

Clara Cohen: What's your favorite flavor of food? Are you a sweet tooth? Do you like salty, bitter, sour, spicy? Are you a little spicy? I think I'm a bit spicy, but that might be more my personality than my food.

I love good food, but at the same time, I am really passionate about sharing online, specifically the amazing benefits of Chinese medicine nutrition. And so today my guest is Dr. Melissa Carr. She has written a book, modern Chinese Medicine Food Cures, all on TCM Nutrition, and today we're going to talk about everything from mindfulness eating to adapting to who we are to each patient to making food easy, to having fun with food, but also to make it easy on the patient by adding food that would help their whole health instead of subtracting or taking away. Cause nobody likes to lose. So with that in mind, we're going to have a great time today. If you are eating, enjoy. If not, you might be hungry by the end of this episode.

Are you ready? Let's go.

Welcome to AcuPro, a show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture. Easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I am your host, Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students and like you in changing the world one patient at a time. My goal is to share my passion for TCM and empower you to achieve superior patient care.

I love to showcase the amazing benefits of acupuncture because after all, acupuncture rocks.

Clara Cohen: Welcome to the AcuPro Show, Dr. Melissa Carr. I am so excited you're here because I've been a big fan of yours for many years. If you are listening to this and you are in Vancouver, you probably have heard of Dr. Carr.

She's been publishing articles on The Alive Magazine, which is a big free magazine in Vancouver. For those who are listening and are not in our area, in Vancouver, we have this amazing magazines that is all about natural health, integrative health, and she has written article for this magazine for a long time, and I've been following her, writing her career, and she's been practicing, she's going into her 25th year in practice, so she's got a lot of experience in her little box. And today specifically, I wanted her to come on the show to talk about Chinese medicine, nutrition 'cause it's one of my favorite subject. So welcome to the show, Dr. Carr.

Dr. Melissa Carr: Thank you so much for having me. I'm super excited. I've also been following you and the wonderful information that you're sharing

about Chinese medicine. I love your passion for it and the way that you present it, making it so accessible.

Clara Cohen: Thank you so much. You just published a book that I wanna talk about. I wanna step back. You've been practicing for a long time. You and I went to the same TCM College in Vancouver and. When you started practicing, were you already fascinated or excited about. Chinese medicine, nutrition as part of TCM, everybody thinks, oh, acupuncture.

And then some people are like, oh, there's herbs too. And then eventually people know that it's about cupping maybe, and some moxa and some other tools. But for some reason nutrition doesn't seem to be a big thing. So I'm so glad you wrote a book about it because it's so important that we share. And we educate the world about what are the possibilities of TCM nutrition.

So were you already passionate about it from the get go or that came with time? Tell me a bit your journey when it comes to that specific part of TCM.

Dr. Melissa Carr: Absolutely. no, it was not part of my starting point. I had a degree in kinesiology and I was thinking I was pursuing sports medicine, so mostly I was headed towards the acupuncture. Direction when I found out about Chinese medicine. So first I was going towards Western medicine, sports medicine, lived in Japan for a couple of years, did research in a western medical university there. And just my perspective about health and life changed by living in Japan over that time. And when I came back, I. Found Chinese medicine and started studying it. I had never experienced any Chinese medicine practice prior to my enrolling in a school. I just knew that it made sense to me and the system was so beautiful and I wanted to learn more about it.

So I started studying it and of course, acupuncture, as you said, is one of the key first points of it. I thought that I was really gonna be focusing on the acupuncture part thinking I'm gonna be in sports medicine. And then the herbs part just really drew me in. And then the nutrition part. Now I will say that the foundation for me is that I love food. I'm not a good cook,

and my family knows, don't ask me to make anything complicated. I'm too impatient as a cook. I can put stuff together, but I'm really quite impatient about it. But the beauty of Chinese medicine with regard to food if you're studying Chinese herbs, you understand Chinese foods as well.

If you understand how Chinese medicine approaches food, you understand how it approaches herbs. The more I studied, then starting to practice, the more

intriguing that part became for me. It grew on me. Both my parents have been educators in the past. So for me, the education piece of teaching people something that they can do. And so I can't teach them obviously to do acupuncture on themselves. I don't want them to be prescribing Chinese herbal formulas for themselves, but I could certainly teach them how to eat. So that for me was where the nutrition part really started to grow on me.

