



Where Does Your Food Come From?

The movie, "Food, Inc." begins with the news that our food no longer comes from pastoral farms like the ones pictured in grocery stores and on food packages. As food producers merge into huge operations, and subsidized commodities like corn and soy are available as cheap calories, the nature of our food has changed substantially.

Having read Michael Pollan's book "Omnivores Dilemma," I was familiar with most of what the movie revealed. For any of you who have been meaning to read the book but haven't gotten to it, the movie doesn't entirely replace the reading, but it goes a long way and is a lot faster.



One new fact for me was the way they make meat "safe" in processing plants. A resistant strain of bad E-coli has developed in feedlot conditions. It is impossible to keep it out of beef because it spreads through the feces, and cows stand ankle deep in their own manure in factory farms. It ends up getting mixed in during the fast paced processing.

The majority of the E-coli could be killed with a few days of eating grass (the E-coli needs an acid environment – which it gets from the corn diet fed to cattle). But the industry prefers a high-tech solution: sterilization. The movie shows leftover animal bits being washed with ammonia and ground into "hamburger filler." Not exactly farm fresh.

The current food policies and practices come at a high cost. I heard the producer, Robert Kenner, say in an interview that we can't reform health care until we reform our food system. I think he is right. How we eat is making us sick, and that will be hard to change as long as subsidized junk calories are cheaper than real food.

Meanwhile, there is something that you and I can do. As the movie points out, we vote three meals a day. Manufacturers will make big changes if that is what consumers want. While not everyone can afford to support farmers markets and small, local farms – when those of us who can, do it, it is a move towards protecting animals, the planet, and our own health. "We can change the world, one bite at a time."

The Power of Probiotics

We have a symbiotic relationship with the trillions of bacteria that live in our large intestines. They play a vital role in our digestion ; we provide them with "food" and a place to live.

Some of these bacteria are "friendly" and some cause us grief. When they are in balance, our gut is happy. When our gut is unhappy, it is hard to be comfortable.

Probiotics are literally "good" bacteria. They are thought to:

- Boost the immune system
- Prevent harmful bacterial growth
- Protect against infection
- Inhibit or destroy toxins from "bad" bacteria
- Produce B vitamins
- Minimize GI disturbances



I think we are just beginning to understand the importance of probiotics. They play a role in maintaining hormone levels – especially those related to sleep. 95% of our serotonin is produced by the gut – the hormone that makes us happy! Gut health may be more important than we thought.

You can get probiotics from fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut and kimchi. If you have a generally healthy gut, then these natural sources are probably your best bet. Just make sure that you buy yogurts with live culture – which means they need to be added after heat processing.

If you suffer GI problems (such as gas, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, or abdominal pain), consider taking a probiotic supplement. Look for a product that has billions of bacteria. While there are specific strains of bacteria or yeast thought to aid specific problems, the two most-studied bacteria that are good for general GI health are acidophilus and bifidobacteria.

My gut is very sensitive to bacteria. I got sick while trekking in the Himalayas, and it's never been the same since. As long as I get adequate probiotics, I'm fine. The only probiotic supplements that work for me are refrigerated products.

While probiotics are generally considered safe, check with a physician first if your immune system is not working. In that situation, even the good bacteria could get out of hand.

Recipes for the Month

I have three recipes to share this month:

Mediterranean Meatloaf (with lamb)

Banana Bran Flax Muffins

Quinoa Vegetable Salad

www.HealthyHabitsCoach.wordpress.com.



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