

# Food and Diet

## A Macrobiotic Dictionary, Part 4

Carl Ferré

**W**e are most pleased to announce that the new online macrobiotic dictionary is available at MacrobioticDictionary.com. This issue contains entries related to food and dietary concepts. Sandy Rothman continues to point out entries that need greater clarity. As always, we look forward to your comments and suggestions.

**Acid-alkaline theory:** The supposition that eating slightly more alkaline-forming foods than acid-forming foods each day is best for optimal health. This theory is based on the fact that blood pH needs to be maintained at 7.35 to 7.45 (slightly alkaline).

**Acid-forming foods:** Foods that when digested cause the bodily fluids to become more acidic. Examples include animal foods, grains, beans, nuts, sugar, alcohol, most chemicals, and drugs.

**Acid-forming minerals:** The primary minerals that have an acid-forming effect are sulphur, phosphorus, chloride, fluoride, and iodine.



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**Acidic condition:** A preponderance of acid byproducts in the internal fluids, especially when in the blood.

**Alkaline-forming foods:** Foods that when digested cause the bodily fluids to become more alkaline. Examples include sea salt and salt products, vegetables, most fruits, seeds, non-chemicalized teas, and coffee (black, without cream or sugar).

**Alkaline-forming minerals:** The primary minerals that have an alkaline-forming effect are sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and iron.

**Appetite, good:** The desire and ability to eat the simplest food with joy, pleasure, and deep gratitude. Good appetite is one of the seven conditions of health.

**Balanced eating:** Consuming foods that have a near equal amount of yin qualities and yang qualities and thus have a centering effect. In the largest sense, this means a diet based on whole grains and fresh vegetables rather than meat and sugar.

**Binge:** Excessive indulgence, usually for a short period of time, by eating extreme yin foods or drinking alcoholic beverages as a result of restricting food choices too much, trying to yangize too quickly, or using too much salt.

**Biological Transmutation:** A theory that claims that one element can change to another within the healthy body as long as internal heat from

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movement or exercise is available. "The process of transmutation goes on whenever there is life, no matter what sort of diet we follow. By understanding how it works, we can truly be the creators of ourselves and our existence." (*Essential Ohsawa*, 30)

**Breastfed babies:** Breastfeeding is preferred in all cases unless there is some problem preventing it. If breastfeeding is not possible, the macrobiotic view is to use kokkoh (grain milk) or another substitute other than cow's milk.

**Chewing:** The basic macrobiotic recommendation is to chew each mouthful of whole grain quickly at least fifty times and up to one hundred and fifty times and vegetables until they are liquid. Whole grains become tastier the more they are chewed.

**Diet Number Seven:** One of George Ohsawa's dietary plans in which one eats one hundred percent whole grains along with a minor amount of specific condiments for a brief period of time (three to ten days) in order to cleanse the body of excess toxins. This temporary healing diet also includes the instruction to drink as few beverages (other than water) as possible. Note: Current practice is not to

restrict water in any way; each person should make certain to drink an adequate amount of water each day at all times. Note also that Diet Number Seven is not intended for long-term use.

**Dietary Goals, U. S.:** Goals produced by a Senate Select Committee headed by George McGovern in 1977 that affirmed that Americans need to consume more grains and vegetables and less meat and sugar.

**Dietary guidelines / proportions:** Any of several lists of percentages of various food groups that are considered to be healthy. These percentages from George Ohsawa, Michio Kushi, Herman Aihara, and others are adjusted for season, climate, location, activity, and one's purpose.

**Ecology:** One of the principles used to select foods by which perishable foods that grow nearest to one's local environment are preferred. The overriding principle is found in the Japanese Buddhist expression: "Shin do fu ji" (the body and soil are not separate).

**Economy:** One of the principles used to select foods by which whole foods and using an entire food (no waste) are preferred. In addition, foods such as organic ones that are grown without insecticides or other chemical additives are favored.

**Energy, dietary source of:** The macrobiotic view is that the best and cleanest source of energy is complex carbohydrates. Thus, whole grains combined with whole beans to make a more complete protein forms the basis of a macrobiotic dietary approach.

**Fats (saturated and unsaturated):** A macrobiotic approach to diet contains about 13 percent unsaturated fat and about 2 percent saturated fats. Fat sources include good-quality vegetable oils, beans (including soy products), whole grains, nuts, seeds, and fish.

