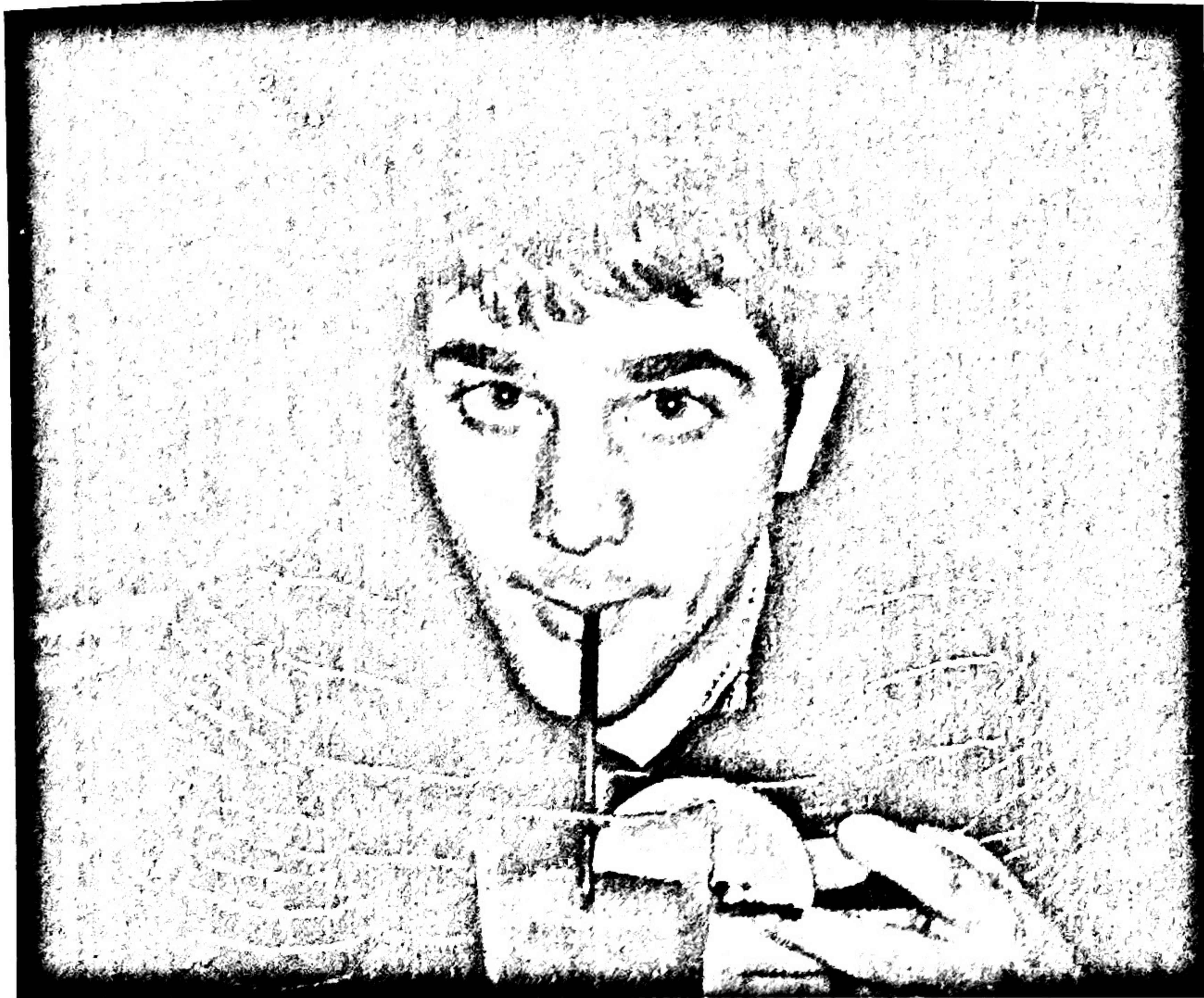


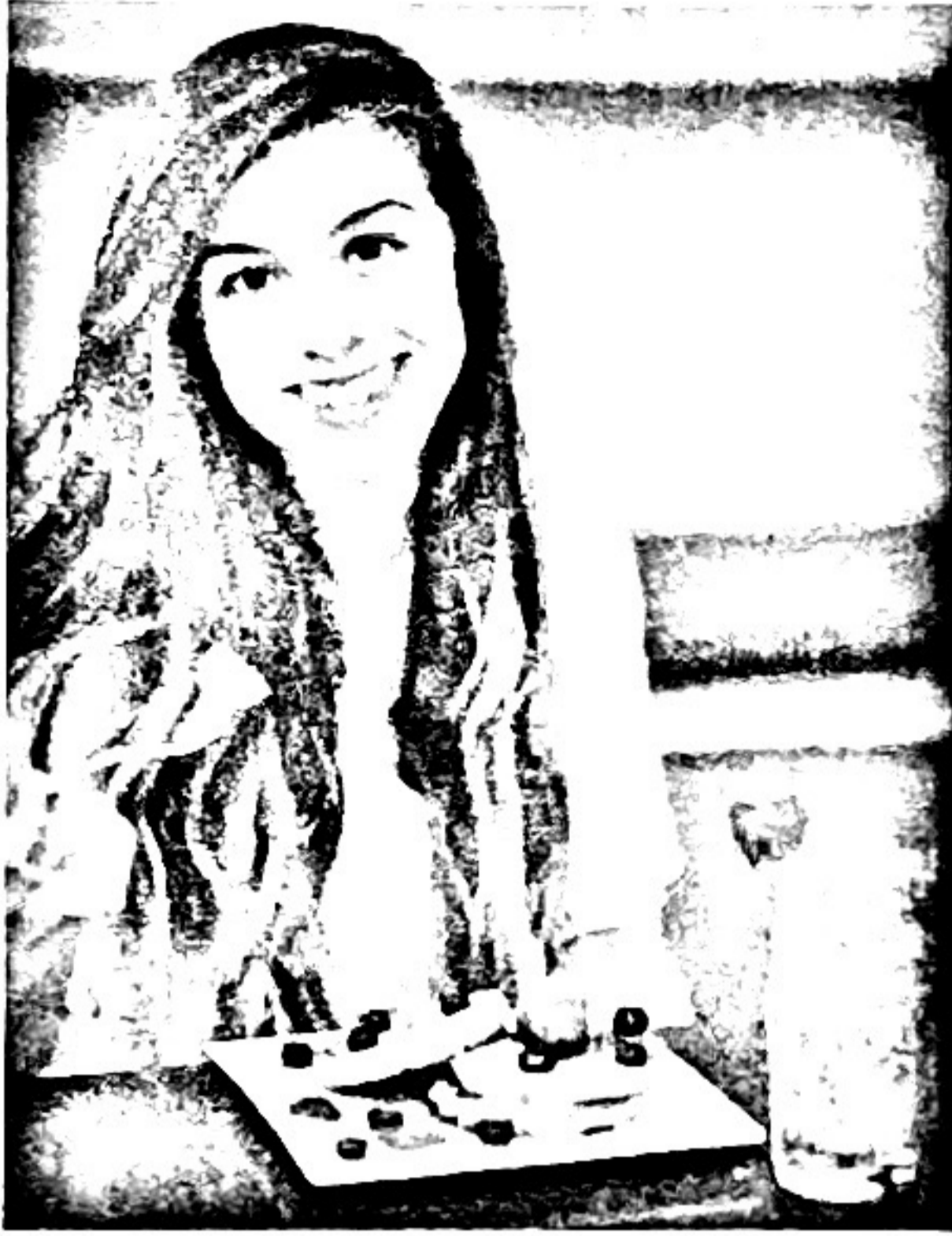
Sustainable Living & Mindful Eating Through the Lifespan



Courtesy of Maria Napoli

*Simply Green Tea
Each sip cools my palette
Liquid swirls around my mouth
Tastes are awakened
Sweet and tart
Antioxidants nourish
Mindfully satisfied*

(Napoli)



Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment without judgment. When we are eating mindfully, we use the medicine of mindfulness to cure the disease of desire. Paying attention in the moment allows our focused awareness to slow us down in ways that provide us the opportunity to deeply look at our habits. Moments of mindfulness can help us break free from our automatic responses to mindlessly eat. When we mindfully decide to eat cookies, cake, or other “forbidden” foods, we begin to cultivate the wise concept of choice. This takes us off of automatic pilot, offering us a glimpse of freedom, hope, and opportunity.

