

The McDougall Newsletter

Volume 5 Issue 6



Mary's Mini-McDougall Diet Not a Lifestyle, But a "Diet"

After working with thousands of people over the past 28 years, Mary (McDougall) believes it is time to introduce a trimmed-down, fast-acting modification of the McDougall program—referred to from now on as "**Mary's Mini-McDougall Diet.**" The principles are the same as with those of regular McDougall diet: it is starch-based with the addition of fruits and vegetables. The difference is the goal is to lose weight quickly with as little effort as possible. You know, a "diet"—not really a lifestyle change. This is a temporary "quick fix" to be used as a tool for people overwhelmed by the initial challenges of starting on the McDougall program and/or to boost their progress when they feel that changes are coming too slowly. Yet, this is a nutritionally sound program that you, too, may want to follow for a long time, if not a lifetime.

In the early 1980s we (John and Mary) went on an "all potato and greens" diet for 10 days—just for the experience. We had hash browns for breakfast, baked potatoes and steamed frozen vegetables for lunch, and mashed potatoes with a salad for dinner. Yes, we were bored towards the end, but we each lost 10 pounds, felt great, and continued our love for potatoes.

Important Note:

This instructional material offers you a significant opportunity—to regain your health and enhance your personal appearance. However, diet is powerful medicine. Do not change your diet or start an intense exercise program if you are seriously ill or on medication unless you are under the care of a physician knowledgeable in nutrition and its effects on health. Do not change medications without professional advice. When appropriate, share this message with your doctor.

Can anyone eat so simply?

You may be thinking "No one would follow such a simple eating program." What if for reasons beyond your control, like political turmoil resulting in extreme poverty, you were forced to eat a simple diet? You would do so, rather than die!

Many populations living in such stark conditions, for example people in rural areas of Poland and Russia at the beginning of the 19th century, have lived in very good health doing extremely hard work with the white potato serving as their primary source of nutrition. Their survival depended on potatoes. You could do the same if required, and the reality for millions of people living today is that their survival, too, depends upon a simple diet—but for the opposite kind of malnutrition than that of the Russians and Poles. Then the threat was undernutrition, and now it is over-nutrition. Dying from heart disease, cancer, and type-2 diabetes is usually slower than starvation, but often more painful.

The truth is simple diets are among the most nutritious. Throughout history almost all human inhabitants of Planet Earth have consumed simple diets. Eating basic foods is an especially powerful tool to regain lost health and appearance.

Examples of simple eating by trim healthy populations living today:

Japanese – rice

Peruvians – potatoes

Papua New Guinea Islanders – sweet potatoes

Rural Mexicans – corn

Each of these starches is combined with a few locally grown, seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Simple Diets are Popular Diets

Because of effortless preparation and no-thought planning, simple diets are perpetually trendy, like “the cabbage soup diet” and the all-you-can-eat “grapefruit diet.” Mary (McDougall), prior to meeting John 34 years ago, periodically followed these same diets with success. Her own invention, however, was “the baby-food squash diet.” This simple program kept her pencil thin by such negligible effort as heating a jar or two of baby-food she bought at her local supermarket.

So was this nutritional foolishness? Was she risking her health for simplicity and weight loss? Before condemning Mary’s diet as a dangerous fad, guaranteeing, at least, protein deficiency, look over the nutrition provided by a simple starch, such as squash.

Nutrients in Winter Squash (mashed):¹

41 Calories in one-half cup

% of calories as protein = 8% (WHO recommendation is 5%)

% of calories as carbohydrate = 90%

% of calories as fat = 2.5%

Cholesterol = 0 mg

Dietary Fiber = 8 grams/100 calories (Milk and Beef = 0 grams)

Calcium = 81 mg/100 calories (Milk = 119 mg/100 calories)

Iron = 1.7 mg/100 calories (Beef = 1.1 mg/100 calories)

Squash is also very low in sodium and high in potassium with an abundance of vitamins (other than B12) and contains all of the other nutrients essential for excellent health.*

**B12 should be added as at least 5 micrograms daily after 3 years on any version of the McDougall Diet or if pregnant or nursing a baby while on the diet.*

Will Mary’s Mini-McDougall Diet Satisfy Me?

People naturally love the flavors found in starches, vegetables, and fruits because we are anatomically and physio-

logically designed to consume and enjoy these foods. Remember, the taste buds on the tip of your tongue respond to carbohydrates (sweet) which are found almost exclusively in plant foods (the exceptions are milk and honey).

A landmark experiment was carried out in 1925 on two healthy adults, a man 25 years old and a woman 28 years old.² For 6 months these two people lived on a diet primarily of white potatoes. (A few additional items providing insignificant nutrients were added: a few fruits, coffee, and tea. Because they were losing too much weight, pure fat—containing no other nutrients—was also added.)

Could a diet of potatoes meet their nutritional needs? Even though they were both physically active (especially the man) they were described as, "...in good health on a diet in which the nitrogen (protein) was practically solely derived from the potato."

Did they like this diet? The report stated, "They did not tire of the uniform potato diet and there was no craving for change."