Clara Cohen: I love that. You said I can teach people 'cause it's all about educating the world and what they can do for themselves. Because this is sometimes the problem we have is that. In North America specifically, people have been used to go see the medical practitioner. You give me the solution and that's it.

For us, it's education, right? Yes, we can do acupuncture. Yes, we can, give you herbs, we can give you treatment, but we also want you to make some lifestyle changes. You have to be part of this team to help you. We can't just do all the work for you. So I love the education piece. That leads to my first question to you before we start talking in depth about nutrition.

I found in practice and I think a lot of practitioners have a hard time, is that compliancy? Okay. So I could tell you what is best for you when it comes to lifestyle nutrition. It'd be great if you don't have a green smoothies every morning in winter in Canada and all those kind of things, but.

How do you get the compliance from patients? Do you have any strategies? Because I found often the hardest part for most people in life is to change their eating habits because they've been ingrained in them for so long. I moved from France here, and the first time I went to the store, I had no idea that there was an entire aisle.

Cereal. 'cause I was not raised on cereal and I was so shocked. And there was another entire aisle on chips and I wasn't raised on that. We drank water, we didn't drink pop or anything. You said food. I love food, but I love real food. French food is very rich. Fair enough. Can be a lot of dampness from that, but it's real food.

We have real ingredients, right? So I feel like in North America when I move here, a lot of people are so used to eat cereal in the morning. And then when they eat cereals, they're like, oh, I saw on the internet that it's better to have a smoothie, so I'm gonna have a green smoothie. 'cause it's full of vitamins and nutrients.

So how do you start with strategies for patients to actually be able to follow your advice.

Dr. Melissa Carr: I think it's inquiring where they are. So I ask, what do you like to eat? What don't you like to eat? How important is food to you? Do you have questions? I do make a lot of recommendations for nutrition.

Every single patient I see does get nutritional recommendations. Even a patient coming in with an ankle sprain, something acute, I'm still gonna give the food recommendations. And I really say, it's really up to you. About whether or not you apply it, but I do let them know that I do think that their health is based off of a foundation, and I think of it like a table with four legs. So if you have a rectangular or a square table, if you have less than four legs, it's not a very balanced table. And for me, those four legs of foundation are. Nutritious food, regular movement. So exercise sufficient, restful, restorative, sleep, and joyful activities.

And I say I can help you with the recommendations for food and ways to improve your sleep hygiene and for movement activities or specific exercises. I can tell you what I do for joyful activities. I say but these are up to you. I do tell them, I can prescribe these things, I can do the treatments, but if you want to enhance it, then my goal is to have you these employ pieces, and if you have questions about it.

Let's have a dialogue. I do have some patients who they come in and I look at what they're eating and I'm like, yeah, I don't really have much to offer you. I'm still gonna give my recommendations. 'cause maybe there's some tweaks or maybe there's an expansion on the foods that you're choosing from.

Because I think that's where a lot of people are afraid. They're afraid that you're gonna take away. Their favorite foods. And so I start with what can we add? Okay, you love having the smoothies in the morning and you're not willing to change that yet. Would you add some warming spices to those smoothies?

How about if you add some cinnamon and ginger? Those kinds of things and how do we add to it and make sure that okay, maybe after that you have your smoothie, but maybe you have a ginger tea. Afterwards so that you can support your bodies or before you have the smoothie.

How do we stoke that digestive fire?

I think that is the way that I approach it and see where they're at and see what they're willing to do. And I remind them too, also that food should be enjoyable. they don't want to eat things that they're not gonna enjoy.

And so I say, what are the things that you like and how do we bridge if it's far away from where your ideal is, how do we find a bridge that you can start that crossing over to toward that direction? And I also tell people, you're never gonna be at a hundred percent, the goal is not perfection. And it's going to change as well same like the Chinese herbal formulas. It's not gonna be the same every season and throughout their life passage. So that's really my starting point with them and you can tell those who are interested and those who are feeling resistant.

