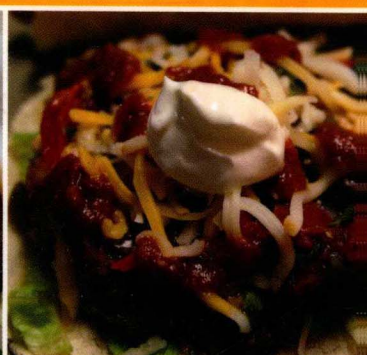


THE
GRASSROOTS
GOURMET
GUIDE TO
GOOD HEALTH
AND GREAT FOOD



MICHAEL S. FENSTER, MD



eating well,
living better

THE
**GRASSROOTS
GOURMET**
GUIDE TO
**GOOD HEALTH
AND GREAT FOOD**



eating well,
living better

MICHAEL S. FENSTER, MD

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Plymouth, UK

Grassroots Gourmet is a registered trademark of Red Tail Productions, LLC.

Published by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706

www.rowman.com

10 Thornbury Road, Plymouth PL6 7PP, United Kingdom

Distributed by National Book Network

Copyright © 2012 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fenster, Michael S., 1964-

Eating well, living better : the grassroots gourmet guide to good health and great food /
Michael S. Fenster.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.


ISBN 978-1-4422-1340-1 (pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-4422-1341-8 (ebook)

1. Nutrition—Popular works. 2. Diet—Psychological aspects—Popular works. 3. Health—
Popular works. 4. Food preferences—Popular works. 5. Cookbooks. I. Title.

RA784.F46 2012

613.2—dc23

2011024308

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America



eating well,
living better

This work is humbly dedicated to:

My mother, who shared her passion for cooking and never hesitated to let me know when I messed up in the kitchen or anywhere else;

My father, who was always there and helped me to “keep going” even though he warned me not to do it;

Lindsey, Davis, and Cheyenne, the best test kitchen ever; and

Jennifer, who makes all things possible and without whom there is no light.



acknowledgments

THERE ARE so many people to thank for helping bring this crazy idea to full fruition. If anyone reading thinks that they should have been mentioned here but aren't, you are probably right. I apologize, and any omissions are accidental and solely my fault.

I have to thank my mother. She gave me her love of food and passion for excellence. The days I played hooky from school to watch Julia Child and the Galloping Gourmet with her and then cook from their cookbooks in the kitchen were some of my best-spent days, a priceless education. I also need to thank my dad for being there to pick me up and help me keep going. Even though he warned me about my harebrained schemes, he never made me feel too bad about them. I hope I have finally learned something so I can be done with all the “learning experiences” and perhaps save him further embarrassment. I need to thank Drs. Ragosta, Powers, and Sarembock. They gave me the best cardiology training any fellow could ask for, and they demonstrated what being a true physician and healer is all about. Whenever I try to decide what the right thing to do is, I hear their voices, and they still make me laugh. I also need to thank my martial arts instructors and friends: Soke Masaaki Hatsumi, who saved me from myself by sharing his martial art with the world; Shihan Kevin Millis, who took on a grubby student from across the country and helped him achieve a dream; Shihan Wild Bill Johnson, my friend and training partner for decades without whom I could never have progressed; and Lindsey,

Davis, and Cheyenne, who were always there to taste the food, whether they wanted to or not. I appreciate your honesty, even if it's not always what I wanted to hear. Spending time with you in the kitchen are memories I shall always treasure. I must also thank my literary agent, Leticia Gomez, who worked tirelessly to find a home for this book. I also need to thank my editor, Suzanne Staszak-Silva, who gave this book a home and helped edit it into an even better read, which I thought impossible. I still do not like the Oxford comma, though.

And finally but certainly not in the least, I must thank Jennifer. Without her love and support, none of this would be. Indeed, I would not be. You are my love and my light.



foreword

THERE'S A LOVE affair going on with food. You can see it everywhere you look. The grocery stores are filled with food that we all think we love, but in reality it's just an illicit affair (with junk)! We are carrying on with food that just isn't good for us. From dyes to pesticides and artificial ingredients, we're overindulging on food that makes us feel empty and alone, much like that one-night stand that we *wish* would garner the true love of our life. We're searching for meaning, sustenance, and satiation from Frankenfoods that are no good for us. The good news, my friends, is the search is over. Within the pages of this book, Dr. Mike Fenster shows us how to truly savor and enjoy real food—the food we were meant to spend our lives with—forever. As an interventional cardiologist and professional chef, he knows the human body inside and out and knows the right foods that will tickle your fancy—and help kick-start a love affair of the marrying kind!

