What People are Saying About the World’s Healthiest Foods

Your book has EXCEEDED my expectations. Healthy recipes, scientific information, colorful charts/pictures, and most importantly, it is written so that everyone can understand what this book has to offer. — Frank

Just received my copy of your book and I am blown away with the information. This has to be the most practical, easy to understand manual I have read. Love the quick, easy to make recipes! — MC

What a spectacular resource! Thank you for your life-long mission to promote good health and, most importantly, for sharing this information with the world! — Gail

What an incredible tour de force! Your book is exactly what I have been looking for—all the healthy ingredients and their amounts listed, the good and bad fish, plus how to best prepare the foods, allergic reactions, and so much more. This is an extraordinary accomplishment, and you are to be highly lauded for such a feat. I stayed up until 3:00 a.m. reading it the other night. Again, this is a fabulous book. You have done a great service to the world with this information all in one book. — Georgia

What a gem of a book!! Thank you so much for this comprehensive resource! For a registered dietitian this is a dream to have all of this wonderful information in one place. I so appreciate this informative and inspiring manual. Thank you for your important work. — Suzanne

I have been in the book business for 18 years and this is exactly the type of book I am asked about time and time again. George Mateljan's book The World's Healthiest Foods is a must-have read for anyone wanting to eat healthier. It's outstanding. — Kris

I received your copy of your new book the other day and I could not believe the quality and the wealth of information that is on all of those pages. This is one book that is definitely going to make great changes, for the better, in people's lives. I have never seen any other book like this one and I don’t think I ever will. Thank you so much for your dedication. — Lena

Every home, nutritionist and healthcare professional should have this book. This is the best book! — Deebi

I love your book. So complete and the information is so reliable, not a bunch of hype. You are really doing a tremendous service. Too bad all the world's people can’t know the world's healthiest foods through your book. I am personally indebted to you for all the information I have gotten from your website and now the book. — Tana

I purchased your book, and I love it, I love it, I love it. I’m sure you’ve heard this many times, but George you saved my life. By following your book for almost a month now the digestion difficulties I had were no more. Now, I eat to live, not live to eat, and cherish the importance of healthy foods entering my body. Please continue with your work because it’s absolutely fantastic, straight-forward, and realistic. — Hala

Congratulations! This was a huge undertaking and it is a great accomplishment to organize so much information into one book. You have truly accomplished the balance between a practical and scientific approach to healthy eating. It contains an unbelievable amount of beneficial information that covers all of the most important aspects of today’s Healthiest Way of Eating. This book is one of a kind—an encyclopedia of healthy foods and practical guide for anyone who is trying to improve the way they eat. In one word: BRAVO! Thank you for everything you have done in the past and for how you are inspiring others to not only improve their individual health but to contribute to the health of the whole world. — Zlatko

I am in thrilled receipt of your great new book. I have been wanting for years to have something at hand for daily use and now have it to guide me through my daily healthy meal planning. You have provided to knowledge of healing foods. So thanks, George, for being a true philanthropist by helping people to help themselves. There's plenty of ‘information’ on the WEB but you provide information that one can absolutely trust. — Sheila
I have been totally engrossed in your new book. From the first time I opened the book I began to learn so many new things. I love the section “The Healthiest Way of Cooking” for each food item. The information on garlic and olives alone was enough to convince me that this essential guide for the healthiest way of eating was worth my investment. This book is beautifully designed, easy to read, and packed full of valuable information. You have my deepest appreciation for working so hard to create this valuable resource. I will use it daily. I will also spread the word to my friends and family about your web site and book. — Jeff

Your book is awesome! I am still enjoying reading it; it’s like a food Bible, with all the wealth of information it contains. I read a large part of it and must say I really enjoyed the learning experience. So much about oils, organic vegetables, ATP and use of energy… It should be nominated for a book of the decade. — Gasper

I just purchased my 6th WHF book (for family & friends). I continue to be very grateful for all your great work. Our country clearly needs to learn to make healthier nutritional choices—either we spend more money on quality food choices (still cheaper than eating out), or we will likely pay in the long run (health care costs). Thanks again—you obviously are really making a difference!! — Lynn

I have been reviewing your book and there is so much beneficial information, it’s just incredible. What a tremendous amount of effort that will benefit so many people! — Nikki

I’m finding it to be an excellent resource for nutritional information, and it is giving me the added benefit of making much better food choices! It’s very thorough, containing great recipes and tips from weight loss to food preparation. By having a working knowledge of the beneficial properties that each food has, I find that it’s just that much more challenging to put together foods or complete meals that contain the greatest amount of healthy things (vitamins, minerals, etc.). It covers what foods are good for certain medical conditions, what to eat more of to counteract illnesses and so forth. I cannot be without this book now! — Corey

I can always count on your unbiased opinions and insights to get me through any doubts or fears. “When in doubt, check with George.” You are simply the best out there, period! — Marybeth

Thanks so much for giving such important life-supporting information to the world. — Kerry

I always thought it was hard to eat right. There was simply too much info out there geared toward all of the ineffective aspects of human nature. People trying to trick the system or do some crazy magic. By reading the World’s Healthiest Foods, I have learned so much, and I am much better off now than I ever was. Great info, techniques, recipes, everything here can help anyone who wants to be helped. Fantastic job. — Patrick