Arriving at the last chapter of *Sustainable Living & Mindful Eating*, you are coming to a new beginning! In this book, you have been invited to reflect upon your own life and relationship to food and eating and contemplate choices or changes. You have been reminded of the power of mindfulness practices, creating space for reflection and *feeling*. You may have noticed how the many habits of food and eating are adopted uncon-

sciously with impact to us, our communities, and even our planet. With a more mindful approach, you may realize that being a certain weight or eating only certain kinds of foods may no longer be as important. You may now notice that learning more about food, its power for nourishment, and connecting us to all living beings through mindfulness may be more important than achieving a certain weight or body shape. If this is true for you, the journey of mindful eating poses wonderful opportunities for self-inquiry, self-improvement, and possibly improved health. Rather than focus on a destination, you may find the journey to be the more interesting path.



Mindful Eating Is

- The ability to look deeply at the food we eat. We see that it contains the earth, the air, the rain, the sun, and the effort of farmers and all of those who process, transport, and sell us the food. Eating with full awareness allows us mindfulness of all of the right effort required to provide our meals. This awareness can nurture our appreciation of the support we get from others and from nature.

It may be exciting to contemplate a future of living mindfully, eating in tune with your body rhythms, your desires, and all of the natural world. A suggestion for your journey is to begin living and eating mindfully *now*, right this moment. This moment is all we have, so let's begin.

Take a Mindful Moment

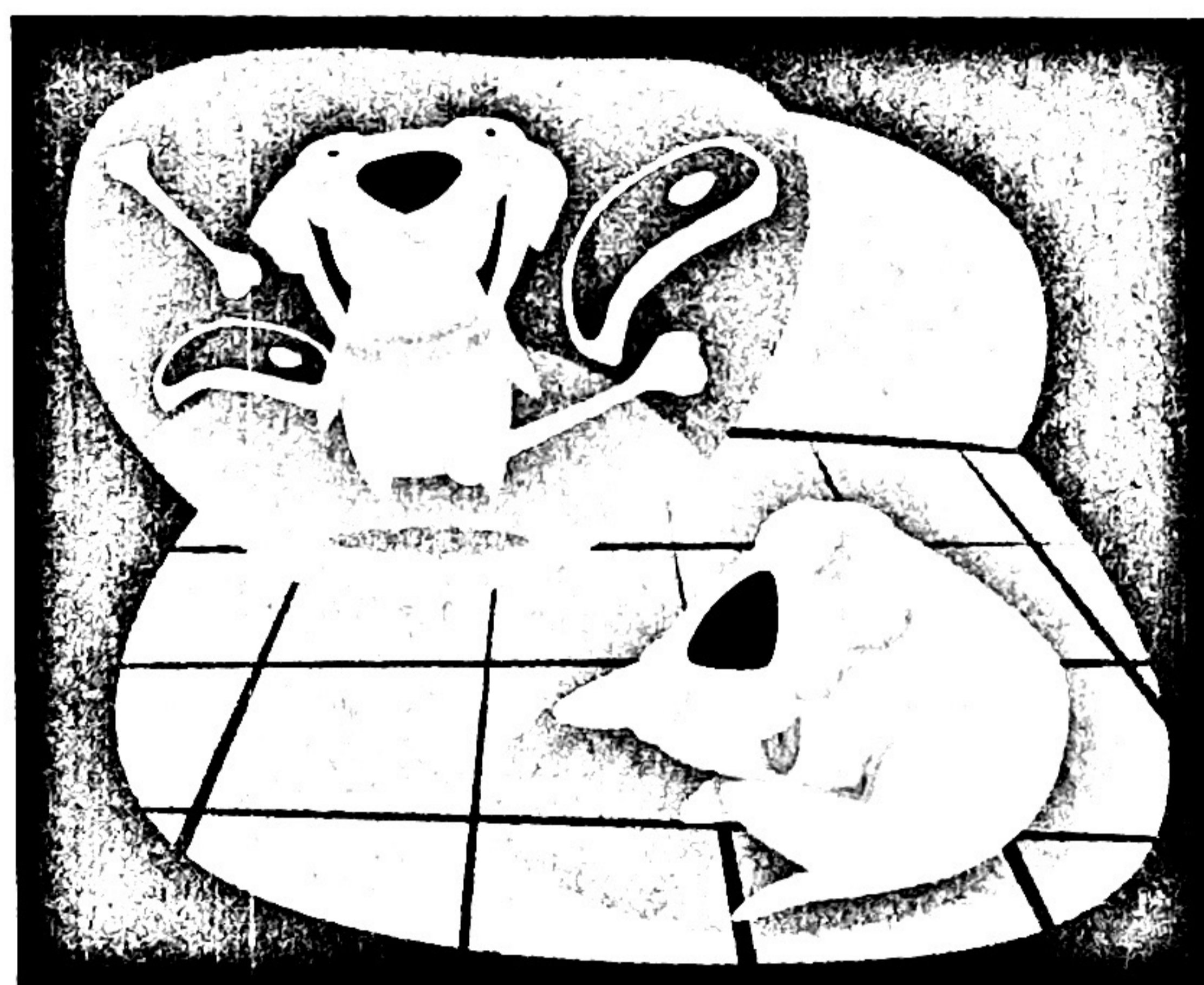
Sit in an upright and dignified way, with your hands resting on your legs, palms open to the ceiling. Observe your breathing. Without changing or manipulating your breath just notice its natural rhythm. Breathing in, breathing out; noticing the pattern of the breath like waves on the ocean. As you breathe in, feel the belly expand; as you breathe out, notice its contraction. Easy breath in, and out.