Dr. Mike's recipes and tips encourage the reader to put flavor back into food and restore the true essence of your body and soul in a gastronomic way. Dr. Mike helps you walk the line between too much and too little with his Zen-like approach to eating: pure, fresh, balanced, and loaded with nutrition and taste without overdoing it. This book is a how-to for anyone interested in learning his or her way around the kitchen without all of the hype and bologna. His candid, charismatic voice is ever present among the pages as if

he is standing over your shoulder, coaching you through your kitchen, grocery lists, and recipe cards. He tells it like it is—from personal experiences to current research—while leaving you with useful information, tips, and ideas that you can put to use during your next meal preparation. Consider Dr. Mike your Sherpa in the kitchen, an intelligent, charming guide taking you on an adventure and food love affair to remember.

Beth Aldrich, author, *Real Moms Love to Eat: How to Conduct a Love Affair with Food, Lose Weight, and Feel Fabulous* (2012)



contents

acknowledgments	ix
foreword	xi
1 why this book?	1
2 how i achieved culinary buddhahood (and you can, too)	7
3 understanding extremes	15
4 the middle path	23
5 taste versus addiction	29
6 diet or die: a word on obesity and weight loss	37
7 the grassroots gourmet	47
8 first: good escape make; avoiding the junk food siren and her weapons of mass consumption	51
9 get fresh but no adultery	67
10 on time and in proportion	91

11	food porn	103
12	great food, God, and the art of cooking	107
13	why wine?	115
14	past and present	121
15	but doc, i can't: common myths and misconceptions	135
16	techniques, tips, and other tasty bits	141
17	firsts (recipes)	159
18	mains (recipes)	199
19	stocks, sauces, and more tasty bits	251
	epilogue: be a buddha	289
	notes	291
	references	297
	additional resources	307
	index of recipes	313
	index of healthy bytes	317
	about the author	319



why this book?

SO, YOU'VE taken a gander at the front cover and this book's title, and now I have your undivided attention.

Dr. Mike?

Doctor?

Really?

Then you peeked at the back cover to see if the guy calling himself “Doc” is truly, by some strange coincidence, a real, honest-to-goodness medical doctor, an M.D. Lo and behold, he is, and to top it off, he has actually worked in the food and restaurant industry, cooking in kitchens and along the way obtaining a culinary degree. At this point, you may feel inclined to ask, “Is this really a medical professional who actually practices what he preaches?” While that may seem a bit schizophrenic on the surface, please don't tune me out just yet because it will eventually make perfect sense to you. If you've come this far, dear reader (and even if you were to put this book down now this very instant and walk away, you are still a dear reader), sooner or later you are bound to ask yourself, Why this book? Why another cookbook? Why another program? Doesn't the world have enough of them already? I think that is a bloody brilliant series of questions because I asked myself the same things.

Now that your curiosity has been piqued, you are probably wondering: “How can these two seemingly disparate paths, medicine and cooking, possibly converge?” As presented in the media today, cooking seems to revolve around a purely supersized, hedonistic

approach to forbidden gustatory pleasures. On the other side of the road stands current medical advice, goose-stepping gurus decrying these very pleasures as a speedy ticket to a painful and slow death, with much gnashing of teeth and wailing along the way. What seemingly insane, freakish twist of fate could have produced an individual who seems to be the offspring of Julia Child and Marcus Welby? Well, it is actually not two distinctly different paths but more like two ends of a circle. “But wait,” you say. “A circle actually has no distinct ends.” Exactly, Grasshopper.

Let’s look a little closer at these two territories: the medical arts and the culinary arts. The commonly shared border between the two becomes clear—the Arts. And the finest Art of any form is one that follows the form of Nature. And Nature is all about Balance. Thus like any artistic endeavor that swings too widely and delves too deeply into one area of focus, it can lose that connection to Nature and become unbalanced. It can become a caricature of itself. Without the face of compassion, the medical arts becomes a cold, calculated, scientific, and sterile process. It may fix and cure but most certainly does not heal. It is a bit of an irony that this character trait seems to play such a miniscule role in selecting those to lead in the deployment of health care. Despite its profundity of scientific achievement and success in treating a vast array of pathologies, Western medicine is often delivered so impersonally and leaves so many patients feeling unsatisfied—cured but not whole and well.

Likewise, without a passion for excellence, the culinary arts yields consumables but does not nurture. It provides nutrition but not nourishment. An Eastern concept to food preparation suggests that a great chef puts some of his own essence, his own *chi*, into each creation. This gives it that indescribable, that *je ne sais pas*, that makes it delicious in a way that a mass-produced product—even using the finest ingredients—can never achieve. It is the reason an original work of art shines above the copies, why a live performance has something that the recording never will. Food prepared without this passion, for lack of a better word, yields gluttons, not gourmets. Regardless of the artistic endeavor, the approach must be one of balance. We need only look at political and religious extremism for other examples of the consequences of unstable pursuits. My more than thirty years of practicing the martial arts has taught me to keep balance and perspective in all endeavors; more on that later.

