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pathways for health



January 2010: New Year's Shopping and the Gift of the Kitchen

In December's shortest days when nature rests, sleeps, and restores, we light the darkness with twinkling lights and scurry about. To counter the cyclical contraction of earth's energy, we feel a natural urge for music, activity, and expansive treats. What fun to splurge on traditional sweets and spirited drinks that we have grown to expect during the holiday season. In the dark stillness of early winter, we party and play.

But now after all the fun, I find that it can be a relief to return to ordinary time. January gives us a fresh start. We move back to the security of home and routine. And, we reclaim our kitchen, returning to more standard fare that might now feel welcome and "just right."

I love my kitchen, especially in January. In the dark, frigid winter months when we are often homebound, the kitchen offers us a playground and the chance to lift the spirits of our family with wonderful aromas of foods baking in the oven or cooking on top of the stove. The kitchen is open to our adventure and whimsy, providing joy and comfort, in any weather and at any hour of the day or night. This is especially true if you have a well-stocked pantry and refrigerator so that you are ready to stir up a new creation anytime that the mood strikes.

So, as we move into the New Year, I thought it would be fun to share in this newsletter some of my own personal thoughts about the kitchen, as well as some resources for purchasing quality, organic, natural foods to stock your pantry for the New Year. No matter where we may live, many wonderful foods can be ordered and shipped right to our door. We just need to know where to find them (see Shopping Guide, page 4).

Cooking: The Culture's Message. My kitchen brings me a deep sense of joy and peace. Cooking restores me in ways nothing else can. The kitchen offers its own culture, including familiar staple foods such as onions, carrots, celery, herbs, legumes, and grains, as well as staple basic equipment like good knives, mixing bowls, and cutting boards to make every task easier. These are my familiar friends and the time I spend with them is a rewarding investment in nutrition, connection, and creativity. Perhaps you too feel as I do about cooking and the kitchen. Yet, have you ever stopped to think how our culture devalues "homemaking" and the kitchen?

When calculating our Gross Domestic Product (GDP), economists impute no value-added for the hours we spend at home in meal preparation. Neither, by the way, do we impute a value



for the hours that family members spend in the care of children. Economists have no yardstick to measure the quality of life, reflected in home cooking and family childcare. To be counted as value-added GDP, we have to *purchase* prepared food at a take-out or restaurant and we have to *hire* others to care for our children.

Perhaps another reason that we devalue time spent in the kitchen relates to the convenience lifestyle associated with our modern culture. The ready availability of low-cost fast food as well as prepared/convenience foods can undermine the value of our home-cooking efforts.

Surrounded by commercial food options, it is easy to decide that spending time on meal preparation makes no economic sense, since there are so many other inexpensive options for supplying our calorie needs. But, as we know, food is so much more than calorie energy. And, cooking is so much more than food.

The Kitchen as a Gift. The kitchen is a special place where a rich kaleidoscope of colors, patterns, aromas, and textures provide nourishment for our senses. Fruits and vegetables--whether mounded high in baskets or cut open to reveal their interior mysteries--create their own still-life images. When we stop long enough to notice, the still-life forms of these foods can bring a still-wonder to our own lives.

So, the kitchen means many things to me. My kitchen is a personal stage for self-expression and creativity. It is also a platform for expressing gratitude and a place for personal connection, connection with others, and connection with the garden of the world. No matter where we live, the kitchen is where nature enters our home. Local greens, onions, apples and pumpkins bring local farmers' gardens to our door. And, we participate in the global garden when we enjoy avocados, mangos, and bananas.

The kitchen is where we can sow our own seeds in the garden of awareness. Grains, beans, and legumes are incredible storehouses of life and nutrition. When planted in the soil, each holds within it the potential to unfold into new plant life. Fruits and vegetables are also remarkable creations. Grown as the magical offspring of the sun and the soil, they invite us into a secret world of adventure when we take time to pay attention: Slicing a head of cabbage or a beet or a carrot, we can discover an amazing web of repeating pattern. The same is true of the complex fractals--simple elements repeated again and again and again--of broccoli, cauliflower, or on the outside covering of a pineapple. Fresh foods offer us a deep sense of wonder and connection to all that is universal across the spectrum of life.

Working with foods in the kitchen is also an empowering experience. Within a national and global setting fraught with uncertainty, it allows us to take control of an important part of our world. Cooking can be a grounding experience. Of course, through the food we prepare and offer to others, it also connects us, in a meaningful and nurturing way, to our friends and family.

Zen and the Art of Cooking. Cooking itself is an art of endless possibility. Like the repetitive act of walking or swimming that enlivens the mind to deep thinking, chopping vegetables can quiet, soothe, and calm. Chopping becomes so much more than chopping: When we allow enough

time to enjoy washing, peeling, chopping, and cooking, the act of connecting with nature's gifts in repetitive ways brings its own meditative stillness and sense of balance and peace. Some of my best and most creative times come when least expected...when I am working in the kitchen.