Let's begin our meditation by practicing the ocean breath.

1. Place your open palm close to your mouth. Breathe in and exhale through your mouth. Notice the breath on your hand. (Remember making window fog as a child with your breath).
2. Next—take a breath—inhale, then exhale with mouth closed—pushing the breath toward the back of your throat. (Notice the ocean sound on the exhale).

You may notice softening in your body. If not, that's OK; resist the temptation to judge or analyze the experience of breathing. Bring your attention to the thought of your favorite food. Try not to judge any choice; simply notice what happens in your body. As you breathe in and out, riding the waves of your breath, just watch what happens to your body as you think about your beloved food. Follow this for six complete breath cycles; then, gently, open your eyes and come back into the room.

What did you notice? Take a few moments and journal some thoughts that came to mind as you sat with your breath and thought about your favorite food. Breathe—reflect—notice—consider.



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YOUR PASSPORT TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING & MINDFUL EATING

In the spirit of a sustainable way to approach mindful eating throughout your life, I offer to you my 10 “travel tips” for the lifetime journey of mindful eating. These suggestions to promote healthful living and a more mindful presence are my form of an offering to you, the reader.

Sustainable living, mindful eating suggestion #1: Food as Energy: Know Yourself.

When we eat foods appropriate to our own *individual needs* we extract energy from the environment in harmony with the natural world. Learning how to honor and respect your own body rhythms, you can become more skillful in eating what your body needs in the right amounts. Resist the temptation to run toward any one “diet” or approach to eating. Instead, contemplate the energetic nature of food itself, and understand how transforming this stored energy source can nourish you in ways that may seem unimaginable.



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Quick Tip: Begin a regular mindfulness practice. Research with compulsive overeaters suggests that mindfulness-based approaches reduce overeating, improve emotional and behavioral dysregulation, and promote internalization of change (1).

Sustainable living, mindful eating suggestion #2: Food as Fuel.Food as Fuel
Checklist

Food	Yes	No
Satisfied with quality	x	
Looks like food?	x	
Cannot pronounce		x

Use this checklist next time you go out to eat or when thinking about eating. You'll find this helpful in noticing if your food meets your body's requirements for supporting its growth and development.

The body's ability to adapt in the face of always changing conditions is crucial, and only possible because of its own innate ability to self-regulate. Begin to pay attention to the food you are eating. Are you satisfied with the quality? Does it look like food? It may not be something recognizable, in a package with ingredients that you can't pronounce or understand. Remember that through eating we transform plants and animals into mitochondria, our "cellular power plants" that generate the chemical energy we need to fuel all of our life's functions (2). Is your fuel premium grade, regular, or unleaded? Pay attention to the needs of your own mitochondria and remember their job is immense: cell differentiation, cell death and turnover, cell growth: repair, replacement, and change. Supporting growth, repair, and replacement is an inside job, and your obligation is to provide nourishment needed to support your body's own innate self-regulation.

Quick Tip: Read labels. Reading the nutrition facts label and utilizing the information it contains can help you improve your eating habits. College students who use the nutrition facts label tend to consume fewer calories; less cholesterol, total fat, saturated fat, sodium and sugar; and more fiber than people who don't make use of these labels, according to a study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* in August 2010 (3). Once you are familiar with the information contained on food labels, it is easy to use them to change your diet for the better.

