

Wolfgang Puck Makes It Healthy

Light, Delicious Recipes and
Easy Exercises for a Better Life



WOLFGANG PUCK

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY CARIN KRASNER

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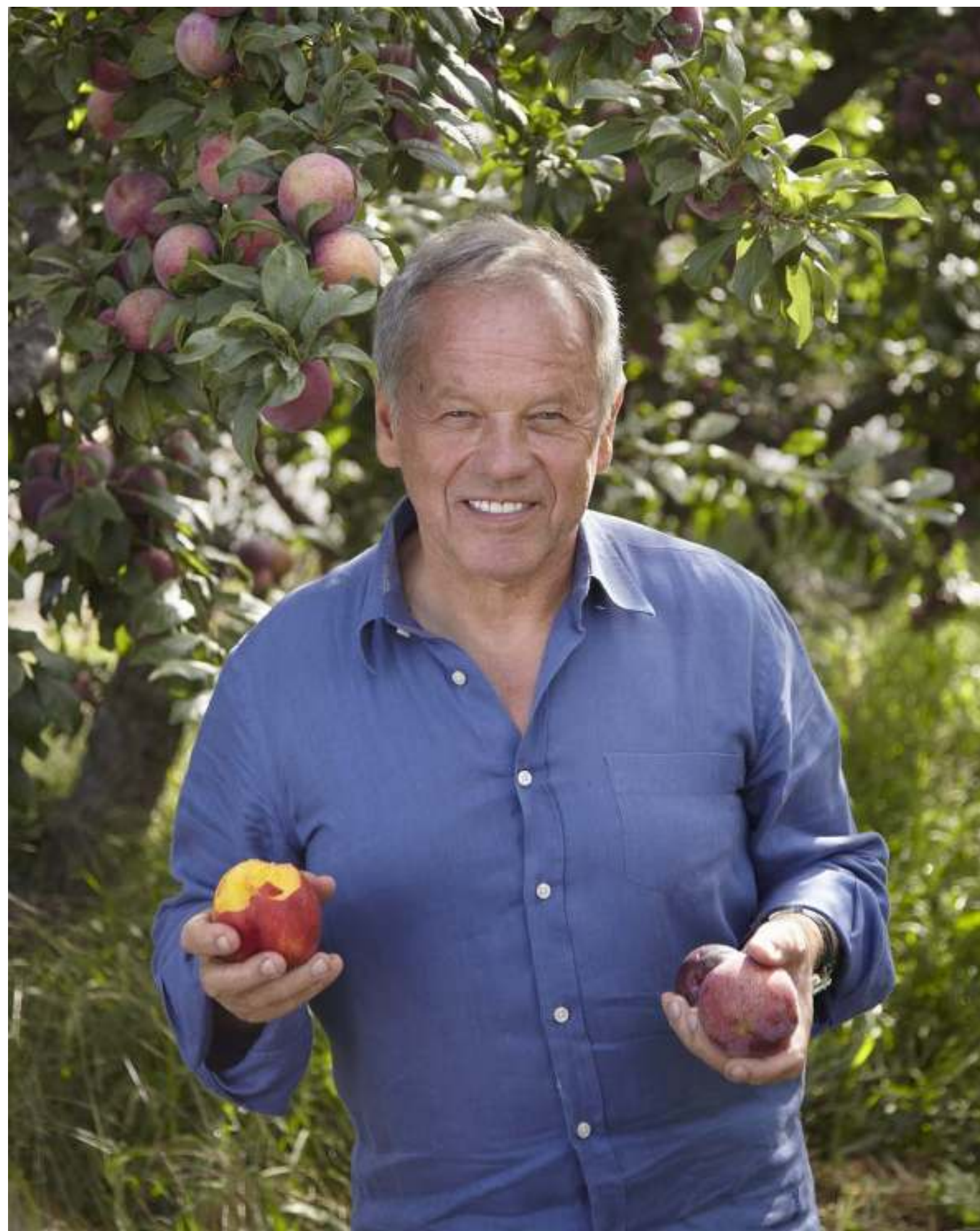
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my family, the driving force and the foundation behind everything I do.

My late mother, Maria, was my first true culinary inspiration. Her warm generous spirit, her wisdom, and her dedication to and talent for honest home cooking can be found throughout this book.

