

Healthy But Great Tasting Food

Last updated: August 23, 2018

Useful? What have I left out.

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"If it looks good, eat it. "

?Andrew *Zimmer*

"Life is too short to drink bad wine."

?R.R.P. Chase (Dr. Bob)

"Factoid: You will fall off any diet with a thud."

?L.F. McGoldrick (Dr. Larry)

Zimmer is somewhat wrong. Chase is always right.

The title of this article suggests that a question be asked: "Is there healthy food that doesn't taste really good?" Of course, because taste is a subjective and highly personal quality. A recent U.S. President hated Broccoli. I love Broccoli (and Brussels Sprouts and Kale?you get the idea). So, who's right? Both of us are.

Healthy?

Google (sometimes your friend) offers this definition for healthy food:

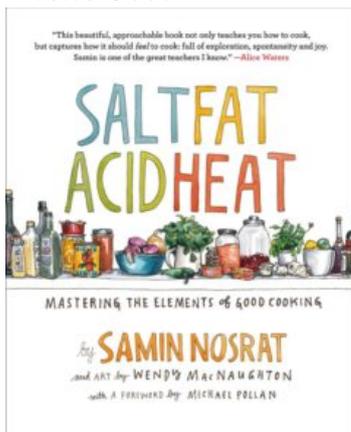
"**Healthy food** label: A food that is low in fat and saturated fat and that contains limited amounts of cholesterol and sodium. If it is a single-item food, it must also provide at least 10 percent of one or more of vitamins A or C, iron, calcium, protein, or fiber."

Too specific and restrictive. My working definition is, simply:

"Food that will neither harm you nor exacerbate a medical condition."

You need to work with your Primary Care Physician (PCP) to determine your own personal list of foods that are healthy for you. If your PCP aims you toward the Standard American Diet (aptly acronymed SAD), run?don't walk?to another PCP who understands nutrition and will help you set eating goals, such as losing (or gaining weight, lowering (or raising) blood pressure, warding off type 2 diabetes, and more.

Tastes Good?



When I judge a meal or a dish, I use three categories: appearance, texture, and taste. Zimmer is big on appearance. There are (for me) four main elements of taste: salt, acid, fat, and heat.

1. Salt:

If you can taste the salt in your food, there is too much. I have discussed this concept with many of my favorite chefs, and they all agree that there should be just enough salt to make the other flavors pop. Too much salt can mask the expert addition of spices and herbs.

2. Acid:

Acid confers a degree of brightness on an otherwise bland dish. Common sources that belong in every kitchen are vinegars, tomatoes, citrus (lemons, limes, and such) including the zest. Finishing off a delicious pappardelle dish with a buttery sauce topped with some fresh lemon zest turns a very good dish into a stunning success. John Haas taught me this.

3. Fat:

Even though fat contains nine calories per gram, you need this in your diet. Lard, unsalted butter, oils for cooking (such as high-smoke-point peanut and avocado oils, and extra virgin olive oil for sauces and vinaigrettes come to mind. Buy the very best olive oils that you can afford. I get mine at M'Tucci's Italian Market on Coors.

4. Heat:

To me, heat means two things: cooking heat and method, and spicings. Cooking heat puts us squarely in the middle of thermodynamics and heat transfer, and I won't go there other mentioning that Frans Dinkleman at savoy is my local idol here. Even though "spicy" in The Land of Enchantment usually refers to our beloved chiles, spices and herbs (fresh and dried) add interest to any dish. Shree Prasad Gurung and Narinder Singh are masters on Indian spicing. And my friend Michael Gonzales aught me the proper balance between fat and chile.

All the chefs in the list of my faves below understand the delicate balance of these four elements.

My Favorite Healthy Food Places in The Land of Enchantment (Alphabetical)

Warning: Avoid fast food places. And avoid any restaurant that you can see from an Interstate.

You can find delicious healthy food in almost any restaurant. Just ask the staff. If you are stonewalled or otherwise met with recalcitrance, walk out. And tell me about it, please.

