

# Chapter 1

## The Cayce Diet: A Tool for Soul Empowerment

*For it is in Him ye live, and move, and have thy being. And it is in thy body-temple where He hath promised to meet thee—in the holy of holies.*

(Edgar Cayce reading 1992-1)

GOOD NUTRITION IS about selecting the right foods. And how fortunate we are to be able to make such choices. For most of us, food is abundantly available. The shelves in our supermarkets are overflowing with the fruits of the earth, attractively arranged and enticingly presented. Within moderate budgets, we can usually afford to buy what we need. Often our biggest problem is deciding *what* to make for dinner!

The endless lineups at food banks, however, tell a different story. The folks who turn up there cannot be choosy. They just want something to eat. A warm bowl of soup, a sandwich, anything to get rid of that gnawing, hungry feeling. These people are not concerned with counting calories, nor with the carbohydrate-versus-protein debate. Just give them FOOD.

Similarly, the desperate mother in a drought-stricken third-world country who brings her starving child to a feeding station can hardly concern herself with details about the child's vitamin intake. When hunger is the enemy, the question of *whether* there will be food becomes more important than *what* food it should be.

Even Edgar Cayce, who faced his own share of economic uncertainty, did not always know where his next meal would come from or what it would consist of. Yet it is his readings that gave the world an unprecedented source of insights on how food energies interact with body, mind, and spirit to create health or illness.

Do we need to question our priorities then? Is it right for us to be concerned about which foods are good for us, when others have no food at all? The Cayce readings tell us that reasonable concern for diet is not misplaced, because a healthier body allows for a more complete unfoldment of our spiritual potential:

The diet—as the body sees and understands—is as necessary [an] element as *any that* may be chosen. As the body builds mentally, so may the body build physically by the choice of those foods or valuations from same that will sustain or maintain—within a developing influence *in* the physical forces—that proper relationship between a mental, a spiritual, and even physical forces in same. 1909-2

The task of sustaining the body, through proper nutrition and other measures, thus becomes a *spiritual responsibility*. It becomes a goal fueled by the sacred purpose of empowering the soul—the God-self of each individual—to more perfectly express and experience the full spectrum of its divine attributes.

Moreover, a healthier body can increase our capacity to serve others, including those threatened by hunger and starvation. Choosing a healthful diet such as the one outlined by Cayce—rich in fruits and vegetables and considerably lower in animal protein than the typical North American fare—may have a more measurable influence on world hunger than is evident: It has been estimated that if Americans were to reduce their meat intake by just 10 percent, the savings of

grain (diverted from animal feed) could adequately feed millions of people who would otherwise face starvation.

We might even save some of our own lives: According to a report by the U.S. Surgeon General, diet plays a major role in more than two-thirds of all deaths in the United States. As a steady flow of scientific research results reconfirms almost daily, good nutrition is our first line of defense against physical and mental deterioration, illness, and premature death from degenerative disease. Among the many modalities of natural healing available to us today, the study and application of nutrition is emerging as an increasingly popular self-help method for improving health and well-being.

It is also an appropriate way of expressing our gratitude to the Creative Forces for the wonderful blessings of food.

### **An Overview of Cayce's Holistic Approach to Nutrition**

In the Cayce readings, diet is featured prominently as both a preventative and a therapeutic measure. For nearly every ailment he was asked about, Cayce suggested dietary adjustments, along with other therapies and remedies. Although much of this nutritional advice was offered to individuals with differing biochemical constitutions and specific pathological conditions, there are many common elements which form the basis of what students of the readings have termed *the Cayce diet*.

The Cayce diet represents one of many links in the holistic philosophy of the readings. The word *holistic* is derived from the Greek *holos*, which translates into *whole*, or *complete*. Holistic healing recognizes and honors the essential unity of body, mind, and spirit, as well as the interrelationship between an individual's state of health and his or her environment.