My wonderful wife, Gelila, is always my loving, supportive, and wise advisor. She, along with our two bright, energetic, and food-loving young sons, Oliver and Alexander, every day give me the best reasons possible to live a long, healthy, active, and happy life.

My two older sons, Cameron and Byron, continue to impress me with their academic accomplishments, their love of good cooking, and their joy for life. I am so proud of what good young men they are becoming.







Part 1: **Introduction**



WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

I never, ever expected to write this book. If you had suggested to me ten years ago, or even five, that my next book would focus on healthy recipes and fitness, I would've said you didn't know me very well.

I'm a chef, not a doctor or a research scientist or a registered dietitian. Of course, I read a lot about food, cooking, and eating, and I combine that with a lifetime of experience that comes from working in the kitchen, running restaurants, and seeing what people want and how they like to eat. But in recent years I've become more and more vitally concerned with ways to eat that will improve my own health and energy, as well as that of my family, my friends, and the many guests in my restaurants.

It all began to change for me in 2009. Wanting to feel healthier, I started adjusting my eating habits in simple ways—like emphasizing more fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, reducing fat while maximizing flavor, and practicing moderation—that I'll explain in more detail throughout this book. And I began working with my trainer, Chad Waterbury. I was fifty-nine at the time. I had recently had a hip replacement, and I was in constant pain from an inflamed nerve in my lower back. My biggest fear was that I would have to give up skiing. That may not seem like much of a sacrifice to you, but I grew up in Austria. Skiing is what we do. Every kid has skis. But lately, when I skied with my friends, I had to stop in the middle of the hill to catch my breath. Tennis is my favorite warm-weather sport, but because I'm a competitive person and I like to play with people who are better than me, it involves a lot of running, and I found I would have to sit down to rest every fifteen minutes.

It's not that I'd never tried to get in shape before. I'd tried just about everything, and most of what I did made me feel worse instead of better. The first time I exercised with a professional trainer, when I was in my

thirties, I passed out. They had to carry me out of the gym. After that, I tried gym workouts, home workouts, running. I exercised with a trainer and without a trainer. The results were almost never what I hoped for. Even if I managed to lose some weight, get a little stronger, or build more endurance, the success never lasted long.

But Chad's workouts were different from any I'd tried before. During our first workout, we jumped rope, which I could only do for forty-five seconds at a stretch; did a circuit of basic calisthenics including jumping jacks, push-ups, and squats; did some boxing, with me wearing gloves and Chad holding up pads; and finished with stretching my warmed muscles. That's it. We did the entire routine in my living room, where we still work out to this day. More important, we started with a program I could realistically do, instead of a program Chad thought I should be able to do. He shared with me a simple piece of wisdom that I'd never heard before: *You can't start with an hour of training if your body is only ready for fifteen minutes.* And then we built up from where I was. A few months later, I could jump rope for ten minutes straight—and the only reason I stopped at ten was because we had to move on to another part of the workout.

EVERY DAY, PEOPLE ASK ME: “WOLFGANG, WHERE DO YOU GET ALL THIS ENERGY, AND HOW DO YOU WORK SO MANY HOURS AT YOUR AGE?” AND THEN THEY ADD: “COULD YOU BOTTLE IT, PLEASE?” THIS BOOK IS MY ANSWER TO THAT REQUEST.

About seven months after I started exercising with Chad, I went skiing in Colorado with some old friends from Austria. The difference in how I felt compared to my last ski trip was incredible. I didn't have to stop halfway down the hill for a breather. I even felt better, less lightheaded, at the high altitude. Back home in Southern California, when I played tennis

I could hit the ball for an hour straight without stopping to rest.

As you'll see, almost 90 percent of this book is what you would expect from me: recipes for great-tasting, easy-to-make food, with detailed instructions for how to prepare them in your home, and lots of general principles to help you cook and eat more healthfully, whatever you prepare or wherever you eat.

But, unlike my previous six cookbooks, I want this one also to give you the big recipe for the way I live my life today, a time when I feel I not only have more energy and more stamina than I ever had before but am also much trimmer—while also still being able to enjoy the food I love. And as I now understand, thanks to Chad, that involves exercise.

Just as I did with exercise, I've had some less-than-satisfactory experiences with healthy eating plans. Long ago, I learned that I could lose weight on a very strict diet, and maybe it would work for three months or so. But I usually wound up feeling weaker—and as soon as I started eating normally again, even while trying to make smart food choices, I would gain the weight back, and maybe a little extra.