Yin/Yang: Time and Intention. To the wise Chinese, yin and yang are complementary opposites that govern change. They create, control, and transform into each other. So what does yin/yang theory have to do with spending time in the kitchen? Just this: Yin/yang theory tells us that sometimes our intentions transform into results that are the opposite of our design.

Yin/yang leads me to wonder what price we pay if we do not take time to shop and to cook. Can we really afford not to? Might we lose energy, efficiency and health--time barometers--in the end? In the short term, fractured/commercial foods may not deliver the energy, nutrition, and "staying-power" to support a busy day of work and activity, so we lose time and efficiency. In the longer term, of course, when we depend on a steady diet of processed/fast foods it may mean debilitating disease, and the loss of both productive years and financial resources.

While cooking will not assure us vitality forever, of course, it does provide both emotional and physical benefits, no matter our state of health. Put simply, shopping and cooking, which allow us to know where our food comes from and how it is prepared, are some of the best investments we can make. So, it is worth the time needed to fit it in. For me, early morning is when I am the master of my time, am fresh, and have the energy to chop vegetables and cook. Oven roasting root vegetables or cooking a pot of beans or grains on top of the stove fills the house with welcoming aromas and is quickly finished while I busy myself with morning routines. Then, it is comforting to know that there will be plenty of good food on hand for when I get hungry. You may not be a morning person, but try to think of a time when you are relaxed and can have fun in the kitchen. The key is both to make time and to have a pantry full of high quality, staple ingredients so you are always ready to cook when the mood strikes you.

Shopping Guide for Quality, Organic Ingredients to Stock Your New Year's Pantry Part of supporting New Year's resolutions is to have a well-stocked pantry. Perhaps you have some holiday gift money that you are thinking to spend and are looking forward to some healthy cooking in the upcoming winter months. The following list of shopping resources is not meant to be exhaustive, but these are tried and true purveyors that I use and whose products reflect a visible and apparent difference—in taste, quality, and appearance—from what you might find at your local market or health food store.

Most of the suppliers described in this list have catalogs and web sites, and deliver right to your door. When possible, I like to use suppliers whose web sites end in "org" rather than "com," as a reflection of their non-profit nature. A variety of deserving non-profit organizations abound that are interested in sustainable agriculture and in guiding consumers to sources of healthy, organic foods.

The following list is in two sections, the first provides resources by type of food, and the second indicates product sources and resources by state. You can also refer to the Weston Price Shopping Guide, published annually, <http://www.westonaprice.org/Order-materials.html>

Pathways4Health Shopping Guide

Animal Products and Fermented Foods

Hawthorne Valley Farm

www.hawthornevalleyfarm.org

Ghent, NY

518-672-7500

Hawthorne Valley Farm is my favorite source for animal products and fermented foods. It is a 400-acre teaching farm located in rural New York. Hawthorne Valley is committed to land stewardship and, through its school, to connecting children to the environment, the soil, and the concept of sustainability. Hawthorne Valley Farm strives for a healthy land balance of animals and plants and for self-sufficiency, producing all its needs within its 400-acre complex. The Farm's mission is to heighten the ecological awareness of people regarding the production of food. It goes without saying that the Farm uses no synthetic chemicals or hormone therapies. Products are shipped with cooling packs and are also sold at the Union Square Farmers' Market, Wednesdays and Saturdays in New York City. Foods include:

- Organic meats, poultry, and organ meats
- Raw whole milk and artisanal cheese; yogurt and kefir
- Lacto-fermented vegetables

Seafood

Vital Choice Wild Seafood and Organics

www.vitalchoice.com

Bellingham, WA 98227

800-608-4825

Vital Choice offers a variety of seafood, but its specialty is wild Alaskan salmon, which it harvests in some of the freshest waters of Alaska. Vital choice seafood is approved by the State of Alaska and by the Marine Stewardship Council, which certifies that its products are sustainably harvested. Once caught, fish are processed and flash-frozen within hours of a catch, to preserve freshness, as well as omega-3 and vitamin D nutrition. For shipping, fish are packed with dry ice and arrive at your door in a fresh-frozen state. The web site also includes vast information on health issues, charts and tables regarding mercury and other toxins, as well as recipes. Products, all sustainable include:

- Wild Alaskan sockeye salmon
- Wild seafood such as low-mercury halibut, tuna, and black cod
- Wild harvested shellfish: Alaskan king crab, scallops, prawn
- Smoked salmon and salmon roe
- Canned Alaskan salmon, tuna, and Portuguese sardines