Sustainable living, mindful eating suggestion #3: Understand how certain foods affect your emotions. Notice how certain emotions affect your eating patterns.

From an early age, we learn that avoiding pain is associated with a food reward. As infants, we cry from hunger and we are calmed by Mother's milk. Our earliest associations before conscious awareness include the urge for nourishment, involving pain, and suffering mitigated by sweet liquid goodness. This primal connection is necessary for life itself—we must have food to survive.

With conscious awareness, we can begin to notice just how quickly, often, and without thinking we feed ourselves in response to *any type* of pain. Hunger pains are habitually addressed by feeding, even when we are not physically hungry.

Quick Tip: Slow down your eating or drinking. The hungrier we are, the more important it is to eat slowly with attention. Slowing down allows us to notice if we *even are hungry*. Since much of eating is habit driven, and often a response to strong emotions, slowing down provides the opportunity to notice what is happening in our bodies. This may help us see if it is beyond hunger. Stress is shown to be a cause of unwanted eating (4), so taking three slow, deep breaths before eating can help right the stress reflex.

Sustainable living, mindful eating suggestion #4: Know the difference between real foods, fake foods, and junk foods. Choose skillfully.

Food-like substances are processed foods made from real food that has been put through chemical processes and are filled with chemicals and preservatives. Junk foods have very little food in them. Instead, they are made of highly processed foods, hydrogenated fats, chemicals and preservatives, and anything made with “refined white flour”. Fake foods are made primarily of chemicals, and usually contain gums and sugar as fillers (5). Knowing more about real, whole foods and choosing them more often is a ticket to a lifetime of sustainable and mindful eating.

Quick Tip: Avoid eating fast food. Research shows that eating fast food among children in the United States seems to have a negative effect on dietary quality in ways that increase risk for obesity (6).

Sustainable living, mindful eating suggestion #5: Find ways to balance food and pleasure.

Sustainable living and mindful eating for life involves pleasurable eating, too. Remember that it is not necessary to eliminate *all* of the less desirable food choices we make. We all enjoy the occasional cheeseburger, fries, Coke, or potato chips. When we begin to understand the consequences of changing an occasional treat into an everyday event, we can make skillful choices about how many of these “treats” we are willing to eat.

Quick Tip: Find ways to work special foods into your diet. Remember that treats are designed for occasional indulgences; keep a food diary or journal to track the percentages of “healthy” versus less healthful food choices. Notice your own patterns with food and eating, and find ways to have a treat, or an indulgence, once or twice a week. Studies show that people who keep track of what they eat lose weight faster than those who don’t. The researchers noted that the more detailed and consistent the food journaling, the better results you’re likely see (7).

Sustainable living, mindful eating suggestion #6: Limit your added sugar intake.

Sugar added to foods really does appear to be a big problem (8). Foods with a lot of added sugar contribute extra calories to your diet but provide little nutritional value. In addition, added sugar is often found in foods that also contain solid fats. It is in *all* packaged foods. Over 80% of the food sold in the supermarket contains added sugar.

Eating too many foods with added sugar and solid fats sets the stage for potential health problems, such as poor nutrition, weight gain, increased triglycerides, and tooth decay. Most experts now recommend no more than 100 calories a day from added sugar (for women) or 150 per day (for men). That’s about six teaspoons for women and nine for men.

Most Americans get more than 22 teaspoons (or 355 calories) of added sugar a day. This can easily add up to a weight gain of 3–4 pounds a month if we're not careful. Choose natural sources of sweet food instead, like fresh fruit, to help with cravings for sweet foods.

Quick Tip: Can the cola. Drinking calories is a one-way ticket to added weight gain. Don't be confused: anytime we drink calories (especially alcohol, which has 2½ times the calories per gram as carbohydrates or protein calories), our body is not able to "register" our intake in the same way as if we chew whole foods. Added or concentrated forms of sugar are in soda, energy drinks, sports drinks, smoothies, coffee drinks, juices, and alcohol—causing unwanted weight gain. Sugar calories are empty calories—they just add pounds (9).