The Cayce readings on diet and health clearly project this philosophy. As important as what we feed the body are the thoughts that we feed the mind. Reading 288-38 gives us the key to this important concept: *"What we think and what we eat—combined together—make what we are, physically and mentally."* The vibrational energy of the food interacts with the mental energy created by our thoughts, and they are both reactive to each other. Together, they create the aspect of our being that represents us in this lifetime upon the earth. With our intentions and actions, we choose to allow certain foods and thoughts to enter our bodies and minds, thereby continuously directing the re-creation of our mental and physical selves. Whether we realize it or not, we are cocreators with God, as Cayce tells us in reading 2246-1: *"Thus is each soul, each entity, a cocreator with that universal consciousness ye call God."* With this concept in mind, we can look upon diet as one of the tools available to us in this glorious act of cocreation.

### **Fruits and Vegetables**

Decades before extensive research delivered scientific proof that an increased consumption of fruits and vegetables protects against degenerative disease, the Cayce readings emphasized the importance of a plant-based diet for the maintenance of good health and the prevention of illness. The new Food Guide Pyramid issued by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services now recommends an increased number of servings from this important food group. Nevertheless, the proportionate amounts of vegetables recommended in the readings far exceed what the average person was then, and still is, accustomed to consuming.

Fresh vegetables and fruits form the mainstay of the Cayce diet with good reason. They supply an abundance of vitamins and minerals and produce an alkaline reaction after being metabolized in the body. Meats, grains, and other foods high in protein or starch, as well as refined sugar, are acid producing. The readings emphasize the importance of keeping 80 percent of the diet alkalizing to ensure an optimal state of health and to boost the body's immunity to colds and infection. For most of us, this means completely reversing the traditional role of vegetables as a "side dish." In the Cayce diet, meals are built around vegetables and accompanied by small portions of animal protein and limited amounts of grains or other starchy foods.

The types of vegetables most often mentioned in the readings are those belonging to the green leafy and yellow or orange varieties. These colorful vegetables are a virtual storehouse of concentrated nutrients. Nutrition researchers today are just skimming the surface in identifying the powerful phytochemical components which give them their tremendous healing potential. Green veggies owe their color to chlorophyll, an effective detoxifying and anti-inflammatory agent. Chlorophyll is also one of the best natural sources of magnesium, an important element in the utilization of calcium in the body. In addition, green vegetables supply many other minerals, vitamins, bioflavonoids, and essential fatty acids. Yellow and orange veggies are an excellent source of cancer-fighting carotenoids, as well as the B-complex vitamins and several minerals. Cayce recommended that the vegetables and fruits in our diet be as field-fresh as possible, since nutrient losses multiply with each day of storage. Modern agricultural methods of premature harvesting, transport, and processing, as well as subsequent cooking, can also adversely affect nutrient content. The following guidelines, drawn from Cayce's recommendations, can help us to maximize nutrient intake by emphasizing fresh, unprocessed foods.

- One meal each day, preferably the noon meal, should be based on fresh and raw vegetables, such as leaf lettuce, carrots, celery, peppers, radishes, onions, sprouts, and tomatoes (in season), prepared as a salad. Occasionally, a raw fruit salad may be substituted for the vegetables.
- To minimize nutrient losses when cooking vegetables, the preferred methods are steaming or cooking in Patapar paper, a vegetable parchment.
- Whenever possible, it is best to select locally grown fruits and vegetables in season.

### **Grains, Legumes, and Nuts**

**Grains.** The increasing popularity of whole-grain products in recent years bears witness to a growing health consciousness among consumers. Edgar Cayce frequently suggested that whole grains be incorporated into the diet, either in the form of whole-wheat bread or as a well-cooked cereal at breakfast. Whole grains are high in fiber, and they supply a number of important vitamins (especially E and B complex and minerals such as iron, chromium, and manganese). The readings emphasize, however, that cereals should never be combined at the same meal with citrus fruits or their juices, although these are highly recommended as breakfast foods at other times. The exception is whole-wheat bread in small amounts, which is considered to be compatible with citrus juice in most cases.