Here is a short list of places that I love and trust that my meal will be healthy. You may notice that there are no Asian places here (save Budai). I am especially fond of Vietnamese and Thai food, but as fate would have it, a typical bowl of delicious beef Pho contains 3,100 ng. of sodium and a typical 1-cup bowl of Thai Red Curry contains 1,440 mg. of sodium. And who can stop at 1 cup. If, however, you choose carefully and ask the right questions, you can get delicious low-sodium stuff in nearly any Asian restaurant. I do cook Thai curries at home, and can guarantee that the sodium content is less than 500 mg. You, too, can do this for yourself with the aid of the nutritional tool (free) I discuss later in this article.



[Acre \(The\)](#)

Vegetarian comfort food. Yeah, hot dogs, green chile cheeseburgers, chicken wings (pictured), and lots more. Highly inventive.



[Budai Gourmet Chinese](#)

Ask the co-owner elsa to have her husband make your meal low sodium and low carb. No msg is ever used ere. Best Chinese food in the state. Pictured: Crispy Pork Intestines.



[Grove Café & Market](#)

Great EDO breakfast and lunch spot. Usually crowded, and that's a good sign. Pictured: Vegan salad stuff, absolutely delicious.



[Maya Cuisine/Monk's Corner Taproom](#)

Best GCCB in town. Get the tasty and spicy slaw, not the fries. BTW, this burger contains 590 Kcal. and 208 mg. sodium (see nutritional details below where I discuss the analysis tool).



[Mogo Mogo](#)

Japanese-inspired weekday lunch place. Instead of noodle base, get Tomoku to pile the protein and veggies on zoodles. I have been here 22 times.



[Monte Carlo Steak House](#)

Home of my favorite prime rib (pictured) and rib-eye steak. The GCCB is outstanding but there is no cole slaw. Get the delicious onion rings instead, and eat only a few of them (if you can sop).



[M'Tucci's Italian Market and Pizzeria](#)

I have been here 77 times. The chefs know my dietary needs and custom build me a healthy dish, called a roulette. Pictured: Argentinean Pink Shrimp atop veggies on a herbed yogurt base. Thanks, Shawn and Cory.



[Poki Poki Cevicheria](#)

Bernie Sanders ate here. This place is a do-it-yourself ceviche-in-a-bowl joint, and, as such, is unique in the Duke City. Choose from scallops, mussels, shrimp, squid, octopus, and more, then add three (or more) veggie thingies, and choose a dressing. Build what YOU want.



[Poki Poblano Fusion Lounge](#)

Elvis Bencomo, Albuquerque fusion king, has surfaced in this fabulous new restaurant, which has won my Best Newcomer Award for 2018. The Mixed Ceviche is the best I have had outside of Peru for the past 41 years.



[Seasonal Palate](#)

Food that is both good for you and Good. The Dazzler and I were wowed. Healthy and delicious are not mutually exclusive concepts here. The Shrimp Po' Boy is especially good. Grilled Shrimp Salad pictured.



[Sharky's](#) and [California Oyster Bar](#)

Located on the North Rim of the South Valley, these places (one indoors and the other outdoors) serve up some of the most delicious genuine Mexican food. Same menu at both locations.



[Vibrance](#)

OK, you carnivores. Get over your animal desires and go here. It will blow your mind. Did mine!

It has been my experience that vegan, vegetarian food is often more flavorful, beautiful, and vibrant than our beloved animal stuff.

And that is the case here. Karen Hammer is a magician.

Google can be your friend sometimes. Google "healthy foods" and you will be inundated with more links than you can possibly read.

One such link proposes the [The 15 Best Places for Healthy Food in Albuquerque](#). As with most lists (except mine), don't believe it.

If your favorite is not on this list, then please leave me a comment at the bottom of this page.

Cooking this way in your own kitchen? Easy.

Before you start, you should complete this take-home exam: build a perfect omelet.

YouTube Video: [YouTube.com/watch?v=X1XoCQm5JSQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1XoCQm5JSQ)

If you can't do this in three or fewer tries, then you should probably stay out of the kitchen. By the way, [Jacques Pépin really knows eggs](#). You should, too.