Don't worry about the "sugar" that is in fruit. Whole fresh fruit, or fruit that you use in a smoothie that you make yourself, doesn't appear to be a problem. The fiber that is also in fresh whole foods such as fruits and vegetables acts as a "buffer" to natural sugars in foods, slowing down our digestive process which helps keep our blood sugar stable. If you pair some fresh fruit with a healthy form of fat or protein (apple and nut butter, orange and nonfat yogurt, carrots and hummus) you benefit from this winning combination. For more "healthy pairings" go to The Mindful Nutritionists' YouTube page (10).

Sustainable living, mindful eating suggestion #7: Give your food a face.

Mindfulness requires of us that we wake up to what is. Rather than judging whether certain foods are good or bad, we simply notice other things—how food makes us feel when we eat it; how we respond to cravings, desire and strong drives for certain foods; whether or not what we eat aligns with our beliefs and values. This means that eating mindfully is facilitated by learning more about food—where it comes from, how it is grown, who harvests it, how does it get to us (truck, train, plane), and how we prepare it. Since food is energy that nourishes us, converting vitalism from plants and animals to our own use, give your food a face. If your food comes from an animal source, how was that animal treated? Was it factory farmed, or humanely raised and butchered? If it is a plant, were chemicals used, or was it grown organically?

Honor yourself and the food that nourishes you by giving it a face. This doesn't mean that plants are good and animals are bad—just take time to learn more about how your food gets to your plate. Sustainable living and mindful eating asks this from all of us.

Quick Tip: What about GMOs? The issue is complex. Food that is genetically modified has the potential to contribute to allergies, as well as antibiotic resistance (11). The facts are that there have been no human studies to see if eating GMO foods causes any problems for humans (12). For now, many experts recommend avoiding genetically modified foods and advocating for transparent labeling. With mindfulness, once you notice you have the choice to change (or not). Unless foods are labeled as to how they are modified, you as the consumer have no choice.

Non-GMO foods are voluntarily labeled, and more widely available than ever. Choose non-GMO foods until safety studies can demonstrate little or no risk to humans from consuming them.

Sustainable living, mindful eating suggestion #8: Choose to eat a wide variety of whole, fresh foods, mostly plants.

In the *Permanente Journal* last year, the official peer-reviewed publication of our nation's largest managed care organization, a "Nutrition Update for Physicians" was published, which concluded that "Healthy eating maybe best achieved with a plant-based diet," which they defined as a diet that encourages whole plant-based foods and discourages meat, dairy products, and eggs as well as empty calorie junk. To quote their conclusion: "Research shows that plant-based diets are cost-effective, low-risk

interventions that may lower body mass index, blood pressure, HbA1C, and cholesterol levels. They may also reduce the number of medications needed to treat chronic diseases and lower ischemic heart disease mortality rates. Physicians should consider recommending a plant-based diet to all their patients, especially those with high blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, or obesity” (13).

The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee is a governmental committee responsible for updating the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This position paper becomes the starting point for federal recommendations and policy regarding nutrition standards for healthy Americans. In their 2015 preliminary position statement, they are suggesting all Americans adopt a whole foods, mostly plant-based diet for health and sustainability reasons (14). There is a ways to go before final recommendations are issued, but it is likely that moving to a more plant-based diet will be a cornerstone of the recommendations since that position aligns with what most nutrition and scientific experts on health and longevity have been saying for many years.

Quick Tip: Eat real foods. Mostly plants. Not too much (15). This wisdom from Michael Pollan is a sensible strategy for a sustainable, mindful eating mode. Avoiding issues with processed foods, added sugars, salt, and other nonfood items, real foods help nourish our bodies the way nature intended. Eating real foods allows you to meet all of your nutritional needs in an effortless, delicious way. Learn about real foods; take a cooking class, read cookbooks. Your health is worth it!

Sustainable living, mindful eating suggestion #9: Eat mindfully in the right amount.

Mindfulness practices encourage us to view things with “right” mind. Ancient wisdom encourages us to follow the eight-fold path, which uses the adjective “right”: right view, right mindfulness, right effort, and so on. In this way, right means appropriate, beneficial, leading to happiness and freedom. What then is the “right” amount of food?

Eating the right amount is consistent with the concept of “just enough”. This is not a fixed amount. It changes according to circumstances. One thing is for certain—we can find just enough using our mindfulness practice. By paying attention to how we feel before, during, and after our meals, we can learn for ourselves what “just enough” is. In so doing, we encourage learning how to find the right amount of food for ourselves.