I am 40+ community college professor. For virtually all of my adult life I’ve been trying to lose weight, cut down on fatty foods and eat healthily—but without much success. As I worked my way through the stock of information something clicked on in my brain; This is it! This is the grand design in the nutritional cosmos. This is the way I must go. This is the light among the tunnels of information available. Your approach to helping people find and lead a healthy lifestyle through eating WHFoods surpasses all that I’ve ever purchased and read about. I’ve been researching and preparing meals based upon WHFoods for the past month. I feel far more alive, alert, enlightened and energized. I now experience greater degrees of balance, equilibrium, sound sleep and no more mood swings. I and my family are forever blessed for discovering this treasure trove of nutritional wisdom. — Michelle

Five of my closest friends are eating the World’s Healthiest Foods and after 3 days, we really are noticing some big changes, like how much ENERGY we have first thing in the morning!! Your information is very helpful and just makes good basic sense! — Amy

Thank you so much for providing this information. In the past few years, I have been doing everything I can to eat healthy and provide healthy meals for my family. With the help of the World’s Healthiest Foods, I can know much more about the specific nutrients that are within the whole foods that we are consuming. — Carole

I have had high cholesterol levels for years. For a year or so I have been studying the information on your site and adjusting my diet. A few days ago my doctor called me with the lab results—healthier in all areas! And my high cholesterol was down about 50 points. The doctor told me my diet practices have paid off! Your brilliant site is an ever-updated, research-supported, and rewarding resource. Thank you so much. — SM
The World’s Healthiest Foods are the true expression of vibrant health and energy.

George Mateljan
PHOTOGRAPHS BY:  *Tenji Cowan*

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**The World’s Healthiest Foods**
*Essential Guide for The Healthiest Way of Eating*
1st Edition

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FROM GEORGE MATELJAN

We are entering an exciting new era—an era where the “Healthiest Way of Eating” will be enjoyed by more people, an era in which we will take more personal responsibility for our own health because we realize that this is the way to achieve a lifetime of vibrant health and energy. The emphasis will be placed on enjoying health-promoting foods, which play a major role in keeping your body and mind functioning at their peak. We now know that health, reaching an ideal weight and youthful aging are not just a matter of luck. We can optimize our genetic potential for health every time we eat. We know enough about the messages that specific foods deliver to begin unlocking our genetic health potential right now.

It has long been my strong belief that our future health belongs to selecting and preparing foods that contain the greatest number of health-promoting nutrients. The focus of this book is to answer your questions about what foods are best for the “Healthiest Way of Eating.” The World’s Healthiest Foods are 100 foods that you can rely on as the foundation of your “Healthiest Way of Eating” because they are known for their nutrient-richness. They are among the best foods to provide you with 100% of all the nutrients—vitamin, minerals, antioxidants and many others—that you need everyday. They are also some of the most flavorful foods in the world.

Scientific evidence is now supporting the fact that only nutrient-rich foods, such as the World's Healthiest Foods, can provide you with all the nutrients you need to promote health. This is because nutrients don’t work in isolation but synergistically. The synergy between these nutrients found in the World’s Healthiest Foods plays a major role in the expression of our genes, and therefore our appearance, overall health and longevity. I am also now seeing that eating for better health is also the best avenue to achieve an ideal weight.

Since I have experienced firsthand the vibrant health and energy that comes with eating the World’s Healthiest Foods, I want to share with you how easily you can incorporate the World’s Healthiest Foods as a regular part of your diet by following the “Healthiest Way of Eating Plan.”

While writing this book, I also tried to keep in mind how preparing the World’s Healthiest Foods could fit into the today’s busy lifestyles. Since most of us don’t have hours, but usually only minutes, to prepare our food, this book shares with you 500 healthy Mediterranean-flavored recipes in a matter of minutes, many of which you can make in 7 minutes or less—and you can even make a “Dinner for Two in Just 15 Minutes!”

With this book you can easily discover how the nutrient-rich World’s Healthiest Foods will solve your quest for the “Healthiest Way of Eating.” I wish you the many joys this delicious Mediterranean-style of eating can bring to your life.

Dedicated to help make a healthier world.

George Mateljan
Books by George Mateljan:
Cooking Without Fat
Baking Without Fat
Healthy Living Cuisine
Healthier Eating Guide
Natural Foods Cookbook

special note to the owner of the world’s healthiest foods book:
To thank you for purchasing this book and for your interest in the “Healthiest Way of Eating,” I want to present you with three special privileges and services, exclusively for you:

• A free video featuring George Mateljan sharing with you how to make a “5-Course Meal in 15 Minutes” as well as tips on selecting and storing foods, “Healthiest Way of Cooking” techniques and more. The regular price of this video DVD is $15.95.

• Personal answers to any further questions you may have about topics covered in this book, including the World’s Healthiest Foods, “Healthiest Way of Eating” and “Healthiest Way of Cooking.”

• A free guide, How To Create a “Healthiest Way of Eating” Group, which will show you how to create a healthy evening of eating with family and friends.

