residues:

- \* Papayas
- \* Broccoli
- \* Cabbage
- \* Bananas
- \* Kiwifruit
- \* Sweet peas (frozen)
- \* Asparagus
- \* Mangoes
- \* Pineapple
- \* Sweet corn (frozen)
- \* Avocados
- \* Onions

CNN also notes (at <http://tinyurl.com/bmcas>):

Of course, just because pesticide residue didn't show up in tests doesn't mean the vegetables weren't sprayed. And many people buy organic products simply to help keep toxins out of the environment.

Some items, like seafood and cosmetics, are not worth paying extra for organic. Rangan said that, although seafood is allowed to carry an organic label, the government has yet to develop certification standards, making the label essentially useless. She also said there are no warnings on other pollutants, like mercury and dioxin, found in some seafood.

An organic label on cosmetics is of little value, the report said, as the main ingredient in things like shampoo and body lotions is simply water in which an organic ingredient, such as lavender leaf, has been soaked.

Other labels, like "free range" or "all natural" were found to be meaningless.

For example, the report said standards were so lax that a chicken could be labeled "free range" if its coop were opened for just five minutes a day, regardless of whether the bird actually went out.

The report said that, on average, organic food can cost 50 percent to 100 percent more than conventional products. But there are ways to minimize this bill.

The government found that 40 percent of organic vendors at farmer's markets don't charge a premium for their organic product, the report said.

Buying a share in a community-supported organic farm can also reduce the prices of organic produce below those found in non-organic supermarkets.

You can learn more by using “when to buy organic” (without the quotation marks) as a search term in Google or other search engine. Also take a look at <http://tinyurl.com/28t34b> for why it's good to go organic on these 10 foods:

- milk
- potatoes
- peanut butter
- baby food
- ketchup
- cotton
- apples
- beef
- soy
- corn

When buying fresh produce, Price Look-Up (PLU) codes on those annoying stickers on your produce tell you the type of produce it is:

- 4-digit code = conventionally grown (with pesticides, etc.)
- 5-digit code beginning with 9 = organically grown (no pesticides)
- 5-digit code beginning with 8 = genetically modified

Unfortunately, you can't distinguish genetically modified produce that's grown using pesticides and artificial fertilizers from genetically modified produce that's grown without the use of such products, a weakness in the current classification system.

Mnemonic: think of the “9” as a little hand-watering can (hand-grown produce) and the “8” as a view of two twists of the DNA double-helix. An example:

- 4016 = conventionally grown Red Delicious apple, large
- 94016 = organically grown Red Delicious apple, large
- 84016 = genetically modified Red Delicious apple, large

## Fruits

First, the fruits. This list is certainly not exhaustive—I immediately think of the Star Fruit, which isn't in this list. This list focuses on the basics. Refer also to the list of Superfoods above.

**Lemons** — Lemons are essential for me. I use lemon juice in many dishes—it seems to spark them up—and lemon zest is equally useful. Lemon juice in water or fruit juice makes it better. When simmering/braising meat that contains bone and cartilage, I always add lemon juice in the liquid to help dissolve the cartilage and leach calcium from the bone. Often, when making a chicken dish, I'll cook thin cross-sections of lemon with the chicken and eat those, peel and all. (I remove the seeds before cooking.)

I *always* have lemons on hand. Usually these are the common Lisbon or Eureka lemons, but when Meyer lemons are available (thin, smooth skin, spherical shape, quite a few seeds, very sweet juice), I love to have those around, too. If you're going to use the zest or eat the peel, you should buy organic lemons. Otherwise, I buy conventional.

**Apples** — Apples are another fruit that I keep always on hand, in the bottom drawer of the refrigerator. This is a fruit that's worth buying organic, if organic is available. You can go quite a ways on the "try a food you've never before tried" by going through all the varieties of apple that you find in the market. Note that some (Granny Smith apples, for example) are mostly used in cooking. Some Web searching on the apple variety will tell you more about the apple, its origin, use, and so on. For a useful list of varieties, see <http://tinyurl.com/e6jwy>.

When I eat a raw apple, I eat around the equator, as it were, then around the base, then up through the core to the top, then around the top. I throw away the stem, but the rest of the apple—skin, seeds, core, and flesh—I eat. I started doing this when I saw a friend eat an apple that way, and I found that it worked great. In fact, some seeds have a distinct cinnamon taste that's very nice. Try it.

Same thing when I cook apples—for example, the Granny Smith apples I grate to cook with sauerkraut and bacon (<http://tinyurl.com/yovmns>): I remove the stem and the little product label, wash off the apple, and then grate the whole thing: skin, seeds, core, and flesh.

Since dirt tends to accumulate around the stem and blossom ends of the apple, pay attention to those areas in particular when using your little spray bottle of vinegar-water to clean the apple.

**Berries** — These are more a treat for me. Fresh berries in yogurt are very nice as a dessert. I never buy berries unless they're organic. Strawberries were the food found to have the highest level of pesticides, even after washing. Goji berries I eat daily with my cereal.

**Oranges** — Navel oranges are one reason for looking forward to winter: they are back in season, and they're great for breakfast. I don't drink orange juice—diabetic—but eating a whole peeled orange provides more nutrients and affords the same pleasure (or even more). I'll buy conventional unless I'm going to use the zest, and for that I'll seek out organic.

**Kumquats** — I love these little guys in cooking. I have several recipes for braised chicken in which the kumquats are cooked with the chicken. I usually halve them. Organic would be best here, but I'll even eat conventional ones: I don't eat that many in a month.

**Avocados** — I don't eat these too often, but I do greatly enjoy them. I will make a guacamole using my *molcajete* and *tejolote*. I now can whip up a great batch of guacamole in a moment. Avocado is one of those things not worth buying organic: conventional is fine.

**Olives** — Olives, like lemons, are a staple I always have on hand, particularly a quart of pitted Saracena and/or Kalamata olives along with perhaps a pint of Niçoise olives. Whole Foods carries a wide variety in bulk and other stores have them as well. Lots of varieties to try in the "new food" endeavor.

## Vegetables

Once again: not an exhaustive list, just the basics.

**Garlic** — Yes! Always on hand. I buy four heads of garlic at a time. I try to avoid those in which the large cloves are actually collections of smaller sub-cloves: you can usually tell by looking closely. When I want a large clove of garlic, I want just the one clove.

One thing I've discovered is that many recipe writers are garlic-wusses and are afraid to call for as much garlic as I for one would like. So if a recipe calls for one clove of garlic, I'll use two or three. If it calls for two, I'll use four or five. You should experiment to find your own proper garlic level, but don't be afraid to use more.

I usually take my Chinese knife and cut off the very base of the clove (where it attached to the bulb) and then crush the garlic with the flat of the blade. The peel then slips off and the mincing of the garlic is well underway.

Garlic contains compounds that are very good for you, but those compounds don't form until you crush or mince the garlic, and then at first they are unstable. So if you mince the garlic and put it immediately into hot oil in the sauté pan, the garlic will still taste great but it will not do you so much good as if you minced the garlic and then let it sit for 15 minutes. This is a good argument for doing the mise en place: preparing all the things that will go into the dish before you even start to cook it. That will give the garlic compound time to stabilize.

**Onions** — Same as garlic: essential and always on hand. White onions lack the nutritive value of yellow and red onions, so I always buy the latter. Generally I go with the yellow spherical onions, looking for those that are tightly wrapped and firm. I also buy sweet onions (<http://tinyurl.com/yqtea9>)—Vidalia, Walla Walla, and so on—for use in salads. With onions, you don't need organic and you get the greatest benefit if you eat them raw or lightly cooked—which is why sweet onions are handy. I also often have scallions, which are eaten raw, and those I buy organic only. I use leeks in soup or braise as a vegetable.

**Tomatoes** — I frequently get tomatoes, though they are not a staple like garlic and onions. I generally buy Italian plum tomatoes (Roma), and I almost always cook them. The lycopene in tomatoes becomes much more available after cooking, which is why tomato sauce, tomato paste, canned tomatoes, and so on are good to use. Tomatoes cooked with broccoli make a dish that's particularly healthful.

**Broccoli** — Broccoli is one of the cruciferous vegetables (<http://tinyurl.com/y27fmh>), and these have been found to prevent cancer. Broccoli is one of the most nutritious, though in fact Broccoli Sprouts have substantially more of the good stuff than Broccoli.

**Brussels sprouts** — Another cruciferous vegetable. I like to cut them in half vertically, steam them for about 10 minutes, and then perhaps pour balsamic vinegar over them and chill them, or sauté them with other goodies. Very tasty.

**Cabbage** — Yet another cruciferous vegetable. I like green cabbage, red cabbage, and Napa cabbage. I'll eat all of them chopped up in a salad, though I'm more apt to cook the green and the red cabbage—perhaps chopped up in a stir-fry.



**Greens** — You should eat a mess of greens every day. (“Mess,” in this context, means enough for a meal—cf. “mess hall”.) Greens are a basic food—plus you again get to try “foods new to me” many times by exploiting the variety of greens: kale, collards, spinach, mustard, turnip, dandelion, Swiss chard, red chard, beet greens. The most nutritious are kale and collards, but collect ’em all. You can mix greens, too. Get organic greens if possible—spinach in particular should be organic.

Greens are high in calcium and good vitamins, and (as with most vegetables) are best if they are fresh. Pick any of the greens—say, kale—and Google “kale nutritional value” (without the quotation marks). You’ll be astonished.

### **Cooked Greens**

Wash the greens thoroughly in a sink of cold water, swishing them around. If you see a lot of sand in the bottom, drain the sink, refill with cold water and wash them again. Shake dry, then use the Chinese knife to chop up the greens. Some remove the stems, but I don’t bother. I chop those up too.

Put the chopped greens in a large sauté pan or a pot, along with a cup of water—two cups if you think you need that much. Bring water to a boil, cover the pan, turn heat to low, and simmer for half an hour.

You can salt and pepper them before cooking, or sprinkle on a little crushed red pepper, or use chicken stock for the liquid. You can chop up raw kale or other greens and cook them in soups. Try different things. If I’m cooking beet greens, I often cut the beets into chunks and cook them with the greens. (Beet greens are tasty and very good for you.) I also like to eat the beets raw: grate them and put them in a salad or slaw.

**Sweet potatoes** — I no longer eat plain potatoes (and I liked Yukon Gold potatoes a lot), but I still eat sweet potatoes, usually roasted. In fact, a sweet potato well roasted (in its skin—I always eat the skin) and chilled makes a great dessert, so far as I’m concerned, with a plop of yogurt.

Those things called “yams” in your market are sweet potatoes. A yam is a tropical vegetable: white, tasteless, and with little food value. The sweet potato, which comes in several varieties, is orange, tasty, and has lots of food value. Grocers started using the term “yam” to make sure people didn’t expect a regular (white) potato.

### **Bourbon Sweet Potatoes**

4 1/2 lbs mixed varieties of sweet potatoes  
1/2 tsp salt  
3/4 cup butter, softened  
1/3 cup bourbon  
2 Tbs butter  
1/2 cup (or more) walnuts, coarsely chopped

Bake potatoes in jackets in a hot oven for 1 hour or until soft. Scoop out the meat and beat it with the soft butter, bourbon, and salt. Don't overdo the bourbon—I did once and it tasted too strong. Put the mix in a shallow, greased baking dish. Dot with butter and walnuts. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes.

**Celery** — Always good to have on hand for fish salads, for a snack, and for making a mirepoix (*mere-pwah* — <http://tinyurl.com/267geo>). Mirepoix is 2 parts minced onion, 1 part minced celery, and 1 part minced carrots. It serves as the basis for many soups, stews, sauces, and the like. A layer of mirepoix in the bottom of the pan is a great support for some meat you're going to braise. Mirepoix is the “holy trinity” of French cooking; the Cajun “holy trinity” is bell pepper, onion, and celery.

**Carrots** — Another staple. Great snack; good to grate and add to pasta sauce (the grated carrots sweeten it and thicken it—a good trick for many dishes that call for sugar); wonderful glazed; an important ingredient in braised dishes; and an all-round highly versatile vegetable. Particularly good in the winter if roasted:

#### Roasted Winter Vegetables

Serves 4

2 medium carrots, peel on, cut into 3/4-inch chunks

1 medium onion, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces

1 medium sweet potato, peel on, cut into 1-inch cubes

8 oz mixed mushrooms, cut (if necessary) into 1-inch pieces

2 medium parsnips, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes

10 garlic cloves, peeled

10 shallots, peeled and separated into sections

3 Tbs extra-virgin olive oil

1 Tbs balsamic vinegar

2 tsp coarse salt (Maldon or kosher)

1 Tbs chopped fresh rosemary

Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

Heat the oven to 450° F. In a large bowl, toss the vegetables with the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, salt, and rosemary.

Spread the vegetables in a baking pan just large enough to hold them in one layer. (If pan is too big, vegetables may dry out too much and burn.)

Roast in the oven, shaking the pan once or twice, about 50 minutes. The vegetables are done when they turn a toasty caramel color and are fork tender. Garnish with chopped fresh parsley and serve hot or at room temperature.

