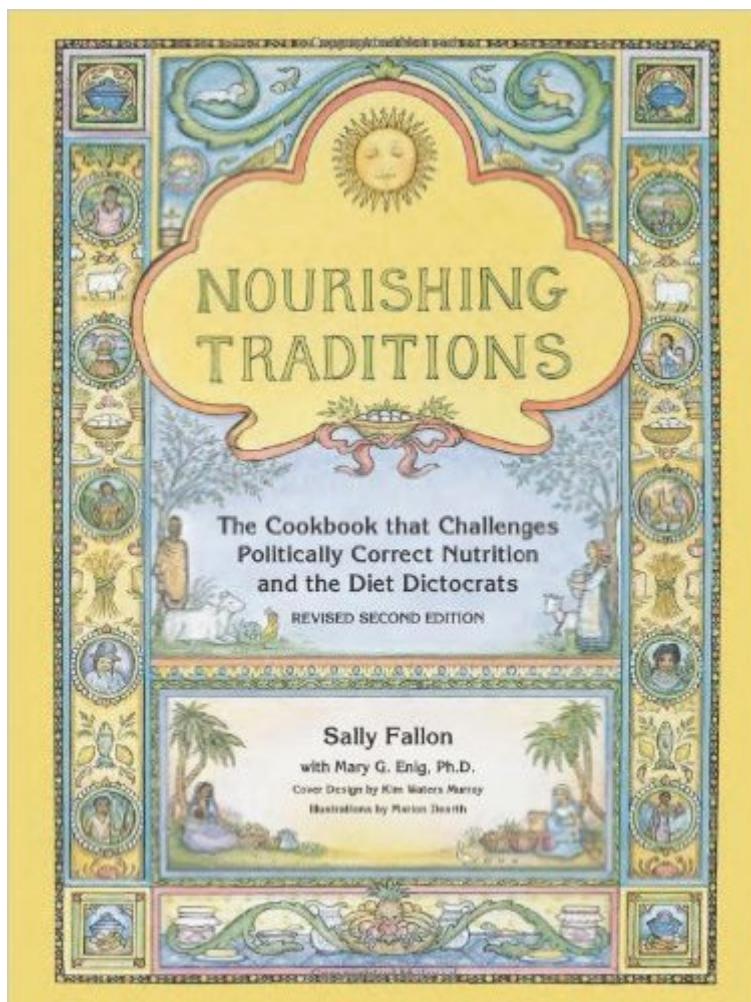


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Nourishing Traditions: The Cookbook That Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition And Diet Dictocrats



Synopsis

This well-researched, thought-provoking guide to traditional foods contains a startling message: Animal fats and cholesterol are not villains but vital factors in the diet, necessary for normal growth, proper function of the brain and nervous system, protection from disease and optimum energy levels. Sally Fallon dispels the myths of the current low-fat fad in this practical, entertaining guide to a can-do diet that is both nutritious and delicious. Nourishing Traditions will tell you: Why your body needs old fashioned animal fats Why butter is a health food How high-cholesterol diets promote good health How saturated fats protect the heart How rich sauces help you digest and assimilate your food Why grains and legumes need special preparation to provide optimum benefits About enzyme-enhanced food and beverages that can provide increased energy and vitality Why high-fiber, lowfat diets can cause vitamin and mineral deficiencies Topics include the health benefits of traditional fats and oils (including butter and coconut oil); dangers of vegetarianism; problems with modern soy foods; health benefits of sauces and gravies; proper preparation of whole grain products; pros and cons of milk consumption; easy-to-prepare enzyme enriched condiments and beverages; and appropriate diets for babies and children.