One case study that I'd like to share of a person who was very resistant to change. So this patient was on a raw cold food diet. she had a lot of spleen yang deficiency. All of this stuff was coming up as yang deficiency, spleen, predominantly yang deficiency and also some kidney yang deficiency. And I said, we can do the acupuncture, we can do the herbs, and she was vegan as well, and she was very passionate about it. She had built a whole community around that. And I said, I don't wanna take that away from you, but I feel like. We need to look at how can we tweak it to work for you because the people that you're talking to, that it's working for live in a warm climate and that's not where we are. so I said, can you just try this for a week? I said, continue to eat a vegan diet. Let's try adding in cooked herbs for one week and then see how you feel. And she came back after that week mad at me because she felt better. She was afraid she was gonna lose her community. I was like, I'm not telling you need to do this a hundred percent of the time, but now you have information about what will work for your body and you can make a choice.

It was so funny 'cause she was so upset, but she really realized that's why she was upset was she really realized it. She was gonna have to make a change.

Clara Cohen: Yeah and I could see that if it's her entire being it's more than just you going, oh, I'm gonna try the raw diet. It's this is her passion and she's helping other people with it. So I could see being so difficult, right? But I love your approach first of all. By adding versus, stop eating this, stopping in that and people are like, what?

I can't have my favorite. So I think it's really good to say, okay, what can we add? Like adding that ginger tea, which I'm having right now. It's exactly ginger, turmeric. So I'm having right now, even though it's a beautiful day in BC and Vancouver area, but it's still cool. It's still winter.

And and I like that you talk about the different time in life because when I was younger I was much more on the cool side because I had tendency to be more blood deficient, and so I needed warm food. Now that I'm, past menopause, I'm warmer all the time so I can have more. Cooling food in summer, I have salads and they feel good and they don't feel like, okay, this is awful.

And it's funny you say that because I think with your story I have a similar different story, but similar is that. You can tell people to try something and then they can decide because they can see both side. And I think that's the best way to go about it. 'cause I remember having students, you start teaching a class to a brand new, year, a brand new student.

It's the first day, first class on the foundation of TCM. And you have, this girl in front of me that's sitting there and her coat is on. Her scarf is on. Her hat is on, and she's holding her smoothie and listening to me while drinking this green smoothie. And everybody else in the room they don't have their coat on. It's just, sweatshirt or whatever. And I remember we start talking about yin and y and cold and hot. So I said, I'm gonna target you. What's your name? And she told me her name. And I'm like, don't take it personally, but you're having a smoothie right now.

You look like you're freezing. 'cause and she's all covered. She's oh my gosh, I'm always cold. I'm always cold. And she's holding the smoothie like for dear life, and I said to her, I said, have you ever tried in the morning something warm? Let's say tomorrow morning or this week, try once.

Maybe some warm quinoa with some cinnamon and maple syrup, and eat that. And some walnuts or some seeds or whatever you wanna add up in it and see how you feel after versus how you feel the morning of the smoothie. And it's exactly like you. The next week when I came back, she was like, Clara, I had no idea.

And that's the thing, she was in her head just like your patient. She was thinking what I'm doing is good for me, it's healthy for me. So that was a great story and that. It takes me to my next question for you that I was thinking about in your book. So Dr. Carr just published a book called Modern Chinese Medicine Food Cures, because that's when we go in TCM perspective, we look at this as cures because food is medicine.

So I love the title. And in your book, you not only talk about TCM, but you also talk about Western, right? It's like putting the two together. How do you reconcile that? Because so many people. Like your patient will say smoothies

are good for you and salads are good for you because they're full of nutrients, they're raw.

I'm not losing, all the nutrients by overcooking it, et cetera, et cetera. And so you come in and you're like, okay, depends, because we all different. And so what works for you, like you said to them, it doesn't work for somebody else. So we have to adapt and that's a problem I have with the Western nutrition, like western medicine, it's one size fits all. Most of the time. Unless you know you have a disorder and you're trying to treat, let's say diabetes, and you have to do it a certain way, but in general it's like you said, it's whole food. It's eating at regular hours.

It's not overeating, it's, having a balanced meal with all the protein, the carbs, the fat, et cetera. But it doesn't take in consideration. Each individual. So that's the strength of TCM.