Additional possibilities:

Beets, peel on, cut into chunks (especially good)

Celery root, peeled and cut into chunks

Fennel, trimmed and sliced

Pitted Kalamata Olives

Potatoes, peel on, cut into wedges

Red pepper, seeded and cut into chunks

Rutabagas, peeled and cut into chunks

Turnips, peel on, cut into chunks

Winter squash, peeled if you want, seeded, and cut into chunks

General guidance:

Wash vegetables and peel those with *really* tough outer skin (often skin will soften in the course of roasting—with butternut squash, for example, I eat the roasted skin)

Cut or slice vegetables into even-sized pieces: 1-2" chunks (too small and they turn to mush)

Toss vegetables with oil to keep them from drying out

Add seasonings: salt and hardy fresh herbs like rosemary, sage, and oregano, which can stand the heat. Delicate herbs best added after roasting. Avoid using dried herbs when roasting because they can become bitter.

Spread vegetables out in a baking pan, roast in 450° oven, shaking pan once or twice during cooking to keep veg from sticking. Cook until fork tender and well browned.

**Zucchini and Summer Squash** — Excellent added to braised dishes and stews, good sautéed—good fiber, tasty vegetable.

#### **Sautéed Summer Squash and Onion**

Thinly slice summer squash and/or zucchini and onion. Heat extra-virgin olive oil in large sauté pan, then add the sliced vegetables along with a little basil, marjoram, salt, and pepper. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring as needed. You can macerate the squash and/or zucchini before cooking if you like—it improves the dish somewhat.

**Winter squash** — Butternut, Ambercup, Delicata, Hubbard, Acorn—there's a wonderful variety of winter squashes, quite easy to cook (roasting is the usual method). Again, many opportunities for a “new to me” vegetable.

#### **Savory Roasted Butternut Squash**

Cut the stem off a butternut squash, halved the squash lengthways, and scoop out and discard the seeds. Brush the cut sides and cavity with extra-virgin olive oil and sprinkle with Apple Pie Spice and Lemon Pepper. Roast at 375° until fully soft, about 45-60 minutes. It will be sweet (from the Butternut), spicy, savory, and delicious. So far as I'm concerned, the skin is edible.

**Bitter Melon** — This is actually a squash, and is terrific in stir-fries. Slightly bitter taste, enjoyable once you've become accustomed to it. Good nutritional value. Looks like a very wrinkled cucumber.

**Ginger** — Often useful to wake up a dish. Grate or mince it. Fresh ginger is good to have on hand. I don't peel it, but many do.

**Bell peppers** — Sweet bell peppers—green, red, yellow, orange—are good raw or cooked, in salads or in stews. Yellow ones have the greatest food value. These are best bought organic.

**Jalapeños** — A staple. I always have a few jalapeños around. Many recipes childishly have you remove the ribs and seeds, but those are exactly what provide the heat. I remove the stem and chop up the whole jalapeño for use in cooking. If you're sensitive to capsaicin, you may want to remove ribs and seeds. Modern jalapeños are being bred to be milder, to expand the market. A mistake. Might as well get green peppers then.

**Habaneros** — Beautiful and quite hot. Use gloves in handling. For these, I do tend to remove the ribs and seeds. A little gives a good kick to a chili or stew.

## Mushrooms

Mushrooms have their own section because they are not a vegetable. Indeed, mushrooms do not belong to the plant kingdom. The fungi split off early from the plant kingdom into their own group, more or less midway between the plants and the animals. Perhaps that's why mushrooms are so often used in vegetarian dishes to provide a meat-like mouthfeel.

This is another great category to exploit for your "something new to me" exploration: there are so many varieties: domestic white mushrooms, Crimini mushrooms, Portobello mushrooms (mature Criminis), lobster mushrooms, shiitake mushrooms (my favorite), porcini mushrooms, oyster mushrooms, morels, enoki mushrooms, Chanterelle, truffles, and others.

Often these are available in dried form—indeed, that's probably how you'll have to get your Porcini mushrooms. You reconstitute them with boiling water, and then use them in cooking. I have an enormous bag of dried sliced shiitake mushrooms I got from Costco that I use frequently. Here's a nice little dish using dried mushrooms:

### Orzo with Dried Porcini

1 oz dried porcini mushrooms, rinsed in cold water

2 Tbs unsalted butter

1 small onion, finely chopped

Coarse salt & ground pepper

1 1/2 cups orzo

1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese

3 Tbs chopped fresh parsley

Place mushrooms in medium bowl and add 2 cups warm water. Soak until softened, about 30 minutes. Drain, reserving liquid. Squeeze mushrooms to remove excess liquid. Coarsely chop.

Melt butter in medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onion; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 5 minutes. Season generously with salt and pepper. Add orzo; cook, stirring often, until orzo is golden brown, about 5 minutes.

Add mushrooms, reserved liquid, and 2 ½ cups water [or chicken stock – MH]. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer, stirring often, until orzo has absorbed most of the liquid and is creamy, 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in Parmesan cheese; season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle parsley on top.

Note: I have found that this works with any dried mushrooms. I've used dried morels and dried shiitakes at different times. Also, if 1 oz mushrooms is good, 2 oz is better. It is true, though, that the version with dried porcinis has its own distinct flavor and is very good.

The above is supposed to serve 4. I make a single (large) serving using these quantities:

- 1 oz dried mushrooms soaked in
- 2 cups hot water
- 1 1/2 Tbs butter
- 1/2 onion finely chopped
- 2/3 c. orzo
- 1/3 c grated parmesan
- Prepare as above.

## Packaged foods

The above list, quite incomplete, is of fresh produce. Now we come to foods packaged for the shelves.

**Agave syrup** — Agave syrup is a good sweetener for diabetics because it has a very low glycemic index: 27. So if you like your tea or coffee sweetened, try agave syrup.

<http://tinyurl.com/29rg69>

**Bengal gram dal** — Also known as Chana dal, this really belongs in the “Beans” section, but it’s worth an entry of its own because many people in the US don’t regularly have it. It is split baby chickpeas, and it’s notable because of its extremely low glycemic index: 12, surpassed only by Nopal (prickly pear) at 10. Probably you will have to buy it on-line (for example, <http://tinyurl.com/2p7ucd>). I often include it in soups, and sometimes cook it for a bean salad (see below). Excellent nutritional value: <http://tinyurl.com/2sl2em>

**Beans** — A major staple, both canned and dried—and another easy way to find things you’ve not tried before: lots of varieties of beans. To mention a few: Scarlet Runner Bean, Brown Tepary Bean, Marrow Bean, Flageolet Bean, Christmas Lima Bean, Black Valentine Bean (better than Black Turtle Bean), Red Nightfall Bean, Good Mother Stallard Bean, Yellow Eye Bean, and many others. You can find these on-line by a search for “heritage beans” or “heirloom beans.”

On the whole, I prefer dried beans to canned: cheaper, and there's something satisfying in taking what seems like a handful of small pebbles and turning it into food simply by simmering in water. You can dump a pound of beans into a pot, fill it with water, simmer for an hour, add a smoked ham hock, and pretty soon have a great soup for dinner. Beans—legumes, pulses, call them what you will—should be a regular part of your diet. Lentils are quick and easy to prepare (no pre-soaking and they cook quickly). Here's a favorite recipe made many times over the years.

### **Lentils Monastery Style**

from *Diet for a Small Planet*, by Frances Moore Lappé

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1/2 tsp thyme
- 1/2 tsp marjoram
- 3 cups stock or seasoned water
- 1 CUP dried lentils
- salt to taste
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley
- 1 15-oz can of diced tomatoes
- 1/4 cup sherry
- 3/4 c grated Swiss cheese

Heat oil and sauté onions and carrot for 5 minutes. Add thyme and marjoram and sauté 1 minute more. Add all but sherry and cook covered until lentils are tender, about 45 minutes. Add sherry. Put 2 Tbs of grated cheese in each serving bowl and top with soup. Very good with corn muffins.

I emphasize "cup" in the list of ingredients because I once absent-mindedly used the whole 1-lb package of lentils. I usually also add 1-2 cloves crushed garlic, a dash of Tabasco, and a splash of Worcestershire sauce.

So that the beans will be tender, I generally don't add fat or salt until the beans have cooked. However, I do occasionally put a smoked hock in with the beans to cook, so I guess the rule is what you make of it. You can soak beans in water overnight, but they have a better taste if you just put them in cold water, bring it to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer until they're done (by taste test). It takes longer for them to cook that way, but it works fine.

Beans vary quite a bit in their cooking time. Dried black-eyed peas, if soaked overnight, seem ready for a salad after about 20 minutes. Of course, I'm cooking at sea level. If you're at a high altitude, it will take longer. (Don't cook beans in a pressure cooker: they can boil up and clog the vent.) There are many recipes for Texas Caviar. Here's one I like:

### **Texas Caviar**

Texas Caviar has many recipes. Here's one: soak a 1-lb package of black-eyed peas overnight. Bring to boil and simmer just until tender (about 20 minutes at sea level) and then immerse in cold water to stop the cooking. Drain completely, and add:

Extra-virgin olive oil

Lime juice

Chopped jalapeño (with ribs and seeds removed, if you want)

Chopped fresh cilantro

Chopped scallions, including green leaves (can substitute sweet onion)

Dash Worcestershire

Dash Tabasco

Salt

Refrigerate to allow flavors to blend. Terrific salad.

I often make a large bean salad:

### **Leisureguy's Bean Salad**

In a large bowl, stir together:

1 package of Trader Joe's peeled edamame (cooked fresh soybeans)

1 can black beans, drained and rinsed

1 can dark red kidney beans, drained and rinsed

1 can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed

1 cup hulled barley, cooked in 2 c stock until stock is absorbed (about 1 hr)

1 cup frozen roasted corn kernels (added directly, without cooking)

1 cup dried goji berries (<http://www.gojiberries.us/>)

1 chopped red bell pepper

1 chopped yellow bell pepper

1 chopped sweet onion

1 chopped avocado

1 bunch cilantro (or Italian parsley), chopped

12 oz thick bacon, chopped and sautéed until crisp

Good-sized handful of pitted Saracena or Kalamata olives (check for pits)

6 cloves garlic, minced

2 jalapeños, chopped (but not seeded)

extra-virgin olive oil

juice of 2 lemons or 4 limes

salt

pepper

several dashes of Worcestershire sauce

several dashes of Tabasco sauce

Other things that are good from time to time:



Artichoke hearts (if using frozen, you can cook in the hot bacon grease)  
Crumbled Gorgonzola  
Cooked wheat (kamut, spelt, or farro) or rye berries instead of barley  
Cook cut pasta (orzo, wagon wheels, spirelli, etc.) instead of barley  
Chopped pickled jalapeño  
Sardines  
Chopped smoked salmon (lox)  
Nuts (pine nuts, chopped walnuts, pecans, peanuts—whatever)  
Capers  
White anchovies  
Cherry tomatoes, sliced in half vertically  
Sliced water chestnuts  
Fresh corn kernels cut from the cob  
Crushed red pepper flakes  
Chopped green chilis  
Chopped scallions  
Crumbled feta  
Cottage cheese  
Dried cranberries  
Lemon zest  
Orange zest  
Juice of an orange  
Shredded raw red cabbage  
Toppings I've used:  
Sriracha Hot Chili Sauce  
Drained yogurt  
Mediterranean style yogurt cheese  
Chopped crisp bacon  
Guacamole (if no avocados in salad)  
Sour cream  
Grated cheese  
Branson pickle  
Tzatziki

I don't always use the four beans specified above. For example, I might substitute black-eyed peas (cooked from scratch) or baby lima beans (ditto) or Bengal gram dal (ditto) for the garbanzo beans or red kidney beans.

**Bread** — I eat little bread. But you perhaps should try making your own bread: simple, easy, and satisfying. See <http://tinyurl.com/2zw6ql> and also the flours, tools, and advice at <http://www.kingarthurflour.com/>.

**Frozen corn** — Another staple. I keep a bag of frozen corn kernels in the freezer at all times. I add it to salads (directly, with no cooking), to chili, and to various stews. Good stuff to have around. My favorite is frozen roasted corn kernels from Trader Joe's.

**Fish** — I always have canned fish on hand (or fish in the new foil wrappers). I like to keep a couple of cans (or packets) of tuna and of salmon, along with several cans of sardines (packed in water: they're oily enough). I avoid any packed in oil other than olive oil or fish oil. If the fish is packed in oil, I will typically use it in a salad and with the oil as the salad oil. Salmon and sardines are great sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

Anchovies are definitely a staple and a great source of the taste *umami* (<http://tinyurl.com/crgzn>). (Another good source is parmesan rind.) I chop and add a few anchovies to stews and soups to deepen the taste. Buy Spanish or Italian anchovies packed in olive oil in a bottle, not canned.

**Dried fruit** — I keep dried fruit on hand at all times: dried plums (prunes), grapes (raisins), currants, cherries, cranberries, goji berries, apricots, apples, and the like. Not all of them, but at least some. Right now I have dried plums, grapes, cherries, and goji berries. Good in cereal, good for a snack, and good with yogurt.