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Customer Reviews

I was seeing references to this book in other books that I found helpful: The Metabolic Typing Diet and Life Without Bread. But I delayed more than a year before buying Nourishing Traditions. I figured if I knew what to eat, I didn't need a cookbook too. I was wrong. This is a textbook as much as a cookbook. I liken it to Joy of Cooking. You can learn a lot from it about food and nutrition even if you never use its recipes. I have used recipes from both, though, and can attest to their

deliciousness. But I must admit, for me the best thing about reading Nourishing Traditions is learning about nutrition, not learning new recipes. The authors criticize the "Diet Dictocrats" who propound the "politically correct" low-fat, low-cholesterol diet. I find the epithet of "politically correct" rather grating and would hope they drop it in later editions. The book's thesis is a Rousseauian one: industrial food production yields a product unsuited to our body's nature. To find out what is suited to our nature, we ought to rely on research of what preindustrial societies consumed. Thus, as another reviewer pointed out, they view themselves as continuators of the program initiated by the dentist Weston Price (author of Nutrition and Physical Degeneration). I had spent years eating in accordance with the low-fat dietary dogma and my health suffered because of it. I give the authors credit for recognizing a wide spectrum of ideal diets depending on one's genetic makeup. What is more problematic is how one draws the line between natural and unnatural. Is the line to be drawn between industrial and nonindustrial societies, or is it more basic than that? The book NeanderThin, for example sees humanity making a wrong turn with the advent of civilization. Civilization brings cultivation of grain and the domestication of dairy animals. Nourishing Traditions embraces dairy and grain as long as they are prepared in ways consistent with nonindustrial societies. Despite these controversies, Nourishing Traditions is a treasure trove of valuable information. Just one small tidbit: there is a concern that beef in the USA has an unfavorable fat profile--there is an unsatisfactory omega 6/omega 3 fatty acid ratio. I just learned from Nourishing Traditions that this problem is not present with lamb in the USA because lamb is virtually all pasture-raised. Since I live in a small apartment and have no place to hang a side of pasture-fed beef, this was very helpful information. OK, OK, one more tidbit. Everyone by now should know that people who eat nuts live longer. I love the taste of nuts but they always were hard for me to digest. Nourishing Traditions explains why and told me how to eat nuts without the digestive upset. These people know their stuff. I've seen five stars on a lot of books, that were, frankly, pretty lightweight. This book is a keeper. It's not someone's brilliant marketing concept turned into a book. It's clearly the product of much, much, hard work. It's not the final word. But it's a comprehensive presentation of a coherent worldview on healthy nutrition.

While the front matter in the book is pretty earth-shaking in terms of toppling most dietary shibboleths erected in recent years, the sidebar information as you go through the book is just as eye-opening. But let me deal with some objections I noted when reading reviews of this book. There are over 200 reviews, which says something about this book: it may not be on airport book racks, but people are reading it. The NT way of eating is downright dangerous. This is in the eye of

the beholder. Most studies showing a decrease in heart disease deaths due to cholesterol-lowering drugs or diets show an increase in death rates from all causes. Which one are you going to take your chances with? Several well-done studies audited by independent researchers show no correlation between deaths related to heart disease or arteriosclerosis and the consumption of butter, eggs, and red meat. A few studies show that butter and saturated fats appear to have a protective effect. What happens is that the government, the American Heart Association, the American Dietetic Association, and others (the Diet Dictocrats), cherry pick the studies they will publicize and which aspects of these studies the public will learn about--which the MSM then dutifully report to John Q. Public. Studies whose results seem to defy the diet-heart hypothesis are silenced, starved of funds, and ultimately shuttered. Hence you have people like my father-in-law who says he's not supposed to eat organ meats because they are high in cholesterol. There is absolutely no relationship between the amount of cholesterol in a food and the likelihood of it contributing to arteriosclerosis. The one exception is a form of oxidized cholesterol (present in powdered milk and powdered eggs, and in liquid lowfat milk), which did produce arteriosclerosis in rats. These are the foods we are supposed to eat to lower our cholesterol, and they actually contribute to heart disease! Sally Fallon et al. have a thing against vegetarians. This criticism was the most prevalent among the reviews. The reviewers were very emotional in their comments...but that should not be construed as reflecting an emotionalism (can I say that?) in the book. The book is unemotional. However, vegetarianism is the most deeply established alternate diet we have--many people are invested in it body, heart, and soul. I won't debate here whether vegetarianism is a good diet or not, but I will say that there are several points in the book where it's pointed out that pure vegetarian (vegan) diets are likely to contribute to a deficiency in fat-soluble vitamins (which come from animal products, primarily), some B vitamins and, if the grains/beans/legumes are unsoaked and unfermented, to the loss of minerals. Children in particular are profoundly affected by the lack of animal fat in the diet, and this is very sad to see. On the other hand, a form of "vegetarianism" is followed in some cultures (more out of necessity than choice) which includes animal products in the form of eggs, raw and cultured dairy products, seafood, shrimp and fish eggs, and insects. These high-vitamin foods are sought-after commodities in these cultures, since they contain the all-important fat-soluble activators necessary for strength, long life, and healthy reproduction. The book notes that these more vegetarian cultures tend to suffer more from dental caries (as noted by Dr. Price) than others, but there are no diatribes. The book is not well referenced. I do not get this one at all. There are 63 footnoted pages of text explaining traditional foods, the role of certain substances in the diet (with an emphasis on fats), and the shortcomings of modern food processing