Ad: Here's the truth. Your patients are already taking supplements, the Googling the following influencers that have no clinical experience, and then they come to you for answers. This is why I ask Dr. Alex to create the integrative guide to vitamins and nutrients. This is not just about vitamins and minerals.

This is about deepening your practice, building trust with your patients, and expanding your ability to provide true integrative care. This course is designed specifically for practitioners like you who wanna bridge the gap between Chinese medicine and functional medicine in order to provide amazing patient care.

This is an online prerecorded course so you can go at your own pace. You get four and a half hours of continuing education and a certificate after you pass a quiz and a seven day money back guarantee. So you cannot lose. Don't wait. Invest in this course today. The link is below for you.

Clara Cohen: So in the book, how do you go about reconciling the opposite advice people would get from Chinese medicine versus Western Nutrition?

Dr. Melissa Carr: I think if somebody's come in and they've seen say for example a naturopath or a dietician or a holistic nutritionist and they've been given advice, the first question I usually ask is, how is that working for you? How is it going? if it's working and they feel good, then I can say, i'll add some things to it just to tweak it up a little bit.

I'm not gonna take away and feel free to try it. And then if sometimes they say actually I feel worse. Or I'm not better, it's not helping me. And I say, okay, would you be willing to try a different perspective? And traditional Chinese medicine really personalizes it. The shortest chapter in my book is on diets.

I think it's one paragraph. Because I don't want people to think that there is one diet that's gonna work for everyone. I've seen panels where there's vegan and carnivore and, they're talking about. How this way of eating has saved their lives.

And I'm like, I believe you. But each one of you that worked for you doesn't mean it's gonna work for everybody. That's why people say, how does one person tells me one thing, somebody else tells me an entirely different diet is suitable. Who am I supposed to listen to? I think that is the beauty of Chinese medicine.

It's what works for you. There is no one perfect diet. Diet is a four letter word that sometimes we just need to leave it, we need to drop that from our idea and think more like what are we, developing our relationship with food, I think of our experience with food as a relationship.

And it changes based off of what's going on for us at the time and based off of the season and our time in life. I do think it's important for Chinese medicine practitioners to have a fundamental understanding of nutrition from the carbohydrates, proteins, fats, the macronutrients, as well as the micronutrients of vitamins and minerals. when people talk about. The cooking destroys the enzymes of the fruits and vegetables. And so I don't wanna destroy the enzymes 'cause that helps with the digestion. I said, but do you know that the breakdown of that is it's also breaking it down so it's easier to digest? say you've had that experience probably in your life, unless where you've got very strong digestion, if you have digestive weakness and you have that raw salad, and then you notice.

After a bowel movement that there is pieces of food that you can identify. It means your body did not do a very good job of digesting that. Whereas soups and stews, things that are cooked, they generally are more easily digested. So people have had this experience themselves. That is the way that I reconcile the Western and the TCM way of thinking about nutrition is, they don't work against each other.

They're both the thing that is common for both of them generally is variety of foods. and that, it does depend on your own situation to some degree. And that moderation is often recommended by nutrition on both sides as well.

Clara Cohen: I was in the fitness industry before I went back to do TCM. And in my first year in school I was in school and still working in the fitness industry part-time to pay for all my expenses and life expenses. So that was really great.

However, coming from a fitness. Background. We ate a lot of salads because this was nutrition, this was nutrients. And so I remember starting school and it was lunchtime in that tiny little kitchen we had at school. And I would bring my massive bowl with a salad full of raw. Vegetables. So many like peppers and mushroom and lettuce and spinach and everything was in there.

And because it was easier, I would put tofu because, let's say fish doesn't keep as long, so this was easy when you're running around between school and work. And so I would put tofu and I remember Dr. Lou Fong, who was one of my teacher came past. Passed by in the kitchen and looked at my salad and looked at me and yelled You no more salad.

Right? But yelled at me like this, and then I was like, what's his problem? I hadn't done food cures yet. I hadn't learned the nutrition my first year, right? And yeah, every day he'd see me with a salad, he would just yell at me and tell me, no more salad. And I was like, this guy is so weird. What's his problem?

And wouldn't you know? He teaches us food cures. And then within the first day I was like, oh, this is why I'm always bloated. No matter how much and good food I eat and how well I eat, I'm always so bloated. And I was like. Oh, and so that changed everything. But that's the thing, right? That knowledge of the Western nutrition.

