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

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Gout Is on the Rise

Over the past 20 years the incidence of gout—a debilitating arthritis caused by eating rich food—has doubled in the USA.¹ Not surprisingly, this is an increase that parallels the growing epidemic of obesity.² Although gout is the most common form of inflammatory arthritis in men, affecting 1 to 2% of men in Western countries and as many as 5 million men in the United States³—it this painful arthritic condition is essentially unknown in parts of the world where people consume a diet based on starches.⁴⁻⁶

Featured Recipes

• Squash Fries
• Baked Potatoes
• Creamy Corn Soup
• Broccomole
• Chunky Gazpacho
• Asian Noodles

We encourage you to pass this newsletter along to friends.

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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 overnutrition. 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):**

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 physiologically 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. 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. 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. Feeding rats a potato-enriched diet for 3 weeks led to a 30% decrease in cholesterol and a 36% decrease in triglyceride levels.

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. 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. 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 sufficient 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.

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<th>Example Days*</th>
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<td>White Potato</td>
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<td>Breakfast</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Dinner</td>
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* 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.
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 a powerful tool to use for easing the learning curve.

References:


Gout Is on the Rise

Over the past 20 years the incidence of gout—a debilitating arthritis caused by eating rich food—has doubled in the USA.¹ Not surprisingly, this is an increase that parallels the growing epidemic of obesity.² Although gout is the most common form of inflammatory arthritis in men, affecting 1 to 2 % of men in Western countries and as many as 5 million men in the United States³—a painful arthritic condition is essentially unknown in parts of the world where people consume a diet based on starches.⁴⁻⁶

The Diagnosis

I see many people who believe they suffer with gout, but they don’t. They may have joint pains, and some may have an elevated blood uric acid level, but their problem is usually degenerative arthritis (osteoarthritis). Gout is suspected if a joint—classically, the base of the big toe—becomes suddenly swollen, red, and painful. However, the definitive diagnosis is made by examining, under the microscope, fluid extracted from a painful joint and finding uric acid crystals (monosodium urate crystals).

The Cause

The inflammatory process in gout is caused by the accumulation of uric acid crystals in a joint. Excess uric acid in the body can be caused by an increase in production by the body and by under-elimination by the kidneys. However, the most important cause is an increase in the intake of rich foods, which are high in uric acid precursors, known as purines. These molecules are the building blocks of genetic materials—DNA and RNA. The muscles of animals—meat, poultry, fish and seafood—are the most important sources of purines. Vegetable sources of purines do not contribute to the risk of having an attack of gout. According to an article in the New England Journal of Medicine, “Higher levels of meat and seafood consumption are associated with an increased risk of gout…Moderate intake of purine-rich vegetables or protein is not associated with an increased risk of gout.”⁷ Other lifestyle habits, like alcohol consumption are also believed to encourage the deposition of uric acid crystals in the joints.

Weight Loss from Any Cause Can Start Gout

I have seen a couple of my patients develop gout after changing to our diet.⁸ This is caused by the release of uric acid from their dissolving body fat. These molecules can move to the joints where they may form crystals. I worry about this happening only with patients with a history of previous gout. Even for these people, the risk of an attack is very small. However, for some patients any risk is too much and they may choose to add a further measure of protection by taking a time-honored gout medication—colchicine .05 mg daily for about 6 months—in order to eliminate the possibility of an attack while losing weight.

Not surprisingly, gout attacks have been seen more frequently since the popularity of high protein diets (Atkins, South Beach, etc.).⁹ The foods recommended by these low-carbohydrate diets are very high in purines. Second, these diets cause rapid weight loss and thereby facilitate the release of uric acid from the body fat. Lastly, these diets cause dehydration and place added stress on the kidneys, which might make people more sensitive to the rise in uric acid.

The Medical Treatments

Early treatment, within 24 hours, is the key to resolving an episode of acute gouty arthritis. Colchicine, the traditional agent used, is more specific for gout than are the NSAIDs, which are also effective. Although elevated levels of uric acid in the blood are a major risk factor for the development of gout, acute gouty arthritis can occur in the presence of normal serum uric acid levels. Patients suffering with on-going damage from elevated uric acid levels may need treatment with medication that lowers uric acid in the body (like allopurinol). Just having an elevated uric acid level without chronically active arthritis (or recurrent kidney stones) is not a cause for treatment with medication (you still need to change your diet).
All dietary recommendations for the prevention of gout attacks strongly recommend avoiding the use of muscle foods. Some authorities also warn against high protein vegetable foods, like beans, peas and lentils. Actually, higher intake of vegetable protein is associated with a lower risk of gout. Therefore, if a patient avoids the animal foods, including some of the higher protein vegetable foods mentioned above will cause no trouble. Based on population studies and the well-established cause-and-effect mechanisms between animal muscles and gout, I believe the common form of diet-caused gout cannot occur in people who follow a McDougall-type diet. However, most people have large storages of uric acid in their tissues which may take months of healthy eating and associated weight loss to dissolve away.

References:


Featured Recipes

SQUASH FRIES

Many people have sent me variations on these “fries” so I decided it was time to share this simple starch dish with you. John calls this recipe the “I could eat these all day long squash fries”.