And let's face it: It's not reasonable for someone in my profession to stay on a strict diet. To be a good chef, I have to, and want to, sample everything in my restaurants. But that means *sample*, a small taste. If I like it, I might even have more than one taste, especially when it's a dessert (I've always had a sweet tooth, particularly when it comes to anything with chocolate.) At any one time, I may not eat a lot; but, over the course of a day, I can sometimes consume a lot of food. It's great food—I'm always surrounded by the best ingredients, and everyone who works in my kitchens really knows how to cook well—but, since my name and reputation are so closely associated with Spago and my many other restaurants, I always have to make sure that the food meets my highest standards. I'll also have a glass or two of wine in the evening. I don't think I could be happy if I wasn't able to eat well and drink well.

The difference today is that I can eat all of my favorite foods without

overeating anything. I feel good because of the combination of eating well and exercising. Now I want to help you achieve the same goal, to feel healthy and happy, with plenty of energy to do the things you love to do.

With that in mind, the first part of this book focuses on food. The recipes are somewhat different from what you may have seen in my previous books or ordered in my restaurants. But their style, ease, and the delicious results they deliver have not changed; after all, I don't believe there's any point in preparing a meal that doesn't taste great. I've worked very hard to make sure that anything you make will be a recipe I'm proud to put my name on. But, at the same time, I've made a deliberate effort to change things significantly. Fat, especially, has been reduced—usually as low as or lower than the 30 percent of total calories most experts on sound nutrition set as a benchmark. (And in some cases, where healthful ingredients are just naturally high in what are known as “good,” heart-healthy fats, like the omega-3 fatty acids found in salmon and other cold-water fish, I've aimed to pair them with other ingredients or suggested side dishes that will bring down the meal's overall fat percentage.) I've reduced the salt in some of the recipes in which it makes sense to do so—or left the decision of adding salt to taste to you, since some people are more sodium-sensitive than others. (As much as possible, I also use widely available kosher salt, which is free of the additives that table salt may contain and, being coarse-grained, is lower in sodium content by volume than fine table salt.) I've also tried as much as possible to increase the amount of complex carbohydrates—for example, using whole grains and whole-grain flours instead of their refined, “white,” lower-fiber counterparts. And, maybe most important, recipe by recipe, bite by bite, I've tried to increase the amounts of healthful fresh vegetables and fruits, allowing them to play a greater role in your meals.



I want to make very clear to you, though, that I do not intend this to be what you or anyone would call a diet book. Even though these recipes represent a healthier way of eating, and will very likely help you lose weight when you eat and exercise sensibly, I am not going to tell you how much you should weigh or how much or what you should eat. Unlike the diet books you'll find everywhere, I won't make you promises of specific weight losses in a specific number of days or weeks. Those kinds of goals are best set by you and your doctor or another professional health

practitioner.

Instead, what I offer you here is simply a healthier way of cooking and eating (and exercising) that will benefit you no matter what your goal might be.

In particular, the recipes and cooking instructions you'll find here will very likely bring a wider variety of healthy nutrients into your daily eating, while also helping you reduce your calorie intake by eliminating the hidden fats and empty calories found in so many foods today. And that can't help but be good for you.

Many of these recipes are simple ones that are based on the way I eat at home and cook for my own family—and sometimes they're the kinds of fresh-from-the-garden dishes my mother and grandmother cooked for me when I was a little boy. At home, I usually don't make complicated food. After all, there's an understandable difference between the dishes you find in a special-occasion restaurant and in everyday, family-style home cooking. But everything I cook at home is still great food, made with the highest-quality ingredients. If something doesn't taste good, it doesn't matter whether it's good for you. I don't want to eat anything unless it tastes great. And I don't think you should, either.



Thanks to the combination of good workouts and better eating habits, now have more energy, more muscle, and more strength than I have in long time. I feel less stressed and sleep better—in fact, I feel better than have in two decades. At my age, most people would think the opposite would be true. And if I hadn't made the lifestyle changes I'm going to share with you throughout this book, that *would* be the case.