**Legumes.** Dried peas, beans, and lentils are rich in B vitamins and several minerals. Particularly when combined with a whole grain to complement the full range of essential amino acids, they are a good source of protein often relied on by vegetarians. However, they are difficult to digest,

especially if not properly prepared. Cayce recommended legumes for their high nutritional value, but he cautioned that they should be consumed in small amounts and that each pod vegetable should always be balanced with at least one leafy (and nonstarchy) vegetable.

**Nuts.** Nuts, especially almonds, are frequently recommended for their strengthening qualities. The readings even suggest that eating a few almonds daily will provide anticarcinogenic protection. Almonds are high in fiber and contain several important minerals, amino compounds, and vitamins, notably B and E.

### **Animal Protein, Fats, and Oils**

**Meats and Fish.** Fish, fowl, and lamb are the flesh foods most often featured in the Cayce diet, usually to complement an evening meal of cooked or steamed vegetables. Meat and fish should be consumed in small quantities and should never be fried, but rather roasted, baked, or broiled. Eating red meat is not generally recommended. However, wild game, including rabbit and squirrel meats, as well as organ meats, such as liver, kidney, and brain, are sometimes recommended for their nerve- and blood-building qualities. In some cases, small amounts of juice extracted from meats through heat are said to be preferable to the flesh itself. Beef juice, in particular, is considered to have medicinal value and strengthening properties and is especially recommended for those who are ill or convalescing. Pork is to be avoided, with the exception of a little crisp bacon at breakfast occasionally. (It is interesting to note that in a recent study conducted by the Karmanos Cancer Institute, at Wayne State University in Detroit, high beef and pork consumption was identified as a risk factor for greater DNA damage related to breast cancer.)

**Eggs.** Eggs, preferably soft boiled, are often recommended for the breakfast meal. In many cases, Cayce preferred that only the yolk be eaten, since egg whites are difficult to digest. Egg yolks, particularly those from eggs laid by grain-fed, free-range hens, contain valuable nutrients, including protein, vitamins A, B, D, and E, phosphorus, iron, and essential fatty acids. They are also an excellent source of lecithin, a phospholipid that promotes the synthesis of cholesterol. A substance often misunderstood today, cholesterol acts as a disease-fighting antioxidant and is a precursor to important hormones, bile salts, and vitamin D. Research has shown that dietary intake of cholesterol has little or no effect on cholesterol circulating in the blood. High levels of serum cholesterol are not the *cause* of heart disease, but rather one of its indicators, since cholesterol lines the blood vessels to protect them against further damage. We need not fear egg yolks, nor other sources of dietary cholesterol, unless the cholesterol is oxidized through exposure to air and excessive heat, such as occurs when an egg is fried or scrambled. Cayce's recommendation to eat eggs that have been "coddled" (soft-boiled) is the perfect solution for benefiting from the egg's considerable nutritional potential without risking oxidation of the cholesterol in the yolk.

**Milk.** In the way of milk products, the readings mostly favor raw milk, or fermented milk products such as buttermilk or yogurt. Good-quality raw milk is difficult to obtain nowadays, leaving the consumer with the poor choice of pasteurized, homogenized milk, usually from cows fed antibiotics and hormones to increase milk production. Many people, especially those who are lactose-intolerant, do better with dairy products fermented with lactic-acid bacteria, because the

milk protein and fat are predigested. Extensive research has shown that fermented milk products such as yogurt offer considerable health benefits, primarily by promoting the colonization of “friendly” bacteria in the intestinal tract.

**Cheese.** The readings recommend that cheeses be eaten in moderation; and soft types of cheese are preferred. Eating cheese at the same meal as other protein foods, or combining cheese with quantities of starches, is advised against. In general, high-protein and high-starch foods should not be combined in the same meal, because their digestion requires different gastric secretions.

**Butter.** The Cayce diet permits the use of moderate amounts of butter, spread on whole-wheat toast or dotted on cooked vegetables. As with eggs, the popular notion that butter is a nutritional villain stands in contrast to research findings which have shown that it is the artificially hydrogenated vegetable oils in margarine which are implicated in both heart disease and cancer. A natural food that has been a component of many traditional diets for thousands of years, butter is a good source of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, and E, lecithin, and a number of important short- and medium-chain fatty acids.