and what can be done about it. There are 188 references listed in a separate section; most of these are research periodicals. Sally Fallon is down on working moms. "No one in modern America deserves more sympathy than the working parent on a limited budget....While it is not necessary to spend long hours in the kitchen in order to eat properly, it is necessary to spend some time in the kitchen. Simple, wholesome menus require careful planning rather than long hours of preparation...nutritious meals can be prepared very quickly when one lays the groundwork ahead of time. If your present schedule allows no time at all for food preparation, you would be wise to re-examine your priorities." There are two pages of simple hints and advice that anybody could follow. Sally Fallon is down on moms who don't breastfeed. "If, in spite of these measures, your milk supply is inadequate, don't feel guilty. Lack of adequate milk supply sometimes does occur, especially as baby grows and his appetite increases. You have done the best you could and your baby can still grow up healthy, strong and smart on a homemade, whole-food baby formula." Soaked baked goods don't turn out. There may be some credence to this criticism. I don't know all the recipes (there aren't many bread/baked goods recipes in the book). The one recipe I made produced some very decent sourdough bread. It turned out just as the book said--it was different, and boy was it sour! The good news is, you don't have to be a purist. Although refined flour is bad for the body, you don't have to eat it by the truckload. Making your own bread (even if it breaks the NT rules) is still better than buying stuff from the store; it's fresher, tastes better, and you can buy a bag of top-quality flour for the same price you'll pay for a loaf of the good stuff. If you do that, you will rely less on pre-made bread products for the foundation of your diet--lowering your overall intake of refined carbohydrates. Without all the flour-based products from the store, and with a few home-made loaves and a batch of cornbread or muffins now and then, your protective fats will take care of you. Sally Fallon and Mary Enig reference their own works. This is to be expected, after one has written a number of extended/scholarly works (which Mary Enig has done) and is now contributing to a book intended for a general audience. The recommended foods/supplements are too expensive. After reading The Maker's Diet, I had the same thought: how is everybody supposed to get a hold of raw milk and grass-fed meat? We don't all live in California and have Silicon Valley-sized incomes, bub. Don't even get me started on the supplements. This is not the case with NT. While it's true that if you want the ultimate cod-liver oil, it can get kinda spendy, the emphasis here is on putting the highest quality of food you can afford on the table. A philosophical shift might be helpful here. You will become convinced, reading this book, that the epidemic in degenerative disease afflicting Americans is due to our long-distance, highly processed mode of food production. A dollar spent today on high-quality food may save thousands in medical bills down the road. It is an