I also now weigh about twenty pounds less than I did at my heaviest. A lot of the weight I lost was in my stomach, the area of the body medical science tells us is the most dangerous place to carry excess fat. But to me that isn't even the most important benefit. What matters to me is simply that I *feel* better. I look forward to my workouts. I have more stamina than ever for my work. And best of all, I am more able to play with my children every day.

Every day, people ask me: *Wolfgang, where do you get all this energy and how do you work so many hours at your age?* And then they add: *Could you bottle it, please?* This book is my answer to that request.

That's why exercise is such an important part of this book, along with the food. It reflects the fact that I have now made exercise an important part of my lifestyle. And I don't do it for the exercise itself. Yes, I like being stronger, but I've never cared about being able to lift a lot of weight or flexing my muscles in the mirror. For me, that's not real life.

The reason I exercise is that I want to be good at what I like to do. And what I like to do, more than anything else, is cook.

I grew up watching my mother and grandmother cook. I started my first apprenticeship in a restaurant kitchen when I was fourteen. Since then, I've been on my feet for ten to twelve hours a day, six days a week, month after month, year after year.

The workouts in this book not only helped me lose fat but they also improved my core strength and my stamina, making it easier for me to stand for long hours. Today, I need less sleep than I did just a few years ago. I travel more than ever. My businesses have all grown larger, and

open more new restaurants every year all over the world, which only add to my hectic travel schedule. And yet, I feel less fatigued. I spend more time with my wife and children, eating breakfast with my boys every morning that I'm in town, before I take them to school; and having dinner with my family almost every evening. One of my sons even sometimes joins me for my morning workouts with Chad. None of that would be possible without the energy I get from my workouts and from the benefits of a healthier, more reasonable way of eating.

My goal with this book is to help you achieve what I've achieved: a better, more sustainable, and more enjoyable lifestyle. I want to help you enjoy your food, your fitness, and your time with your loved ones. I want to share with you the kinds of meals and exercises that can enhance your own life. If that describes your goals, too, then let's get started.

MY GUIDE TO DELICIOUS, HEALTHY COOKING

To me, food should nourish the body, mind, and soul alike. It's a complete experience that activates and engages every one of your senses.

You could definitely use the word *healthy* to describe the way I love to eat today, and the way I prefer to cook for myself and my family. I prepare and eat food that is mostly low in fat, low in sodium, and higher in complex carbohydrates, recipes featuring generous amounts of the freshest in-season vegetables and fruits that I can find. And that kind of delicious healthy food, in combination with regular exercise under the training of Chad Waterbury, makes me feel better and more energetic than I have ever felt in my life.

But, to tell you the truth, I don't really think about food and cooking as "healthy" or "unhealthy." Instead, I usually think in terms of "good food" or "bad food."

What do I mean by *good* food? It's the result of good cooking. And good cooking starts with the finest-quality ingredients you can find: fresh produce; the best seafood, poultry, and meat; whole grains and beans; flavorful, heart-healthy cooking oils; and vibrant seasonings. Back in the kitchen, good cooking continues with recipes and methods that highlight and intensify the natural flavors and textures of those ingredients without masking them, resulting in food that tastes absolutely delicious.



Compare that ideal to so many of the foods today that are considered “bad” for us, particularly processed rather than fresh ingredients and products, whether people cook them at home or buy them in convenience stores or at fast-food restaurants. The aim of such foods seems to be to mask sometimes poor-quality ingredients with far too much of the things we human beings crave—fat, sugar, and salt—in spite of the fact that too much of those substances can damage our health. Those kinds of foods often remind me of creations from a mad scientist’s lab, especially when you read the list of hard-to-pronounce chemical ingredients on their labels. Today, so many foods like that have turned eaters into addicts.

By contrast, I believe that food that is good for you can also be the kind of food that you will love and crave. Start with high-quality ingredients and cook them with simplicity, intelligence, and creativity, and they can taste even more delicious and be every bit as crave-able as the bad foods so many people find hard to avoid.

Good, healthy food can be convenient, too. It’s easy to make, once you understand a few simple guidelines. On the following pages (as well as in the “Wolfgang’s Healthy Tips” that appear with each recipe in this book) I’ll share with you my approach to good, healthy, delicious cooking. I’ll

explain how easy it can be to cook smartly for better health. And I'll share
my personal inspirations for getting creative in the kitchen to produce
meals that will excite you, your family, and your friends so much that
you'll want to cook and eat like this all the time.