**Olive Oil.** Olive oil, in which the fatty acids are largely monounsaturated and therefore chemically stable, is frequently recommended in the readings, to be taken in small amounts throughout the day or as a base for salad dressings. Unrefined, extra-virgin olive oil is noted as one of the healthiest oils for daily use; in fact, it has been credited in research studies with contributing to the low level of heart disease in Mediterranean countries, where olive oil consumption is high.

**Gelatin.** Gelatin is often recommended in the readings for its ability to promote the assimilation of nutrients from other foods. Powdered gelatin can be dissolved in a glass of water (drink before it jells) or stirred into salad dressings or sauces.

### **Seasonings and Sweeteners**

Seasonings are used sparingly in the Cayce diet, mainly in the form of sea salt or kelp, and cayenne rather than black pepper. Unrefined sea salt, available in health food stores, is a good source of iodine and other trace minerals not found in refined, bleached table salt, which often contains a number of undesirable additives. In contrast to black pepper, cayenne stimulates digestion without irritating the stomach. It facilitates the absorption of nutrients from foods and has a beneficial effect on the circulatory system.

Honey, raw and unpasteurized, is often referred to as the sweetener of choice in the Cayce readings. Along with easily digestible natural sugars, honey supplies small amounts of protein, vitamins, minerals, and enzymes. It also possesses antibacterial properties. According to Cayce, the intake of a small amount of honey may reduce excessive cravings for sweets in some individuals. Other options mentioned in the readings are beet sugar and brown cane sugar in moderation. Combining sweets with starches is not recommended.

## Beverages

**Water.** The Cayce readings emphasize the importance of adequate water intake—between six to eight glasses each day. Water fulfills an important role as a nutritional catalyst. It is required for digestion and for the elimination of toxins and waste products. We depend on water to deliver nutrients to the cells and for the circulation of blood, lymph, and interstitial fluids. In several readings, the best type of water is specified as being mineral-rich mountain spring water.

**Carbonated Drinks.** In general, the readings advise against carbonated water and other carbonated beverages, the gases of which are said to be detrimental to the system. Most carbonated drinks today come in the form of soft drinks, which are loaded with refined sugars or artificial sweeteners of questionable safety. Cola drinks also contain caffeine, which, taken in excess, can overstimulate the nervous system and become habit forming. However, Coca-Cola syrup, taken in plain water in medicinal amounts, is considered helpful for purifying the kidneys and coordinating kidney and bladder action.<sup>5</sup>

**Alcoholic Drinks.** The Cayce readings advise moderation in the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Small amounts of wine, notably red wine, are recommended as a medicinal food, especially when combined with brown bread, preferably sourdough. In most cases, beer and other beverages brewed with hops are mentioned as being harmful, although one reading for a tuberculosis patient prescribes a daily drink made from beer and egg.

**Coffee and Tea.** The moderate consumption of coffee and tea is considered acceptable for most people, although coffee is said to have a higher food value. Note, however, that the readings are consistent in advising against the addition of milk or cream to either coffee or tea, since this increases their acidity. It is important to remember that caffeine, taken in excess, is an addictive stimulant that can wreak havoc with the nervous system. Furthermore, nonorganic coffee beans are often heavily sprayed with pesticides, which are not removed by roasting. Organically grown coffees, available in many health food stores, are chemical free and usually lower in caffeine. A number of flavorful coffee substitutes made from roasted grains or dandelion roots are also available. These are frequently mentioned in the readings as being preferable to coffee itself. Herbal teas are another good alternative for those who prefer to avoid caffeine.

## The Multidimensional Dynamics of Eating

The importance of proper assimilation of foods is repeatedly stressed in the Cayce readings. Good nutrition is not just a question of *what* is eaten, but also *how efficiently the food is digested and utilized* by the body. The elements involved in this complex process include psychological as well as physical considerations. Essentially, they are all rooted in MINDFULNESS—in being fully present in the moment, conscious of the act of nourishing the body through eating.

