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# INTRODUCTION

## Lulu's Story



I discovered the power of preparing and eating delicious, nourishing anti-inflammatory meals, when I was an exhausted new mother with a family to feed each night and no idea how to do it. Committed to offering healthy foods to my family, I slowly began to learn about good nutrition. What I noticed first was the positive impact on my energy levels and mood when I ate the way we describe in this book. I just felt better every day, and was able to relax knowing that I was setting my daughter up for a lifetime of good health.

Your sense of vitality, like mine, will increase when you eat foods that promote wellness. I know how challenging it can be to try to make healthy changes, especially when you are already feeling tired, run down, and overworked.

I became a registered dietitian nutritionist to help others access the healing power of whole foods, and to teach people easy ways to incorporate balanced meals into their diets. Since then, I have helped many busy, unhealthy clients who often get stuck in today's hurried ways of eating

that leads to chronic inflammation and other diseases. It may seem overwhelming to change your eating lifestyle, but I've heard again and again from people who have reclaimed their own health that the effort is worth it.

It is possible—and really quite simple—to transition to a diet that supports your health goals, by using planning tools and recipes like those we present here. We've broken it down into easy-to-follow steps that provide a broad variety of enjoyable meals. These meals are quick to prepare and just as delicious reheated the next day for something convenient yet nourishing on the go. With these satisfying, tempting foods, you will quickly notice your sense of liveliness and energy increasing, as you begin to live your life with less inflammation and greater gusto!

## Dorothy's Story



You may be surprised to hear this, but even those of us who cook for a living are plagued by what to eat, and when to find time to cook! When we're busy and tired, it's all too easy to take the path of least resistance and make poor or impulsive food choices. I have found that planning is the only way to stop this cycle. Every weekend, before I go to the store, I plan my menus for the upcoming week, then I create my shopping list and go to the grocery store. I like to shop on Saturday and cook on Sunday for meals to enjoy all week.

In addition to exploring new recipes that I know will reheat well, I also find it helpful to make batches of simple things like grilled meats, grains, and steamed vegetables for the option of quick salads, stir-fries, or grain bowls so I can have variety and not feel like I'm eating the

same thing for lunch and dinner. Although this requires a little advance planning, it saves loads of time later in the week when I don't have time to prep a meal.

As your guide, I have done all the planning and organizing for you, so you can reap the benefits of healthy anti-inflammatory eating with minimal effort. All the recipes are uncomplicated dishes that contain no more than five main ingredients, plus basic pantry staples like cooking oil and dried herbs and spices. These recipes can easily be doubled or tripled to make larger batches to freeze or reheat. As a culinary instructor, I understand that the novice cook may feel overwhelmed or even skeptical, so I've used my experiences to develop a book that guides you, step by step, to plan your meals, cook, and eat in a way that is realistic, manageable, and even fun. This book will help you achieve your goals to eat healthy and feel the best you've felt in ages.




PART ONE



# *Preparing for the Anti-Inflammatory Diet*

The anti-inflammatory diet can be easy, delicious, and affordable—and best of all, it's a great investment in your long-term health and vitality. In this section, we'll lay the foundation to help you better understand how chronic inflammation operates, and explore the tools that will move you toward vibrant well-being. Read on to learn how you can support your body in the healing process through meals that are simple to prepare and satisfying to eat.





## CHAPTER ONE



# Anti-Inflammatory Diet Basics

Inflammation can hijack our feelings of wellness and slow us down, but when it becomes chronic, this may signal that something is out of alignment in our diet or lifestyle. Normal inflammation occurs in the body on a regular basis as part of our natural process of maintaining a healthy internal balance. It's only when the necessary process of inflammation gets out of hand that well-being can become impaired. In this chapter, we'll explain how this happens. We'll also present the principles of an easy anti-inflammatory diet, based on whole foods and grounded in science, to support you in restoring your natural balance. Our simple lists of foods to include (and those to avoid) will help you choose meals far beyond the recipes. We'll also touch on how people's bodies respond differently to particular ingredients, so you can personalize these recipes to best meet your own nutritional needs.

