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June 2010: The Caduceus and National Health Care—Balancing Reliance with Responsibility

The caduceus in its original form, a serpent encircling a leafy tree branch, dates back to Ancient Egypt. It was originally associated with Troth, the Egyptian god of wisdom, and later adopted by the Greeks for Hermes, their god of knowledge.

For the Greeks, the caduceus became a symbol of the higher knowledge gained by uniting the wisdom of the polar extremes—the staff representing Aesculapius and *intervention*. Together with the serpent, representing Hygaea/Mother Nature and the power of *natural healing*.

The caduceus served to remind the citizens of Ancient Greece that health was the reward for those who could successfully balance and integrate the dualities of *natural healing* with *interventional* medicine.

The Greeks saw in the opposing forces of the caduceus a balanced, complementary system similar to the polarities in all of nature and in human nature. Dualities exist within the human body as:

- Mind/Body
- Reason/Intuition
- Intervention/Natural Healing
- Balance/Imbalance

They also appear as energetic polar forces in our Universe:

- Sun/Earth
- Hot/Cold
- Day/Night
- Expansive/Contractive.

The energies of the Universe, the life force of plants and animals, and the human psyche are a melding of these dualities.

To the Ancient Greeks, a person in good health was someone in a relative state of balance, acceptance, and attunement to these opposing forces. Disease symptoms were viewed as the body's messages sent to instill greater personal awareness and understanding. The caduceus, then, embodied the healing power that could be attained by balancing the body's inherent healing ability with complementary and appropriate strategies of intervention.



The Modern Message of the Caduceus: Partnering Health Care with Self-Care

Time has tarnished the powerful symbolism of the caduceus. Today, the caduceus is synonymous with allopathic medicine—*reliance* on intervention without the underpinning of self-healing and *personal responsibility*.

We are privileged today to live sheltered by the powers of miracle drugs and surgical wonders. But in this reassuring setting, it is easy to forget the ways we can assist and support our body in its ongoing efforts to heal and stay well. Isn't it logical that with the *privilege* of having access to the miracles of modern medicine and the protections of a national health care system comes the *responsibility* to play our own supportive role?

When we are under the care of a skilled doctor, there are many ways—through good nutrition, adequate sleep, relaxation and spiritual practices, for example—to complement the devoted efforts of allopathic medicine. Or, when we are fortunate not to need a doctor's support, we might think of ways to help our body to increase its overall resilience.

Without sharing in the responsibility, I worry that we put a tremendous burden on medical science. Our *awareness* of modern antibiotics, other miracle drugs, interventions, and health care coverage may foster complacency. And, in this comfort zone, furnished with a plethora of medical safeguards, we may lose sight of classic strategies for conserving energy and preserving health that were used by past cultures...

Without our modern safety nets, traditional cultures throughout the globe fermented foods for preservation, as well as to increase nutrient and enzyme levels for better digestion and absorption. They ate nutrient-dense organ meats and utilized bone stocks and cooked with bones to extract the rich array of minerals, fats, gelatin and other nutrients locked within the structural core of animals and wild game. Traditional cultures ate naturally organic fruits and vegetables; natural sweeteners; and whole grains, which they soaked and ground for maximum nutrition. Our forebears used mineral-rich sea salt; natural, saturated fats from grass-fed animals; fish and fish oils; nuts and seeds. And, to conserve energy and protect the immune system and bio-chemistry, traditional cultures lived in tune with nature's diurnal and seasonal cycles—by the sun's clock rather than one of man's own making.

If we stop long enough today to think about it, we really live—both with respect to our food and our media-based culture—by a “Reliance Model.” Reliance is programmed into what is presented to us via television, radio, and now even the internet—as others control so much of what shapes and colors our thinking. The Reliance Model is also at work with our food...at “food courts” and fast-food outlets; at roadside, amusement park, and sports concessions; and in many schools, hospitals, and institutions... where we are offered little to choose from but commercial fractured food products that supply calories with no life-force energy.

Reliance is the partner of convenience and the antithesis of personal empowerment. Convenience brings with it our modern, manipulated food supply with hidden ingredients such



as refined, denatured grains and oils; high fructose corn syrup (HFCS); herbicides and pesticides; artificial sweeteners, foods and colorings; and, foods that have been genetically altered (GMOs). Our modern world also brings with it chlorinated water, antibacterial cleaning agents, and antibiotics that disrupt intestinal flora and our immune system. Meanwhile, convenience associated with our modern lifestyle offers technology, and with it the light bulb and screen-based living that, when not used judiciously, can upset the body's natural biorhythms and body chemistry.

Henry Lindlahr, a natural healer of a century ago, thought in terms of creating a "fertile terrain" in the body to support health and natural healing. As long as the vital force of an organism was of sufficient strength and vitality, Lindlahr believed that chronic illness could be overcome. He used natural foods, rest and relaxation, fresh air and sunshine, water therapies, herbs, and homeopathy to restore his patients to good health. In contrast, he saw "morbid terrain" that gave root to disease bacteria to be the result of denatured foods, as well as drugs (drugs before and at birth, antibiotics, painkillers, antihistamines, etc.), mercury dental fillings, vaccines...all of which affect the immune system in one way or another.