To access these special privileges, go to www.whfoods.org/privileges and then type in the promotional code nutrient-rich foods. Not only will this website offer these three features designed for owners of The World’s Healthiest Foods, Essential Guide for the Healthiest Way of Eating but it will also be continually updated with special offers, announcements and other information related to the World’s Healthiest Foods, “Healthiest Way of Eating” and “Healthiest Way of Cooking.”
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How to Benefit Most From This Book

The first and most important way to benefit from this book is to familiarize yourself with the World’s Healthiest Foods. On page 21, you will find the Nutrient-Richness Chart, which presents a list of the foods in order of their nutrient-richness, a reflection of their nutritional value in relation to their caloric content. Nutrient-richness is the primary criteria I used in the selection of the World’s Healthiest Foods because their concentration of nutrients is your assurance that the foods you eat will provide you with the foundation of optimal health. (For more on nutrient-richness, see pages 24 and 805.)

Beginning on page 11, you will find a list of over 500 delicious Mediterranean-style recipes that will help you include the World’s Healthiest Foods in your “Healthiest Way of Eating.” Rather than one chapter dedicated to recipes, you will find the recipes—including “Flavor Tips” and “Quick Serving Ideas”—featuring specific World’s Healthiest Foods in each of the individual food chapters along with color photographs. If you want to learn more about the “Healthiest Way of Cooking” the World’s Healthiest Foods, see page 45.

The “Healthiest Way of Eating” Plan on page 29 is an easy-to-follow guide that will help you to jumpstart your “Healthiest Way of Eating.” It takes the guesswork out of how to begin incorporating the World’s Healthiest Foods into your lifestyle by providing you with four weeks’ worth of menus. After four weeks on the Plan, you’re likely to feel the benefits of enhanced vitality and wellness. It is also a healthy way to lose weight that works, if that is your goal. The Plan and the World’s Healthiest Foods are great ways to boost your immune system, fight free radicals, curtail inflammation and support a healthy heart.

If you want information about how to select the safest and most environmentally-sustainable fish and shellfish, see the Fish & Shellfish Guide on page 457. It provides information on the sustainability rating, omega-3 fatty acid content and mercury level of many different varieties of seafood.

Because we all have different needs when it comes to health, the section on Biochemical Individuality, starting on page 717, will provide you with information on compounds such as oxalates, purines and sulfites, that may be difficult for some individuals to tolerate. Also included in this section is information on food allergies and intolerances.

If you are looking for the foods that are the most concentrated source of specific nutrients (such as calcium, iron and B vitamins) that you need for optimal health, the charts found in each of the individual Health-Promoting Nutrient chapters, starting on page 733, will help you determine which foods are the best for you. These chapters also include an extensive review of information relating to each nutrient including how it promotes health, deficiency causes and symptoms, public health recommendations and more. Information about what nutrients we need and why we need them can be found on page 71 in the section on Eating for Healthier Cells.

For information about Healing with the World’s Healthiest Foods, see page 807.

On page 821, you will find information about the Food Sensitivity Elimination Plan. I believe every person should read this section because people often do not realize that the food they eat can be the source of many of their everyday health concerns.

To make it even easier for you to select the World’s Healthiest Foods, I have included a Shopping List on page 879 and 880 that you can copy and use when you go to the market.

You will also find Q+As throughout the book. These are answers to questions submitted by readers of the whfoods.org website. I’ve included them since they may help to answer questions that you have about food, nutrition and healthy cooking. A list of Questions of Interest can be found on page 17.

I have organized this book so that it is very easy to use. My recommendation for the best way to benefit from this book is to start by reading about five or six of your favorite foods. This will familiarize you with how the chapters are organized and what is covered in each of the food chapters. You can use this as a reference book. The World’s Healthiest Foods chapters start on page 83. Enjoy!
Acknowledgments

This book could not have been written without the dedication and hard work of a number of individuals who believe in the benefits of the “Healthiest Way of Eating.” It is because of the hard work, extensive knowledge and energy of those researching the World’s Healthiest Foods that I could compile and present you with the most accurate and up-to-date information about these foods. Others spent thousands of hours working with me to develop, test and perfect the recipes to ensure that they were not only nutrient-rich and had wonderful flavor, but could be prepared in a minimal amount of time.

I want to acknowledge these people and thank them for their many contributions.

Tenji Cowan, who worked with me and contributed in every aspect of the book, including researching, editing, photographing the foods and recipes, and acting as coordinator.

Stephanie Dara Gailing, M.S., who worked as a writer and editor and was not only indispensable in providing her background in and knowledge of nutrition education but also her ever-present enthusiasm for this project.

Joelle Chizmar (Hartman Group), who designed this book and made it as easy to read as it is attractive.

Janet Cooper, for her work on the recipe tips and Tyua Sereda, for editing the recipes.

Rosemary Widener, has “worked her magic wand” with the typography and the pagination of the book.

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WORLD’S HEALTHIEST FOODS
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Recipes Requiring
No Cooking
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PART 1
what are the world’s healthiest foods?
My passion for foods that are good for you and my belief that they are the key to vibrant health and energy has been a pivotal part of my life ever since I can remember. It is what inspired me, in 1970, to embark on a journey determined to find the World’s Healthiest Foods.

My search to find the World’s Healthiest Foods took me to more than 80 countries around the world. I did whatever it took to immerse myself in the native foodways. I went to Florence, Italy, with the desire not only to see the perfection of Michaelangelo’s David, but to learn how to cook pasta to perfection. I went to India not only to see the Taj Mahal, but to discover firsthand how locals used spices in their cooking. I went to Paris not only to visit the Eiffel Tower, but to meet French chefs cooking healthy dishes without creams and heavy sauces.