Sometimes it is easier to define a thing that is new or difficult to conceptualize by what it is not. Think of Sesame Street’s “Which of these things is not like the others?” And no, the answer is not Bert and Ernie’s sleeping arrangement. Is this another celebrity cookbook? No, because I am not a celebrity, neither by Hollywood standards nor by culinary standards. The “cookbooks” by Hollywood celebrities are read by the same people who actually give a damn about what Paris Hilton is doing today. They follow celebrity for celebrity’s sake. Celebrity chef offerings do often contain, however, great

information. I read a lot of them. These folks are master craftsmen and craftswomen, and you can garner a lot of great techniques, information and ideas from getting a glimpse inside their noggins. I encourage perusing these (see the list of resources at the back of this book). Yet, you need to understand that these offerings are written by restaurant chefs creating restaurant meals. A restaurant meal is a product sold to you, hopefully with a taste so delicious that you come back for more. It is a product in a business plan. It is not intended, nor should it be, as a diet to sustain your health and well-being. It doesn't mean it can't be, but *caveat emptor*, that's not its purpose.

This is also not a weight-loss book. It is a sad sign of the times that every time we say the word *diet* it is taken not as the noun referring to what we consume but as the verb form of trying to achieve weight loss, as in "to diet." If you currently consume the average American or Western diet and follow this program, I guarantee you will shed some pounds. You will shed even more if you add a little exercise. However, this is not a program about weight loss only. If you need to call Jenny to achieve some poundage reduction, fine. If you need to lose weight, do it and achieve it by whatever means necessary. This is the lifeline of sanity once you've gotten to where you need to be; you need not be a prisoner ordering meals only from "the system" for the rest of your days like a captive in *The Matrix*. A majority of these programs focus on short-term solutions and snake-oil sales pitches. They prey upon our innate desire for a magical cure that gives us what we want with no effort or work. Delicious, healthful food takes effort. I find it incredibly fun and satisfying to create, and I think you will, too—but it most definitely requires effort.

This is not a companion book to some crazy exercise program, either. There is no infomercial, catalogue of exercise products, nutritional supplements, cookware, videos, or other very expensive paperweights to purchase. This book is based on sound medical principles and data, but it is not a penance program in nutrition perdition. Many of the health/dieting/cooking books written from the medical perspective are a lot like a book teaching you how to walk on your hands. It is interesting, but the novelty quickly wears off and eventually everybody returns to walking on their feet; we simply were not meant to go through life ambulating that way. No one has ever completed a meaningful journey walking on his or her hands.

These days, I practice interventional cardiology and international cuisine. They are both part science, part art, part technique and a damn lot of work. Come to think of it, they are not much different from the martial arts. These disciplines all require the accumulation, assimilation and application of a great deal of information. We now live in the Information Age. If you have no idea how to prepare a beef Wellington to die for, you can go on the Internet and read about how to pull it off. You can also download videos and print recipes. There are a lot of books with information and step-by-step procedures. Heck, you can even go out and buy a piece of meat, some puff pastry, and

practice your beef Wellington—making technique until you’ve gotten it perfect. The same just-practice-until-you-get-it-right algorithm is generally frowned upon in current medical circles (although I have always wondered why it was called a “practice”). Between the Internet, television, books, and DVDs, one can almost acquire a culinary expertise just by immersion. Just like in college, however, there are some “professors” who ought to be avoided like the plague.

This book was born out of a functional need. While practicing medicine I continued to cook and cater, help manage a restaurant and eventually took some time and earned my culinary degree. One day it hit me like a bolt from the blue. My muses merged together at lightning speed at a general cardiology talk I was presenting to the community to help educate the public. I had spent my usual twelve to twenty hours getting things together for the talk, a run-of-the-mill cardiology lecture designed to encourage compliance with all the things doctors tell patients they should do (most of which doctors themselves don’t do). I researched data and statistics until I was blue in the face, made an outline, prepared PowerPoint slides and even created graphics and pasted pictures. All this was done, of course, in my “spare time.” I spoke eloquently and entertainingly for about forty-five minutes and then opened up the floor for questions. “Surely,” I thought, “the wisdom I have imparted to the audience must have sparked some sort of self-realization for them.” Would there be a heartfelt confession perhaps? Or maybe a penetratingly sharp observation of the data I had painstakingly presented? Was I in for a question so deep and insightful that it not only demonstrated a complete grasp of the knowledge I had meticulously laid before them but also would inspire a publication-worthy hypothesis?