THE GOALS OF GOOD, HEALTHY COOKING AND EATING

Over the years, I've devised my own secrets to preparing healthy food. Before I get into more detail about ingredients and cookware and cooking methods and so on, I would like to share a few broader observations about how to make the most delicious healthy meals—and the wisest choices—possible.

MAKE FRESH PRODUCE AND WHOLE GRAINS THE STARS. Not so long ago, if you asked someone what they planned to have for dinner on a particular night, their answer would probably be something like, “I’m having steak tonight,” or “I think I’ll have fish tonight.” Today, I like to make seasonal produce the star of the plate: vegetables from the farmers market or a good greengrocer, leafy salad greens, ripe fruits in desserts or even in some main dishes. It’s hard to overeat or gain weight from vegetables. I also add more whole grains to my meals; high in fiber and generally low in fat and calories, whole grains fill you up more quickly and deliver more nutrients than processed grains. And if you aim to eat a rainbow of different colorful vegetables and fruits, you’ll get a wide variety of healthy nutrients. Whole grains and legumes, along with fruits and vegetables, are also rich sources of fiber.

EAT REGULAR BUT SMALLER PORTIONS OF SEAFOOD, POULTRY, AND MEAT. Yes, animal proteins may seem like the featured players, since most people still define main courses by the proteins they contain. But, while we need regular protein to provide our bodies with the building blocks they need to function, we don’t need too much. I now try to limit my protein portions to 4 to 6 ounces per serving, a healthier balance to the other items on my plates, and I aim for lower-fat choices like fresh fish, skinless chicken, leaner cuts of red meat. You can also get good protein from non-animal sources by regularly eating beans and lentils, nuts, dairy

products (unless you're a vegan, of course), and whole grains.

CUT DOWN ON FATS—AND CHOOSE GOOD FATS. The broad consensus today seems to be that a healthy diet limits calorie intake to just under a third from fat. I've made that a goal for all of my recipes—that the calories are 30 percent or less from fat. A few are a bit higher in fat—some simply because cutting the fat too much would compromise good flavor, but mostly because they feature fish that are rich in heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, or because they include heart-healthy olive oil or other heart-healthy fats, including other vegetable oils, avocado, or nuts. Regardless, that limitation on fat calories need not apply to every bite of food you put in your mouth—it should be your average intake over a meal or a day. So, if you're going to choose to make and eat something that's slightly higher in fat, average out your intake by serving it with something much lower in fat or eating lower-fat dishes the rest of the day.

LIMIT SODIUM. Yes, there is too much salt (the diet's main source of sodium) in much of the food people eat today, especially in processed foods. Although some people are more sensitive to sodium than others, it's generally a good idea to cut down on how much salt you eat for the sake of cardiovascular health. But it's also a simple fact that salt helps enhance the taste of many foods. Throughout this book, I've aimed to cut down on salt. As explained in individual recipes, I've found many other ways to enhance and intensify the natural flavors of ingredients. When I feel salt is needed, I usually (but not always) say to add it "to taste," leaving its addition and quantity to your own discretion and personal dietary needs. (Ingredients added to taste, without specific quantities, are not included in the nutritional analyses that follow each recipe.) Bear in mind, though, that many foods naturally include sodium. If you're on a sodium-restricted diet, do your own calculations and make your choices based on your doctor's guidelines.



CHOOSE VARIETY. Nutrition experts tell us that the best way to eat for optimum health, regardless of whether you're a carnivore, a vegetarian, vegan, or someone following other dietary guidelines, is to eat a wide variety of foods. Whether you do it over the course of a meal, a day of eating, or a week, aim to eat as many different kinds of vegetables, fruits, grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy products as possible. Doing this will help ensure that your body gets as much as possible of the many different nutrients it needs.

HIGHLIGHT AND INTENSIFY NATURAL FLAVORS AND TEXTURES. The more flavor and texture there is in a dish, the more pleasure and excitement it delivers with every bite or spoonful, and the more likely you are to slow down and savor it. How can you not eat more slowly to experience the bright crunch and freshness of a salad vegetable, the chewiness and earthiness of a sautéed mushroom, the way lively seasonings complement a moist and delicate morsel of fish, the pure and intense fruit essence that bursts from a cloudlike spoonful of surprisingly

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