Starchy vegetables, like potatoes, are very appetite-satisfying. In an enlightening experiment, 38 separate foods were fed to subjects and a rating of their level of satisfaction (a satiety index) was determined every 15 minutes for 2 hours after the meals.³ The highest satisfaction level was produced by boiled white potatoes, and it was seven times higher than the lowest index for croissants. Potatoes were almost 5 times more satisfying than a Mars candy bar and twice as satisfying as beef or cheese. Starchy vegetables satisfy the hunger drive—fatty foods leave you craving.

You can adjust to simple eating, just like your pets are happy eating the same meal every day. You don't worry if your dog and cat are enjoying their simple chow. They are hungry, the food satisfies them, and you know you are providing the best nutrition to keep them fit and long-lived.

Are Simple Diets Nutritious

Most animals thrive on simple diets—the koala bear lives on eucalyptus leaves, the panda bear on bamboo shoots, the horse on grass, etc. The truth is that nature has designed her foods complete and balanced for proper nutrition, long before they reach your dinner table. You cannot improve on this blueprint.

White potatoes are 10% protein with all of the essential amino acids provided in generous amounts. These tubers have 2.5 grams of dietary fiber per potato. That translates into 50 grams for an active man and 37 grams for an active woman. Potatoes are very high in vitamin C, B vitamins, potassium and other minerals. In animal experiments potatoes have been shown to have a particularly potent cholesterol-lowering effect.⁴ Feeding rats a potato-enriched diet for 3 weeks led to a 30% decrease in cholesterol and a 36% decrease in triglyceride levels.⁵

The potato even meets the needs of growing infants. Eleven Peruvian children, ages 8 months to 35 months, recovering from malnutrition, were fed diets where all of the protein and 75% of the calories came from potatoes.^{6,7} Their growth patterns were normal. (Soybean-cottonseed oils and pure simple sugars provided some of the extra calories—neither of these sources—oil or sugar—contains protein, vitamins, or minerals.)

People in New Guinea who live on diets consisting almost entirely of sweet potato tubers and leaves have cholesterol levels, on the average, of 108 mg/dl.⁸ Heart disease, obesity, inflammatory arthritis, colon cancer, and type-2 diabetes are unknown in these people on their sweet potato diet.

Practical Application of "Mary's Mini-McDougall Diet"

Which starches are your favorites? Potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash, corn, beans, rice? Choose one or several to form the centerpiece of your diet. All of these can be found pre-cooked in packages in the frozen food section of your grocery. Check the ingredients to make sure they are free of added fats, oils or other harmful ingredients. The refrigerated section of the store will also have packages of fruits and vegetables for you to buy.*

*While root vegetables like potatoes and sweet potatoes provide well-rounded nutrition—grains and beans lack suf-

ficient vitamins A and C to be eaten alone; therefore add some fruit and/or green and yellow vegetables to make your grain and bean meals complete.

Meal preparation is now a matter of thawing out these foods. You can place your warmed starch on the plate separate from the vegetables or mix them all altogether. You can add some additional flavor with your favorite spices; including salt and pepper (unless you have health restrictions that require you avoid these). Condiments, including low-fat salad dressings, salsa, ketchup, barbecue sauce and packaged soups (like those made by Dr. McDougall's Rightfoods) can be poured over the top.

Example Days*					
	White Potato	Sweet Potato	Squash	Rice Mix	Corn
Breakfast	Hash Browns	Grated	Baked	with Fruit	Tortillas
Lunch	Baked	Roasted	Baked Fries	with Carrots	Polenta
Dinner	Mashed	Mashed	Mashed	with Greens	Pureed

* To these basic cooked starches, add side dishes of green and yellow vegetables and a few fruits. Use seasoning.

** Instead of rice you can use other grains, like millet, barley, wheat berries, and quinoa.

Simple Eating-out Suggestions:

A baked potato or sweet potato (steakhouse)

A plate of beans, lettuce, tomatoes, and salsa (Mexican)

Steamed rice and vegetables (Chinese)

Steamed rice and green papaya salad (Thai)

Easing the Learning Curve

High protein diets are popular in part because they are easy to learn and follow: Buy a burger anywhere—throw away the bun, scrape off the ketchup and you are now on a diet that gives immediate weight loss. The working mechanism for this diet is to make you sick by feeding you an unbalanced diet solely of fat and protein, causing fluid loss and appetite suppression. Over the long course this form of malnutrition causes your arteries to rot, your bones to be urinated into the toilet, your bowels to ache from plugged-up defecation, and your body to smell like the stock-yards you pass while driving down highway 5 (from San Francisco to Los Angeles).

The learning curve for the McDougall Program is steep: People must retrain their taste buds to enjoy unfamiliar foods, and they must also learn new ways to cook, shop, and socialize. There are additional struggles: healthy eating in restaurants often requires brutal confrontations with the wait-staff and detective-like skills are needed to locate McDougall-approved convenience items in the local grocery. Add to these burdens daily sabotage from well-meaning friends, family members, and their own doctor. But, the reward from overcoming these obstacles is their best opportunity to have a lifetime of great health. Mary's Mini-McDougall Diet is powerful tool to use for easing the learning curve.

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