



Dark Chocolate

While there is a lot to like about dark chocolate, my favorite attribute is that it is such a good alternative for high calorie, high sugar desserts. Because dark chocolate is fairly low in sugar and high in fat, a small amount is satisfying. If you eat sweets frequently, try substituting with a square of dark chocolate. You will probably see your craving for sweets diminish, save calories overall, and feel satisfied with a rich treat that has some added health benefits. Not bad!

Dark chocolate contains flavonoids, a type of anti-oxidant that is thought to reduce the risk of blood clots and to increase the blood flow in arteries. Recent studies have demonstrated that even small amounts of dark chocolate can modestly lower blood pressure. Chocolate may even improve mood by boosting serotonin and endorphin levels in the brain.



A little is good, but more is not better. Chocolate is high in calories, and excess calories can cause weight gain. For some people chocolate can cause headaches or trigger digestive discomfort. The caffeine in chocolate can disrupt sleep. Pay attention to how it affects you.

When purchasing dark chocolate, look for something that has 70% or more cocoa. Also look for products made with cocoa butter instead of fats such as palm and coconut oils. Check out sugar content for portion size: some brands have less sugar added than others.

Because of the low sugar content, dark chocolate usually seems pretty bitter at first. It is something of an acquired taste – but I have known avowed milk-chocolate enthusiasts who have been won over with time. Let the chocolate melt in your mouth to get maximum satisfaction and to enjoy the rich texture.

If you don't care much about sweets or chocolate, don't start now! But if the idea of cutting back on treats makes you twitchy, try a square of dark chocolate instead. It can be a good way to cut back on sugar without feeling deprived.

Eating Locally

I just finished reading Barbara Kingsolver's [Animal, Plant, Miracle](#). It is a funny and moving story about the year her family swears off transported food. They explore what it means to live in harmony with the rhythm of the seasons.

From the book: "Americans put almost as much fossil fuel into our refrigerators as our cars. Each food item in a typical U.S. meal has traveled an average of 1,500 miles. This consumes the bulk of the fuel used in agriculture. Energy calories consumed by production, packaging, and shipping outweigh the energy calories we receive from the food."

"If every U.S. citizen ate just one meal a week (any meal) composed of locally and organically raised meats and produce, we would reduce our country's oil consumption by over 1.1 million *barrels* of oil every *week*." Even seemingly small changes make a difference!

The thing that I like most about Kingsolver's book is the way it celebrates food and eating. In our too-busy-to-eat-well world it is easy to relegate food and eating to something that happens on the run between other activities. Kingsolver makes a compelling argument to put real food back into the center of our lives, and to do so in a way that supports the health of land, animals, farmers and ourselves.

We can't all be as involved in our food as Kingsolver and her family were, but it is good to raise our awareness. Each small change adds up.

What Nourishes You?

February is the month of Valentine's, love, hearts and thinking of those who are dear to us. What we love is usually nourishing. When our life doesn't nourish us, we may look to food and eating to fill in the gap. When we feel nourished and full in our life, it is easier to make better food choices.

What nourishes you? Besides food. What are the people, things, and circumstances that you are glad for in your life? Although these things are there whether we think about them or not, when we bring conscious attention to them they have a way of expanding. We get even more nourishment and well-being. And it supports our healthy habits.

Just thinking about the people we appreciate usually gives us a warm glow. Sometimes it is the little things that nourish us the most. Dinnertime conversations. Phone calls with a friend. Hot showers on cold mornings. Reading a good book.

Find the things that nourish you. Make time for them in your day, and soak it in. Consciously feel yourself being nourished.



Want Support?

Many of my clients know what to eat but want support with actually doing it. It helps to have someone help you choose a strategy and stay focused. I charge \$75 per hour, and sessions range from 30 min by phone to 1-2 hours in person. Call me to discuss what would work best for you.

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

Are you ready to stop dieting and looking for a way of eating that is sustainable, enjoyable and healthy?

Discover Wellness from the Inside Out!