# How Inflammation Helps—and Harms



When the immune system is working properly, inflammation plays an important role in our body's healthy response to injury or infection. Upon injury or infection, such as a scrape on the knee or exposure to the cold everyone else has at the office, our immune system rallies to restore health. This leads to a period of acute inflammation, which promotes healing as the body's defensive process repairs and restores integrity. Once the problem has been successfully managed, the immune response deactivates, and the inflammation around the area of injury or infection subsides.

When you notice that a paper cut on your finger is red, swollen, warm, and painful, this is all part of inflammation, which is taking place as a result of a smoothly running immune system. Immune cells have been activated to the site of the problem, so blood flow in the area increases, leading to the experience of swelling and heat, which will subside as the wound heals. Soon you'll have nothing to remember the paper cut by but a thin line of scar tissue. This kind of acute, localized inflammation may not require any additional treatment; however, maintaining a consistent anti-inflammatory diet like the one described in this book will ensure that your body has all the nutrients needed to support even this minor healing process.

Conversely, a little cut that seems to hang on too long, remaining puffy and painful and not making much progress in healing, might indicate a bigger issue. In this case, the normal

process of acute inflammation may have continued unchecked, signaling a chronic inflammation that is more problematic. This can occur as a result of an unhealed infection like hepatitis B or C, prolonged exposure to environmental toxins like cigarette smoke, or existing health conditions like obesity or autoimmune disease. Lifestyle factors such as diet and stress can also amplify the inflammatory response. At first, there may not be any obvious symptoms of this kind of ongoing low-grade inflammation, yet in the long term, chronic inflammation can increase risk for or exacerbate a variety of diseases.

Recent research has linked chronic inflammation to a wide range of diseases and health conditions, including:

- \* Obesity
- \* Type 2 diabetes
- \* Metabolic syndrome
- \* Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease
- \* Some cancers—especially colorectal, gastric, esophageal, pancreatic, breast, endometrial, and ovarian
- \* Heart/cardiovascular disease
- \* Hypertension
- \* Rheumatoid arthritis
- \* Inflammatory bowel disease
- \* Crohn's disease
- \* Ulcerative colitis
- \* Pancreatitis

Chronic inflammation can cause, exacerbate, or result from these types of health conditions. Repeated or unchecked inflammatory responses play a role in the many complex biological pathways by which disease may result or be worsened. In these disease pathways, protein

messengers called cytokines are released as part of the immune response. Some cytokines participate in your body's defensive response to a health threat and accelerate the inflammatory response, while others are anti-inflammatory and help restore balance as you heal. If the balance of proinflammatory to anti-inflammatory cytokines is disrupted, normal cell function can be impaired, and health and well-being may suffer. It can be hard to tell which came first, the inflammation or the disease to which it is linked.

With obesity, for example, a series of causes and effects interact with each other in a downward spiral of declining health. Chronic, low-grade inflammation results directly from consumption of excess calories and obesity. As fat tissue increases, it releases chemicals, hormones, and immune cells that can disrupt normal body function. Proinflammatory cytokines are also released, leading to higher levels of inflammation throughout the body. As the internal system becomes more imbalanced, the risk of developing chronic disorders such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and various cancers increases. Many of these conditions increase inflammation themselves. It can become quite complicated when so many of the body's systems are poorly regulated and caught in a feedback loop of actively causing inflammation and damage to other systems.

But there's good news! Consuming anti-inflammatory foods can help straighten out the whole situation, whatever it may be rooted in. An anti-inflammatory diet can support healing if inflammation already exists, and it will provide a foundation for resilience in the future.

Shift your focus to this kind of nourishing, balanced, and tasty diet and you'll see a difference in no time, as this diet will restore the energy and sense of well-being you deserve.

## Principles of the Anti-Inflammatory Diet



Experts agree that a diet consisting of a wide range of plant-based foods, accompanied by moderate amounts of whole grains, lean proteins, and healthful fats, is the type of eating pattern that will reduce inflammation and ensure a robust immune system. We are constantly learning more about the negative effects of heavily processed, packaged foods, which are often high in inflammation-promoting sodium, added sugars, refined grains, and detrimental fats. Conversely, this book emphasizes fresh, whole foods that are prepared using healthy cooking techniques. Vibrant herbs and spices are not just good for punching up flavor—you'll learn how each brings its own health-supportive qualities to your meals. Prebiotic and probiotic foods support your microbiome—that's the name for the beneficial gut bacteria in your digestive system. These bacteria are linked to a thriving immune system. And you can wash it all down with powerful inflammation-fighting beverages such as unsweetened tea and coffee, water infused with herbs or fruit (see *Own Your Water*, page 19), and the occasional glass of red wine, if you choose to partake.