**Horseradish** — Get bottled horseradish in the refrigerated section of your market or horseradish root in the produce section. Do not buy those little jars that sit unrefrigerated on the store shelf.

I keep a jar of horseradish (from the refrigerated section) in my fridge at all times. It's a staple without a substitute. It gets used as a condiment with cooked meats (roast beef, tongue, and the like) and in beef and lamb stews, especial those made with shanks or oxtail.

I don't get horseradish root all that often, but it's very pleasant, in a pungent sort of way. Peel it and use the microplane to grate it. Here's a terrific sauce from the *LA Times*:

#### Horseradish Sauce

1/2 cup crème fraîche

1 tablespoon freshly grated horseradish

Combine the crème fraîche and horseradish in a small bowl and mix well. Cover and refrigerate at least one hour or as long as overnight.

**Mayonnaise** — It's very easy to make your own mayonnaise, but if you buy mayonnaise in a jar, buy only that made with canola oil—avoid those made with soybean oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil, or corn oil. Here's one recipe. See also <http://tinyurl.com/2yumht>.

#### Mayonnaise

1 egg yolk

Pinch of salt

1/4 teaspoon powdered mustard

Pinch sugar (and here I would use sugar: small amount, no problem)

Some cayenne pepper

1 1/2 – 2 Tbs lemon juice

1 cup canola oil or extra-virgin olive oil or mix of the two

Put the yolks, salt, mustard, sugar, pepper, and 1 teaspoon lemon juice in a bowl and whisk it (with the balloon whisk) until it's very thick and pale yellow. Add about 1/4 cup oil, drop by drop, beating vigorously all the while. Whisk in 1 teaspoon more lemon juice until well blended, then add another 1/4 cup oil, a few drops at a time, beating vigorously all the while. Whisk in another teaspoon lemon juice. Add another 1/4 cup oil in a very fine steady stream, whisking constantly, then whisk in remaining lemon juice. Finally, drizzle in the last of the oil while whisking vigorously. Cover and refrigerate until needed. Do not keep longer than 1 week.

You can experiment with changing the proportions to vary the consistency, and you can try adding other flavors: Dijon mustard instead of dry mustard, a bit of anchovy paste, some capers with a little of their liquid, crushed garlic, and so on.

**Nuts** — Just as with dried fruits, I keep dried nuts on hand to add to breakfast cereal, use in stir-fry and salads, and as a snack. I always have English walnuts, often pecans and almonds, and occasionally peanuts and Brazil nuts, and right now macadamia nuts, pistachios, and hazelnuts (along with the English walnuts).

**Pasta** — Pasta is a staple, and I always have it on hand. I prefer cut pasta (e.g., rotini, orzo, ditalini, wagon wheels, penne, and so on) to the long pasta (spaghetti, linguini, vermicelli, fettucine, and so on) because I often add the pasta to the dish that I braising or stewing and let it cook in the liquid. Of course, I do that with long pasta as well, simply breaking it up, but the cut pasta is more convenient. I tend to get whole-wheat pasta, but regular durum pasta has a relatively low glycemic index (but a high glycemic load because of the amount of carbohydrates, which is why I add a little pasta to a stew rather than making pasta the main component of the meal).

### Chicken Thigh for One

Heat oven to 350°.

Salt and pepper both sides of the chicken thigh. (I sometimes use lemon pepper.)

Put a little extra-virgin olive oil in the small sauté pan, heat, and brown the chicken thigh well: you want the skin to be brown and crisp.

While it browns, crush and peel 4 or 5 garlic cloves and mince, and half an onion.

Remove the browned thigh, add onion and garlic to the pan and sauté briefly. If you want, add a little crushed red pepper at this step.

If you have white wine or dry vermouth on hand, pour in a splash and deglaze the pan. Otherwise, skip that step. Pour in 1 cup of chicken stock and (if the pan hasn't been deglazed), deglaze it now, scraping up all the brown bits.

Add some oregano and stir it into the liquid.

Add 1/3 cup orzo (whole-wheat is what I use) to the pan, along with a handful of pitted kalamata olives and juice of one lemon. You can, if you wish, also add some chopped mushrooms, either fresh ones or dried ones that have been soaked in hot water for 20 minutes or so. If the latter, you might want to use the soaking water for the liquid, or mix some of that with the chicken stock.

Return the thigh to the pan, skin side up. Cut several thin cross-sections of lemon, remove the seed, and add to the liquid, with one cross section on top of the chicken thigh.

Cover and put it into the oven for 50 minutes. Spoon out and eat, including the lemon sections, which will be slightly bitter.

**Peppers** — I like to get dried chile peppers to make chile-garlic paste.

### Chile-Garlic Paste

Get good dried chiles that are still flexible, not brittle. Put a variety in a bowl—for example, ancho, pasilla, chipotles, New Mexico, habanero. Use 15 chiles in all, about 3 ounces. Use only a couple of chipotles and/or habaneros, as those are spiciest.

Pour boiling water over them, let them soak for 30 minutes (with a little plate on top to keep them submerged), and then at the sink pull off their stems and remove most of the seeds, putting the peppers and a few seeds into a food processor. It's wise to use disposable gloves for this task.

Add one or two tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil, a good dash of salt, and a few peeled garlic cloves, and process the lot into a paste. You may add some of the soaking water if needed. You can try also using a little ground cumin or ground coriander. Lots of variation possible with different dried peppers, different herbs, etc.

Use immediately or cover tightly and refrigerate.

**Pomegranate juice and cranberry juice:** I always have several quarts of 100% pure unsweetened pomegranate juice and also of cranberry juice on hand. I drink water in the afternoon and evening, but it's water with those juices added: into a 2-liter pitcher, pour 1 cup pomegranate juice and 1 cup cranberry juice and then fill the pitcher with water and refrigerate. I use a one-pint glass, and two glasses of the diluted juice mix give me a therapeutic amount of both pomegranate and cranberry juice. (See the "Superfoods" section above.)

**Salt** — Salt is very definitely a staple—and another good opportunity to explore variety. I use kosher salt for cooking, for example. (No salt is treyf: salt is kosher by nature. But "kosher" salt, so called, has a porous structure useful for koshering meat—i.e., drawing out the blood. <http://tinyurl.com/ynqejt>) Other salts I keep on hand: fine sea salt, as my standard table salt; Maldon salt (<http://tinyurl.com/23vkdk>), terrific on steak; hickory-smoked salt (<http://tinyurl.com/9dj7c>), also good on steak; Velvet De Guérande (<http://tinyurl.com/2nyxcj>), a salt so fine it feels like flour, which works great on

popcorn. You can find an excellent variety of salt, along with much salt lore, at the Salt Works, [www.saltworks.us](http://www.saltworks.us).

**Liquid smoke** — I always have a little bottle of liquid smoke on hand. A good dash into a pot of chili I'm making adds a great flavor. It can be used on roasts to provide a BBQ flavor—in fact, use it in any dish where a hint of smoke would be tantalizing. You can even buy liquid smoke in different flavors, as it were: hickory, pecan, mesquite, and apple. <http://tinyurl.com/292aqk>

**Tofu** — Tofu is a great food, one you should eat regularly. You may find on it the shelf (Mori-Nu Tofu: <http://tinyurl.com/34p8hw>) or in the refrigerated section (various brands, often local). You can also order Mori-Nu Tofu from Amazon.com. Here's a terrifically luscious chocolate pie based a recipe from *Science News* (<http://tinyurl.com/2sfe8m> — article at link explains health value). People simply can't believe how good this tastes.

### Tofu Chocolate Mousse Pie

2 boxes of low-fat Mori-Nu silken tofu (12.3-ounces each, any firmness) – no substitutes (other tofus don't get as smooth). Mori-Nu comes in a cardboard box and is not always in the refrigerated section—it might be on the regular shelf.

1 10 or 12 ounce package of semi-sweet chocolate chips

1/2 tsp. sugar (or use 1 Tbs agave syrup)

1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

chocolate-cookie no-bake pie shell (or no shell: serve as a pudding)

raspberries or strawberries (garnish)

Melt the chocolate in the top of a double boiler until the chips retain their shape but are soft as warm butter. Remove from heat and let stand a couple minutes.

Purée the tofu in a food processor—about 2 minutes—frequently scraping down the sides of the mixing bowl to ensure that all of the tofu is converted from a soft brick into a warm-pudding consistency. Add the water to the sugar, then mix both into the tofu. Add the softened chocolate and stir until thoroughly mixed. Pour into a chocolate-cookie pie shell and swirl the top to make soft peaks, like frosting a cake. Garnish with berries. Then chill to set. Ready in 1 hour.

My wife simply refused to try this recipe for years. "I don't like tofu." Finally, I coaxed her to try a bite. Now it's a favorite. You can use tofu in many ways. Take this:

### Horseradish Cream

From *This Can't Be Tofu!*, by Deborah Madison

1/2 cup silken or soft tofu, drained

1/4 cup sour cream

1/4 cup prepared horseradish

2 Tbsp white wine vinegar

Salt

Purée the tofu in a small food processor with the sour cream until perfectly smooth, scraping down the sides once or twice as necessary. [I find that Mori-Nu tofu becomes smoothest when puréed. – LG] Scrape into a bowl and stir in the horseradish, vinegar, and salt to taste.

[Get the horseradish in the refrigerated section of the market. You might try squeezing out the liquid from the horseradish before folding it in. You can also try a pinch of sugar. – LG]

**Tomatoes** — A staple. I keep several 15 oz. cans of diced tomatoes (some with green chilis, or jalapeños, or basil, or whatever) on hand, along with a couple of 28 oz. cans of plum tomatoes. Tomatoes are almost always good in something cooked.

**Vinegar** — Vinegar is another staple, and I always have several types on hand: red wine vinegar, white wine vinegar, rice wine vinegar, white vinegar, and apple-cider vinegar. Vinegar has literally hundreds of uses—see <http://tinyurl.com/2y88as>. And I drink 2 Tbs of apple-cider vinegar in a glass of water at bedtime for my type 2 diabetes: for risks, see <http://tinyurl.com/2kd65v> (I find Bragg’s Organic has the best taste.)

## Bulk foods

Bulk foods are those found in the bins. Generally you get good-quality food at a reasonable price by buying in bulk. All these bulk foods, however, can readily be bought also in packages, which you would do if your store has no bins or if you’re buying via the Web (as you might buy heirloom or heritage beans).

At Whole Foods you can use their plastic bags or their rigid plastic containers for bulk food purchases. If I plan to store the food in the container, I use the rigid plastic container rather than the bag.

**Grains** — Grains are the seeds of various grasses, such as wheat. Grains do not provide a complete set of essential amino acids, so the protein from grain must be completed by other sources—for example, beans or dairy products. I get all my grains in bulk unless lack of availability forces me to a package.

**Oat Groats** — I eat oat groats for breakfast every morning. The whole-grain oats taste much better to me than rolled oats or even steel-cut oats.

**Bulgur** — Bulgur is a quick-cooking form of whole wheat that has been cleaned, parboiled, dried, ground into particles and sifted into distinct sizes. It’s good in salads, and sometimes I add some to a bowl of soup or cup of chili to increase the grain content. (Another good chili addition is cornmeal, dribbled in while stirring.)

**Barley** — I really like **hulled barley**: it has a better taste and is chewier than pearled barley (though I also used **pearled barley** in some dishes, such as the veal shanks recipe given above). Barley is quite high in protein and has a low glycemic index.

**Kamut** — Kamut is a relative of durum wheat, and I prefer it to regular wheat berries. It’s about the same shape as a wheat seed but a Kamut kernel is more than twice as big, has 20%-

40% more protein, and is higher in vitamins and minerals. Cooked whole, it is like rice on steroids, only much more nutritious than rice—and it's cooked like rice: one part kamut, two parts water, simmer until the water's all absorbed. The grains are tender but chewy, and it's excellent in a bean salad, or even as a salad by itself:

#### **Kamut Salad**

Mix in large bowl: cooked Kamut, dried cranberries or other dried fruit, chopped sweet onion, chopped red or yellow bell pepper, chopped parsley or cilantro. Toss with extra-virgin olive oil, lemon juice, salt, pepper. If you enjoy capsaicin, add a chopped jalapeño pepper to the mix. If garlic, add a clove of crushed garlic. If you have cherry tomatoes, you can halve those lengthwise and add them as well.

**Spelt** — Spelt is another species of wheat, cooked and used much like Kamut. Both Kamut and Spelt can often be eaten by those who cannot eat wheat.

**Farro** — Farro is the Italian name for Emmer wheat, a very primitive form of wheat that arose in the Middle East and now is grown in Italy. The Italians use it in soup, but it can also be used like Kamut or Spelt.

**Rice** — Rice is a familiar grain. I eat a little, every now and then, but I prefer the other whole grains listed above. When I eat rice, I commonly eat brown or converted rice.

**Seeds** — Grains are seeds, of course, but specifically the seeds of grasses. (That includes maize, what we in the US call “corn.”) But other seeds offer excellent nutrition and are well worth including in the diet.