Organic Grains, Beans, Sea Vegetables, Dried Foods and Fruits, Spreads, Kitchen Supplies

Gold Mine Natural Food Company
www.goldminenaturalfoods.com

San Diego, CA 92126
800-475-3663

The Kushi Store
www.kushistore.com

Becket, MA 01223-0500
413-623-6679

Gold Mine Natural Food and the Kushi Store offer some of the finest quality grains, beans, and macrobiotic foods and equipment. Once I discovered the quality of foods that Gold Mine and Kushi offer, and how easy it is to order and have foods shipped, I no longer buy at my local health food store. The Kushi Store web site is a fine reference and educational resource, providing descriptions and information for a variety of grains, beans, seaweeds, and other macrobiotic products. You can order:

- Grains and quick cooking cereals
- Beans and legumes
- Sea vegetables
- Fermented foods
- Condiments
- Macrobiotic kitchen equipment

Organic Heirloom Grains and Cold-Milled Baking Flours

Anson Mills
www.ansonmills.com

Columbia, South Carolina
803-467-4122

Anson Mills is the result of Glenn Roberts' dream to revive the native heirloom grains of his childhood. Anson Mills grows more than 10 varieties of organic, native heirloom grains, as well as Japanese buckwheat, French oats, and Italian farro...each with its own unique flavor and texture. Anson Mills grinds grains in freezing temperatures to prevent the heat damage normally suffered by grains in standard milling. Anson Mills' efforts are aimed to revive grains that were threatened with extinction. Their superior flours are of such character and integrity that they do not always adapt to standard recipes. The web site offers a host of recipes to be used with its products, which include:

- Heirloom corn, rice, and wheat
- Hominy grits, cornmeal, polenta
- Wheat and rye flour
- Farro, oats, buckwheat
- Legumes

Organic, Non-irradiated Spices, Herbs, Extracts, and Teas

Frontier Natural Products Co-op

Norway, IA

www.frontiercoop.com

800-786-1388

Frontier is the largest seller of organic, non-irradiated or chemically treated botanicals. Frontier, through its Well Earth sourcing program, works with local farmers throughout the globe to educate and support sustainable agricultural practices and organic farming techniques. It is also Fair Trade Certified, which means local farmers are fairly compensated, have safe working conditions, and do not use child labor. Frontier is my favorite source for herbs and spices, as well as green tea. These are available in small amounts, as well as one-pound packages. Frontier's web site also offers recipes. Products include:

- Spices, seasonings, and baking flavors
- Herbs for health and healing
- Teas

Unrefined Coconut Oil

Tropical Traditions

Philippines

www.tropicaltraditions.com

866-311-2626

Tropical Traditions coconut oil is wet-milled, extracted naturally without heat. Coconut is grated to extract the milk and then left in vats for 24 hours to allow the oil to separate, creating a full-flavored, clear oil. Of all unrefined, organic coconut oils, this is my favorite. The site has recipes and you can buy:

- Gold label virgin coconut oil
- Organic coconut flour, and organic flaked coconut

Fermented Cod-Liver Oil and X-Factor Butter Oil

Green Pastures

O'Neill, NE

www.greenpastures.org

402-858-4818

Green Pastures sells the only fermented cod liver oil that is free of synthetic vitamins, with an ideal balance of vitamins A and D. Green Pastures also sells X-Factor Butter Oil, from cows grazing on rotating grassy pastures. X-Factor Butter Oil provides a perfect balance of omega-3 to Omega-6 essential fatty acids. I use both these each day, for the synergy they provide. Products include:

- Blue Ice fermented cod liver oil
- X-Factor Butter Oil

Unrefined Sea Salt

Celtic Sea Salt

www.celticseasalt.com

800-867-7258

Refining removes most of sea salt's essential and trace minerals. Look for quality, unrefined sea salt for the trace minerals they provide and to avoid additives that are often added to table salt. Saltworks and Realsalt are also reliable sources of unrefined salt.

General Web Site Shopping Sources, by State

Grass-Fed Animal Products

Eatwild

www.eatwild.com

Eat Wild offers a state-by-state directory that lists well over 1000 pasture-based farms. Eat Wild is the most comprehensive source of grass-fed meat and animal products in the United States. You can use it to find a local farmer in your area that you can come to know and trust.

Pastured Poultry

The American Pastured Poultry Producers Association (APPPA)

www.apppa.org

Boyd, WI 54726

888-662-7772

The APPPA was established in 1997 to assist poultry producers that raise chickens by traditional methods—on green grass and traditional grains (and often with processing taking place right on the farm). The APPPA web site lists pastured poultry farmers by state, where you can find local farms to supply your poultry needs.

