

Author of the #1 New York Times Bestseller *The Zone*

BARRY SEARS, Ph.D.

MASTERING THE ZONE

**The Next Step in Achieving SuperHealth
and Permanent Fat Loss**

- ✓ **Dietary Strategies**
- ✓ **Protein Prescriptions**
- ✓ **Zone Secrets**
for
- ✓ **Maximum Fat Loss**
- ✓ **Powerful Mental and
Physical Performance**
- ✓ **Supercharged Health**

**WITH
OVER 150
SCIENTIFIC
ZONE
RECIPES**

MASTERING THE ZONE

THE NEXT STEP IN
ACHIEVING SUPERHEALTH AND
PERMANENT FAT LOSS

Barry Sears, Ph.D.



ReganBooks

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The Zone recipes are the work of Scott C. Lane, who is the Executive Chef and Quality Assurance Manager of one of the major food manufacturing companies in the United States. As a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and a college instructor in the culinary arts, Scott brings a unique perspective in making great-tasting meals with advanced food technology.

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PREFACE

I hoped that by writing *The Zone*, I would be taking the first step in unearthing the Rosetta Stone of nutrition on how food affects hormonal response. Furthermore, I hoped to provide a readable summary of my work to other medical researchers, as well as to the lay public, who knew very little about those seemingly mystical and almost magical hormones known as eicosanoids that ultimately control our lives. Frankly, I never expected *The Zone* would sell so well. I am gratified, but still overwhelmed by the response. Yet I realize that many readers of *The Zone* still find it difficult to apply the concepts of the Zone to their daily lives. I hope that *Mastering the Zone* will remove many of those barriers, because in reality, the Zone Diet is incredibly easy to follow on a lifetime basis. *Mastering the Zone* is a compilation of the advice I have given over the years on how to easily integrate the principles of the Zone into your own life, whether you're a cardiovascular patient or a world-class athlete, or somewhere between these extremes.

Obviously, I had a strong personal reason for this quest to understand the Zone: my own health. With a family history of early death from heart disease, I knew I couldn't change my genes, but I could possibly control their expression by manipulation of levels of eicosanoids in my body. Frankly, I was willing to bet my life on the Zone.

Now that I'm forty-nine, the obvious question is, how am I doing? Every cardiovascular indicator says that I have the heart of a twenty-five-year-old. More important, I feel I have uncovered a fundamental pathway to achieving SuperHealth that is easy for everyone to follow. What is SuperHealth? In essence, it is doing everything in your power to squeeze as much quality out of life as possible, and in the process begin to dissociate biological age from chronological age.

Writing both books has been like keeping a personal diary of my own scientific journey toward understanding how food controls hormonal response. I never anticipated the twists and turns of that journey, nor the fact it would take me nearly fourteen years to decipher this Rosetta Stone of nutrition. The Zone is not intuitively obvious, but it is based on a combination of cutting-edge biotechnology and common sense.

I hope that after you read this book, you can say the magic phrase, "I can do this," because if you can, you have taken a major step forward to enhance the quality of your life by achieving SuperHealth. And in my opinion, the only way to achieve SuperHealth is by reaching the Zone and staying there on a lifelong basis.

This book is not intended to replace medical advice or be a substitute for a physician. If you are sick or suspect you are sick, you should see a physician. If you are taking a prescription medication, you should never change diet (for better or worse) without consulting your physician, because any dietary change will affect the metabolism of that prescription drug.

Prevention will always be the best medicine. However, prevention can only be undertaken by the individual, and that includes eating correctly. This is the foundation of a healthy lifestyle. You have to eat, so you might as well eat wisely.