**Feeding table, kokkoh, for infants:** A table for feeding kokkoh (grain milk) to infants for the first weeks and months of life. Kokkoh is used in cases where mother's milk is unavailable for some reason, or as a supplement.

**Five-Element Theory:** An extension of yin-yang based on seasonal changes for further classification and refinement in making daily choices. The five elements are wood (spring), fire (summer), earth (late summer), metal/air (autumn), and water (winter).

**Five flavors (tastes):** The flavors corresponding to the five elements of the five-element theory: sour (wood), bitter (fire), sweet (earth), pungent (metal/air), and salty (water).

**Food Selection:** One's physical, mental, and emotional life depends on the nourishment of food since foods determine the condition of the vital organs including the brain. Principles used are selecting local, in-season, indigenous, and organic foods and choosing as wide a variety as possible.

**Fruitarian diet:** A diet based on eating only or primarily fruits. Some fruitarians include nuts and seeds and some legumes. The macrobiotic view is that such a diet might be useful for a brief period of time to remove toxins from excess animal food but that

it is not balanced and not practical for long-term use.

**Grain diet:** A diet based on eating only or primarily whole grains. The macrobiotic view is that such a diet might be useful for a brief period of time as a type of fast to remove toxins from the body but that it is too restrictive for long-term use.

**Grains, refined:** Grains that are milled, stripping out both the bran and germ to give them a finer texture and longer shelf life. The refining process removes many nutrients, including fiber. Refined grains include white flour, white rice, and pastas. Refined grains are used in macrobiotics as supplemental foods and less often than whole grains.

**Grains, whole:** Grains in which the bran, germ, and endosperm are still present in the same proportions as when they were growing in the fields. The bran contains B vitamins, fiber, and important antioxidants. The germ contains many B vitamins as well as some protein, minerals, and healthy fats. The endosperm contains starchy carbohydrates, proteins, and small amounts of vitamins and minerals.

**Grains, yin and yang of:** Most whole grains such as brown rice, millet, barley, whole oats, buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth, and products made from whole grains like white rice, buckwheat noodles, and naturally-leavened bread made from 100 percent whole grain flour are more yang. Partially processed grains such as udon noodles, ramen, soba (buckwheat) noodles, bulghur, cornmeal, and rolled cereals (oats, rye, wheat, etc.) are slightly yin.

**Homeostasis:** The ability of the body

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to control its internal conditions and keep them relatively constant and in equilibrium between interdependent systems of the human body. Examples include the amount of oxygen, amount of glucose, body temperature, and acidity or alkalinity.

**Infants, macrobiotic food for:** General suggestions are breastfeeding for at least nine months (one year preferred), the introduction of soft whole grains at about six months old, and soft vegetables at about one year old. Kokkoh is recommended if breastfeeding is not possible.

**Liquid intake:** The appropriate amount of water is vital to one's health. Much of the macrobiotic literature advises drinking less or controlling liquid intake. One chart stated to

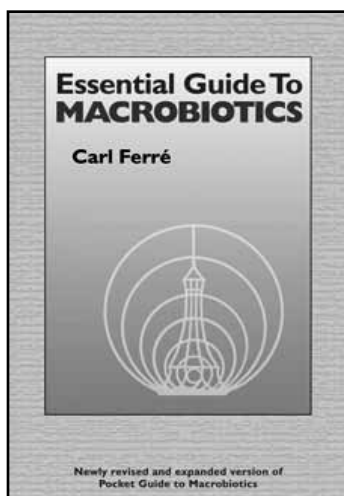
drink "as little as possible." Current recommendations are for people to limit beverages but not to limit fresh water. Dehydration can lead to many problems and drinking water when needed is important for maximum health.

**Locally-grown foods:** The first principle of macrobiotic food selection is that the best fresh foods for an individual are those that grow in one's local environment and that are in season.

**Macrobiotic dietary approach:** The use of specific techniques for optimal food choices, preparation, and consumption based on combining healthy traditional foods, including whole grains and their products, fresh vegetables, beans, fruit, nuts, seeds,

**This is one of the best introductory books on macrobiotic philosophy and diet uniting the three major expressions of macrobiotic teachings: George Ohsawa, Herman Aihara, and Michio Kushi.**

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pickles, fermented foods, herbs, seasonings, sea vegetables, and teas. Each person discovers the best foods for her or him based on macrobiotic principles. Thus, the term “the macrobiotic diet” is inaccurate; there are as many different diets as there are people. Many people thrive being vegan and other people choose to include some animal food.