'cause I have a bachelor in Applied Nutrition, so I knew my macros, my micros, all my stuff. So I'm like, I'm having a balanced meal. I put olive oil in there, like it's got fat, it's got carbs, fiber, it's got everything, nutrients, everything. It's a beautiful salad. It's colorful. But yeah, in Vancouver in winter and I learned better and now it's very much something that I also like to share with patients is like.

are you listening to your body? Are you listening to your insights? Because your intuition, when you eat something, how you feel after tells you, oh yeah, so that wasn't great for me. Let's try something a little bit, adapt to what the

intuition is, and that is really hard. I don't know if it's a men women thing, I'm not sure, but that's really hard for my husband because he'll say, oh, let's do this.

I'm like, no, it doesn't feel right now. I want to do this 'cause I wanna follow my intuition and what my body needs. He has a hard time with that. Anyway, that's I figure I share that So one of the question I had for you, and then I want to talk about your book, but my last question was, in TCM perspective, I always think okay, let's guide the patients to eat in season to eat local food.

'cause that's also a Western way of eating better, not food that comes from, so far away, or watermelon in winter, which makes no sense to me because. It's winter and that's not a food that is meant for winter. So in season, more local, like you said, whole food, really good. Nourishing food that is real food.

Like we talked about. One of the thing that I've seen over my 20 plus of. Years of practice because I live in Canada, is that I see a lot of people from different ethnic backgrounds. And you do too, obviously. 'cause we live in Canada, so in North America, because it's such a, new kind of country, a lot of people immigrates from somewhere else like I did, I immigrated from France and I'm.

First generation. There are patients of mine that are second generation or third generation, depending where their family immigrated to Canada. And one of the things that I notice and that I started to tell patients, and you could tell me if you really agree or if you don't see any correlation.

But I'm like, okay, so you are first or second generation from. Korea and probably drinking lots of milk might not be the best for you because in Korea that's not part of the diet. So for me as being French, I have to be careful with super spicy food because that's not something we do a lot. So when I went to India I had to be really careful, although I love chai I have to be careful because my body is you were not born in India, you are French. So I do much better with things that are, from my background which is Mediterranean, so goat cheese and a lot of chickpeas and those kind of things. I see patients that you know, the background, let's say another one would be from Germany.

They definitely wouldn't do well. Thai food because it's very blend German food or people, like I said, from certain countries in Asia, they don't do dairy, so when they come to North America, all that milk is just not agreeing with them. Do you talk to your patients about this as well?

Dr. Melissa Carr: I do, when I have a visit with a patient, I ask them what they're eating and what's their standard and regarding the dairy component. The

majority of the world does not digest lactose well. So the ones who do digest it well are, I think it's 20% of the world's population has the sufficient enzymes of lactase to digest past the breastfeeding. I think that, having information about what people eat and usually if they are first generation, they're eating a lot of the foods that they would have grown up with that might be culturally more relevant. So for example, somebody from India who eats a lot of hot, spicy foods. If they've got a lot of stomach fire, I might be like, can we pull that hot spicy back and still enjoy the flavor.

So we still have those conversations about whether, it's the foods that they're choosing that are culturally relevant are they working for them now? We don't grow tropical fruits here. I wish we did because I go to countries where it's grown and I'm like, oh my God.

The first time I went to Thailand and had a banana, I was like, I don't think I've eaten a banana in my life. I think this is the first time I've actually tried a banana, some something so simple. I went to Greece, I had a Greek salad with black olives, and I was like, I hate black olives, but I don't, apparently I love black olives, but only there. I don't love them when they're here, even if I get it from a Greek market. So I think that the food part the cultural context. Still comes into play. Our biology doesn't change super fast.

And so some of us have digestive enzymes that work better towards one type of food or one type of diet. And when we travel, we notice this. So when we travel to another country and we eat foods that we're not used to our digestive system gets a little 'aahhh', and I think that important to recognize that, but not be entirely stuck on it at the same time, because it's possible that what they would normally have eaten in the past may not be relevant for where they are. Like if they've been eating tons of tropical fruit in Malaysia, and then they come here and they continue to eat the same tropical fruit, it may not work if they're in the northern hemisphere in a colder climate.

