

IN POLITICS, are you Republican or Democrat? In terms of religion, are you liberal or conservative? When it comes to your personality, are you sanguine or melancholy? In diet, are you vegan or vegetarian? Are you for or against . . . , in or out, yes or no, right or wrong? I mean really! Take a stand! Isn't that how we think at times? It is for good reason that we have developed a passion for platforms, positions, and absolutes. There is enough wishy-washy in the world. However, when it comes to certain issues, especially lifestyle related ones, I am continuing to be impressed with how wisdom is often found in the middle of the road, rather than in either extreme.

The average American diet is full, and I do mean full, of very cooked

food. Some of the foods we eat use highly processed ingredients that are then cooked once, twice, sometimes three or even four times. Have we killed it yet?! Other foods we cook at temperatures and conditions that cause chemical reactions to occur that literally produce toxins in the food.

Acrylamide is a chemical that has been classified as a probable carcinogen to humans. It is produced when starchy foods are cooked at high temperatures. "The higher the cooking temperature and the longer the cooking time, the greater the acrylamide concentration becomes . . .

The most concentrated food sources of acrylamide are processed foods such as potato chips and other baked or fried salty snacks and French fries."¹

Advanced glycation end products (AGEs) are also produced when high cooking temperatures are used.

AGEs have been associated with impaired immune function, inflammation, Alzheimer's, diabetes, eye disease, nerve disease, and heart disease.

"Foods that have the most concentration of

AGEs are broiled, grilled, and fried meats."² The more browned the food, the greater its potential of having higher concentrations. For example, a fried egg or broiled tofu has higher concentrations than a boiled egg or warmed tofu.

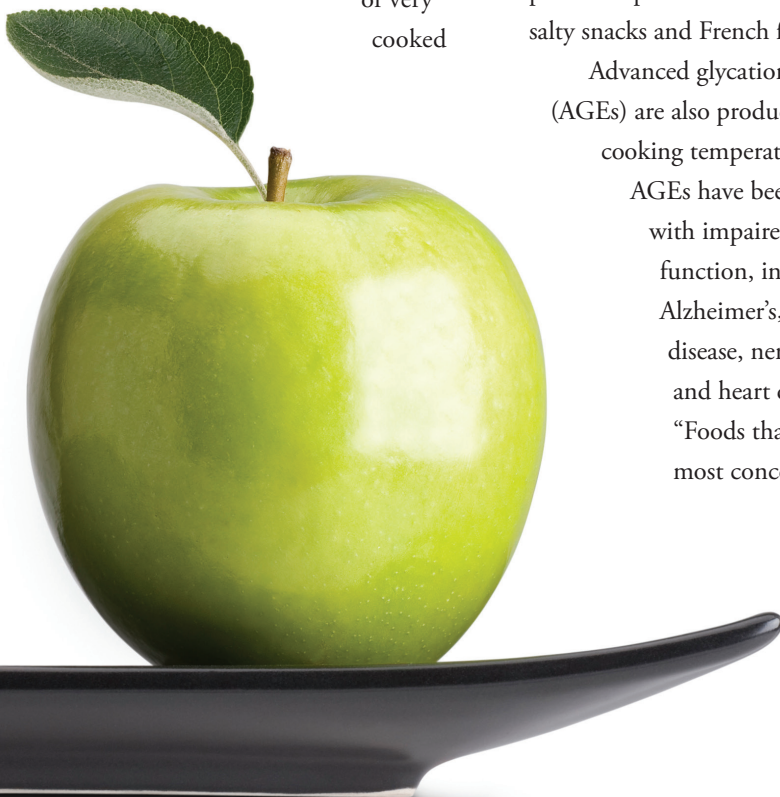
Other harmful chemicals are produced at the barbecue. When meat, poultry, fish, or eggs are subjected to

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high-temperature cooking, such as barbecuing, grilling, or frying reactions occur that produce heterocyclic amines (HCAs). Grilling meat also produces polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). "The most concentrated sources of PAHs are grilled or charred meat, poultry and fish, grains, fats and oils, and sweets."³ Both HCAs and PAHs are official carcinogens.

You don't have to worry about these chemicals in raw or minimally cooked foods. The more food you consume in its natural, or close to natural, state, the less damaging dietary compounds you will ingest.

Understanding the dangers of overcooking has led some to forgo cooking altogether. This way of eating, however, has its social and satiation



challenges as well as its nutritional concerns. There are advantages in cooking certain food items, such as promoting nutrient availability and enhancing digestibility. As an example, “The protein digestibility of some raw plant food is lower than the digestibility of that same protein when the food is boiled or steamed.”⁴

There are those who thrive on consuming all raw. My hat goes off to them. However, I see this as an extreme.

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An extreme diet may be quite beneficial in an extreme situation, but on the whole, the benefits of raw food can be obtained and enjoyed without having them compose the entire diet.

Plant foods “deliver nature’s most powerful beneficial compounds—phytochemicals, plant sterols, antioxidants, fiber, and healthful fats.”⁵ Raw plant foods are an excellent source of nutrition. Vitamins are left untrammelled when eaten in a raw form. Research has shown that the average intake of vitamins A, C, E, and K in people groups who consume raw diets is double, triple and in some cases quadruple the daily recommended intake. That is some super nutrition.

Hundreds to thousands of compounds are present and work synergistically in plant foods. Obtaining nutrients in whole foods has proven to be far more effective than any supplement. Antioxidants

in pill form don’t provide the same level of protection. The multitudinous amount of beneficiaries is not found in the same amount in processed or overcooked foods. Some destruction of these health-giving rescue heroes occurs when things get hot.

Phytochemicals mean plant chemicals. Plants produce these chemicals to protect themselves and promote their survival. When we eat these plant chemicals they protect us.

When the plant undergoes stress of some kind, production of phytochemicals increases.

If a plant is

attacked it will launch a counterattack by manufacturing more. “Organic produce receives more contact with naturally occurring microorganisms and pests than conventionally grown food because synthetic herbicides and pesticides are not used.”⁶ This explains why organically grown produce has been found to typically have higher amounts of phytochemicals. Sprouting has been found to remarkably increase phytochemical and antioxidant content in some foods. Wheat, rye, and broccoli sprouts are power packed.

Cooking does result in the loss of some of these powerful substances in food to some degree. Often it depends on the temperature and duration of cooking time. Some substances actually become more bioavailable when cooked. By and large, the greatest concentration of antioxidants and phytochemicals are going to be found in raw food. That doesn’t mean that cooked food is dead,

lifeless, or void of nutrition. It may just have less of some of these substances.

I enjoy food. I delight in well-prepared food. But I am becoming more conscious of how I prepare food. I am in the process of turning the stovetop temperatures lower and making my salad bowl larger. My take is why not do both and enjoy the best of both worlds.

Scripture’s encouragement is, “Let your moderation be known unto all men” (Philippians 4:5). In other words, be a people who are consistent and balanced, not given to extremes. Be known as someone who is centered in Christ and from that solid platform receives wisdom as to how to relate to all the various issues in our world today. May God help us.

¹ Brenda Davis RD, Vensanto Melina MS, RD, *Becoming Raw*, Book Publishing Company, 2010, p. 67.

² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.



Risë has been writing on various health subjects for over 20 years. She has inspired many through her research and down-to-earth writing and speaking style. She believes that healthy living is intimately tied to happiness and wholeness.