

Introduction

“Knowing where your food comes from can change your life.”
–Alice Waters

I wrote this book for my children.

As a dietitian with a successful corporate wellness practice, I had worked with thousands of individuals to lose weight, manage chronic disease, and improve their health through diet. I loved staying abreast of the latest clinical research on food findings, and then helping my clients to incorporate the newest proven strategies or foods for effectively managing weight, fighting disease, feeding their families soundly, and helping companies better manage their spiraling healthcare costs.

Then I had children, and my world changed. Suddenly the issue of global health, always important but somehow easy to nudge into the back seat of the day to day realities of making a life, took on a clearer focus, and had a startling, immediate urgency to me. As each day brought a steady drip of fresh news which reinforced the consensus on the global warming crisis (including some that hit very close to home for us living in a ski town), the reality finally sunk in; the world that I have known, the lifestyle that I have been fortunate to enjoy, will change dramatically for my children.

Suddenly, speaking to 200 company employees about “healthy dashboard dining” really didn’t seem all that important. In fact, it seemed kind of pointless, much like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

Like a polar bear clinging to a shrinking ice floe, I had clung in vain to the idea (and perhaps the hope) my children would somehow be sheltered from the impending climate crisis. But I now felt the weight of knowing how life would change for my children and grandchildren, and it seemed unacceptable not to at least *try* to become part of the solution.

So, out of curiosity, to see if I could contribute by making some different suggestions to clients to help them eat in a greener way, I began looking deeper into our food choices and their possible role in our individual carbon footprints.

And what I found appalled me.

The American diet is warming the planet.

Americans food choices are a significant driver of the global warming crisis.

Yes, it is our *food choices*, and all of the energy that it takes to give us these choices (including production, transport, processing, packaging, storage and preparation) that is now the single largest contributor to global warming, eclipsing even our love affair with our SUVs; The “food sector” in America accounts for 19% of total U.S energy use each year. The average

American diet creates 2.8 tons of CO₂ emissions each year per person, *which has now surpassed the 2.2 tons generated by Americans driving*¹.

The impact of these changes are now echoing around the globe; not just because our food is nowadays logging more frequent flier miles than we are, with blueberries from Argentina and grapes from Chile, but because throughout the whole system of the food production, from when it is produced to when we put it in our mouths, the amount of fossil fuel going into our food choices has now far outstripped the actual amount of energy in the food itself. Even something as seemingly innocuous as a head of lettuce can require a river of petroleum to bring it to diners' plates; the average head of lettuce that's grown in California and picked at the peak of ripeness ends up requiring nearly 60 calories of fossil fuel per calorie of lettuce by the time it arrives on a diner's plate in New York City². This is to say nothing of the thousands of highly processed foods that often require barrels of oil to create but provide little in the way of real nutrition.

So thus begins a new chapter in the diet debate; your food choices not only determine the current (and future) state of your health and weight, but are also a significant portion of your overall carbon footprint that you are leaving for your children to deal with. And the typical American diet has the global impact of a Hummer. Not to mention, for most Americans the diet they are consuming is clogging their arteries, fattening their waistline and wreaking havoc on their immune system.

The good news is that health, flavor, and a genuine excitement for food are entirely possible while also cutting your carbon footprint. You do not have to subsist on reconstituted gruel and local twigs in order to trim the amount of fossil fuel on your plate; in fact, I was inspired to create this eating plan precisely because it is easy, doable, and can have significant health and carbon impacts *now*; you will be losing weight and carbon and gaining life and health. Believe me, as someone living high in the Wasatch Mountains in Utah, if anyone was scared about the "pleasure" implications of cutting a carbon footprint (did I mention I am food snob obsessed with authentic ingredients like Prosciutto di Parma *from* Parma, Italy?), it was me.

So here's how it works.

You will enjoy a variety of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and grains.

You will eat at a better spot on the food chain, one that cuts your waist *and* your waste, (and still get to enjoy that steak once in a while).

¹ Eshel G and Martin P.A. "Diet, energy and global warming." *Earth Interactions*. 2006: 10(9): 1-17.

² Pimental D. and Pimental M., eds. *Food, Energy and Society*. Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1996.

You'll live a bit more like a locavore (eating more local and seasonal food) when your area's growing season allows it.

You'll realign your relationship with Industrial Food.

You will move your kids from "food products" back to real food in a way that's easy, tasty and still fun.

You'll still get to savor dessert and alcohol in moderation.

While doing all this, you will *also* significantly cut your carbon impact. In fact, you can actively use this book not as a diet book, but rather as a guide to actively green up your diet and cut greenhouse gasses associated with your food choices.

So that is the genesis for this book. And I hope you will join me. While the global warming crisis is complicated, multifactorial, and has many, many far reaching tentacles that need to be sorted out, *one of the largest, most significant tentacles has a clear, easy, immediate solution*. And the best part is, it can help you slim down, lean up, and dramatically reduce your odds of many chronic diseases, including the leading killers of heart disease and diabetes in the process. If you have children, it will help them change course from being what the CDC warned "the first generation not to outlive their parents", to healthy, nourished eaters of real food instead of "food product" that seems to have overtaken their lunchboxes and their lives.

Only ACTION creates RESULTS. I implore you to join me in this 'lean and green' revolution that will help you lose weight, cut your risk of disease, and significantly cut your carbon footprint *now*.

I think our children would be proud of us.

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