Sustainably Grown Foods

Local Harvest

www.localharvest.org

The Local Harvest web site can help you find organic, sustainably grown food sources close to where you live. The web site includes information on farmers' markets, family farms, and the locations of stores and markets where you can purchase sustainably-grown foods. The site also includes Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) and Farmers' Markets as well as sources of specific foods such as animal products, poultry, fish, fresh fruits and vegetables, syrups, soaps, and flowers.

Raw Milk

Real Milk

www.realmilk.com

Weston Price Foundation

202-363-4394

If you are a milk lover and if dairy agrees with you, you will like the Real Milk web site. It describes the different laws of each state that govern raw milk. The site can help you locate a local farm or buying club to obtain raw milk, butter, and yogurt.

Farmers' Markets

The U.S. Department of Agriculture

www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets

This web site provides an extensive list of farmers' markets around the country. It is updated and maintained by the USDA.

Recipes From Shopping Guide Web Sites:

Vital Choice Poached Salmon

Salmon filets (allow 6 ounces per person)
1 carrot, sliced
1 small stalk organic celery, sliced
2 slices lemon
Several sprigs of parsley
6 bay leaves (Turkish, or ½ of California bay leaf)
Salt to taste
1 cup dry white wine
Juice of half a lemon

1. Cut the salmon filets into individual portions if necessary
2. Place in a large skillet the carrot, onion, celery, lemon, parsley, and bay leaves
3. Add the fish, cold water to cover, salt to taste, the wine and the lemon juice. Bring the liquid to a boil, uncovered.
4. Adjust heat to simmer and let fish cook for 5 minutes.
5. Turn off the heat and leave fish undisturbed for 10 minutes. Then remove it carefully to a serving platter; the salmon will be perfectly done. Delicious served hot or cold.

Tropical Traditions Gluten-Free Chocolate Coconut Cake

½ cup coconut oil
¾ cup cocoa powder
1/3 cup coconut milk
1 ¼ cups agave nectar
9 eggs
¾ t. salt
1 t. vanilla
¾ cup plus 1/8 cup coconut flour, sifted
¾ t. baking powder

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Melt coconut oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add cocoa powder, coconut milk and agave nectar; mix together. Remove from heat and set aside.
In a bowl, mix together eggs, salt and vanilla. Stir in cocoa mixture. Combine coconut flour with baking powder and whisk into batter until there are no lumps.
Pour batter into a greased 9x9x2 inch pan or 2 round 9 inch pans. Bake for 45 minutes until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool and frost with your favorite icing, if desired.

Anson Mills Rustic Coarse Style Oatmeal

1 cup Anson Mills Toasted Stone Cut Oats
2 cups filtered water
Generous ½ teaspoon fine sea salt

1. Place the oats in a heavy, medium saucepan and cover them with cold tap water. Swirl lightly. Let settle, then tilt the pan and pour the hulls and water off the oats. Drain the oats completely—there will be close to a tablespoon of water left in the bottom of the pot—and add the water.
2. Place the saucepan on the stove and stir in the salt. Bring the oats to a simmer over high heat, stirring frequently, about 3 minutes. Simmer 50 seconds, stirring frequently—the oats will thicken. Remove the pan from the stove, cover and let rest 5 minutes. Serve hot with butter, brown sugar and cream (or any combination thereof).

Anson Mills Carolina Quick Grits

1 cup Anson Mills Whole Hominy Quick Grits (white or yellow)
Filtered water
Fine sea salt
2-3 tablespoons unsalted butter
½ t. freshly ground black pepper

1. *For a slow cooker:* Place the grits in the slow cooker and cover them with 3 cups water. Stir once. Allow the grits to settle a full minute, tilt the vessel, and skim off and discard the chaff and hulls with a fine tea strainer. Cover the slow cooker and turn the heat setting to high. Cook, stirring once or twice, until the grits are creamy and tender throughout and hold their shape on a spoon, about 90 minutes.
2. *For saucepan cookery:* Place the grits in a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan and cover them with 3 cups water. Stir once. Allow the grits to settle a full minute, tilt the pan, and skim off and discard the chaff and hulls with a fine tea strainer. Cover and let stand overnight at room temperature. Note: If you have not soaked the grits, cover them with 4 (rather than 3) cups of water, and skim off and discard the chaff and hulls as directed above.
3. Set the saucepan over medium heat and bring to a simmer, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until the first starch takes hold, about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and cook, stirring frequently, until the grits are creamy and tender throughout and hold their shape on a spoon, about 15 to 30 minutes, depending on whether or not the grits were soaked. Add 1 teaspoon salt halfway through the cooking time. To finish, stir in the butter with vigorous strokes. Add more salt, if desired, and the black pepper. *Serves 4-6 as a side dish.*

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