Preparation Time:  10 minutes
Cooking Time:  40 minutes
Servings:  2

1 butternut squash

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Peel the squash and remove the seeds. Cut into french fry shapes. Place on a non-stick baking sheet in a single layer. Sprinkle with salt, if desired. Bake for 20 minutes, then flip over and bake for an additional 20 minutes. They will get lightly brown and crispy, but still be a bit soft in the center. Delicious!

BAKED POTATOES

Baked potatoes are a simple yet versatile meal. They can be eaten plain or with a wide variety of toppings. Potatoes may be microwaved if you are in a big rush, but the flavor and texture of the potato won’t be nearly as delicious as those baked in an oven. Our favorite potatoes for baking are the large brown-skinned russet variety.

Preheat oven to 475 degrees.

Scrub the potatoes well and prick them all over with a fork.

Bake potatoes directly on the oven rack, for one hour. They will be fluffy and delicious.

I don’t recommend baking them in aluminum foil. It makes potatoes pasty, instead of dry and fluffy. If you like potatoes this way, make sure you wrap them in parchment paper before using the foil.

Make extra potatoes for leftovers. Store unwrapped in the refrigerator. Eat them cold or reheat in the microwave.

Topping Ideas:

Salsa or barbecue sauce
Tofu sour cream and chives
Baked beans
Chili
Pea soup or bean soup
Fat free dressings
Almost any bean recipe goes great over baked potatoes.

Hints: Sweet potatoes are also delicious when baked. They should be baked at a lower temperature, about 350 degrees, for 45-50 minutes. Prick them all over with a fork and place on a baking tray in the oven. (Or place on the oven rack and put a baking tray on the shelf underneath to catch the drips.) Eat plain, either warm or cold, or try them topped with baked beans. Open your favorite can of healthy fat-free baked beans, heat, and spoon over the top of the sweet potato.

CREAMY CORN SOUP

This is a simple, yet delicious soup that anyone can easily make.

Preparation Time:  1 minute
Cooking Time:  10 minutes
Servings:  2-4

1 16 ounce package frozen corn kernels, thawed
1 cup vegetable broth

Place the corn in a saucepan with 1/3 cup water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and cook about 5 minutes, until corn is tender. Remove from heat and let cool slightly. Pour into a food processor and process until smooth. Gradually add the broth while processing and continue until soup is quite smooth. Return to saucepan, heat through and serve.

BROCCOMALE

This makes a great substitute for guacamole (I know it sounds a bit strange!). Try it with baked chips for dipping, or use on
burritos or tacos.

Preparation Time: 20 minutes
Chilling Time: 2 hours
Servings: Makes 2 cups

1 ½ cups broccoli stems
1 ½ tablespoons lemon juice
¼ teaspoon cumin
1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
1 tomato, diced
1-2 green onions, chopped
¼ cup chopped green chilies
¼ cup chopped cilantro (optional)

Peel broccoli stems, chop into pieces, and steam until tender, about 10 minutes. Place in a food processor and blend broccoli stems with lemon juice, cumin and garlic powder until completely smooth. Place in a bowl, add remaining ingredients and mix well. Chill before serving.

CHUNKY GAZPACHO

During the summer months I always serve several different versions of gazpacho, the classic cold tomato soup. This one requires a lot of chopped vegetables, so it takes a bit longer to prepare. (See hint below.) It will keep for several days in the refrigerator and makes a great meal on those days when it is too hot to cook.

Preparation Time: 20-40 minutes
Chilling Time: 3-4 hours
Servings: 10

4 cups tomato juice
2 cups peeled, seeded and chopped tomatoes
1 cup chopped cucumber
1/2 cup chopped red onion
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/2 cup corn kernels
1/2 cup chopped green pepper
1/4 cup chopped green onions
1/4 cup chopped zucchini
1/4 cup chopped green chilies (canned)
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
1/4 cup chopped cilantro (optional)
1-2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons lime juice
1 tablespoon hot sauce (like Tabasco), optional

Combine all the ingredients in a large bowl. Cover and chill for several hours before serving.

Hint: The ingredients may be prepared by using a food processor. This is a great time saver. This may also be prepared by pureeing half of the ingredients and leaving the remaining ingredients finely chopped.

Note: To peel tomatoes, use one of the new serrated peelers, or dip briefly in boiling water until the skins loosen, then just slip the skins off.

ASIAN NOODLES

Preparation Time: 20 minutes
Cooking Time: 20 minutes
Servings: 4

1/2 cup water
1-2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 teaspoon fresh grated ginger
1/8 - 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
2 carrots, shredded
1 medium bunch broccoli, cut into florets
1/2 lb mushrooms, sliced
1 bunch green onions, cut in 1 inch pieces
1/4 cup soy sauce
1/2 pound soba noodles
1 tablespoon cornstarch mixed with 2 tablespoons cold water

Place garlic, ginger, red pepper, carrots and broccoli in a wok or large pan with the 1/2 cup water and 2 tablespoons of the soy sauce. Cook and stir for 5 minutes. Add mushrooms and green onions. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile prepare the soba noodles according to package directions. Drain. Toss with the remaining soy sauce. Set aside.

Mix cornstarch with water. Add to vegetable mixture, cook and stir until thickened. Pour over soba noodles and mix well. Serve at room temperature, or refrigerate and serve cold.

VARIATION: Add baby corn, snow peas, or both when you add the mushrooms and green onions.