

“A clear road map for the confused eater.”

— SANJAY GUPTA, MD



# FOOD

**WHAT THE HECK SHOULD I EAT?**

*The no-nonsense guide  
to achieving optimal weight  
and lifelong health*

**Mark  
Hyman, MD**

**BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF  
EAT FAT, GET THIN**



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Mark Hyman, MD



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*For all those who have ever wondered, “What the heck should I eat?” this book is for you.*

## Introduction

My guess is that you picked up this book because food confuses you. Why do I say that? Because I have been studying nutrition for 35 years, and even the experts are confused by the science. If the people we look to for nutritional guidance keep changing their views, it's no wonder that the rest of us are befuddled and mystified.

When you wake up in the morning, do you wonder what you should eat that day? Are you sick of being mixed-up and confounded by conflicting media reports about the latest research on which foods are good or bad for us? One day eggs are unhealthy, and the next day they are a miracle food. One year the government tells us to eat six to eleven servings of carbohydrates (bread, rice, cereal, and pasta) as the foundation of our diet, and the next it tells us to cut carbs. The US Dietary Guidelines told us 35 years ago that all our health problems were derived from eating fat and recommended we eat fat “only sparingly.” Then, more than three decades later, they suddenly learned fat wasn't so bad for us. We were just recently told, in the 2015 US Dietary Guidelines, “Uh, don't worry about fat; there is no restriction on how much you can eat because the research shows no connection between obesity or heart disease and dietary fat. And that cholesterol we told you to avoid for fear of dropping dead of a heart attack? Well, we were wrong about that, too, so skip your egg whites and enjoy your whole eggs.”

Of course, the \$1 trillion food industry provides us with all sorts of “healthy” options: low-fat, high-fiber, whole-grain, gluten-free—most of which are the opposite of healthy. My food rule is if there are health claims on the label, what's inside is probably unhealthy. Multigrain Frosted Flakes, anyone?

All of this is enough to make you give up and just eat whatever you want, whenever you want, and in whatever quantities you want. It feels like nutrition whiplash.

This is the reason I have written this book. I want to help you undo all the beliefs about food that are making you fat and sick and replace them with a new understanding that will lead to health and longevity.

In the landscape of eating, there are many beliefs and dogmas, from vegan, Paleo, vegetarian, Mediterranean, and raw food, to ketogenic, high-fat, low-fat, omnivore. How can they all be right? There are benefits to each of these diets, but an all-in approach to one or another may not be the all-in answer.

Humans are adaptable. For generations we have consumed varied diets native to all sorts of environments from all over the planet, from arid desert landscapes to frozen Arctic tundra. So, should you be eating 80 percent carbs from mesquite, acorns, and wild plants, as the indigenous Pima of Arizona did for thousands of years, or 70 percent fat from whale blubber and seal, as the Inuit of the Arctic have traditionally eaten?

The good news is that science continues to refine and illuminate fundamental principles of good nutrition, and we know now more than ever what a good and healthy diet really looks like. I refer to these basic nutritional principles as the Pegan Diet, mostly as a spoof on the fanaticism of my Paleo and vegan friends, who often get hotheaded and emotional when defending their points of view. It's sort of like the Hatfields and the McCoys.

The sad truth is that much of what we eat is not really food. At least, it has been so adulterated and processed we may as well not call it food. It is more of a food-like substance. And as a result, most of us are confused, baffled, and frustrated, not knowing whom to believe or what to eat.

I've also written *Food* because I believe that cultivating and consuming real, whole food is the answer to many of our world's problems. How we grow it, produce it, and eat it affects almost every aspect of our lives and our society. *Food* is an honest how-to guide designed to answer the question, "What the heck should I eat?"

Now, you might be thinking, *I know what food is. It's the stuff you eat to provide fuel for your body so you can live.* But it is so much more. It is medicine. It is information. Food literally controls almost every function of your body and mind. And it connects almost everything that matters in our lives. Food connects us to one another and to our bodies; it can reinvigorate our health, bring families together, restore vibrant

communities, improve the economy and the environment, reduce pollution, and even help our kids get better grades and avoid eating disorders, obesity, and drug abuse; food can even reduce poverty, violence, homicide, and suicide. Our industrial food system drives many of these problems by enabling a national diet of sugary, starchy, overly processed, nutrient-depleted foods laden with pesticides, herbicides, hormones, antibiotics, and other harmful chemicals.

This book is meant to be a road map, based on the best and latest science of what to eat. What you put on your fork is the most important thing you do every day. It influences your capacity to live a rich, energetic, connected, soulful life—a life in which you have the energy to care for yourself, to love your friends and family, to help your neighbor, to fully show up for your work in the world, and to live your dreams. If you enjoy real, whole, fresh foods that you cook using real ingredients, you are positively affecting everything around you.

Simply put: Food is the doorway to living well and loving well—and to fixing much of what's wrong with our world.