**Quinoa** — a New World seed, quinoa is highly nutritious and high in protein (12%-18%), with a complete set of proteins, including the essential amino acids. It's also high in fiber, phosphorus, iron, and magnesium. The seeds are coated with saponins, which are quite bitter. Rinse the seeds thoroughly in water before cooking.

**Buckwheat** — Buckwheat can be cooked and eaten whole (buckwheat groats, or kasha) or ground into flour and cooked (buckwheat noodles, or soba) or mixed with wheat flour for cooking (buckwheat pancakes). Buckwheat has some excellent nutritional benefits and is an interesting food. See <http://tinyurl.com/2oromh>

**Chia seed** — You may be able to find chia seed in your market's bulk bins, but I have to order it. <http://tinyurl.com/287mn7>. Chia seed is digestible without grinding or cooking. You can include it in things you cook, add it to salads and cereals, and even make a gel of it to include in other foods: To prepare chia gel, whisk 1/3 cup chia seeds in 2 cups water. Let stand for 3 minutes and whisk again. Chia gel keeps for up to 2 weeks when refrigerated.

**Flaxseed** — Flaxseed is another good source of omega-3, though to digest it fully the flaxseed must be ground. (Once ground, it must be refrigerated.) Flaxseed oil is often used as a supplement for its omega-3.

**Pumpkin seed** — Pumpkin seed (pepitas) are another nutritious seed: “Pumpkin seeds are a good source of iron, zinc, essential fatty acids, potassium, and magnesium. Pumpkin



seeds may also promote prostate health since components in pumpkin seed oil appears to interrupt the triggering of prostate cell multiplication by testosterone and DHT.”

(Wikipedia)

**Sesame seed** — I use sesame seed every now and then in cooking. The seeds have a very nice smell—and a great fragrance as you toast them in a skillet before using them in a dish.

**Walnuts** — English walnuts are an excellent source of omega-3, and I have them on my hot breakfast cereal every morning. They are also full of calories, so I eat only a tablespoon of the small pieces.

**Pecans** — Great food value and also extremely tasty. I will sometimes make up a good batch of toasted pecans—quick and easy:

### Toasted Pecans

From Classical Southern Cooking, by Damon Lee Fowler

1 pound pecan halves

2 tablespoons unsalted butter -- no substitutes

salt -- to taste

Position a rack in the center of the oven, and preheat the oven to 250 degrees F. Spread the pecans on a 9 x 14-inch cake pan and place them on the center rack. Roast, stirring them occasionally (when you think about it - they are forgiving on this point) until they begin to color, about an hour. Don't let them turn dark; the nuts will darken and crisp as they cool, so don't over-roast them.

Take them from the oven, cut the butter in bits, and add it to them. Stir until the butter has just melted and the pecans are coated. Return them to the oven and toast for about 10 minutes more.

Salt the pecans to taste while they are still hot, toss until they are uniformly coated, and let them cool somewhat before serving. In the winter, they make a welcome snack when they are still toasty warm. Store them in a tightly sealed container, such as a glass jar or tin box with a sealing lid.

## Dairy

Dairy products are great if you can digest lactose—and, of course, you can find lactose-free products if you can't. My own dairy choices I list here. Dairy products are worth buying organic if you can find them.

**Cottage cheese** — This is a staple, always on hand. I like nonfat cottage cheese. I use it on chili, as a snack with dried fruit and pepitas, and in many other ways. Good to have around.

**Hard cheese** — Cheese is high-fat, so I try to keep it away, but a good Campo de Montalban is hard to resist. For a grating cheese, I prefer Romano to Parmesan since Romano has no rind. (Dry Monterey Jack is also good for grating.) On the other hand, the Parmesan rinds are very good to save and add to soups since they impart umami.

**Yogurt** — Another staple, used more or less interchangeably with cottage cheese. I buy the nonfat variety. Very tasty.

**Butter** — Another staple, though used sparingly: a pound will easily last me a month or more. I buy unsalted, European-style: sweeter and richer. I use it melted on popcorn, as a oil for sautéing, and occasionally spread on bread in making a sandwich. (Butter seems much nicer than mayo or mustard for some sandwiches.)

## Meat

Some eat no meat at all, and in general it's a prudent idea to eat small amounts in comparison to your intake of vegetables and complex carbohydrates—and since meat tends to be expensive, cutting back on meat consumption also saves you money. Still, my childhood memories of some meat dishes still call to me, depending on the weather and the season: braised oxtails and beef stew in the winter, grilled steaks in the summer, pork ribs in the fall. Obviously, though, there's no requirement that you eat meat.

## Beef

Beef is gradually coming under fire: not only is mad cow disease a possibility (perhaps especially in the US, where the USDA has completely knuckled under to the beef industry to the point where the USDA would not allow a beef producer to test its cattle for mad-cow disease—the producer sold much beef to Japan, and the Japanese business customers wanted the test done. No, said the USDA. Reason: it could possibly lead to more testing—American customers would start to want that. Why is that bad? Because mad-cow disease might then be discovered.)

Beef from cattle fed corn as a finishing step has more omega-6 and less omega-3. In addition, corn is hard on the cattle's digestive system. For a better balance and more humane raising, try to find grass-fed beef, which also has a better taste, provided that it is properly aged. "Organic" beef, note, does *not* mean grass-fed beef. Still, if it's omega-3 you're after, keep in mind that even farm-raised salmon provides more omega-3 than grass-fed beef, and sardines more yet. <http://tinyurl.com/2e3yfm>

**Shank** — Beef shank is readily found at the market, and it makes a delicious dish. It requires slow cooking—braised at a low temperature. The same is true of **oxtails** and **beef short ribs**, and the following recipe can be for shanks, oxtails, or short-ribs — or a combination:

### Beef Shank, Oxtail, and/or Short Ribs

Last night at 6:00 I put the large sauté pan full of oxtails in a 200° oven, and this morning I took it out, with the kitchen and living room awash in delicious aromas. Off with the lid, and it looked wonderful. I used little tongs to remove the bones, pushing the meat off them with the spatula if the meat didn't simply fall off, as it mostly did.

Colder weather is perfect for oxtails. Since I was making these for me and The Wife, no hot pepper, and she requested no tomatoes. So here it was:

I took two small packages of oxtails, a total of 2 1/4 lbs., and put them in the large sauté pan to brown—no oil, just the oxtails.

As they browned, I chopped finely an onion, 4 stalks of celery, and 2 carrots: a mirepoix, though the usual ratio of amounts is 2:1:1, onions most. Mine was closer to 1:1:1. I also minced about six cloves of garlic. As I did this, I would turn the oxtails from time to time so that they would be browned on all sides.

Once they were brown, I poured in a cup of red wine and used the spatula to deglaze the pan, scraping up all the brown bits. I put the minced vegetables in with the oxtails.

Earlier in the afternoon I had poured boiling water over some dried shiitakes. I took them mushrooms out, squeezing them to dry them a bit. I added some of that water to the pan, about a cup. I cut the mushrooms into slices and added them as well.

I stirred it a bit, and then added the juice of 4 lemons (the acid helps break down the cartilage and leach out a bit of calcium from the bones), about 1 Tbsp of horseradish (this imparts a wonderful elusive flavor), a good healthy dash of Worcestershire sauce—probably a tablespoon—salt, pepper, and dried thyme. A bit more stirring, on with the lid, and into the oven for 11 hours. You might try using star anise (perhaps 3 stars) instead of the horseradish.

**Tongue** — Beef tongue is absolutely delicious.

#### **Beef Tongue**

First make a stock: add several celery stalks cut in chunks, a clove-studded onion, carrots cut into chunks, (optional: a whole orange cut into chunks), peppercorns, and a bouquet garni to a pot of water, bring it to a boil, and simmer for 20 minutes. Removing the vegetables and put a whole beef tongue into the pot and bring it back to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer gently, covered or partially covered, for 3-3 1/2 hours, until the tongue's totally tender. Remove it to a platter, let it cool for 20-30 minutes, and then peel it. You can then slice it and serve it hot with mustard and horseradish. Also be sure to keep some for later: cold tongue slices make a superb sandwich.

**Heart** — When I get beef heart these days, I normally cut it into small pieces and use it in a stew or make a kind of chop suey with it. Very high in B vitamins and tasty as well. Veal heart is also good, and it can be cooked like beef tongue.

**Kidney** — Beef or veal kidney is quite tasty, cooked with sautéed onions and perhaps a splash of red wine or Amontillado sherry. Use a sharp knife to trim away the white innards of the kidney, then enjoy. A steak-and-kidney pie is a true pleasure on a cold day. And take a look at this recipe <http://tinyurl.com/24btwb>

**Sweetbreads** — Simmer the sweetbreads (the thymus gland of an immature calf) in salted water to which you've added some vinegar or lemon juice. After about 20 minutes, drain, let cool, then strip off the membranes covering the sweetbreads. You can then sauté the sweetbreads, serve them in a sauce, and so on.

**Tripe** — Tripe is the essential component of menudo, along with posole (dried corn). It's best to cook this with a cow-foot (for the gelatin), but cow's feet are hard to find in most markets. Same with a calf's foot. I usually now am forced to use pig feet. Here's a good recipe. Menudo is a traditional New Year's Day dish—or any other day when one is apt not to be feeling 100%. The photo shows the actual result of this recipe when I made it.

### Menudo Rojo

Honeycomb tripe or blanket tripe works best for this soup—which tastes best if it's made a day ahead of time.

Rather than use canned hominy (which is wretched), I got white corn posole from [www.loschileros.com](http://www.loschileros.com). It comes in 12 oz bags, and I used two bags in this recipe. Probably just 16 oz would be better.

- 16-oz. of posole (soaked overnight)
- 4 lbs bleached beef tripe
- 1 med onion, peeled and quartered
- 1 head of garlic, unpeeled and halved

crosswise

- 2 hot red chiles, such as chile de árbol

1 cow's foot, cut in half lengthwise, then crosswise into 2" pieces by butcher and cleaned (or 2 calves' feet or 4 pigs' feet; wrap pigs' feet in cheesecloth and tie)

juice of 2 lemons

1/4 cup vinegar

6 Tbsp medium-hot chili powder, such as New Mexico chili powder

1 Tbsp crushed red pepper

2 Tbsp dried oregano

1 tsp ground cumin

salt

Soak the posole overnight and drain. Set aside.

Put tripe into a large pot and cover with cold water by 1". Bring to a boil over high heat, then drain and rinse. Cut into 1" squares and set aside.

Put onion, garlic, and chili into a piece of cheesecloth, gather corners together, tie shut with kitchen twine, and set aside.

Put the foot pieces into a large heavy-bottomed pot with enough water to cover. Add lemon juice and vinegar, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium and simmer, skimming the foam the rises to the surface, for 30 minutes.

Add tripe and onion-garlic-chili sachet to pot and more water if needed (just enough to cover everything). Continue simmering until tripe is soft, 3-4 hours.



Remove and discard feet and sachet. Add posole, chili powder, crushed red pepper, oregano, cumin, and salt to taste and simmer until tripe is soft and soup is thick, 1 - 1 1/2 hours.

Skim and discard fat from top. (Easier if you chill the menudo first, and it's better on day 2 anyway.)

Serve with warm corn tortillas, lime wedges, chopped cilantro, and chopped white onion.

**Tripe**—the stomach lining of ruminant animals, most commonly cows—isn't very popular in the US, but it's relished in many other countries, including Italy, China, and Mexico, where it is the key ingredient in menudo. There are three basic types of tripe: blanket, or plain, the thickest and firmest; book, so named for the way it folds into page-like piles; and—most typical in America—honeycomb, generally preferred for its subtle flavor, texture, and tenderness. Tripe is sold canned, pickled, and fresh (which usually means partially cooked and bleached)—the form most recipes call for. If the tripe you buy hasn't been bleached (its gray tint will be a giveaway), soak it in water with a sliced lemon overnight; drain; boil it in a pot of water for one hour, changing water halfway through.

**Feet**—Calves' feet are often used to give body and flavor to soups and stews. A cow's foot is bigger and better: this much larger hoof yields much more gelatin and a richer flavor. Ask your butcher to cut the foot in half lengthwise, then crosswise into 2" pieces. Use a small, sharp knife to scrape away any impurities and trim off any hairs. Rinse bones well, then boil away.

My supermarket can't get a cow's foot. Two calves' feet is next best, but I couldn't get this either. So I used four pigs' feet. Because the pigs' feet shed small bones just the same size, color, and look as the hominy, wrap them, singly or two at a time, in cheesecloth so the bones will not escape.

**Hominy**—The original recipe called for two 15.5-oz cans of white hominy. Canned hominy is pretty bad. Posole corn is prepared by soaking hard kernels of field corn (traditionally white, although blue is sometimes used now) in powdered lime and water—a method thought to mimic the ancient preservation of corn in limestone caves. After several hours, when the corn kernels have swollen, the liquid is allowed to evaporate and the kernels to dry.

Posole is different from hominy, which tends to be softer and blander. Compared to hominy, posole's flavor is intense and earthy, its consistency more robust and chewy. But you can use canned hominy in a pinch.