No.

The people just wanted to know what they could eat.

Right then and there, my two muses hit me on either side of the head with twin two-by-fours. All this lecturing—complete with charts and graphs of death and disease, pictures of the damnation that was sure to follow if the rules of conduct as espoused by we Lords of Medicine were not heeded—all this mumbo jumbo turned out to be fear mongering and intimidation in the first degree. Sure we had an important message to relay. We were trying to convey things that had been shown to help people live longer and healthier lives. Yet, the message was a bit draconian. There was no room for the variances life inevitably throws your way. Like so many Hail Marys to expiate our sins, we tell people, “You must follow this prescription, you must exercise, you must not smoke, and you cannot eat this and must eat that.” This “one and only” path of salvation seemed a bit Inquisitionesque. Forget the data and the biochemistry. Forget patting ourselves on the back with the study-derived algorithms we were using. The simple fact remains. People like to eat. People do not eat nowadays simply for nutrition alone and haven’t done so for

millennia. It is part hard-wired cravings, part instinct driven, part emotional experience, part societal custom, and a whole lot of joy and pleasure. It is a pursuit second only to sex (and for some that's arguable). It is a pure and simple pursuit of happiness, end of story. It makes us feel good to eat, drink and enjoy food. Like with alcohol, we need to do this responsibly, not go all Prohibition. I believe they repealed that bit of temperance because it is so contrary to human nature, and as the Roman emperors learned in the end, it is always mob rule; Rome *is* the mob. Like it has been said: We need to teach them to fish, not cram omega-3-rich salmon down their gullets while telling them how good it is for them. Once they catch that fish, we need to teach them how to make it so damn tasty that they'll *want* to eat it time and time again, not because it is good for you, but because it simply tastes delicious.

So the public cooking demonstrations began and progressed and evolved into blogs and articles and a television show. Therefore, dear reader (and you are very near and dear to this chef's heart if you've come this far), for several reasons this is not just another cookbook like all the others. No one really needs another cookbook, I know. No one needs empty promises from the meal-in-a-minute messiahs hawking "delicious" desserts and such that taste like frozen and then microwaved pig turds. No one needs some soul-sucking stranger treating you like a dietary heretic for wanting to enjoy your food (soul sucking is strictly the purview of ex-spouses). It does take some basic skills, some minimal effort, and a large infusion of passion.

The time has come for a Metallica pearl of wisdom (MPOW): "My lifestyle determines my death style." And like the guys from Metallica, I know of what I speak. This program is a way to control an area of your life (and the lives of those close to you) in a positive manner. This is a way to end a death style and initiate a true lifestyle change. This is a culinary survival guide *and* a prescription for happiness, complete with occasional *pommes frites*. Food is fuel, and most people can appreciate that fact. Yet, we must also appreciate that food is more than just fuel; it supplies all the raw materials from which we construct the infrastructure of our bodies. Cells, cell parts, organs, bones, and tissue are constantly being broken down and replaced—replaced with what we ingest. We need healthful food for the body. For like the infrastructure of America itself, the infrastructure of the average American is crumbling into disrepair.

The purpose of this book is to provide a basis upon which you can develop an absolutely delicious food program in a sustainable manner, sustainable in that it is good for the Earth, for your locale and most importantly for you and your loved ones because you follow it every day (willingly) and it sustains your good health. It is to provide food that tastes good first and foremost because that is what nourishes our souls.

So why buy another self-indulgent cookbook?

Don't.

So, why buy a lifetime of denial?

Don't.

Buy into a solution to a problem created by these extremes that is plaguing so many: how to eat things that make you healthy *and* taste good at the same time. Become a Grassroots Gourmet. Why? Because becoming a Grassroots Gourmet is the first step on the path to becoming your own culinary Buddha. A Grassroots Gourmet is an acolyte of Nature's wisdom in the kitchen temple, to be sure, but so much more. With a foundation in food and health knowledge, you will learn why we crave certain foods and seek out poor eating behaviors. You will follow the Threefold Path of the "Bes," and you will learn proper principles for maintaining good health and eating great-tasting food that is great for you. You will move beyond simply counting calories and understand what healthful eating is really about and how and why it can include a variety of choices, including fat, sugar and salt—in moderation, of course. You will apply the appropriate technique where and when you need it. You will get to eat the delicious food you want and learn how to select local foods; how to read labels; how to make better food choices; and how to live joyfully, hopefully, and healthily. The path of the Grassroots Gourmet leads to culinary nirvana and epicurean enlightenment. In the following chapters, I lead you down that path and at the end you will be able to determine your own gastronomic reality, one grounded in reason.