BTW, you don't need a non-stick skillet for omelets. That's why cows invented butter. Adds taste and a pleasant sheen. Now you can run wild and invent stuffings. My favorite stuffing consists of crimini mushrooms, Gruyère cheese, scallions, and a tiny bit of white truffle oil. Tastes like Peter Lukes' mushroom pizza at Piatanzi (my favorite in the world), but without all those carbs.

Best Kitchen Practices

No rules here, just suggestions and guidelines that will make your culinary journey easier and your food taste better.

- Buy the best ingredients you can afford. Organic produce (Sprouts or Fruit Basket). Use USDA Prime beef (Costco). You get the idea.
- Shun highly processed foods. Read the nutrition labels and you will know why. RTFL.
- Get the best knives you can afford, and keep them razor sharp. Learn to use diamond-impregnated sharpening stones and various sharpening steels. YouTube will help you through the sharpening and honing techniques.

Master the five basic sauces that all chefs know.

- The 5 French Mother Sauces

- Béchamel. This is roux whisked with milk or other dairy to make a white sauce. ...
- Velouté A velouté is a light roux whisked with chicken, turkey, fish or any other clear stock. ...
- Espagnole. Sauce espagnole is a basic brown sauce. ...
- Sauce Tomat. ...
- Hollandaise.

- Learn how to make a roux
- Use good wine. Bad wine will make otherwise good food taste bad.
- Taste your work often. Don't surprise your guests.



Thai Chiles

If you can taste salt in your dish, you have used too much. Remember that a pinch of salt contains about 250 mg. of sodium.

- Don't slavishly follow a recipe. A recipe is just a guideline. Read a bunch of them and then improvise.
- Please remember that there are chiles other than New Mexico Chiles. Experiment with Pasillas, Chiles de Árbol, Habañeros, Thai Chiles (Bird Peppers), and many more. Expand your horizons.



Nutrition Facts	
48 servings per container	
Serving size	1 tsp. (5ml)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	5
Total Fat 0g	
Sodium 0g	
Total Carbohydrate 0g	
Protein 0g	
Dietary Fiber 0g	
Sugars 0g	
Total Sugars 0g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	
Total Fat 0g	
Sodium 0g	
Total Carbohydrate 0g	
Protein 0g	
Dietary Fiber 0g	
Sugars 0g	
Total Sugars 0g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	
Total Fat 0g	
Sodium 0g	
Total Carbohydrate 0g	
Protein 0g	
Dietary Fiber 0g	
Sugars 0g	
Total Sugars 0g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	

Ingredients:
Organic Coconut
Tree Sap, aged and
blended with Sun-Dried,



Coconut Aminos

Avoid soy sauce. too much sodium. Try [Coconut Aminos](#) instead.

OK. Go for it. Invent. One of my all-time [Chinese dishes](#) is Dong Bo Pork (at Budai), a dish that was created in the thirteenth century by mistake.

Examples from my kitchen at Casa de la Vieja Escuela Mariscos



Red Curry Seafood

Scallops and Shrimp Provençal

Calories k-cal 779

Carbs g 32

Fat g 37

Fiber g 1

Sodium mg 780

Sugar g 4



Thai Red Curry

Thai Red Curry with Chicken

Calories k-cal 690

Carbs g 8

Fat g 58

Fiber g 0

Sodium mg 512

Sugar g 13



Larry's Maryland Crabcakes

Maryland Crabcakes (1) [Recipe here.](#)]

Calories k-cal 106

Carbs g 4

Fat g 3

Fiber g 0

Sodium mg 457

Sugar g 0

So, how did I determine the nutrition data for these dishes? My Fitness Pal, if course.