I wanted to discover and experience the foods that are the hallmarks of various regions, especially those from faraway places where people have been known to lead especially long and healthy lives. I found the people of the Greek island of Crete, now believed to be among the healthiest people on earth, enjoying flavorful foods like garbanzo beans, crusty whole grain bread, eggplant, extra virgin olive oil, fish, goat cheese and yogurt. I tasted the sweetest apricots in Turkey and enjoyed the robust flavor of *cavolo nero* (black cabbage) in Italy. In Japan, I learned to enjoy sea vegetables, shiitake mushrooms, sweet potatoes and edamame (soybeans cooked in the pod). I watched the Chinese stir-fry fresh vegetables, and in Alaska, I savored the rich flavor of wild salmon. I joined people savoring spicy black beans in the Caribbean, snacked on pumpkin seeds in Guatemala and ate hearty rye bread in Scandinavian countries.

In Mexico, I also rediscovered the super grain, amaranth, which had been lost for over 300 years, and was honored to share it on ceremonial days with the descendants of the Aztecs. (For more on *Amaranth*, see page 661.)

Delighted by the wonderful tastes and vitality of the healthy, nutrient-rich foods that I discovered were being enjoyed around the world, I began to include them as a regular part of my meals. I started eating whole grain cereal with creamy yogurt and fruit for breakfast. I lunched on salads made with a colorful array of vegetables topped with black beans and an olive oil-based dressing. And for dinner, I would oftentimes choose seafood such as wild Alaskan salmon seasoned with fresh herbs, Mediterranean-style vegetables drizzled with olive oil and sweet ripe berries for dessert. For snacks, I began to enjoy a variety of nuts, seeds and fruit.

Once I started eating this way, I soon noticed something incredible. At the same time I was enjoying the great flavor of these new foods, my energy was skyrocketing. The foods not only tasted great, but they made me feel great! I realized, from my own experience, what cultures throughout the world have known for millennia—foods that are good for you can make you feel your best while providing you with immense taste enjoyment.

I was so inspired by my newly found vibrant health and energy that I wanted to share my discoveries about these great tasting foods so that others would enjoy and benefit from them as much as I did. So, I created a list of foods I called the World’s Healthiest Foods (page 21), which could serve as the foundation of the “Healthiest Way of Eating,” a lifestyle approach that emphasizes whole,
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**The numbers to the far right of each food indicate their total nutrient-richness. (For more details, see page 805.)**
nutrient-rich foods prepared with techniques that enhance their flavor and preserve their nutrients.

**modern science supports the world’s healthiest foods**

I had identified a cornucopia of the healthiest foods through my travels and studies, but I wanted to make sure that the compilation of the World’s Healthiest Foods would not be based solely upon my own personal experience. I wanted these foods’ inclusion among the World’s Healthiest Foods to be supported objectively by modern science.

Therefore, for a food to be included as one of the World’s Healthiest, I decided it had to meet strict scientific criteria for nutritional excellence. First, it had to be a food rich in nutrients, such as vitamins, minerals, fiber, protein, essential fatty acids and antioxidants. Additionally, its ability to promote health and vitality had to be supported by the medical literature.

Out of the 23,000 foods for which there is nutritional data available, I found that the World’s Healthiest Foods were among those richest in vitamins, minerals, protein, essential fatty acids, fiber and a variety of phytonutrients that act as powerful antioxidants; they were among the most nutritious foods on earth! At the end of each food chapter, you will find a section devoted to the food’s Health Benefits, which includes a Nutritional Analysis of its content of over 60 nutrients. To my delight, this analysis demonstrated that the World’s Healthiest Foods are a richer source of nutrients than I had ever imagined.

**qualifications to be on the list of the world’s healthiest foods**

I knew that nutrient-richness and promoting health and vitality couldn’t be the only criteria for a food to be included on the World’s Healthiest Foods list. These foods had to meet practical criteria as well; they had to be easily accessible and taste good. If you can’t easily purchase a food or don’t enjoy eating it, you are not going to include it in your “Healthiest Way of Eating.”

Therefore, the World’s Healthiest Foods had to fulfill the following criteria:

- Be a nutrient-rich food. A World’s Healthiest Foods needed to not only be rich in health-promoting nutrients but also be one of the richest sources of nutrients in its food group. The World’s Healthiest Foods also have research-demonstrated health benefits, such as preventing chronic disease.
- Be a whole food. The World’s Healthiest Foods are whole foods complete with all their rich, natural endowment of nutrients. They have not been highly processed nor do they contain synthetic, artificial or irradiated ingredients. And whenever possible, they should be organically grown, since organically grown foods not only promote your health but also the health of our planet.
- Be a familiar food. The World’s Healthiest Foods are common “everyday” foods. These include the vegetables, fruits, fish/seafood, nuts/seeds, lean meats, legumes, whole grains, and herbs and spices that are familiar to most people.
- Be a readily available food. Although there are many foods that are exceptionally nutritious, many of them are not readily available in different areas of the country. The World’s Healthiest Foods are foods that the majority of people can easily find at their local market.
- Be affordable. I selected foods that are not only familiar and available but also affordable, especially if you purchase them locally and in season. When foods are enjoyed in their peak season they are the freshest and of the best quality.
- Taste good. If a food is healthy but doesn’t taste good, its health benefits will not be enjoyed. Therefore, these foods had to be rich in flavor and have a pleasing taste. The vibrant taste of many healthy foods is one of the primary reasons they have become increasingly popular.