Although this book is about food, the author and publisher expressly disclaim responsibility for any adverse effects arising from the use of nutritional supplements to your diet without appropriate medical supervision.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
PREFACE	ix
1 YOUR GRANDMOTHER COULD DO IT. WHY CAN'T YOU?	1
2 YOUR PROTEIN PRESCRIPTION: THE FIRST STEP TO THE ZONE	5
3 CARBOHYDRATES: MANNA FROM HEAVEN?	11
4 IT TAKES FAT TO BURN FAT	21
5 YOUR HORMONAL CARBURETOR	25
6 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: A DAY IN THE ZONE	32
7 ADJUSTING YOUR HORMONAL CARBURETOR	44
8 A WEEK IN THE ZONE	58
9 ZONE RECIPES	109
BREAKFAST	111
LUNCH	147
DINNER	194
SNACKS AND DESSERTS	243
10 SHOPPING IN THE WAR ZONE	263
11 EATING OUT IN THE ZONE	270
12 YOUR ZONE REPORT CARD	274
13 LIVING IN THE ZONE	279

14	FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ZONE	284
15	TALES FROM THE ZONE	298
16	TALES FROM THE OLYMPIC ZONE	304
17	WHAT THE CRITICS SAY	307
18	WHERE YOU GO FROM HERE	316
	APPENDIX A. FURTHER RESOURCES	319
	APPENDIX B. FOOD BLOCKS	323
	APPENDIX C. CALCULATION OF LEAN BODY MASS	335
	APPENDIX D. DAY IN THE ZONE MEAL CONSTRUCTION TEMPLATE	349
	APPENDIX E. GLYCEMIC INDEX	351
	APPENDIX F. REFERENCES	357
	INDEX	363

YOUR GRANDMOTHER COULD DO IT. WHY CAN'T YOU?

Mastering the Zone. Sounds very New Age, like Yoda teaching Luke Skywalker about the Force. But it's not. Instead it's very similar to the advice your grandmother gave you about eating. Eat everything in moderation, eat lots of fruits and vegetables, and have some protein at every meal. Your grandmother didn't know it, but she was teaching you the basic principles for developing a life-long strategy of hormonal balance. If you can achieve this hormonal balance, you are well on your way to the Zone.

What is the Zone? It is the balance of hormonal responses that occurs every time you eat. A perfect equilibrium: not too high, not too low. Why should you want to get there? Simply said, if you can keep yourself in the Zone, then you will:

- A. think better, because in the Zone you are maintaining stable blood sugar levels,
- B. perform better, because being in the Zone allows you to increase oxygen transfer to your muscle cells,
- C. look better, because in the Zone you are shedding excess body fat at the fastest possible rate, and
- D. never be hungry between meals, because staying in the Zone means your brain is being constantly supplied with its primary fuel: blood sugar.

All these benefits of being in the Zone will emerge within a one- to two-week period if you follow the instructions in this book.

But the best reason to want to stay in the Zone on a lifelong basis is to achieve SuperHealth.

For most people, health is defined as the absence of disease. SuperHealth goes beyond that. In a state of SuperHealth you will reduce the likelihood of developing chronic disease, the types of illnesses that represent the bulk of our health care costs. If you have read *The Zone*, you know that SuperHealth is exactly what you are aiming for. And the only way to obtain SuperHealth is to take control of your diet, and use it to keep yourself in the Zone on a continual basis. The more time you spend in the Zone, the more control you have over the ultimate quality of your life.

When I wrote *The Zone* in 1995, I tried to show that the age-old inherent common sense about dietary balance is really cutting-edge twenty-first-century hormonal control technology that can be mathematically defined with a precision your grandmother never dreamed of. While your grandmother's diet was prepared intuitively, you can do it scientifically.

This book marks the next step on that quest. It will show you how to make a wide range of food choices, from gourmet meals to fast-food drive-through fare and everything in between, while still staying in the Zone. Although thinking of food hormonally may be revolutionary, eating in the Zone is not. In fact, eating in the Zone is a lot like eating your grandmother's cooking (except for the fast food).

For those of you already in the Zone, this book offers new information on making the Zone part of your lifelong routine, from tips on eating out and shopping, to information about adjusting the Zone Diet to your own body chemistry, to more than a hundred and fifty new Zone meals that will make it easier for you to stay there. For those of you still struggling to reach the Zone, this volume will make your journey much faster and easier.

Once you use these tips, getting into the Zone and staying there becomes second nature because you will be eating the foods you already like to eat and adapting the recipes you currently use everyday into great Zone meals.