**Steak** — Steak is a wonderful dish. Properly cooked, it is transcendent. If you ever have the chance, go to a good steakhouse in Chicago, where they really know how to treat a steak. Restaurant equipment is capable of hotter cooking temperatures than consumer equipment, so restaurants can readily sear the steak's exterior fast enough so that the

interior is not over-cooked. A hot charcoal fire on a grill can work, too. (Gas-fired grills generally can't get hot enough.) In the description of the cast-iron skillet (under Cooking Containers) I provide a good technique for cooking steaks in the kitchen.

My favorite steak is the **Rib-eye**, boneless or bone-in. The **NY Strip** (sometimes called a Delmonico) is also excellent. And a **Chuck cross-rib** can be surprisingly good.

**Roast beef** — Roast beef is always tasty. The standing-rib roast is the pinnacle, but even a round roast is good. I often cook a round roast and then put it in the refrigerator after it cools, to be sliced for sandwiches in the days ahead.

**Ground beef** — If you buy beef already ground, you're taking a chance—playing *E. coli* roulette. You don't know what's in it, and you have read the frequent food recalls of ground beef because of *E. coli* contamination (one recall bankrupted the packing house). Clearly, the industry doesn't take the care it should in preparing ground beef. Better to pick out a nice chuck roast and perhaps a round and have your butcher grind those together for you. You know what you're getting, plus you can adjust the amount of fat in the mix by what you give him. (Don't altogether eschew the fat, though, else the meat will be tough.) See <http://tinyurl.com/2fr6ul>

I seldom eat ground beef at all, mainly because I don't eat hamburgers or meatballs. I will occasionally make a meatloaf (and use a mix of ground beef, ground pork, and ground veal). When I make chili, I get a cut of meat (a chuck roast, or a London broil) and use my boning knife to cut it first into strips and then into small chunks, which I like much better in chili than ground meat.

## Pork

Pork is quite versatile, and I have it often. Whenever possible, I like to buy Niman Ranch pork, since they raise the pigs humanely.

**Boneless chops** get sliced into strips for stir-fry.

**Pork shoulder** (aka Boston butt) is roasted for sandwiches or cooked slowly with liquid smoke for barbecue:

### BBQ Pork Shoulder

Put a 4-5 lb. pork shoulder, fat side down, in a Dutch oven (or casserole that has a lid) and pour 1/4 cup of liquid smoke over it. Put on the lid and cook in a 275-degree oven for 10-12 hours.

While the pork shoulder cooks, make the sauce by combining ingredients below in a pan and bringing to a simmer for a few minutes. (Sauce may be made the day before and just reheated before pouring it over the pulled pork.)

Once the pork is done, pull the meat off the fat and bone. Put the meat in a deep dish, pulling it apart with two forks. Pour the sauce over it and stir. Serve.

Sauce ingredients:

8 oz can tomato sauce + small (6 oz) can tomato paste  
juice of 2 lemons

1 T salt  
 1/4 cup Worcestershire  
 2 T Heinz A-1 sauce  
 3 T Dijon  
 1 tsp crushed red pepper  
 1 tsp. Tabasco  
 1/4 tsp cayenne  
 1 tsp liquid smoke  
 ground black pepper  
 8 cloves garlic, minced  
 3 small (lime-size) yellow onions, minced  
 2 T butter  
 1/2 c. maple vinegar (see [www.boyajianinc.com](http://www.boyajianinc.com))

Another great recipe for pulled pork is at <http://tinyurl.com/n7but>. I've made it and it's delicious. I did use a fresh jalapeño (seeds and all but the stem) instead of pickled. One lesson I learned: use the 5.5-quart Dutch oven or the 7-qt pot: in the 4-qt pot it comes right up to the edge.

**Ribs** — I regularly cook pork ribs—baby back ribs or spareribs—in the oven. My preferred seasoning is Penzey's Bicentennial Rub (<http://tinyurl.com/3dpmyy>), though Barbecue of the Americas (<http://tinyurl.com/8ymjd>) is also good. Cooking the ribs is simple:

#### Oven-Barbecued Ribs

Coat the ribs with the dry rub, then put them into an open roasting pan and place into a 300° oven. Roast for 2 1/2 hours, and enjoy. If you want a liquid barbecue sauce, you can add it to the ribs at the end.

**Bacon** — I use cooked chopped bacon in salads, in sauerkraut, and in stews. I prefer thick bacon, and I slice it into squares before cooking it.

**Feet** — Pickled pigs' feet are quite good, though I've never made my own. (Good idea, though.) I mainly use pigs' feet in making menudo, as described above.

#### Lamb

Lamb is one of my favorites, and so far as I know, lamb is grass-fed all the way. Leg of lamb is delicious, of course, but I also enjoy lamb shank, which I usually cook like this:

#### Lamb-Shank Stew

Trim off as much fat as possible from 2-4 lamb shanks. The shanks should have been sawed across so that the bone is cut.

Brown several pieces of chopped bacon in the Dutch oven, then remove the bacon, leaving the fat.



Dredge shanks in seasoned flour and brown them thoroughly in the bacon fat. Then add 1 cup of red wine to deglaze the pot, and the following:

2 medium onions, chopped

1 cup chopped celery

1 15-oz. can diced tomatoes with juice

1 bunch Italian parsley, chopped

Juice of 1-2 lemons

1 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce

1/4 tsp crushed red pepper

1 tsp dried thyme

1 tsp dried rosemary

1 Tbsp horseradish

Salt, freshly ground pepper

Cover, bring to boil, and simmer 2 1/2 to 3 hours, until meat is tend. Add 1/2 lb of small (or quartered) Crimini mushrooms and simmer 45 minutes more. Skim fat or use separator to remove fat from juice.

### **Buffalo**

Buffalo is an excellent low-fat, grass-fed meat. I often make buffalo chili, cutting the piece of meat into small chunks. (I never use ground beef to make chili: I like larger pieces of meat, so I cut it up myself.)

### **Rabbit**

Rabbit is a delicious white meat, good braised with onion, lemon, olives, and tarragon, for example.

### **Goat**

I occasionally get leg of goat (chevon). It's delicious and tender when roasted, but hard to find. The USDA reports the saturated fat in cooked chevon (goat meat) is 40% less than that of chicken—even with the skin removed. I order via the Web. <http://tinyurl.com/28m3jf> (Tennessee) and <http://tinyurl.com/2fgaqw> (California) are two sources.

## **Poultry**

Poultry is a standby, mainly chicken.

### **Chicken**

Chicken is a staple. I prefer to buy organic and free-range chicken. Sometimes I buy a whole chicken, sometimes just buy the part of interest. If I buy a whole chicken, I generally spatchcock it (<http://tinyurl.com/2tyw8y>), but sometimes roast it whole and sometimes simmer it whole (to make stock and to use the meat for a chicken salad of some kind or another).

I enjoy wings (with Shari's chicken marinade (below), generally cooked on the grill, but also on a rack in a 300° oven for 30 minutes), thighs (either the full thigh or skinless and

boneless), and chicken breasts. I'm also partial to the packs of hearts and gizzards, which I generally make into a stew:

### **Chicken Heart & Gizzard Stew**

Pour a little extra-virgin olive oil into a hot sauté pan, sauté the chicken hearts and gizzards (I generally cut the gizzards into smaller pieces), then add and sauté onion and garlic and celery and perhaps a jalapeño and/or a bell pepper. Add some oregano and thyme (or herbs of your own selection). Then add a 15-oz can of diced tomatoes, and perhaps (if I have some) a little tomato paste and red wine. Simmer for 30 minutes. You can also make a pasta sauce along these lines. Once you could buy just chicken hearts (and at 10¢ a pound), but now I always find gizzards with the hearts. So it goes.

### **Shari's Chicken Marinade**

1 cup soy sauce  
1 Tbsp lemon juice  
1/4 cup bourbon  
2 tsp grated fresh ginger  
2 Tbsp brown sugar  
1 Tbsp minced parsley  
1 tsp Worcestershire sauce  
1 clove garlic, crushed  
1 Tbsp sesame oil

Combine all ingredients for the marinade and marinate the chicken (or meat, if you like) in the mixture at least 3-4 hours before grilling. You can even marinate chicken all day. The amount above is sufficient for one chicken. Particularly good with a bunch of chicken wings, cut into sections and the tip discarded.

I was told by someone who had been there at the time that the above recipe was created at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo during the post-WWII occupation of Japan by the US. This would explain the confluence of American and Japanese ingredients.

### **Turkey**

I rarely cook a whole turkey these days, but I will occasionally roast a turkey breast (for sandwiches) and buy breast cutlets or breast tenders to cut into strips and chunks for stir fry. I do dearly love turkey necks: meaty and inexpensive. I cook them like this:

### **Turkey-Neck Soup**

This tends to be different each time, depending on what I have on hand and feel like. It always ends up being 8 quarts, because that is the largest pot I have.

I used to soak 1 lb of pinto beans (or Great Northern or black beans—whatever) overnight and let them sit while I simmered the necks to make the stock. But then the Jan/Feb 98 *Cook's Illustrated* said that the beans taste better if you skip the soak and

just cook the beans in the broth. it takes a little longer (roughly an extra hour). I tried it, and that's the way I do it now.

4 lb turkey necks

4 qt water (roughly—maybe 4.5)

juice of 4-5 lemons

2 complete stars of star anise or the same number of points

10 dried hot peppers

Bring to boil, cover, simmer 3 hours. Lemon juice is to make the broth acidic.

Use tongs to remove necks and put them in a covered pan to cool. (Covered so the meat doesn't get all dry and weird.) Remove and discard the star anise and dried peppers at this point.

Put the beans into the broth along with a cup of pearled barley. Bring to boil and then simmer for 30 minutes.

Add: 1-2 big bunches of fresh kale, washed, trimmed, and chopped; even better is mustard greens if the store has it.

Continue simmering for another 30 minutes. Then add:

1 15-oz can diced tomatoes (Those with the jalapeños are good.)

2 large onions, chopped

8-10 stalks celery chopped (good if you can use some of the celery leaves)

If it looks like I'll have room, I'll add a chopped fresh red bell pepper.

A piece of fresh ginger-root twice the size of your great toe, peeled and minced

The meat picked from the cooled turkey necks. Discard all the bone.

Simmer 30 minutes more, or until beans are done. Salt and pepper to taste. A good dash of Worcestershire sauce is nice. Maybe juice of a lemon. Soup will be reasonably thick.

## **Duck**

Ducks are sold both as a complete bird and just the breast, where almost all the edible meat resides. Here is a clear explanation of cooking a duck breast: <http://tinyurl.com/2b692r>

## **Goose**

Goose is a great bird to have for a holiday dinner—quite rich, though not much meat on a goose. Roast goose not only gives a wonderful meal (almost totally from the breast meat), it will provide a quart or more of fat that's wonderful for sautéing vegetables. (The same is true of duck, though the duck won't have so much fat.) There are many recipes for roast goose you can find through Google, but let me impart the key secret:

### **Prepping a Goose for Roasting**

Remove excess skin, fat and quills from goose. Carefully lower goose into large pot of boiling water. Boil 1 minute. (You may have to do the two ends separately.) Remove from water. Pat dry. Place on rack in large pan. Chill uncovered 2 days.

This simple step improves the final result to an amazing degree by ensuring that the roast goose will have lovely crisp skin. With the long carcass of a typical goose and the height of a typical pot, you're going to have to boil the two ends of the goose separately: one minute of boiling for each end of the goose.

## **Fish**

Fish is an important part of any healthful diet. I like living near the ocean specifically because I enjoy fresh seafood. (In fact I never go out on or in the ocean: I like to look at it, I like the gentle breezes it encourages and the more temperate weather it brings, and I like the seafood—but I don't especially like being in it or on it.) Of course, you can also get fresh seafood in the interior, but at a price.

Nowadays, however, we have to be conscious of our seafood choices for two reasons: first, over-fishing is decimating fish populations (and looks likely to lead to some extinctions), and second, our continuing use of the ocean as a dump for garbage and toxins has resulted in some fish being unsafe to eat, particularly in quantity.

### **Fish advice**

You can get up-to-date advice on the fish and seafood that's it's advisable to eat from several sources. Check these *at least* once a year: things change. Some of these sites make it easy to print small reference cards you can take with you to the market.

- <http://www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp>
- <http://www.blueocean.org/seafood/>
- <http://www.oceansalive.org/eat.cfm>

### **Salmon**

Fresh salmon is superb. I usually poach it, though you can broil it, grill it, or roast it. Wild salmon is high in omega-3 and is a delight. When I poach it, I eat it hot, or chill it and later use it to make a salmon salad.

Farmed salmon have less omega-3 than wild salmon, but the real knock against farmed salmon is environmental, on several levels. First, the pens concentrate the salmon in an exceptional population density, which leads to salmon wastes also being dense. Worse, the salmon used for farming are not the same strains as wild salmon, and when they escape (as they inevitably do), the offspring of the farm-variety salmon and wild salmon die easily, leading to declines in the wild-salmon population. I avoid farmed salmon. Take a look at these articles, for example: <http://tinyurl.com/yqj5jj>

### **Tilapia**

Tilapia are always farmed and are often imported from the Far East. I don't buy those from China, given China's problems with food quality. Tilapia is a white fish, and it seems to be sold always as fillets. I use it in a stew or poach it and make a fish salad.

