



## Nutrition Nibbles

### Book Club: In Defense of Food

For better or for worse, when Oprah talks people listen... especially when it comes to health, nutrition, and dieting. Over the past few months, Oprah has profiled several different nutrition-related books for the consumer. Many people ask me what I think of her picks—how credible they are, do they make sense, and most importantly, do they contain the “magic map” to a healthier, fitter, slimmer body? This month, my book club read and discussed In Defense of Food by Michael Pollan. My colleague, Maureen Bligh, MS, RD, gives you the skinny on the scoop.

Our book club (made up of dietetic professionals) enjoyed reading this thought-provoking book and strongly agrees with many of the key messages. **Pollan’s thesis, while simplistic, encourages consumers to prepare and eat more meals using whole foods (foods from each of the food groups that are minimally processed).** He advocates eating foods based on cultural traditions and steering clear of highly processed foods that have recently emerged on the food industry landscape. He promotes consumption of

real, well grown, unprocessed foods. Finally, he advances the importance of eating more communal meals with family and friends.

**Pollan challenges readers to eat whole foods and avoid the prevailing nutrient-by-nutrient approach – what he calls “nutritionism.”** Several club members felt Pollan was overly critical of the nutrition profession. Many felt these criticisms were unfair - that more dietitians are aligned with his philosophy than he inferred.

Our readers felt that In Defense of Food would be a difficult read for most and his recommendations hard to implement. Cooking most meals from scratch requires more time than many people can devote to meal prep. Rather than the “all-or-nothing” model presented by Pollan, the registered dietitians in our San Jose book club, prefer a reality-based approach to meet clients where they currently are and help them eat more nutrient-rich foods to have an *improved* rather than perfect diet. **How can we help clients strike a balance between the**

### COLLEGE CORNER: DRINK UP?

It’s a hot summer day; you are parched and start dreaming of that soda, juice, or frappuccino that will so refreshingly quench your thirst. Or maybe its a chilly evening and to warm-up, you make yourself a nice mug of hot cocoa or grab that white mocha with extra whip. What do these two scenarios have in common besides tasty beverages? Empty calories!

**What exactly are “empty calories”?** Any food or beverage that is packed full of energy (aka calories or fuel) with little or no nutrients (vitamins, minerals, fiber, or other healthy body building blocks). Another name for empty calories? Junk food!

So, let’s get back to beverage basics. **What makes your beverage a good bet?**

•**Little or no calories:** water is a great choice anytime.

•**Packed with good quality nutrition:** 1% or non-fat milk is a wonderful source of bone-building calcium, powerful protein, and a healthy dose of carbohydrates. Plain soy milk is an alternate option for those who are lactose intolerant.

**How do your favorite beverages stack up?**

•**Juices:** As seemingly healthy as juices seem, they often have added sugar and no fiber. Always choose 100% fruit juice with no added sugars and limit yourself to no more than 1 cup daily.

•**Sodas:** Regular sodas are a

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## In Defense of Food continued...

conveniences offered by the food industry and the nutrients available in whole food? This is our challenge as nutrition professionals.

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The author of this article, Maureen Bligh, MS, RD, is responsible for the Dairy Council of California website and writes for their blog. She finds that participating in this book club offers ideas for content development. Maureen feels it is important for registered dietitians to remain current not only with the scientific literature, which is required to maintain dietetic registration, but also to keep abreast of what consumers are reading in order to meet them where they are with nutrition information. Visit her online at: [www.dairycouncilofca.org](http://www.dairycouncilofca.org) or [www.dairycouncilofca.org/blog/](http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/blog/)



# Food Rules!

In his book, In Defense of Food, Michael Pollan lays down some straight-forward “rules” of eating. Here are a few of his self-explanatory suggestions that will make you think before you eat.

- Don't eat anything your great grandmother wouldn't recognize as food.
- Shop the peripheries of the supermarket and stay out of the middle (*where the processed foods are located*).
- Pay more, eat less (*i.e. enjoy quality instead of quantity*).
- Eat meals.
- Do all your eating at a table. No, a desk is not a table.
- Don't get your fuel from the same place your car does.
- Eat slowly.
- Cook and, if you can, plant a garden.

## COLLEGE CORNER CONTINUED...

popular source of calories, colorings, and sugar. Think diet soda is healthier? While diet soda has no calories, it is still void of nutrients. Keep it for the occasional treat.

•**Vitamin Waters:** They are just water right? Water with added table sugar or juice. Many vitamin waters contain as many calories as soda! Drinker beware.

•**Energy Drinks:** Think of these as a designer soda laced with caffeine. Caffeine is not a nutrient...sorry!

•**Coffee Drinks:** These tasty drinks, if made with milk or soy milk, will provide you some calcium and protein. Always request low-fat or nonfat milk and a small size. Skip the whip and save the sweetened syrups for special occasions. Try not to overdo it on the cream and sugar.

•**Alcohol:** Alcohol calories can add up in a hurry and end up being metabolized by your body similarly to fat. Think of the “beer belly.” Mixed drinks contain the highest amount of empty calories but this does not mean you should drink more beer or wine! Remember to practice moderation which is defined as fewer than 1 drink per day for women and 2 drinks per day for men. A drink is considered 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1 1/2 ounces of hard liquor (tequila, rum, vodka, etc).

**The moral of the story?** Stick to water and low-fat milk at meals as your top-notch choice. Save the others for fun occasions and don't forget to incorporate them into your calorie allotment for the day.

## Favorite Food

Lots of people are curious about what dietitians eat when they are “off-duty.” I have been enjoying roasted red peppers in a variety of ways this past month. When diced they make a fun addition to a quiche or breakfast sandwich. I love to dip baked pita chips or carrot strips into roasted

red pepper hummus, which can be found at your local grocery store, Trader Joe's, or Whole Foods. Turn a jar of roasted red peppers into a quick, delicious sauce for chicken or pasta. Just blend them in a food processor, heat on the stove, and pour over your entree. Vitamins A and C never tasted so good!