Since each nutrient-rich food contains a unique nutritional profile that contributes to optimal health, it was also important that the list of the World’s Healthiest Foods contain enough variety to meet your personal taste preferences and all your nutritional needs. I cannot tell which of the World’s Healthiest Foods you will enjoy the most since I don’t know what you like. I leave it up to you to select your favorites and those you feel are the best for you.

Regardless of which you choose, one thing is certain: by eating the World’s Healthiest Foods, you will be enjoying those richest in health-promoting nutrients while consuming the lowest number of calories. This is because all these foods are “nutrient-rich,” an important concept in nutrition, which I cover in the next chapter, and a key characteristic of all the World’s Healthiest Foods.

**are all healthy foods on the list of the world’s healthiest foods?**

Of course I could not include every healthy food in the world on the list of the World’s Healthiest Foods. Pomegranates, for example, are rich in antioxidant phytonutrients, yet they were not included on the World’s Healthiest
Foods’ list because they are not easily accessible and are relatively expensive. Peaches, cherries, mangoes and other wonderfully healthful fruits are not on the list because they are very seasonal. And hemp seeds, while rich in important nutrients, are not as well-known and versatile as the nuts and seeds chosen for the World’s Healthiest Foods. Although every food that offers health-promoting nutrients and benefits could not be included, the list of World’s Healthiest Foods provides you with 100 nutrient-rich, familiar foods from which you can choose those that can serve as the foundation for your “Healthiest Way of Eating.”

If your favorite nutrient-rich food is not on the list, that doesn’t mean that you should not enjoy it or that it is not good for you. I encourage you to include foods such as pomegranates, peaches, cherries, mangoes, hemp seeds and others as part of your “Healthiest Way of Eating.” However, selecting from the list of the World’s Healthiest Foods is one way to ensure that all the foods you eat are nutrient-rich, easily accessible and affordable.

**why the world’s healthiest foods are not all vegetarian**

The World’s Healthiest Foods contain dairy products, fish, lean meat and poultry. That’s because many individuals (because of their unique genetic inheritance and biochemistry) may find animal foods to be beneficial or even necessary to their health. Others—due to their biochemical individuality, personal tastes or philosophy—may choose not to eat these foods. One of the reasons that I included 100, not 10 or 20, foods on the list of the World’s Healthiest Foods was to provide you with a selection from which you could choose the ones that best met your individual needs. (For more on Biochemical Individuality, see page 717.)

**the benefits of the world’s healthiest foods**

The benefits of the World’s Healthiest Foods are that they are whole, nutrient-rich and unprocessed, characteristics that help keep us connected to nature, the changing of the seasons, the land and the many miraculous aspects of living things. Enjoyment of nutrient-rich foods is an integral part of maintaining optimal health.

In contrast to adulterated, refined or “un-whole” foods, the World’s Healthiest Foods are real foods that still retain their natural endowment of nutrients as provided by nature, nutrients essential to the life of the plant or animal. They are not highly processed and contain nothing more than the naturally occurring nutrients intrinsic to the food from which they were derived; none of their nutrients have been removed or altered, and no synthetic, artificial chemicals, whether they be nutrient factors or preservatives, have been added.

Whole foods contain a combination of nutrients that work together synergistically to produce a much more powerful effect on health than any one nutrient alone. Recent research has found that compounds in whole foods differ in molecular size, polarity and solubility; they produce a powerful natural combination that is medically more available than individual nutrients. The nutrients found in apples are a good example of this. According to Cornell Food Scientist, Rui Hai Liu, one medium apple contains only about 6 mg of vitamin C, however it has enough other antioxidants—such as quercetin, procyanidins, catechins and epicatechins—to produce as much antioxidant activity as 1,500 mg of vitamin C alone. The latest research clearly demonstrates that it is the complex interplay of all the natural components of whole nutrient-rich foods that gives the World’s Healthiest Foods their superior nutritional quality as well as their delicious flavors, vibrant colors and rich textures.

**Enjoying the World’s Healthiest Foods Will Give You Peace of Mind**

- Peace of mind that they are nutrient-rich: Each of the World’s Healthiest Foods has been analyzed for its nutrient-richness, and this information can be found in each of the individual food chapters.

- Peace of mind that they promote health: Each individual food chapter contains information on the special health benefits of each food.

- Peace of mind that they are affordable: The World’s Healthiest Foods are not exotic foods that can only be found in specialty grocery stores or ethnic food markets. In fact, they are readily available and can be easily found in your local market, most of them year-round. And they are not expensive, especially if you purchase them locally and in season, which is why I included the information about their peak season in each food chapter.

- Peace of mind that they taste great: Whole, nutrient-rich foods are naturally bursting with flavor, and the tips on selecting, storing and cooking each food, plus the delicious and easy-to-prepare recipes included in this book, will help you retain their nutritional value while making them taste their best.

I hope you enjoy discovering the World’s Healthiest Foods and the health benefits that they provide as much as I did.
Nutrient-rich foods provide our bodies with the vital nutrients they need for optimal functioning and help us to feel our best. Therefore, one of the most important goals of eating healthy is to eat foods, such as the World’s Healthiest Foods, which are the richest in nutrients.

In addition to the importance of considering the nutritional value of all of the foods we eat, we must also consider the number of calories they contain. Taking in too many calories to meet our nutritional needs leads to weight gain, reduced health and diminished energy.