Let me help you visualize the Zone on a plate: a moderate serving of low-fat protein (such as fish or chicken) with a significant amount of vegetables covered with slivered almonds, and fruit for

dessert. Every time you eat, make sure that your carbohydrates come with a protein chaser and a dash of fat. To be a little more precise, for every cup of vegetables, or half a piece of fruit or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of pasta that you plan to eat (these serving sizes will be explained later on), add an ounce of low-fat protein like chicken or fish. Then add a bit of monounsaturated fat, like a little olive oil or a few slivered almonds. Do this at every meal and snack, and, presto, you're pretty close to being in the Zone for the next four to six hours. And during that four- to six-hour period, you will be thinking better, performing better, and losing stored body fat—all without hunger. This book will teach you how.

Once you understand what the Zone is and how it works, you will also understand that virtually every dietary recommendation made by the U.S. government and leading nutritional experts is hormonally dead wrong. What is their recommendation? Eat a high-carbohydrate diet. Unfortunately, these authorities seem to have forgotten that the best way to fatten cattle is to feed them excessive amounts of low-fat grain. The best way to fatten humans is also to feed them excessive amounts of low-fat grain, in the form of pasta and bagels. Another popular dietary slogan these days says, "If no fat touches my lips, then no fat reaches my hips." But that is simply not true. Our war on dietary fat really began in earnest fifteen years ago as fat phobia became the norm. And the results are now clear: Americans have become more obese than anyone on the face of the earth.

Obviously, fat was not the enemy. If fat isn't the enemy, then what is? The answer is insulin. It's excess insulin that makes you fat and keeps you fat. And your body produces excessive amounts of insulin when you eat either (1) too many fat-free carbohydrates, or (2) too many calories at a meal. Therefore, when I talk about the Zone, it is really a zone of insulin. Not too high, not too low: a zone of insulin controlled by your diet.

To eat in the Zone is to treat food with the same respect you would give a prescription drug. However, this doesn't mean food must taste like a drug. On the contrary, Zone cooking allows for great-tasting food packed with maximum nutrition. Mastering the Zone is a recipe for lifelong hormonal control, a recipe that pretty much lets you forget about counting calories or grams of fat.

Throughout this book, I will refer to my program as the Zone Diet. Most people think of a diet as a limited time they live in a state of deprivation that allows them to return to old eating habits. The Zone Diet is neither deprivation nor short-term. It is not deprivation because while you're in the Zone, you maintain peak mental and physical performance while consuming the foods you like to eat. And being in the Zone is a lifetime habit, not a short-term fad. The hormonal responses generated by food that allow you to reach the Zone haven't changed for the past 100,000 years, and they are not going to change in your lifetime.

Like any lifestyle change, getting into the Zone takes patience and practice. But within two weeks, if not sooner, you will begin to see a dramatic change in your life. Carbohydrate cravings will be gone, mental focus will be increased, physical performance will be enhanced, and you will lose excess body fat at the fastest possible rate. And you will be well on your way to achieving SuperHealth. That's the kind of lifestyle change anyone should be happy to swallow.

This book is divided into three basic parts. The first describes how to determine your unique protein and carbohydrate requirements and how they work together to form your hormonal carburetor. The second part deals with the construction of balanced Zone meals and contains more than one hundred and fifty new Zone recipes. The final part provides helpful hints that will allow you to stay in the Zone for a lifetime.

If SuperHealth is what you want to achieve, then reaching the Zone and staying there is the way to make it happen. Your grandmother knew this intuitively. Treat this book as a personal user's guide and achieve a precision never imagined by your grandmother. And once you're in the Zone, why would you ever want to leave?

YOUR PROTEIN PRESCRIPTION: THE FIRST STEP TO THE ZONE

You're nearly ready to travel toward the Zone, but just as with any trip, some preparation is necessary before you begin the journey. As I said in the first chapter, reaching the Zone is all about insulin control. If you have read *The Zone*, you know that the most important step needed to control insulin is fulfilling your body's unique protein requirements.

Why is protein so important? First, your body requires incoming protein on a continual basis to repair and maintain its critical systems. Your muscles, your immune system, and every enzyme in your body are composed of protein. Every day your body loses protein constantly. Without adequate incoming dietary protein, these critical body functions begin to run down.