We present recipes inspired by the many traditional cuisines around the world that

## ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET GUIDELINES

**Eat more plants.** Explore and enjoy the wide range of fruits and vegetables that provide fiber, antioxidants, and other nutrients to support optimal health. These low-calorie foods combat cellular damage, promote digestion, and help maintain a healthy weight range, which keeps inflammation in check as well.

**Discover whole and ancient grains.** Ancient grains are those that predate modern varieties created through selective breeding and hybridization—think oats, barley, chia, sorghum, quinoa, bulgur, and the like. These and whole grains retain fiber, antioxidants, and other nutrients that promote

a healthy immune response. If whole grains are new to you, try mixing them 50/50 with your usual choice to begin dining the anti-inflammatory way, such as white rice with brown rice, quinoa with couscous, or whole-wheat bread crumbs with white.

**Choose healthy fats.** Plant-based options like olive oil contain unsaturated fats that support immunity. These are preferable to proinflammatory trans fats and saturated fats from animal products, like butter and bacon. Look for omega-3 fats, such as fish and walnuts, to directly reduce inflammation.

**Enjoy nuts and seeds.** These little bites provide healthy fats and protein, as well as valuable micronutrients and fiber. Plus, their flavor and crunch enhance any meal or snack.

**Add flavor with herbs and spices.** Turmeric, ginger, and garlic are anti-inflammatory powerhouses. Have fun exploring these and countless other options for their deep flavors and unique benefits.

**Support your microbiome.** High-fiber foods like beans and whole grains provide nourishment for your beneficial gut bacteria to thrive. Fermented foods such as yogurt, kimchi, and pickles keep the “communities” of bacteria in your digestive system balanced to help fight inflammation and disease.



**Consume power beverages.** Coffee and unsweetened black or green tea offer antioxidant compounds that promote resilience against cell damage. Enjoy red wine on occasion, if you like, to maximize anti-inflammatory benefits. Plain water is always a great choice for keeping your body hydrated and energized—vary the flavor and benefits by tossing in some cut fruit or herbs (see *Own Your Water*, page 19).

**Eat fewer processed foods.** Highly processed foods are often high in added sugars, refined grains, sodium, and detrimental fats. These types of foods are proinflammatory and also increase one's risk for weight gain and other diseases. If you haven't yet, become a label reader to increase your awareness of what's in these foods—it may surprise and inspire you to run toward the whole foods sections of the store.

**Consume less meat.** When you want meat, choose and prepare it carefully. Many meats have undesirable amounts of unhealthy fats, and some are pumped full of sodium during processing. Use cooking methods that do not blacken the meat, such as grilling, as the blackened parts that occur have compounds that can contribute to inflammation.



**Relax!** Stress is a significant contributor to inflammation and disease—in fact, chronic elevation of the stress hormone cortisol leads to ongoing negative impacts on health. Get more sleep, boost your physical activity, and try new activities such as mindfulness meditation—these all help manage stress and keep inflammation down.

promote a vigorous immune response. Traditional Japanese diets, for instance, are low in fat and full of nutrient-rich vegetables and seafood, but contain very little sugar or refined flour. A modified paleo approach is also explored here, including generous portions of vegetables and hearty protein dishes prepared from the healthiest meats. The Mediterranean eating pattern is well studied for its anti-inflammatory, health-promoting qualities, and many people find its familiar flavors satisfying and appealing. It is based on abundant fruits and vegetables, along with whole grains, legumes, and nuts. Fish, red wine, and olive oil are incorporated regularly in Mediterranean cooking, while red meat, added sugars, and high-fat dairy are limited. We are inspired by this delicious style of eating, so you'll see a lot of recipes here that reflect the Mediterranean approach. But we also recognize that the only anti-inflammatory diet that will work for you is the one you find satisfying and delicious. So after you master the basics, use these principles to figure out which styles you enjoy best and fine-tune your own anti-inflammatory lifestyle path!