**what is nutrient-richness?**

A nutrient-rich food is one that provides the high concentrations of health-promoting nutrients without excess calories—a key feature of all of the World’s Healthiest Foods. They are foods that deliver a rich supply of nutrients but a minimal number of calories. They are packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, powerful antioxidants and phytonutrients that science believes are at the foundation of health promotion, disease prevention and longevity. Studies have shown that animals eating nutrient-rich foods without excess calories live 50% longer than normal.

The new paradigm in healthy eating is the following:

\[
\text{World’s Healthiest Foods} = \frac{\text{Maximum Nutrients}}{\text{Minimal Calories}}
\]

This concept is important for everyone who wants to feel his or her best and/or is trying to lose weight. I use the term “nutrient-rich” to describe this important characteristic of the World’s Healthiest Foods; scientists often refer to this quality as “nutrient-dense.”

Nutrient-richness compares the absolute nutritional content of a food to its caloric content to discern whether the food has significant nutritional value. If a food is very high in one or more nutrients, but very low in calories, it can be described as “nutrient-rich” because it uses up very little of your day’s calories but is a rich source of nutrients. Conversely, if a food is low in nutrients but high in calories, it is the opposite of nutrient-rich—it is “nutrient-poor,” giving you very little in terms of nutrition, but using up a lot of your day’s calories. Each of us has a budget of calories to take in each day to maintain our optimal weight and look and feel our best. Therefore, nutrient-rich foods, like the World’s Healthiest Foods, are those that give you the most health-promoting nutrients for the number of calories you consume.

**how to calculate nutrient-richness**

When nutritionists calculate nutrient-richness, they take nutrients and divide by calories. For example, there are 123 mg of vitamin C and 44 calories in a cup of cooked broccoli. If you take 123 and divide it by 44, you get 2.8 or

\[
\text{Broccoli with 123 mg vitamin C} = \frac{123}{44} = 2.8
\]

Translated into nutrition language, this result means that you get 2.8 mg of vitamin C for every calorie of broccoli you
eat. In other words, broccoli is a food in which vitamin C comes pretty cheap in terms of its caloric “cost.” When you get your vitamin C from broccoli, it doesn’t cost you very much. To get 60 mg of vitamin C, the current Daily Value, you would only need to eat 18 calories’ worth of broccoli, or less than a cup. Nutritionists therefore call broccoli a “nutrient-rich” food when it comes to vitamin C.

When it comes to vitamin C, one example of a nutrient-poor food is fried onion rings. A cup contains about 200 calories and less than 1 milligram of vitamin C. It would take over 17,000 calories’ worth of fried onion rings to give you the Daily Value for vitamin C! In other words, fried onion rings are anything but a bargain when it comes to vitamin C.

Another example is the difference between the nutrient-richness of white bread and whole wheat bread. You would have to eat between 2 1/2 and 5 slices of white bread in order to get the same amount of vitamin E as is found in one slice of 100% whole wheat bread. Those extra slices will cost you as much as 320 extra calories!

unique charts highlight the nutrient-richness of the world’s healthiest foods

To fully illustrate the exceptional nutrient-richness of the World’s Healthiest Foods and to give you a fast, simple, yet highly reliable way to meet your personal nutrition needs, a team of top nutritionists and I designed an original nutrient-richness rating system. The system took nutrient-richness as well as absolute nutrient contribution into consideration, applying standards that allowed us to qualify foods as sources of nutrients. To learn more about the details of how the World’s Healthiest Foods Quality Rating System was devised, please refer to page 805.

One feature of this nutrient-richness ranking system is that it qualitatively rates foods as excellent, very good or good sources of individual nutrients based upon their nutrient-richness and nutrient contribution. This qualitative rating system is featured in three different types of charts found in this book:

- **THE NUTRIENT-RICHNESS CHART** can be found at the beginning of each food chapter and identifies which nutrients are concentrated in that food. For example, in the Nutrient-Richness Chart for Oranges (page 368) you’ll see that they are an excellent source of vitamin C, a very good source of dietary fiber and a good source of folate, vitamin B1, potassium, vitamin A and calcium. The chart for each food will give you insight into its special nutrient endowment.

- **THE TOTAL NUTRIENT-RICHNESS CHART** is like a snapshot of the overall nutrient-richness for each of the World’s Healthiest Foods. Each food has a unique overall nutritional profile, featuring different nutrients in different quantities. While all the World’s Healthiest Foods are naturally nutrient-rich, some are more “rich” than others. For example, how do two incredibly nutrient-rich vegetables—spinach and broccoli—compare to one another? A glance at the Total Nutrient-Richness Chart (page 21) will show you that spinach is actually a bit more nutrient-rich than broccoli, having an overall rating of 65 while broccoli has a rating of 40 (the total nutrient-richness rating for each food is located at the top of its individual Nutrient-Richness Chart). This is not to say that spinach is necessarily better than broccoli, but it does give you an easy way to compare the total nutrient-richness of different foods.

- **THE HEALTH-PROMOTING NUTRIENT CHART** can be found in the individual nutrient chapters and identifies the foods that are the best sources of a particular nutrient. For example, in the chart for Calcium (page 738), you’ll see that spinach and collard greens are excellent sources of this mineral (while numerous other foods are either very good or good sources). The Health-Promoting Nutrient Charts can serve as valuable tools for helping you to make decisions as to which foods can help you to meet your personal health and nutrition needs. You can use the Health-Promoting Nutrient Charts to see which foods are excellent, very good and good sources of the nutrients in which you are interested.