In the words of teacher Ajahn Chah, we learn about right amount:

“When you think that after another five mouthfuls you’ll be full, stop and drink some water and you will have eaten just the right amount. If you sit or walk afterward you won’t feel heavy . . . But that’s not the way we usually do it. When we feel full we take another five mouthfuls. That’s what the mind tells us. It doesn’t know how to teach itself . . . Someone who lacks a genuine wish to train their mind will be unable to do it. Keep watching your mind” (16).

Quick Tip: Breathe before eating. As you sit down to eat, stop, pause and take five breaths. Then begin. Halfway through your meal, stop, pause, and take five more breaths. Notice your level of fullness and hunger. Thinking about fullness from a scale of 1 (famished) to 10 (stuffed and uncomfortable) gauge your level of hunger. Ideally, we stop eating at 6 or 7—and never wait to eat below 3.

Sustainable living, mindful eating suggestion #10: Practice gratitude.

Food is abundant in our culture. So is disharmony with food and eating. Americans are plagued with unbalanced and negative relationships with food and eating. Access to more information about food

and health only makes matters worse. Should I eat carbs? No Carbs? Paleo? Vegan? Vegetarian? Avoid gluten? Avoid sugar? The list goes on and on. This distress about food and eating is due to our affluence and ready access to food. When we have too much, something happens to our sense of gratitude. When we lose touch with feeling grateful, we become more and more unhappy with our lives. Taking our bodies and our health for granted, we ignore how we feel, moving only toward pleasure.

Taking food for granted, without gratitude, we ignore what is on our plate. We stop paying attention, smelling, and tasting. That's why it's so easy for us to eat "fake" food; protein powders with no flavor, bars that taste like cardboard, "dead" food fried beyond recognition.

Finding our way back to simple gratitude for the magic of food and nourishment is the way home. Through mindfulness, we can look more deeply into the act of eating, rediscovering the wonder and amazement of our abundant choices. Mindful eating allows us to really look at our food; appreciating the colors, shapes, sizes, play of light and shadows, and taste of the first bite.

"In this food I clearly see the presence of the entire universe supporting my existence" (17).

When we look deeply into our food, our hearts reach out to the many forms of life that are sacrificed every day to provide our abundance. We repay this sacrifice by being alive to them and the food we choose to eat, which has been provided for our needs. We send loving kindness to all of those who have benefitted us, including the plants and animals, and all the people who have helped to bring the bounty to our table. We look deeply, with gratitude arising without effort.

Quick Tip: Before meals, acknowledge your food with gratitude. Here is one example: "May I receive this food as a gift from the earth, the sky, and all the living beings and their hard work that made it possible for me to nourish this body and mind."

We eat and drink at the opportunity to enter a special place of noticing, paying attention to our body and breath, and our emotions. Every time we pick up our fork, we can notice the weight of our silverware, feel our body, connect to the breath, and find happiness and peace. As we find happiness in the most basic activities of our lives, including breathing, walking, eating, drinking, and lying down to sleep, we can glimpse the possibility of how to become happy and at ease in our lives. My wish for you is to find your way home to your birthright—a place of peace, happiness, nourishment, and calm. It is right at the end of your fingertips, on top of your plate, inside your drinking cup. May you and all beings be happy. May you and all beings be healthy. May you and all beings always have enough to eat. May you and all beings be at peace.

Here is a sweet finish for the end of your journey. Enjoy this nourishing recipe using bananas and gluten free flours. You may find that you enjoy this version of a traditional favorite more than you imagined!

GLUTEN FREE BANANA BREAD

Ingredients: 1 cup brown rice flour 1 cup white rice flour 1/4 cup each potato starch flour and tapioca flour 1 teaspoon xanthan gum 1 tablespoon gluten free baking powder 1/2 teaspoon salt 1 tablespoon *egg replacer such as Ener-G (dry ingredients mixed) 1/2 cup butter (or canola oil) 2/3 cups honey, maple syrup or brown sugar 1-1/2 cups thoroughly mashed overripe bananas.

Directions: Mix bananas with oil/sugar. Oil one standard or two small loaf pans, (or six mini-loafs). Stir dry ingredients into wet ingredients; stir until all is moist. Immediately put the batter in the pans and bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes to an hour depending on loaf size.