investment, and you get to choose where you need to spend and where you can pull back. There are many, many simple ideas and techniques in the book that you can incorporate right now in your kitchen, lots of basic recipes and just a few key ingredients you can stock right away. Like lard. The recipes/cooking methods take too much time. This also would seem to be a criticism that sticks. But here again, we need to examine priorities. Do we really need to watch 3 hours of television a night? Do the kids really need to be trucking here and there to a different activity every afternoon/evening? Why can't Mom get some help in the kitchen? Perhaps the family needs to spend more time together, planting a square foot garden. Then everybody can get excited about eating food that tastes good and is good for you. And if all that Pollyannish stuff doesn't work out, Mom can just get sneaky. Pull out the margarine and substitute butter. Put liver in the tacos. Use brown rice pasta and less of it. More rice and potatoes and less bread. No more bottled salad dressing. Soak everything. Personally, I used to stress about every meal when I first started using this book. Then I realized that if I just took 5 minutes every night to think through the next day's meals, everything went so much more smoothly. I could soak the oatmeal or the beans, get some stock going to simmer through the night, pull out meat from the freezer, or if all else fails, make a shopping list and figure out how I can procure the stuff I need. Sometimes it can be difficult to locate a crucial ingredient. NT has a Sources page that is invaluable, especially if you want to try making something exotic, like kombucha. The Internet, of course, offers a lot of different packaged goods. And then again, different areas of the country have access to different foodstuffs. I could go to Trader Joe's and Wild Oats in Washington but they don't have that here. On the other hand, I can buy meat and milk directly from a farm. And lard from local hogs.***This is long, and sometimes I wonder why I stay up to write about such things. Is a review of Nourishing Traditions really that important? I think it is, and I'll tell you why. Because when you read about Dr. Price and what he learned about the impact of nutrition on the body (not just the teeth), you will realize that being in the home, cooking fresh high-quality food for your family, is the most important thing you can do. All the things modernity has brought us, all the activities (for better or for worse) have tempted us away from the table and pushed us toward the TV tray. Fast, flash-frozen, microwaved meals and reheated pizza--no wonder we are all fat and exhausted. Cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stroke--they wait at the end of our lives for us and what can we do to protect ourselves? More immediately, when a child is born and the birth is difficult, or the child has physical problems, it is absolutely searing for the parents. When that child grows up and has allergies, learning disabilities, childhood diseases or cancer, everyone suffers. Poor nutrition in the parents is a death sentence for the next generation. The health care crisis in this country has a lot of factors involved in it--but one of the

most preventable causes, one over which we have the most control, is what we put on our table and what we put in our mouths. We have the power to heal ourselves and it is worth making it a priority.

UPDATE 4/9/09 Still cooking with this book. Lately I've experimented a lot more with the soaked flour recipes and have gotten good results. And while my husband tried to tell me politely that he really didn't prefer the sourdough bread, the yeasted buttermilk bread is a hit. And it smells like heaven while baking. I also bit the bullet and bought the Country Living Grain Mill. This is a hand-powered mill and so might not be for everyone, but I'll vouch for it. If you enjoy baked goods as much as I do, it's worth trying to make them as healthy as you can. All the soaked flour recipes turn out hearty, whole grain products that only involve one extra step (besides grinding, that is)--you take the flour and liquid (usually buttermilk) and mix it up the night before and leave it out. Only the pancakes are really "soaked" in the sense that you get a soupy mixture. The rest of the time it just forms a ball of dough. The real secret to these recipes is the food processor. You are taking a pretty firm ball of flour and buttermilk (or yogurt or cream cheese) and trying to work a few tablespoons of yeast/salt/water/honey/whatever into it the morning after. The food processor (a powerful one--I use a Kitchenaid) makes this task relatively quick and painless, since inadequate mixing will result in hard dry spots in your finished product. If you want to make these recipes and have to choose between the food processor and the grain mill, get the food processor. (I doubted I'd use one very much, but it sees frequent use in our kitchen.) Cookies and cakes...the next frontier. The few cookie recipes in the book are very different than what I'm used to, but the ones based around ground nuts are easy to make and absolutely delicious. There aren't many different recipes for muffins and quick breads, although some variations are provided. You can experiment. You can also take an "ordinary" recipe and try to modify it in some way to bring it more in line with NT principles. Some NT "recipes" are really no-brainers that are obviously favorites in the author's family or meant to jog your brain into thinking more creatively. The Flourless Carob Cake, for instance, is a basic sponge cake that you might find somewhere else and yet not try in favor of the more familiar flour-based ones. It is in fact pretty easy to make, and very sophisticated. Good luck, and happy baking.

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