**every day with the world’s healthiest foods**

Over the course of each day, we need a wide variety of nutrients. This list of nutrients includes vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrates, fats, fiber, antioxidants and others. No matter what your health goals are (e.g., trying to lose weight, trying to get more energy or any other goal), it’s always best to get the widest variety of nutrients you can for the least amount of calories. If you have to consume too many calories to get the optimal amount of nutrients, you’ll inevitably gain excess weight.

That’s where the World’s Healthiest Foods come in. As a group of 100 foods, they give you the fullest variety of nutrients for the least amount of calories. Their nutrient-richness is one of their most important features, a quality that makes them an integral component of a “Healthiest Way of Eating” that promotes vibrant health and energy and optimal weight management.
Study after study shows that nutrient-rich foods, such as the World’s Healthiest Foods, are essential for optimal health. Researchers have found that nutrient-rich foods are the most effective for the prevention of disease because they contain a synergistic blend of nutrients including vitamins, minerals, fiber, fatty acids and other important compounds; in addition, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts/seeds and herbs/spices contain over 800 identified phytonutrients (plant-based nutrients), such as carotenoids and flavonoids.

Recognizing the nutrient synergy provided by the World’s Healthiest Foods is very important since research clearly shows that nutrients do not work in isolation; they can only fully do their work when their activity is complemented by the actions of many other nutrients. All are interrelated in a complex system supportive of the life of the plant or animal from which the food was derived. The more research is done, the more complex this life-giving nutrient web is revealing itself to be. Whole foods contain a wide variety of nutrients to ensure that the right combination is available for each individual nutrient to function optimally. For example, many foods that contain calcium also contain magnesium, which aids in calcium’s absorption.

Yet we have just scratched the surface of understanding the role of different nutrients in our food as it is estimated that there are over 40,000 phytonutrients that have the potential of working synergistically to promote health! (For more on Phytonutrients, see page 743). While we may not yet know their specific functions (100 years ago, we did not even know the functions of vitamins because they had not yet been discovered), we do know that including the World’s Healthiest Foods into your “Healthiest Way of Eating” can vastly increase your probability of enjoying the many benefits that phytonutrients provide. Perhaps the secret to vibrant health and energy, longevity and the fountain of youth rests right in front of us—in the synergistic activity of nutrients, many of which are yet unknown, but are found in nutrient-rich foods such as the World’s Healthiest Foods.

**nutrient synergy: an example**

Hundreds of epidemiological studies have looked at the relationship between whole, nutrient-rich foods, such as the World’s Healthiest Foods, and chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer. What they have consistently found is that nutrients working together provide greater benefit than ones working alone. Recent research conducted on the health benefits of almonds provides a great example:

Researchers found that the flavonoid phytonutrients found in almond skins team up with the vitamin E present in their meat to more than double the antioxidant power delivered by either one of these nutrients separately. They identified twenty potent antioxidant flavonoids in almonds, some of which are well-known as major contributors to the health benefits derived from other foods.
The effects of almond flavonoids alone on LDL cholesterol levels was dramatically different when compared to the effects of these flavonoids working in combination with the vitamin E also found in almonds. While almond skin flavonoids alone enhanced LDL’s resistance to oxidation by 18%, when almond meat’s vitamin E was added, LDL’s resistance to oxidation was extended by 52.5%! This study demonstrates the dramatic increase in health benefits that comes from nutrients working synergistically.

If the nutrients in just one of the World’s Healthiest Foods, such as almonds, can work together so dramatically to increase their health-promoting benefits, think of the increased number of benefits that can be derived by enjoying a diversity of whole, nutrient-rich foods.

Eating more whole, nutrient-rich foods has consistently been shown to result in decreased incidence of disease. Individuals eating diets that contain the most fresh vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains are always found to have the lowest disease risk.

**whole, nutrient-rich foods protect against cardiovascular disease**

In two of the largest, most significant studies that have looked at the relationship between diet and cardiovascular disease—the DART study and the Lyon Heart Study—a whole foods diet consistently and significantly reduced cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk and mortality.

According to a recent news roundup in the British Medical Journal, the combined evidence of a number of large population-based surveys suggests that for every additional portion of fruit or vegetables eaten, the risk of heart disease is reduced by 4%. In one population study, postmenopausal women who ate 10 daily servings of fruit and vegetables lowered their risk of heart attack by 40%!

In the Lyon Heart Study, those following simple guidelines—increasing their consumption of vegetables, fruit, whole grains and legumes; eating healthy fats such as those found in olive oil, nuts and seeds; and decreasing their consumption of saturated fat—were found to have reduced their risk of death from cardiovascular disease by an amazing 70% after 27 months.

The DASH (Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension) study demonstrated that a higher intake of whole grains, fruits and vegetables can lower blood pressure. In this trial, a whole foods diet produced an average drop of systolic/diastolic blood pressure of 12mm/6mm in a group of individuals with moderately elevated blood pressure.