Today, as our nation stands at a special moment in time looking ahead to a future of health care for all, personal responsibility seems more important and perhaps more challenging. Our depleted soil, our fractured, convenience foods, and a host of electronic stimuli are just a few of the issues complicating our efforts at self-care. Yet, taking responsibility for self-care and self-healing in creative ways will free scarce medical resources to be shared and preserved for the greater good and benefit of all. In a world of universal health coverage, the message of the caduceus seems as timely today for the citizens of the United States as it was for the citizens of Ancient Greece so very long ago.

Ideas for Self-Care:

*Sleep and the Natural Body Clock...*December07 Newsletter

*Roadmap for Nutrition...*January08 Newsletter

*Resolutions for Good Health...*January09 Newsletter

*Whole Foods Shopping Guide...*January10 Newsletter

*Fermenting Foods...*July/August09 Newsletter

*Bone Stocks...*February10 Newsletter

*Cooking with Bones...*March10 Newsletter

*Traditional Fats and Oils...*See the following articles on my web site *Resources Tab*:

- *A Primer on Good Fats and Oils*
- *Refined Vegetable Oils and Trans Fats*
- *Fats and Metabolism*

For a variety of other shopping and reading ideas, see listing on Resources tab of my website

<http://pathways4health.org/resources/>



June Recipes: Strawberries¹

When I think of June, I think of celebrations—especially graduations and weddings—and, I think of strawberries. At their peak and bursting with flavor, strawberries herald the long days of summer, with its change of pace and its promise of possibility. Strawberries are a lively, “happy” food: like raspberries, they are one of the few fruits with “fire energy” which, like other “fire”² foods—chocolate, popcorn, chips, and salsa—fit so well parties and special celebrations.

Strawberries, a rich source of vitamins C and K, flavonoids, and fiber, also bring their own health benefits. The deep red color of strawberries is associated with its special mix of flavonoids which helps to protect against cancer, heart disease, and inflammation. Almost all (some 80 percent) of the strawberries produced in the United States are grown in California, but if you are fortunate as we are to have access to pick-your-own strawberry fields, I hope you can venture to enjoy the delights of strawberries picked fresh from the vine. In our family, early-June trips to the local strawberry fields ushers in summer and its promise of fun, in a similar way that unpacking the holiday decorations each December brings with it the anticipation of seasonal joys and good times.

Whether you pick your own or not, strawberries are delicious washed and eaten fresh, served with fresh whipped cream, in smoothies, or mixed into salad greens. Because strawberries are one of the fruits with a high pesticide levels, it is best to buy those raised organically.

Strawberry Soup (Serves 4-6)

2 cups fresh strawberries

1 cup dairy sour cream

1 cup half and half

¼ cup sugar

1 teaspoon brandy extract

1 teaspoon vanilla

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Blend until smooth. Pour into chilled soup bowls.

Source: Cooks.com

¹ For a small portion of the population, strawberries can cause allergic reaction. And, because they contain oxalates, eating excessive amounts can increase the risk of kidney stones for people that have calcium oxalate...Michael Murray,*The Healing Power of Foods*.

² See Chinese Five Phase Theory, Resources tab of my web site. Other “fire” foods include alcohol, coffee, and tobacco.

Strawberry-Apple Kanten (serves 6 to 8)

3 ½ cups plus 2 tablespoons cold apple cider
1 pint fresh strawberries
¼ cup agar flakes
1 tablespoon arrowroot powder

1. In a blender, combine 1 cup of the cider and 1 cup of the strawberries and liquefy. Stir through a fine mesh strainer of cheesecloth to get 1 ½ cups strawberry juice.
2. In a 2-quart saucepan, combine the strawberry juice, 1 ½ cups cider, and the agar³ flakes and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until the agar dissolves.
3. In a small bowl, combine the remaining 2 tablespoons cider and arrowroot powder and mix well. Add to the saucepan and simmer for 1 minute. Pour into a shallow 2- to 3-quart-capacity pan and refrigerate.
4. While the kanten is cooling, slice the remaining cup of strawberries.
5. In a blender or food processor, blend the chilled kanten until creamy. Fold in the sliced strawberries and serve, accompanied by pralines if you choose.

Source: Peter Berley

Strawberry-Couscous Cake (one 9" x 14" cake)

6 cups organic apple juice
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
3 cups couscous
1 pint strawberries

1. Wash and stem strawberries. Set aside on paper towels to dry thoroughly. Then slice.
2. Place the apple juice, vanilla, and couscous in a large pot, and bring to a boil. Stir continuously, until the couscous has thickened and all the juice has been absorbed.
3. Gently fold the strawberries into the hot couscous. Pour immediately into a 9" x 14" rinsed, un-dried shallow baking pan. Chill until set, about 2 hours.

Source: Annemarie Colbin

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³ Agar, derived from red seaweed, is a natural jelling agent. To dissolve agar flakes, stir or whisk the flakes into cooking liquid that has been brought to a boil and then reduced to simmer. Simmer for about 5-8 minutes, stirring occasionally until all flakes have disappeared.