## Catfish

Another farmed fish, and quite tasty. These are grown in the South and have a fresh, clean taste from a good diet on cornmeal and other such treats. Also look for catfish “nuggets”: pieces of catfish. Same great taste, same fish, but much cheaper. Very good in fish stews, like this:

### Catfish Stew

Add extra-virgin olive oil to heated pot, then put in:

- 1 chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 chopped jalapeño (or some crushed red pepper)
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 1/2 tsp turmeric

Sauté the above, then add 1 15-oz can diced tomatoes, 1 15-oz can black beans (drained and rinsed), 1 cup frozen corn kernels, 1/2 – 1 cup of chicken stock or water, and a dash of Worcestershire. Bring to boil and simmer 20 minutes. Then add 1 lb catfish chunks and simmer for an additional 10 minutes. Stir in 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice. Enjoy.

## Kona Kampachi

Still another farmed fish, this one imported from Hawaii. It's identical or close to identical with the sushi fish *hamachi*, and I love to eat it as sashimi: I cut the fillet free from the skin (easily done), then cut out the little center row of bones. Then I slice it into little chunks that I have with soy sauce, wasabi, and shiso (aka shiso) leaf. I like it so much raw that I've yet to cook it.

The local Whole Foods began to carry this at my request, so you can try to get your local market to carry it. Their Web site is <http://www.kona-blue.com/>. Lots more info if you Google “kona kampachi”.

I did discover that most who buy kona kampachi cook it. Apparently it's also good that way. I keep intending to try that, but when I get a fillet home, I can resist eating it immediately as sashimi. Once you try it, you'll understand why.

## Pacific Swordfish

Unlike the Atlantic swordfish, the Pacific swordfish is not (yet) endangered. It's a wonderful fish. Sometimes I cut it into chunks for a fish stew, and sometimes I poach it in fresh salsa.

## Tuna

Fresh Ahi tuna is very good eaten raw, and I also use it cut into chunks for use in a curry. I have also poached it and used it to make a really superior tuna salad.

## Anchovy

I occasionally get white anchovy in the refrigerated fish section, but more commonly buy little jars of anchovies—packed in olive oil, and from Spain or Italy—to add to various foods and to make things like this:

### **Pasta With Garlic, Anchovies, and Tomatoes**

Time: 20 minutes Servings: 4

Salt

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

10 garlic cloves, peeled

A little crushed red pepper if you want

20 anchovy fillets, more or less

2 cups halved cherry tomatoes

Freshly ground black pepper

1 pound cut pasta, like penne

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and salt it. Put olive oil in a medium skillet over medium heat; a minute later, add garlic and chilies, if using. Cook garlic so it bubbles gently. When it is lightly browned all over, add anchovies. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about a minute, until anchovies begin to fall apart, then add tomatoes. Adjust heat so tomatoes bubble nicely, and cook until mixture becomes saucy, about 5 minutes. Taste and add salt and pepper as necessary.

Meanwhile, cook pasta until tender but not mushy. When it is done, drain it, reserving a little cooking water to thin sauce if necessary. Serve pasta with sauce.

### **Sardines**

Sardines are high in omega-3 and, because they are small and low on the food chain, little mercury or other problems. I mainly put them into salads (those packed in olive oil or fish oil go in with the oil, which becomes part of the salad; those packed in water I drain). Occasionally we can find local fresh sardines from Monterey Bay, which are very nice indeed.

### **Shrimp**

Shrimp are frequently farmed and almost always frozen as part of the processing. You can brine shrimp for a better texture and flavor. Shrimp cooked in the shells have more flavor, though sometimes you can shell the shrimp and then sauté the shells and use them to make the stock, getting the flavor that way.

### **Scallops**

I love both sea scallops (large) and bay scallops (small), and if the scallops are quite fresh, they're delicious eaten raw—particularly the sea scallops. Best not to overcook them, else they get tough. Sea scallops can be sliced in half horizontally (so they're half as thick) and sautéed in a cast-iron skillet. Try them: if they're still sticking, cook them a bit longer. When they're ready to be turned, they release their grip.

### **Mussels and oysters**

Mussels are easy to cook and fun to eat. I often buy a jar of shucked oysters and use them in a stew or sauté them. Both mussels and oysters have excellent nutritional value.

## Spices & herbs

Spices and herbs add flavor and sparkle to your food, and some turn out to have significant health benefits as well. This is another category that provides many opportunities to try a new food from a trip to the market: get an herb or spice you've not had, and use it in cooking. A great way to get the taste an herb is to use it in a plain omelet or with scrambled eggs.

**Turmeric** — Turmeric is well recognized as a cancer preventative, as noted above. You use turmeric in curry, but I regularly add it also to fish salads, stews, and the like. Good to keep on hand as a regular spice, right beside the salt shaker.

**Cayenne** — Adds some life and zip to many things. If I don't use crushed red pepper, I will use cayenne. Great on buttered popcorn, in a fish salad. Helps you get your daily capsaicin.

**Cinnamon** — Cinnamon is effective at reducing insulin resistance, and being a type 2 diabetic, I eat at least 1/2 tsp a day. I mix it with my morning hot cereal.

**Crushed red pepper** — Certainly a staple here. I buy a quart at a time and sprinkle some over all sorts of things. You're limited only by your imagination and your heat tolerance.

**Cumin** — Ground cumin is always used in chili, and it's called for in other things, too.

**Whole allspice, whole cloves** — These are called for occasionally—buy the small jars—and once you have them, take steps to use them. For example, if you're simmering a chicken or chicken parts, add allspice and/or cloves to the water along with peppercorns.

**Nutmeg** — Nutmeg is an essential part of most cream sauces. Freshly grated is far superior to the pre-grated kind in the bottle. You don't need much: it's strong. A little freshly grated nutmeg makes all the difference. Use it with spinach.

**Star anise** — This is a great addition to stocks and soups and the simmering liquid if you're cooking meat. Put in a few stars as you cook, remove them at the end (like bay leaves).

**Thyme** — Essential, for those who like it. (I met someone once who didn't.) If I'm cooking chunks of meat—braising or in a stew—I'll generally add some dried thyme.

**Basil** — Fresh basil is good in all sorts of things, and if you don't have it, dried basil is a regular addition if you're cooking with tomatoes.

**Oregano, Mexican and Italian** — Mexican oregano has a stronger taste than regular oregano, and I prefer to use Mexican oregano when I make chili. I also regularly use it in soups and stews. Like basil, it seems to go well if you're cooking with tomatoes.

**Marjoram** — Another herb I frequently use and always have on hand.

**Tarragon** — Tarragon is a wonderful herb with chicken or fish, and the taste of fresh tarragon seems to me to be totally unlike that of dried tarragon. Dried tarragon is strong: use caution in the amount you use. But do try the fresh: a wonderfully complex flavor.

**Rosemary** — Another standby, good on roasted vegetables (fresh only—dried will be bitter), on lamb or pork (fresh or dried), and in other uses.

**Sage** — Sage is terrific on pork roasts and in dressings. Useful herb to have around.

**Savory** — Savory is used less often that it deserves—a very tasty addition to bean soup, and very nice with chicken or beef soup or stew, baked chicken, pork, stuffing and vegetables. It tastes like a cross between thyme and mint with a touch of pepper.



## Spirits & fortified wines

**Gin: Plymouth Gin** — Plymouth Gin (82.4 proof) is by far the best gin for a Martini. It's not a London Dry gin, but a different type of gin, a Plymouth gin—the last remaining example. London Dry Gin has a relatively high alcohol content. It's normally distilled, then botanicals are added, then it's redistilled. Plymouth Gin has a better and more complex flavor than London Gin and is made from wheat. Although at one time, there were many makers of Plymouth gin (Plymouth being a British Navy town), today but one distiller remains.

**Scotch: Balvenie Doublewood** — This Scotch I like above all others. Tastes vary, of course.

**Bourbon: Knob Creek** — I haven't tried all bourbons, but this one is the best (for me) so far. I buy it at Trader Joe's. Recently I discovered Bulleit Bourbon there, and it's also excellent and slightly less expensive (and lower proof). Bourbon is a key ingredient in the best holiday cookie ever:

### Lizzies

from *Woman's Day Encyclopedia of Cookery*

Put 3 cups seedless raisins in bowl with 1/2 cup bourbon. Mix well. Let stand for at least 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 325°.

Sift together into bowl:

1 1/2 cups sifted all-purpose flour

1 1/2 tsp baking soda (not baking powder)

1 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon (best China Caissa: <http://tinyurl.com/26govm>)

1/2 tsp freshly ground nutmeg

1/2 tsp ground cloves

Put 1/4 cup soft (not runny or whipped) butter in large bowl of electric mixer.

Add:

1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar

2 eggs

Beat with mixer or wooden spoon until mixture is light and fluffy. Beat in flour mixture with mixer or spoon, blending until smooth. Then stir in:

raisins (and bourbon)

1 pound (4 cups) pecan halves

1/2 pound citron, diced (1 1/4 cups)

1 pound whole candied cherries

Drop from teaspoon onto greased cookie sheets and bake in preheated slow (325°) oven for about 15 minutes or until firm.

Remove to wire racks to cool. Makes 7 to 8 dozen. They taste only so-so fresh from the oven—store at least overnight in airtight container (after they've cooled) for best results.

Store cookies in airtight containers. Can be frozen. Good keepers and shippers.

**Cognac: Remy Martin** — I have found that in cooking you should use the best cognac possible. I once made two copies of the following recipe, using Remy Martin cognac in one and a domestic brandy in the other. Everything else was the same. I couldn't believe how obvious and great the difference was between the two. Only a little cognac is used in cooking: make sure it's first-rate.

#### Chicken Liver Terrine (pâté)

1 quart boiling salted water  
1 stalk celery  
2 springs parsley  
6 whole peppercorns  
1 pound chicken livers  
1 tsp salt  
Pinch of cayenne pepper, or 1/2 tsp Tabasco sauce  
1/2 cup soft butter (or rendered chicken fat if kosher is important)  
1/2 tsp freshly ground nutmeg  
2 tsp dry mustard  
1/4 tsp powdered cloves  
5 Tbsp minced onion  
1 clove garlic, finely chopped  
2 Tbsp excellent cognac (it makes a big difference)  
1 finely chopped truffle (optional)

To the boiling water add the celery, parsley, and peppercorns. Reduce the heat and simmer five minutes. Add the chicken livers and cook, covered, ten minutes.

Drain and grind the livers, a few at a time, in an electric blender.

Add the salt, cayenne (or Tabasco, which I've always used), butter, nutmeg, mustard, coves, onion, garlic, and cognac. Blend thoroughly. If desired, add chopped truffle and mix. Pack the pâté in a three-cup terrine and chill thoroughly.

**Sherry: Amontillado** — There are many types of sherry from the very dry cocktail sherries to the heavy after-dinner cream sherries. The Amontillado type is more or less in the middle, and it's what I use for drinking and for cooking. (A splash of sherry is a must in cream soups, excellent in lentils, and a good addition to stir-fry.)

**Dry vermouth: Noilly Prat** — Certainly so far as the Martini is concerned, there's no substitute for Noilly Prat dry vermouth.

**Red vermouth: Martini & Rossi** — I've tried Noilly Prat red vermouth, but on the whole I prefer the Martini & Rossi for red.

**Wines for cooking** — Occasionally you may see "Cooking Wines" on a grocer's shelf. Never buy those. They're terrible. For cooking, use the same wine you would serve at the table.

## Cooking

Food is cooked using a variety of techniques, and one frequently uses a combination—for example, you might sear a cut of meat, deglaze the pan, and then braise the meat slowly until it's tender. The following brief descriptions of the techniques will give you the basic ideas.

### Timing

Timing is the technique of making the dishes finish at the time you want—so that, for example, all the dishes of a meal—the roast and all its accompaniments of vegetables and sauces—are ready for the table at the same time. Experience helps, but also thinking through the meal and doing all that you can before you officially begin. For example, the mise en place might be prepared the day before, along with the dessert. The roast's cooking time can be estimated, along with the 10-15 minutes it will “rest” before you carve. (See “Roasting” below.) The table can be set—and the serving dishes readied—as soon as the roast goes into the oven.

By having the vegetables prepared for the pan ahead of time, you can start each at the appropriate time to have them finish shortly after the roast emerges (and begins its rest).

Some dishes finesse the timing issue by being made the day before—a stew, for example, or the Menudo Rojo. For those, preparation is merely reheating.

### Sautéing

Sautéing is cooking quickly over relatively high heat. Stir-fry is an example of sautéing. Normally you sauté the food in a little oil—for me, that's typically extra-virgin olive oil—though sometimes one “sautés” using stock or water.