A Tracking and Nutrition Tool (Free)

[MyFitnessPal](#) is a free web-based tool that will allow you to track and analyse your eating habits. It is also available as a smartphone and tablet app. It is indispensable and insanely great. Browse over 5,000,000 food items, and quickly add them to your diary intake. A satisfied user says, "MyFitnessPal has made a tremendous difference in my life! I love the vast database of food. The huge food database makes it almost impossible to NOT find a food that you're eating. The recipe counter makes it so much easier to track the nutrition in homemade meals and the exercise tracker lets me see the amount of calories I've worked off for the day. With MyFitnessPal's help, I've lost 75 lbs and I'm still going! I feel like a whole new woman!"

What are your health goals? Weight control? Sodium monitoring? Sugar and carb and fat intake monitoring? This tool does it all and is based on a huge database of foods, drinks, and meals. You need to work with your PCP to set your individual goals. For me, I have set upper limits for sodium (1,500 mg), calories (1950), and more. I rarely use sugar and salt, but this will track sugar and sodium in whatever food you eat. Easy and quick. Just get it.

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Your Food Diary For: **Saturday, January 14, 2017**

Breakfast

	Calories kcal	Carbs g	Fat g	Fiber g	Sodium mg	Sugar g
Wild Planet - Wild Albacore Tuna Corrected From Can, 1 container (5 oz ea.)	225	0	9	0	500	0
beefsteak tomato - Tomato, 2 medium	50	10	0	2	40	6
Best Foods - Real Mayonnaise, 1 Tbsp	100	0	11	0	100	0
Add Food Quick Tools	375	10	20	2	640	6

Lunch

Homemade - Pan Seared Sea Scallops, 78 grams (6 medium)	87	0	1	0	207	0
Generic - Shrimp, Grilled, 1.2 skewer (10 shrimp)	57	0	1	0	234	0
Barefoot Cellars - Sauvignon Blanc, 10 oz	240	0	0	0	9	10
Noodles, Japanese, soba, cooked, 1.5 cup	189	37	0	0	103	0
Butter - Unsalted, 2 pat (1)	72	0	8	0	1	0
Add Food Quick Tools	625	37	10	0	554	10

Dinner

Homemade - Pan Seared Sea Scallops, 78 grams (6 medium)	87	0	1	0	207	0
Generic - Shrimp, Grilled, 1.2 skewer (10 shrimp)	57	0	1	0	234	0
Barefoot Cellars - Sauvignon Blanc, 10 oz	240	0	0	0	9	10
Noodles, Japanese, soba, cooked, 1.5 cup	189	37	0	0	103	0
Butter - Unsalted, 2 pat (1)	72	0	8	0	1	0
Add Food Quick Tools	625	37	10	0	554	10

Snacks

Totals	1,000	47	30	2	1,194	16
Your Daily Goal	2,092	262	70	30	1,500	41
Remaining	1,092	215	40	28	306	25

Calories kcal | **Carbs g** | **Fat g** | **Fiber g** | **Sodium mg** | **Sugar g**

*You've earned 142 extra calories from exercise today

MyFitnessPal Sample Record

Great Exceptions

I rarely eat baled foods (especially desserts) and don't bake n my kitchen. Nonetheless, these three dishes (and perhaps a few others) reduce me to a quivering mass of desire. You should allow yourself such delicious aberrations.



Mushroom Pizza at Piatanzi. Best pizza I have ever had anywhere.



Best Carrot Cake Vic's Daily Cafe



Duke City's Best Cake Honey Cake Campo (Los Poblanos)

Everybody should allow such guilty pleasures. Just do it, but not too often.

Know your body. Know your goals. Don't diet, but just change your eating habits. Make your PCP happy (right, Alyson?)

Thanks for coming here. Be well.

Some Resources

- The [Splendid Table](#). Once a week on your favorite NPR station.]
- Food Network. Guy Fieri's DDD shows many delicious dishes that if you eat them too often, you will become obese, have high blood pressure, and be well on your way to Type 2 diabetes. Be careful here.
- YouTube. Recipes, and tools. Techniques and methods.
- My Fitness Pal.

Amazon.com.

Great source for utensils, spices, and flavorings.

- Local food stores and bodegas. Talin, El super, Tyader Joe's, Sprouts, Costco, and others.