But more important, protein is so vital because it stimulates the hormone glucagon. Glucagon has the opposite physiological action to insulin. In fact, glucagon acts as the major governor of excessive insulin production. It is excess insulin that makes you fat, makes you hungry, makes you mentally foggy, decreases your physical performance, and increases the likelihood of chronic disease.

If your goal is to enter the Zone and stay there, then you have to control insulin production, and to do that, protein is the key.

So how much protein should you eat at a meal? Here is the simple answer and handy rule of thumb: **Never consume more low-fat protein in one sitting than you can fit on the palm of your hand.** This means the maximum amount of protein you should eat

at a meal is approximately 5 ounces of skinless chicken breast or its equivalent.

Of course, your protein requirement is unique to you and no one else. One size does not fit all. So can you be even more precise about exactly how much protein you need?

The answer is yes, and to make it very easy for you to actually apply, use, and remember just how much protein you need, I have created a nutritional measurement that I call a block. I don't care if you have a Ph.D. in nuclear physics, you probably don't want to have to calculate how many grams of protein you need each day, let alone each meal. But you can apply the block method to any source of protein, be it tofu, tuna, or a steak filet. Your stomach breaks all of them down into simple amino acids for absorption.

My blocks all contain 7 grams of protein. There, I've done the gram counting for you. Now any source of protein is on the same level in terms of amino acid content. Differences in protein density are eliminated. All you have to do is refer to a few simple measurements. One block of protein could be 1 ounce of meat, such as sliced turkey, chicken, or beef. One block of protein could be 1½ ounces of fish, or two egg whites, or ¼ cup of cottage cheese, or 3 ounces of extra-firm tofu. It's all equal to your body. One practical reason I like using blocks is so you can measure the amount of protein you need at each meal on the fingers of one hand.

In Appendix B you will find most of the protein sources (including vegetarian sources) you normally eat, in their appropriate block sizes. With a little practice you'll find that your eyeball becomes a very good judge of protein block size.

Using blocks, you now have a more precise way to determine how much protein is in the food you eat. You can also use blocks to tell you how much protein you need at each meal. **If you are a typical American female, you will need between two and three blocks of protein at every meal, and if you are the typical American male, you will need between three and four blocks of protein at every meal.** This amount of protein is adequate to maintain your muscles and your immune system, but won't exceed your daily requirements.

What if you want even greater precision? First, you have to determine your percent body fat by using the worksheet in

Appendix C. From that you can determine your lean body mass. And from your lean body mass you can begin to figure out exactly how much protein you need every day.

What is lean body mass? You can view your body as consisting of two components. The first is your total fat mass. The other component of your total weight is everything else. This “everything else” component is known as lean body mass. Lean body mass consists of water, muscle, bones, tendons, etc. Your body requires adequate levels of protein to maintain this amount of lean body mass. Obviously, your fat mass doesn’t require any incoming dietary protein to maintain it.

Determining your total fat mass can be a downright scary proposition, but you have to do it to establish your starting point. Simply multiply your total weight by your percent body fat. For example, if you weigh 160 pounds and have 25 percent body fat, then your total fat mass will be

$$160 \times 0.25 = 40 \text{ pounds}$$

This means that 40 pounds of pure fat is sitting on your body. Since fat contains 3,500 calories per pound, this means you have approximately 140,000 calories of stored useable fat energy, and this stored energy is the equivalent of the calories in more than 2,000 pancakes!

So to continue the example, if you have 40 pounds of total fat, then what is your lean body mass? Simply subtract your total fat mass (40 pounds) from your total weight (160 pounds). As I said, your fat mass doesn’t require any protein to maintain it, only your lean body mass does. So if you weigh 160 pounds and subtract 40 pounds of fat, what is left behind is 120 pounds of lean body mass. This measure gives you half of your Protein Prescription.

The other half of your Protein Prescription is determined by how active you are. Do you primarily watch TV all day (and that includes looking at computer screens all day at work), or are you a world-class athlete working out twice a day? Obviously, the more active you are, the more protein you will need. So we run a continuum from purely sedentary individuals (who only need 0.5 grams of protein per pound of lean body mass per day) to elite athletes