**Natural foods:** Foods that don’t contain additives or preservatives and that have undergone minimal (if any) processing.

**Old age:** Beginning at age seventy, dietary suggestions include reducing salt intake, using a small amount of good quality vegetable oil daily, and making certain foods as simple and natural as possible. Lifestyle recommendations include living more in nature and giving happiness to others.

**Overeating:** Consuming more than is good for oneself due to unbalanced eating such as using too much salt (yang) and thus being attracted to sweets (yin). Another example is eating only carbohydrates or only protein or only fat at a meal, which results in overeating to feel satisfied. Meals with at least one source from all three yields a more satisfying meal and thus no need to overeat.

**Pleasure foods:** All foods not included as principal foods (whole grains and their products) or secondary foods (fresh vegetables, beans, sea vegetables, fish, fruit, nuts, seeds, fermented foods, and teas) except for refined sugar, which is avoided if at all possible. Examples include animal foods (other than fish), dairy products, and honey.

**Principal Food (staple foods):** One

of Ohsawa’s main teachings in the dietary realm is that whole grains should be the principal or main food of one’s diet. The return to a diet based on natural whole grains as one’s principal food is the secret of improving one’s natural immunity or healing power. “Only whole grains are meant to be used as principal foods...they form the foundation of a macrobiotic way of eating because they are a combination of both seed and fruit, are abundant on the Earth, and are a most economical, ecological, and nutritious food.” (*Essential Ohsawa*, 19)

**Rice diet:** Shorthand (but inaccurate) name given to a macrobiotic dietary approach because whole grain brown rice is the principal food. Also, a shorthand name for diet number seven.

**Salt, intake of:** The amount of salt consumed is of vital importance for optimal health. Too little salt can lead to fatigue and dulled mental awareness and greater disorders if continued for a long period of time because salt is an alkalizing factor. Too much salt can lead to an attraction to sweets or other yin foods and to heart problems and high blood pressure if continued for a long time.

**Secondary foods:** Secondary foods to principal foods (whole grains and their products) include fresh vegetables, beans, sea vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, fermented foods, fish, and teas.

**Standard Macrobiotic Diet:** Dietary guidelines from Michio Kushi that provide lists of foods he believed were acceptable and those foods he maintained should be avoided. Ideally, these preliminary guidelines are

used for a brief time until one learns macrobiotic principles and can decide the best foods for him- or herself.

**Strict macrobiotic diet:** Name given to restricting macrobiotic foods to mostly brown rice, some vegetables, and very little else. People often use this approach thinking it can remedy a disorder; however, using a restricted diet over an extended period of time can lead to additional problems.

**Ten Ways to Health and Happiness:** In *Zen Macrobiotics*, Ohsawa published a list of ten dietary percentages of various foods that comprise healthy ways to eat in his view. These diets were numbered from minus 3 to seven, from which the diet number seven gets its name. Five of these diets are vegan and five include up to 30 percent animal foods.

**Vegetal mother:** The realization that all foods have a vegetal origin because only vegetables can absorb inorganic elements and convert them into organic foods. Without the vegetal world no animals, including humans, can exist.

**Vegetarians/Vegans:** Vegans are persons who eat only vegetal foods. Vegetarians eat primarily vegetables but some include small amounts of animal foods such as fish, eggs, cheese, or other dairy products. Many macrobiotic practitioners are either vegetarian or vegan and the number is growing given the decreasing quality of animal foods.

**Whole foods:** “What are whole foods? Those that are not refined, extracted, or made by synthetic chemicals. Therefore, refined flour, white bread, sugar, meat (this is only part of a cow), milk products (cream,



cheese, etc. are part of milk), sugar products, etc. are not whole foods. All whole grains are whole foods. Small fish can be whole if you eat the head and tail. Eat vegetables, leaves, and roots. Whole foods contain all the nutrition and minerals needed. (Of course, some elements are contained in less quantity in certain foods than in others.) By eating whole foods, we will be able to maintain homeostasis and a good balance of nutrition in our blood, body fluid, and cells. By eating whole foods, we will be able to manufacture our own vitamins and enzymes. Therefore, by eating whole foods, we will be able to develop the ability of transmutation. When we acquire this ability, we will be able to live on grains and vegetables, transmuting these to animal protein and

body cells.” (*Macrobiotics: An Invitation to Health and Happiness*, 40-41)

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