Why are all these studies producing such consistently positive results? Here are just a few of the reasons:

- Foods rich in soluble fiber, such as oats, beans and nuts, have been shown to lower LDL (“bad”) cholesterol significantly, not only in persons with high cholesterol but even in healthy subjects.
- The fiber in a whole foods diet also lowers serum triglycerides, its potassium and magnesium drop blood pressure, and its rich supply of antioxidants—such as vitamin E—protect cholesterol from free-radical damage.
- Diets rich in plant foods are also high in arginine, an essential amino acid that our bodies use to produce nitric oxide (NO). A vasodilator, NO relaxes blood vessels, improving blood flow.

With all these beneficial actions, it’s not surprising that epidemiological studies indicate that a whole foods diet protects against CVD. Penny Kris-Etherton, a well-known researcher from Penn State University, and colleagues have noted that this is most likely due to the fact that a fruit and vegetable-rich diet naturally contains not only antioxidants but also a wide array of active compounds that act synergistically to prevent disease and promote health.

**whole, nutrient-rich foods protect against cancer**

Bruce N. Ames, Ph.D., the renowned University of California-Berkeley biochemist whose work focuses on the relationship between diet and maintaining health, has noted that more than 200 epidemiological studies indicate that a diet high in fruits and vegetables can reduce cancer risk. A whole foods diet is richly endowed with all the well-known vitamins and minerals, as well as thousands of phytonutrients whose benefits researchers are just beginning to uncover.

The following provide just a few examples:

- Substantial evidence suggests that folic acid—abundant in vegetables, especially leafy greens—reduces the risk of colon cancer as well as cardiovascular disease.
- Broccoli and other members of the cruciferous vegetable family contain glucosinolates that switch on and turn up enzymes that detoxify carcinogenic substances.
• Powerful anthocyanins found in blueberries, which have a dramatic ability to penetrate cell membranes and provide cells with antioxidant protection, can decrease levels of inflammation and help prevent DNA damage throughout the body.

• Regular consumption of tomatoes, which are rich in a phytoneutraceutical called lycopene, is highly correlated with a lower risk of developing prostate cancer.

**whole, nutrient-rich foods team up to provide greater cancer protection**

A study presented on July 15, 2004, at the two-day WCRF/AICR International Research Conference on Food, Nutrition and Cancer in Washington, D.C., examined the effect of eating whole foods in combination instead of isolated nutrients. Not surprisingly, it showed that the benefits of consuming a variety of healthful foods beat consuming single nutrients by many a mile.

According to this research, eating broccoli along with tomatoes maximizes the cancer protection both foods provide. In the study, laboratory animals fed a tomato-and-broccoli combo had much less prostate tumor growth than animals given diets containing either food alone or normal animal chow diets supplemented with lycopene or finasteride (the drug commonly prescribed to men with benign prostatic hyperplasia, or BPH).

At a press conference, lead researcher John W. Erdman, Ph.D., Professor of Food Science and Human Nutrition at the University of Illinois at Urbana, explained the rationale behind this new approach to nutrition research:

“We decided to look at these foods in combination because we believed it was a way to learn more about real diets eaten by real people. People don’t eat nutrients; they eat food. And they don’t eat one food; they eat many foods in combination.”

Erdman also noted, “Studies that examine individual substances in isolation are simply not designed to tell us anything about the interactions that occur among those substances, much less among foods that each contains its own anti-cancer arsenal.”

Erdman and his colleagues reported their results on research testing the interaction of substances and their effect on cancer in the November 2003 issue of the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*. In this study, lycopene alone offered laboratory animals little protection from prostate cancer, while diets containing freeze-dried tomato powder greatly improved their prostate cancer survival.

The conclusion these and other scientists have drawn from hundreds of studies is that cancer protection must come from a combination of phytoneutrients, not isolated nutrients. In an article in the December 2004 issue of the *Journal of Nutrition*, Dr. Rui Lui of Cornell University summed up current thinking when he wrote:

“The additive and synergistic effects of phytoneutrients in fruits and vegetables are responsible for these potent antioxidant and anticancer activities, and the benefit of a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is attributed to the complex mixture of phytoneutrients present in whole foods. This explains why no single antioxidant can replace the combination of natural phytoneutrients in fruits and vegetables to achieve the health benefits. The evidence suggests that antioxidants or bioactive compounds are best acquired through whole-food consumption. We believe that a recommendation that consumers eat 5 to 10 servings of a wide variety of fruits and vegetables daily is an appropriate strategy for significantly reducing the risk of chronic diseases and to meet their nutrient requirements for optimal health.”

**whole, nutrient-rich foods protect against diabetes**

A nutrient-rich foods diet also provides well-established benefits for persons with diabetes. In fact, data collected in the Nurses’ Health Study suggest a whole foods diet may be the most successful treatment available for managing onset of the insulin resistance that characterizes early stage type 2 diabetes. A whole, nutrient-rich foods diet provides not only high levels of anti-inflammatory antioxidants and phytoneutrients, which lessen the damage that high blood levels of glucose would otherwise cause, but an excellent supply of fiber, which slows digestion, lowers insulin requirements, provides better control of blood glucose and reduces blood cholesterol levels. The importance of whole foods is reflected in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s new food pyramid, which specifically calls for including whole grains in your diet.

**practical tip for optimal health**

Take the advice of numerous researchers and health organizations. Eat a diet abundant in fruits, vegetables and other nutrient-rich foods, restrict your intake of foods that are high in saturated fats and sugars and combine it with an active lifestyle to prevent or fight chronic diseases including obesity, cancer, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. The following chapters will help you discover more about this “Healthiest Way of Eating.”