### Searing

Searing—on a grill over hot coals or in a well heated pan—is cooking a piece of meat briefly at high heat to add flavors. For example, you will typically sear a roast before putting it into the oven. Novices don't understand the importance of this step—they figure that the roast in the oven is going to get cooked, so why bother searing it? And then later they remove from the oven a gray lump of meat that lacks the tasty crust that searing provides. Never neglect searing when the recipes calls for it. In general, I almost always sear the meat I'm cooking, whether it's to be roasted or braised or stewed.

One reason a non-stick pan is inferior is that it will not adequately sear the meat, since the non-stick layer is an insulator. Nor will the seared meat stick little flavorful parts of itself to the pan, to be removed by deglazing.

### Deglazing

Deglazing is the inevitable follow-on to searing. The browning of the meat during searing is due to the Maillard reaction (<http://tinyurl.com/38tw5c>), which makes the seared bits—including those stuck to the pan—extremely tasty and flavorful. So the smart cook (you) will want to

incorporate those into the dish by deglazing the pan: while the pan is still hot, pour in a little liquid (wine, stock, water, what-have-you) and use your wooden spatula to scrape up those bits. Deglazing is virtually always done after searing. More here: <http://tinyurl.com/yw8nho>

## Frying

I do very little frying—that is, cooking foods in deep hot fat of some kind or another. Properly done, frying can produce superb results: one thinks of excellent fried chicken, for example, or the fried oysters I once enjoyed in Savannah, or fried squid. But it's not so easy as it sounds, and I find that I simply don't do it and so can be of little help.

Properly fried foods are not especially greasy: the hot oil does not penetrate the food being fried, and the moisture, unable to escape, remains within the food so that the result is hot, moist, and delicious. This requires the fat to be at the proper (high) temperature.

## Boiling

Boiling—cooking foods in a liquid (water or stock, typically) heated to the point where the surface is rolling and steam is pouring forth—is used infrequently in cooking. You will often bring things *to* the boil, but then immediately reduce the heat and simmer. Still, pasta is cooked in boiling salted water with a bit of extra-virgin olive oil poured in to reduce boil-over. When you're boiling, you don't cover the pan, though you may cover the pan to bring the liquid to the boiling point. But once it begins to boil, the lid is removed.

Boiling is also used to reduce the quantity of a liquid by driving off the water and concentrating the flavors. "Reduce the sauce by half" means to boil the liquid until it's half its original volume. When you do this, turn on the exhaust fan so that the smoke detector won't go off. Generally, this sort of boiling is done in a sauté pan, where the large surface area of the liquid means that the evaporation of the water happens fairly quickly. Don't leave the pan unattended when you're reducing the sauce: it can quickly boil dry and burn if not watched.

## Simmering

Simmering is keeping the liquid (stock or water, typically) just barely at the boiling point. There is no big motion, no rolling of the liquid. Instead, an occasional bubble will surface. The very hot liquid—just at the boiling point—cooks the contents gently. Dry beans, for example, are brought to the boil, and then the heat is reduced so that they simmer gently. The same for beef tongue: cooked at the simmer.

When you prepare hard-boiled eggs, you don't actually *boil* them.

### Hard-Boiled Eggs

Pierce the egg's shell at the large end and place the eggs in a single layer on the bottom of a pan. Cover them to a depth of about an inch with cold water. Bring the water to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer the eggs for 10 minutes. Put the pan under the tap and run cold water over them to cool them, stop the cooking, and make them easier to peel. (Eggs not perfectly fresh peel better than fresh eggs when hard-boiled.)

## **Braising**

Braising is cooking foods slowly in a (usually acidic) liquid for a long period of time. Braising is especially used for tough (and flavorful) cuts of meat such as shanks, oxtails, beef short-ribs, chuck roasts, and the like. You can either cook over low heat on the top of the range, or in a slow-cooker, or in a low oven (200°-300°) for a long time. When you braise things, you cover the pot. Because meats selected for braising are tough, an acidic braising liquid is used to tenderize the meat. You include lemon juice and/or tomatoes with their juice, or a splash of vinegar.

## **Broiling**

Broiling is cooking primarily through radiant heat: the hot coils/flames above the food radiate heat, and the food (in relatively close proximity) absorbs the radiated heat and cooks. Often this is how steaks are cooked at home, though I prefer the hot-cast-iron-skillet method. (Restaurant broilers (salamanders), however, are far hotter than home broilers.) Baked dishes are sometimes placed briefly under the broiler to brown the top, or to melt a cheese topping, or the like.

## **Grilling**

Grilling, in the sense that I use it, is cooking food outdoors on a charcoal-fired grill. Propane grills are more carefree, but propane grills cannot generate the heat required for effective grilling. I strongly prefer lump charcoal to charcoal briquettes. Both lump charcoal and briquettes absorb moisture from the air, and thus should be kept in an airtight container (for example, a plastic garbage bin with a tight-fitting lid). Briquettes can break down as they absorb moisture and spontaneously combust, like a pile of oily rags, so be particularly careful with those. For example, don't keep a half-full bag of charcoal briquettes in your garage lest you someday return home to a smoking ruin.

## **Baking**

Baking is cooking bread, cake, pies, tarts, quiches, and such in an oven. I do little baking.

## **Roasting**

Roasting uses a hot oven, dry heat, and an open pan, with the pan containing meats (or poultry) and vegetables, either alone or in combination. Generally speaking, I sear the meat to be roasted to brown it, and cook it at a relatively low temperature—300° or even 250°. Poultry I generally don't sear, and roast at a higher temperature: 350° or 375°. If you're following a recipe, it will advise you on the temperature, but you will find that as you gain experience you often won't bother with a recipe. A meat thermometer is invaluable in roasting.

In the overall roasting time, it's important to include 10-15 minutes of "rest" before the meat or bird is carved. This time is critical to allow the juices to find their proper place in the meat and settle down. If you carve immediately after the roast or bird is taken from the oven, the juices, instead of remaining in the meat, will ooze—nay, *gush*—out and the meat will not be so moist and tender as it should be. The rest time depends partly upon the size of the roast: a

large turkey might rest (beneath a loose tent of foil) for 20 minutes, whereas a small standing-rib roast (similarly loosely tented in foil) need rest for only 10 minutes.

## **Stewing**

Stewing is similar to braising, but the meat of the stew (if it contains meat) is cut into chunks rather than cooked whole, as is typically the case for braising. In addition, the end result of stewing—the stew—is a thick sort of soup and served like a soup, whereas a braised dish is apt to be carved and served in plates, perhaps with the braising liquid poured on potatoes, rice, noodles, couscous, or cooked whole grain. I will sear the stew meat as a first step.

## **Steaming**

In steaming, the food is placed in some sort of rack above boiling water, and the steam in the covered cooker cooks this food. This form of cooking preserves flavonoids best, as compared to pressure cooking (half the flavonoids lost in the water), boiling (80% of flavonoids destroyed or lost in the water), and microwave cooking (worst: destroys 97% of the flavonoids).

## **Poaching**

Poaching consists of cooking foods in simmering water (or stock or court-bouillon). That sounds like braising, but in braising the food is cooked for a long time to break down tough connective tissue and cartilage, whereas poached foods are cooked a much shorter time. I frequently poach fish, and for that around 12 minutes is ample (depending on the thickness of the fish). Poached eggs are excellent eaten directly or in other dishes.

## **Chilling**

Sometimes cooking requires that the ingredients be chilled—as when whipping cream (when the bowl, beaters, and cream should all be refrigerated before whipping), or in making ice cream. Depending on the degree of chilling required, you can put the bowl of ingredients in cool or cold water, or crushed ice, or (coldest) crushed ice on which you put coarse (rock) salt.

If you're chilling a greater volume of ingredients and do not need to be working with them while they chill, the refrigerator or freezer is the best way to chill them. For example, you can put stock in the refrigerator overnight so that the hardened fat can be removed from the surface the next day. Gelatin creations are chilled to solidify the gel, and ice creams are frozen in the freezer.

When you make a stew, overnight refrigeration after cooking allows the flavors to develop so that the stew is improved by the next day.

To chill things in a modern refrigerator, you can put the hot pot in the refrigerator without waiting for it to cool. If you want the contents to cool quickly, leave the lid off; otherwise, put the lid on to keep other items in the refrigerator from absorbing the odors.

## Cooking without heating

Cooking can mean simply selecting, washing, cutting, and assembling, with no heating (or chilling) involved. Salads and sushi are excellent examples, though both may indeed include foods that are cooked as well. Who does not love crumbled bacon in their green salad? or *unagi* (freshwater eel) or *tako* (octopus) sushi, both using cooked fish. But truly raw food can also be delightful. Who does not love *hamachi sashimi*? Or the delectable American version of *sashimi*, oysters on the half shell? Or a fine steak tartare or carpaccio? Or ceviche?

It should be noted that, so far as vegetables are concerned, cooking is good. As reported in *New Scientist* (<http://tinyurl.com/2z4qhz>):

Cooked vegetables give you considerably more protection against heart disease and cancer than raw ones, according to a pan-European research team. Cooking softens up plant cells, the researchers say, improving gut absorption of carotenoids—antioxidants that combat tissue damage and the accumulation of plaque in arteries.

"Absorption of carotenoids from raw carrots is about 3 or 4 per cent, but if you cook and mash them, absorption increases by four or fivefold," says Sue Southon, coordinator of the project at the Institute of Food Research in Norwich. ...

The other important finding from the programme is that, for reasons that are not yet clear, carotenoids and nutrients such as vitamin E are more beneficial if eaten in foods rather than taken as supplements. "It's my belief the supplement era for carotenoids is over," says Southon.



## Reading

Food writing is a vast universe, from collections of recipes to memoirs of great meals. In this section are titles that I think will be of use and interest.

### Cookbooks and recipes

The problem with most cookbooks is that they look great, and one will often find one or two recipes that are enjoyable to make and to serve and to eat, but then the book sits on the shelf, taking up room, and is seldom referenced. So I *highly* recommend trying a cookbook before owning it. Your best bet is the library. A library will generally have a policy of acquiring books that are favorably reviewed, and if they don't have a particular cookbook that you've read about, they may well be open to a recommendation to buy, particularly if you can reference the review that made you want it. A prize-winning cookbook—for example, a winner of the James Beard Award—is almost certain to be found in the library.

I now find recipes mainly through a Web search or in reading the Wednesday papers online: *The LA Times*, *The NY Times*, *The Washington Post*, and others. Occasionally I'll look in a cookbook, but I'm more apt just to make up a recipe. The recipes I find on the Web I copy and paste into a Word document or clip with EverNote ([www.evernote.com](http://www.evernote.com)), and I have a folder of those. I'll look through those files from time to time and print those that look good to me now. I like this method: it doesn't matter if the recipe gets soiled as I'm cooking, since once the dish is done I toss the paper copy. It's also easy to add comments and revisions to a recipe's document file—just use your word processor.

### Abebooks.com and Amazon.com

If you can't find in the library a cookbook that you want, look for a copy at [www.Abebooks.com](http://www.Abebooks.com) or in the used book offerings on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) before you pay for a new copy. Indeed, you can often find among secondhand copies some new copies for sale at a heavy discount, and if the cookbook was especially popular, used copies are apt to be plentiful. If the book has *just* been published, used copies may be scarce and the discount small. Such a book is better found through the library.

### Alice Waters

Alice Waters began a new way of restaurant cooking in the US with an emphasis on fresh, organic, locally-grown ingredients. She developed close relationships with farmers and encouraged the growing of foods she especially liked—the Meyer lemon is a good example. Her books can almost certainly be found in your library, and I particularly recommend *Chez Panisse Vegetables* for its discussion of a broad range of vegetables and how to prepare them. Even though the book was published in 1996, very few copies of this book are available through Abebooks, and those that are sell at a very slight discount—people who have the book obviously want to keep it.

### **Deborah Madison**

Deborah Madison is a famous chef who started the Greens restaurant in San Francisco in 1979. She has written several cookbooks. One you should investigate is *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone*, which includes descriptions of, and recipes for, a wide variety of vegetables. Your library is apt to have this book: over 325,000 copies have been sold. Her book *This Can't Be Tofu!* has many good recipes for dishes using or based on tofu.

### **The Minimalist**

Mark Bittman is the Minimalist: he takes recipes and reduces them to their essentials, resulting in easily prepared but delicious meals. He has a regular weekly column in the *NY Times*, which is always worth reading. He has written several cookbooks, and *How to Cook Everything: Simple Recipes for Great Food* is a good place to start: <http://tinyurl.com/yoxkny>. (That's the hardback edition—I prefer cookbooks in hardback because the paperback versions won't lie open.) But check your library and browse through several of his books and see which you like best, then check for used copies (on Abebooks.com or Amazon.com) if you decide to buy one. I especially like *The Minimalist Cooks at Home: Recipes That Give You More Flavor from Fewer Ingredients in Less Time* <http://tinyurl.com/22oudu>. (Notice he has several different books with the title *How to Cook Everything* by with different subtitles. That I don't quite understand. It reminds me of the sailboat named "Never Again II".)

