

Food Combining Talk - Leslie Barnett

1. **Think about the energy it takes to digest our food.** Our bodies do not have unlimited energy. We get our energy from the food we eat but we also spend energy to digest food. If our bodies have to spend a lot of energy digesting our food, we won't have as much energy to do other things in life... energy that could be used for many other things such as healing an injury, fighting an infection, doing exercise or being productive at work. The reason why we want to pay attention to what we are eating is that if you can control how much energy you want to expend when you are digesting. Food combining allows the body to be more efficient at digestion food. If we expense a lot of energy digesting our food, we don't have as much energy to do the other things. The best example is the feeling you have after Thanksgiving dinner....

2. **Think about your digestive track.** Your digestive track is complex and needs to do a lot of things to make sure that we are able to get all the nutrients from the foods we eat. This process starts in the mouth with enzymes in our saliva and ends at the rectum, after the excess water has been absorbed. Food travels down our esophagus, into the stomach where it is mixed with more enzymes and acids, these come from the pancreas and gall bladder, then moves to the small intestine, where most of the nutrients are absorbed and then into the large intestine. Macronutrients need different things to happen to be digested.

3. **Think about the dominant macro-nutrient in the food... Protein, Fat or Carbohydrate. All foods are made up of protein, carbohydrates and fats.**

- **Proteins** are long chains of amino acids that need to be broken down to individual amino acids. These amino acids are essential to the **structure and function** of every system in the body. Protein needs acid and enzymes to be broken down into the useful amino acids. Most plant foods are not protein dominant. Animal foods are.
- **Carbohydrates** are broken down into simple sugars. These are the primary **energy source** for the body. They need certain specific enzymes to be digested. Carbohydrate dominant foods are all fruits, vegetables, grains (some protein) and legumes (some protein).
- **Fats** are broken down into fatty acids. These are essential for **cell membranes, brain and nerve health**. They need specific enzymes to be digested. Fat dominant foods are nuts (some protein), seeds (some protein) and avocados (some protein) and unrefined oils (olive oil, coconut oil etc.)

4. **Think about each food and where it comes from. I call this the ENERGETICS of food.**

- Root veggies grow under the surface of the soil. They are very dense, lower water content with lots of fiber, and complex sugars that need to be broken down. They are very "grounding". You may need to eat more of these at times to feel grounded. Carrots, potatoes, parsnips, turnips, radishes.
- Ground veggies and fruit growing just on the ground on top of the soil. These include all the leafy green veggies, squashes, melons, strawberry, and asparagus. These have a higher water content than root veggies and are easier to digest. These are very balancing and energizing.
- Vine or bush veggies and fruit grow on vines or bushes a few feet above the ground. Includes green beans, tomatoes, eggplant, broccoli, artichoke, pepper, cucumber, grains, legumes, blueberry, raspberry, etc. These have varying water content. They are also balancing and energizing.
- Tree fruits are the most energizing. Apple, orange, peach, plum, nectarine, cherry, mango, papaya, banana, etc...

5. **Think about how much energy you want to spend digesting food.** If our health is compromised, i.e. if we have a chronic illness, are overweight, fighting infections, we need to devote more energy to healing than to digesting big meals. To gain the most energy from your meals and not use it for digestion, it is important to keep meals and eating very simple. The hardest to digest foods are the ones at the top of the pyramid (nuts, seeds, legumes). You want to use these in smaller quantities and with other foods non-fruit foods that have more water and fiber for better digestibility. Meals with lots of different types of foods are hard to digest.

6. **Become aware of the foods you are eating, how they are prepared and how you feel after you eat them.** Become aware of the color, the texture, the weight, where it was grown, how fresh it is. Prepare all your food with consciousness, care and love. Become aware of how you feel after you eat. Combining food will become second nature with this awareness.