## Smart Dietary Choices



A whole foods approach to eating is the best route to decreasing inflammation, and that's the strategy we present here. As the benefits of anti-inflammatory diets become clearer, a growing number of studies reveal which foods are best to include or avoid as you move toward vibrant wellness. Let's check them out.

## Foods That Fight Inflammation

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.** Consider yourself free to enjoy a wide range of fruits and vegetables on the anti-inflammatory diet—they're all good! Plant foods deliver a high-nutrient, low-calorie foundation and add bright, tempting color to any plate. These foods are a source of satisfying, anti-inflammatory fiber, plus vitamins, minerals, and micronutrients. Fruits and vegetables also contain powerful antioxidant compounds that help prevent cellular damage.

Berries, watermelon, apples, and pineapple in particular are proven anti-inflammatory superstars, thanks to their high levels of phytonutrients. Thousands of these chemicals can be found in different combinations in plant foods, and while they protect the plant against environmental damage, they also protect you on a cellular level, especially when you eat a wide range of produce. Citrus fruits provide high-antioxidant vitamin C, a knockout inflammation fighter. Vegetables such as onions, broccoli, and leafy greens support resistance to inflammation. Garlic and onion don't just add pungent flavor—they've also been studied extensively for their immune system benefits.

**NIGHTSHADES.** Beware the boundless Internet (mis)information available—some is inaccurate and not well grounded in science. Rumors that you can't enjoy nightshades such as tomatoes, potatoes, bell peppers, and eggplant on an anti-inflammatory diet are unfounded for most people. While some with autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis choose to avoid these nutritious vegetables, the Arthritis Foundation notes that no scientific data supports this, and in fact, the group cites research that

shows that consumption of yellow and purple potatoes may actually lower inflammation. However, you are the expert of your own body. If you find that this restriction is supportive of your own health and well-being, then just try to include a wide range of other vegetables to ensure you are providing all the nutrition your body needs to heal. For most people, nightshade vegetables are part of a nutritious, anti-inflammatory diet. For instance, compounds such as the lycopene provided by cooked tomatoes make these vegetables standouts for fighting inflammation.

**WHOLE AND ANCIENT GRAINS.** Whole and ancient grains don't merely replace refined grains. They provide exciting flavors and textures, along with fiber, micronutrients, antioxidants, and protein. Naturally gluten-free grains, such as quinoa and amaranth, keep meals interesting and can be enjoyed by everyone.

**GOOD FATS.** We have learned that it's more important to enjoy the right kinds of fats in moderation than to try to eliminate fat altogether. Olive oil is a rich source of polyphenols, which are compounds shown to reduce indicators of inflammation, and it should be your primary cooking oil. Specialty oils like walnut oil or pumpkin seed oil add rich flavor and beneficial unsaturated fats. And we're happy to promote the benefits of dark chocolate, a delicious source of protective polyphenols—and a fine end to a meal!

**OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS ARE ALL-STAR ANTI-INFLAMMATORY FATS.** Include foods with this type of unsaturated fat frequently to optimize your whole diet approach. Fatty fish like salmon and sardines are excellent sources, as are some plant foods such as walnuts and flaxseed. Flaxseed may sound foreign, but it's been around for thousands of years, just now gaining popularity for its abundant fiber, protein, and powerful antioxidants called lignans.

## OWN YOUR WATER

Water can be the most refreshing treat when you're parched. A decanter of water with sliced cucumber in a hotel lobby is a welcome sight to weary travelers. Yet it's amazing to see how many people have a hard time taking in enough water each day. If you're one of them, consider adding some fruits or herbs to your water to boost the flavor and the benefits. Buy a pretty glass pitcher; it will make the water look especially inviting. Ginger, thyme, basil, and rosemary make good herbal anti-inflammatory add-ins; beneficial fruits include orange, grapefruit, lemon, lime, apples, watermelon, and pineapple. Try water infused with blueberries and lemon, cucumber and mint, or beets and rosemary—or come up with your own favorite flavor combinations!