### **Simply Recipes**

The Web site *Simply Recipes* regularly has very good recipes, and you can subscribe so that you receive the recipes by email. Usually there's one a day, and a surprising proportion are keepers. Plus, if you look at the site, people often provide additional recipes in the comments section. <http://tinyurl.com/f2czz>

### **Epicurious**

A good recipe site with a useful search engine. Recipes are rated, a plus. [www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com)

### **Google**

And, of course, you can simply Google for a recipe. It's good to include the word "recipe" in the search to weed out merely informational articles about the food: "bitter melon recipe" (without the quotation marks) rather than simply "bitter melon", for example.

### **Magazines**

There are many, many cooking magazines. I have subscribed to three at one time or another and found those three actually useful in terms of my cooking (the kind of cooking in this book, not aimed at the "amaze your friends" recipes like those in *Gourmet* and *Bon Appétit*).

#### ***Cook's Illustrated***

"America's test kitchen" follows a standard format for most of its articles: a target dish, massive experimentation with varying recipes and methods, and finally the recipe that works,

with commentary on what didn't work and why. They also rate kitchen tools, profile various foods and wines, and so on. The articles are illustrated with drawings, clearer than photos would be. Since all the issues for each year are available in a hardbound book at the end of the year, one approach is to not subscribe to the bimonthly issues, but instead buy the annual hardbound book. I have gotten quite a few good recipes from *Cook's Illustrated*, including this tip on standing rib roast:

### Standing Rib Roast

From Nov-Dec 2002 issue of *Cook's Illustrated* and stripped to its essentials:

1. Take the roast out 2 hours before starting the process.
2. Pre-heat oven to 250°.
3. Using kosher salt, salt and pepper the roast all over. Kosher salt makes a difference, so seek it out. (Your supermarket has it in the salt section.)
4. Take a heavy 10-12" skillet (cast iron is ideal) and heat it on medium for 5 minutes. Put the rib roast in, fat side down, and brown it for 12 minutes. Then turn the roast onto one side for 4 minutes, then the other side for 4 minutes. This is all the browning the roast gets, so do a good job.
5. Put the roast in roasting pan (or simply use the skillet), ribs down, and roast at 250 degrees until temperature inside is 145° (that's my preference, anyway).
6. Remove from the oven and tent with foil to rest 10 minutes before carving.

### ***Cooking Light***

This magazine has many good recipes but rather too many beauty tips for my taste, as well as too many desserts (since I seldom eat desserts). Its recipes for main and side dishes generally are written with an eye to healthful cooking.

### ***Fine Cooking***

This is published by the same people who do *Fine Woodworking*, *Fine Gardens*, and the like. It's definitely an upscale magazine designed for ... well, for fine cooking. The ads are as intriguing as the articles, and its direction is toward serious cooks: expensive ranges, expensive gadgets, expensive recipes. It's fun to read.

## **Food and cooking exploration**

The books in this section are not so much cookbooks as books about food and about cooking: lore and legend, information and entertainment. They will be relished by any true foodie.

### **Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin**

Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's *The physiology of taste; or, Meditations on transcendental gastronomy* is likely to be in your library, or you can get a copy here <http://tinyurl.com/ytq96z>. Written in 1825, it's a wonderful meditation on food and its role in our lives.

**M.F.K. Fisher**

Mary Frances Kennedy Fisher was one of the great food writers. Her books are to be devoured, as it were. They are listed here <http://www.mfkfisher.com/books.htm> and secondhand copies can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/2yobjw> Your library will also have a selection of her books.

**David Heber**

David Heber wrote an excellent book that explains why eating a variety of food is important and provides a way to ensure that you get that variety. I created the chart in Appendix 2 based on the information in his book, but the whole book is well worth reading. You can readily find copies of *What Color Is Your Diet?* at Abebooks.com, and I highly recommend it.

<http://tinyurl.com/2ra5cy>

**Elizabeth Hiser**

Since I've talked about type 2 diabetes a fair amount in this book, let me point out Elizabeth Hiser's excellent *The Other Diabetes: Living and Eating Well with Type 2 Diabetes* (<http://tinyurl.com/38s7da>). Hiser is a registered dietitian and longtime nutrition editor at *Eating Well* magazine, and her book is informative, useful, and easy to read. Highly recommended if you're a type 2 diabetic or at risk for type 2 diabetes.

**A.J. Liebling**

A.J. Liebling was a wonderful journalist and writer and for many years wrote for the *New Yorker*. All his books are entertaining, but the one that is relevant here is *Between Meals: An Appetite for Paris* (<http://tinyurl.com/2zks3z>). Here's an example of Liebling's writing, taken from *Just Enough Liebling*, which I got from the library:

The Proust madeleine phenomenon is now as firmly established in folklore as Newton's apple or Watt's steam kettle. The man ate a tea biscuit, the taste evoked memories, he wrote a book. This is capable of expression by the formula TMB, for Taste > Memory > Book. Some time ago, when I began to read a book called *The Food of France*, by Waverley Root, I had an inverse experience: BMT, for Book > Memory > Taste. Happily, the tastes that *The Food of France* re-created for me—small birds, stewed rabbit, stuffed tripe, Côte Rôtie, and Tavel—were more robust than that of the madeleine, which Larousse defines as “a light cake made with sugar, flour, lemon juice, brandy, and eggs.” (The quantity of brandy in a madeleine would not furnish a gnat with an alcohol rub.) In the light of what Proust wrote with so mild a stimulus, it is the world's loss that he did not have a heartier appetite. On a dozen Gardiners Island oysters, a bowl of clam chowder, a peck of steamers, some bay scallops, three sautéed soft-shelled crabs, a few ears of fresh-picked corn, a thin swordfish steak of generous area, a pair of lobsters, and a Long Island duck, he might have written a masterpiece.

**Marion Nestle**

Marion Nestle is Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health at New York University, and two of her books are of particular interest: *What to Eat: An Aisle-by-Aisle Guide to Savvy*

*Leisureguy's Cooking Compendium for Novices* – [www.lulu.com/leisureguy](http://www.lulu.com/leisureguy)

*Food Choices and Good Eating* (<http://tinyurl.com/yqbhp9>) and *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health—Revised and Expanded Edition* (<http://tinyurl.com/275ep4>). The second book is of considerable interest. As she explains in the introduction, she has a tenured position at a university and is not dependent on grants and funds from the food industry, so she is one of the very few knowledgeable writers on the topic who is not subject to industry pressure—and this industry is quick to use pressure, as you’ll discover in reading the book.

### **Jeffrey Steingarten**

Jeffrey Steingarten is the food columnist for *Vogue* and the author of *The Man Who Ate Everything* (<http://tinyurl.com/2wlv2y>), a collection of wonderful and frequently hilarious writing about food. His book, *It Must’ve Been Something I Ate* (<http://tinyurl.com/2vx7ls>), is equally good and picks up where *The Man* left off.

### **Calvin Trillin**

Calvin Trillin is a food writer for the *New Yorker*, and his explorations of food and culture are entertaining and informative. Try, for example, *Feeding a Yen: Savoring Local Specialties, from Kansas City to Cuzco*. <http://tinyurl.com/2a3e9j> or, even better, *The Tummy Trilogy* (<http://tinyurl.com/2jcbpk>). You probably can find a good selection of his books at your local library.

## Appendix 1: Tea-brewing temperatures

This table shows the best brewing temperatures for the various types of te, including the most healthful (white tea and, to a lesser degree, green tea). <http://tinyurl.com/2oacbu>

Type of Tea	Amount	Infusion time	Temperature	Material
<b>White</b>	2-3 tsp	3 minutes	158° - 185° F	Glass, porcelain
<b>Green</b>				
Japanese (Steamed)	1-2 tsp	1-2 minutes	158°-176° F	Glass, earthenware
Chinese (Pan Fired)	2 tsp	2-3 minutes	176°-185° F	Glass, porcelain
<b>Oolong</b>				
Light (Green)	2-3 tsp	3 minutes	185°-203° F	Porcelain, yixing
Heavy (Dark)	2-3 tsp	3 minutes	203° F	Yixing
<b>Black</b>				
Broken Leaf	1-2 tsp	2-3 minutes	203° F	Porcelain
Full Leaf	1-2 tsp	3-5 minutes	203° F	Porcelain
<b>Pu-Erh (Fermented)</b>	1-2 tsp	3 minutes	212° F	Yixing
<b>Tisanes/Herbal</b>	1-2 tsp	3 minutes	212° F	Glass, porcelain

## Appendix 2: Food chart by “color” group

A	B	C	D	
				<b>Green</b> –Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, kale, Swiss chard
				<b>White/Green</b> –Artichoke, asparagus, celery, chives, endive, garlic, leeks, mushrooms, scallions, yellow onion
				<b>Orange</b> –Acorn & winter squash, apricot, cantaloupe, carrots, mango, pumpkin, sweet potato, persimmons
				<b>Orange/Yellow</b> –Nectarine, oranges/juice, papaya, peach, pineapple, tangerine, lemon, mandarin orange
				<b>Yellow/Green</b> –Avocado, collard greens, corn, cucumber, green beans, green peas, honeydew, kiwi, mustard greens, turnip greens, romaine, spinach, yellow/green bell peppers, zucchini with skin
				<b>Red/Purple</b> –Beets, blackberries, blueberries, cherries, cranberries & juice, eggplant, grapes & juice, red peppers, plums, prunes, red apples, red pears, cooked red cabbage, red wine, strawberries, red onions
				<b>Red</b> –Tomato juice, tomato sauce, tomato puree, tomato salsa, stewed tomatoes, cooked tomatoes, watermelon

At least 1 serving from each category every day - From *What Color Is Your Diet?*, by David Heber MD PhD



## Appendix 3: Glycemic Indices

The glycemic index measures how fast a carbohydrate is converted to glucose and enters the blood. The higher the index the faster the process. The index is normalized to white bread, which is given an index of 100. A food is generally considered to have a high GI if it is greater than 69 (1/2 the index of glucose). Note that in actual dining it's not that simple: a baked potato, which has a relatively high glycemic index, will be absorbed slower if it's well buttered, since fats digest more slowly. Still, if you can direct your attention to foods with the lower indices, it certainly can't hurt. On the other hand, I don't hesitate to eat a sweet potato.

Index	Food
10	Nopal (prickly pear)
12	Bengal gram dal (Chana dal)
15	Peanuts
20	Soy beans, dried
22	Soy beans, canned
27	Agave syrup
31	Barley (pearled)
31	Fructose
34	Plum
37	Red lentils
38	Pasta, spaghetti, protein enriched
39	Sausages
40	Peaches
43	Black beans
45	Kidney beans
45	Spaghetti, white, boiled 5 min.
46	Apricots, dried
46	Black-eyed peas
46	Butter beans
46	Skim milk
47	Rye kernels
48	2% milk
49	Chick peas (Garbanzo)
49	Whole milk
50	Green peas, dried
50	Lima beans
52	Fish fingers
52	Ice cream
52	Tomato soup
52	Yogurt
53	Apple
54	Brown beans
54	Pasta, Star, white, boiled 5 min.
54	Rice, parboiled, boiled 5 min.
57	Haricot (white) beans
58	Pears

58	Rice, polished, boiled 5 min.	
59	Apple juice	
59	Orange	
60	Baked beans (canned)	
61	Spaghetti, brown, boiled 15 min.	
61	Spaghetti, white, boiled 15 min.	
62	Grapes	
63	Pears, canned	
63	Sponge cake	
63	Wheat kernels	
64	Macaroni, white, boiled 5 min.	
65	Bulgur	
65	Green peas, frozen	
65	Green peas, marrowfat	
65	Rice, instant, boiled 1 min.	
65	Rice, parboiled, boiled 25 min.	
66	Pineapple juice	
67	Orange juice	
68	Bread, rye pumpernickel	
69	Grapefruit juice	Stay mostly above this line
70	Potato, sweet	
74	All Bran	
74	Buckwheat	
74	Peaches, canned	
74	Yam	
77	Potato chips	
78	Cookies, oatmeal	
79	Fruit cocktail	
79	Rice, polished, boiled 15 min.	
80	Cookies, rich tea	
80	Potato, new, boiled	
80	Sweet corn	
81	Pastry	
81	Rice, brown	
82	Cookies, digestive	
84	Banana	
87	Porridge oats	
88	Beetroot (beets)	
88	Raisins	
89	Bread, rye, whole meal	
89	Sucrose	
91	Apricots, canned	
91	Cookies, plain crackers	
94	Mars Bar	
95	Bread, rye, crispbread	
95	Cookies, Ryvita	
96	Muesli	
97	Shredded wheat	
99	Corn chips	
99	Rutabaga (Swede)	

100	Bread, wheat, white
100	Bread, wheat, whole meal
100	Potato, mashed
100	Tortilla, corn
103	Millet
109	Broad beans (Fava beans)
109	Weetabix
115	Cornflakes
117	Cooked carrots
118	Potato, instant
121	Rice, instant, boiled 6 min.
126	Honey
128	Potato, Russet, baked
131	Lucozade
132	Puffed rice
134	Cooked parsnips
138	Glucose
152	Maltose