**Chewing and Taste.** Probably the most important thing we can do to ensure that we assimilate the foods we eat is to chew our meals well. Chewing allows the starch-splitting enzymes contained in saliva to initiate the process of digestion. Chewing also increases the surface area of the food as it is broken down into smaller particles, making more of the food accessible to action

by digestive juices. The better we chew our food, the less work the digestive system has in breaking it down further. Edgar Cayce suggested that even liquids should be chewed.

Chew any mouthful of food at least fourteen times. Even in drinking water, *chew* it—or masticate it at least three or four times. That is, sip it—let the activity of the glands in the mouth mingle well with the water; not gulping it but sipping it gently. 595-1

Chewing food well also allows us to become more aware of its taste. The experience of taste appears to be an important factor in maximizing the nutrition we derive from food. Marc David, in his book *Nourishing Wisdom*, tells of a research study in which scientists determined that absolute taste deprivation results in clinical malnutrition, even when nutritious foods are eaten. The researchers concluded that there must be important yet unknown physiological connections between taste and health. It is also interesting to note that the millennia-old Indian medical system of Ayurveda maintains that different taste sensations directly influence physiological function. Ayurvedic therapy involves a diet based on foods grouped according to taste in order to counteract energy imbalances in the body.

We also know that tension, fear, and worry inhibit the secretion of digestive juices, which results in incomplete digestion and poor assimilation. It is best to eat in a relaxed, peaceful atmosphere. If we take the time to consciously chew, taste, and enjoy each meal, we will be better nourished. And we may be less likely to eat junk foods, an unhealthy craving for which can arise from a lack of feeling satisfied by the meals we gulp down without fully experiencing them.

**Attitude.** The Cayce readings often remind us of the importance of holding the right attitude—toward ourselves and others, toward specific challenges and circumstances. Similarly, a positive and constructive attitude toward diet helps us to derive maximum nourishment from the foods we eat. Through our consciousness, the readings say, we can actively influence how the nutrients are processed in the body:

That thou eatest, *see it doing* that *thou* would *have* it do. Now there is often considered as to why do those of either the vegetable, mineral, or combination compounds, have different effects under different conditions? It is the *consciousness of the individual body!* Give one a dose of clear *water* with the impression that it will act as salts—how often will it act in that manner? 341-31

A lack of dogma is also evident in the Cayce philosophy on nutrition. Though it provides specific guidelines on food choices, the Cayce diet also encourages flexibility and a sense of tolerance. We are reminded to strive for an ideal in the way of diet, but we are not to become slaves to our own nutritional programs. One of the traps many of us fall into when we become aware of the relationship between diet and health is establishing for ourselves a set of dietary rules according to which we label foods as being either *good* or *bad*. Once a particular food has been assigned to the *bad* category, we might even become critical of ourselves and others for desiring or eating that food. The more zealous we are in our conviction that we have found the one right way of eating, the more limited we become in our understanding of food and our interaction with it. Cayce warns us against such an attitude:

As we find, keep this as the rule—rather than studying the diet in such minutia that the body becomes one that can't eat this, or can't eat the other! or this would hurt, or that would hurt, or the other would hurt! Because such an attitude becomes as chronic as a disturbing diet! 1601-

1The late spiritual teacher Hilda Charlton, who was a vegetarian and was noted for her ability to combine spiritual wisdom with lighthearted humor, illustrated this principle by saying: “I don’t eat eggs, but I am not afraid of them!” She chose not to include eggs in her diet out of a deep reverence for life and all things living, but she did not become upset or worried when she discovered that a food she had eaten contained eggs.

The challenge for us, then, is one of finding the right balance—of recognizing that diet, while important, should not be allowed to dominate our lives in dogmatic fashion. A biblical quote from reading 281-31 appropriately sums up the Cayce philosophy on this subject: “*So it becomes that as the Master gave, ‘Ye shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of the Father.’*”

Now, let’s look at each of the components of the Cayce diet in greater detail.