Clara Cohen: That totally makes sense. So I totally get that. Again, that's going back to what is working. For you at this stage right now, it's all about treating the patient as a whole and that specific patient for them. So I appreciate you sharing that. So modern Chinese Medicine Food Cure is the book you published last year, but it's new. It's your brand new book. We'll have the link for everyone below. Can you tell me why you wrote this book and a little bit more about the book itself and who did you write it for?

Dr. Melissa Carr: I was trying to figure out how long it took me to write this

And I wanna say 15 years. It's possible it was longer. It has just been something that you do in little bits and pieces. And the reason why I wrote it was 'cause I felt there wasn't an English book on Chinese medicine food cures that kind of worked from a western understanding of it that was current. I'm not saying that there's nothing, I just felt like there wasn't anything that was comprehensive enough when I started this journey. And I wrote the book that I thought that I would've wanted as a student. So I have it here. When actually when I first got it.

Clara Cohen: It's beautiful. It's beautiful.

Dr. Melissa Carr: When I first got it, I honestly thought it would be a lot bigger. 'cause , I spent 15 years writing this thing. How is this thing relatively small? It's dense though. I felt like there was a gap. I wanted it for the Chinese medicine students so that they could have an understanding of the foundation piece how the food cures in is interpreted. I wanted it for the TCM student and the TCM practitioner to also understand a little bit about the western nutrition part. Just as you were working in the fitness industry, when you were doing your studies and you started practicing. I worked at a health food store, natural health food store selling supplements while I was

And I saw that there wasn't. Necessarily a lot of knowledge and training in my TCM part about the macronutrients and the micronutrients. And so I wanted a book that covered that as the foundational piece. And so people could think about things like what are common symptoms for a vitamin B12 deficiency who.

Might experience a vitamin B12 deficiency. What are the different types of the forms of the minerals? What are they bound to? So when somebody comes in and they're taking supplements that the TCM practitioner or TCM student would have some foundational knowledge in that. And then I wanted something that I could also give to my patients because I'm always making nutritional recommendations. So I want something that I can say, that section here, turn to this page. So I could have a little bit ease in my practice where I'm just like, yeah, it's here. Go there and that's where you're gonna follow. That I could go and say, you've got spleen qi deficiency. Go to the section on spleen qi deficiency and look that up. is a bit of a publisher's nightmare perhaps because it's not super narrow the market that I was going for. I felt that people were interested in this, have enough basic knowledge it wouldn't go over their heads, even if they've never studied Chinese medicine, even if they've never studied Western Nutrition. I felt like it was possible to give information people could easily apply.

Ad: Before we continue with today's episode, I wanna share something that honestly feels like a big moment for me if you've been following me for a while. You know, I've always said no to all sponsorships. I've been approached many times, but I turn them all down because if I don't genuinely use a product or love it, I will never recommend it to you.

But today is different. I am super excited to introduce my very first sponsor. Drum roll please. Jane app. I'm also a Jane Ambassador, so this is a company I actually use and love. I am saying yes because I've used Jane for years in my own multidisciplinary clinic. Truly, it's the best practice management software and electronic medical record.

I've ever worked with before, Jane, we were using a clunky system that made everything harder than it needed to be. When we switched the entire clinic, felt the difference immediately. Jane is built by people who actually understand what it's like to be a practitioner. Running a busy practice. One of my favorite features is online booking.

There is nothing better than waking up and seeing patients booking their own appointment. Well, I was asleep. Your patients can book when it works for them and the wait list feature. Fills last minute cancellations automatically. I love that. I used to spend so much time calling eight to 10 people just to fill up one spot.

Jane also automates the things we never enjoy doing, like intake forms, reminders, confirmation. It honestly feels like having an extra assistant handling all the moving parts. You can focus on what really matters, which is supporting your patients and being the TCM rockstar practitioner. You truly are.

There are so many features I could talk about, but we would be here all day if you are looking for a system that brings more ease, more clarity and comment to your practice. I truly. Recommend Jane. You can check it out at jane.app/demo. And because you're part of the Acupro community, you can use my code ACUPRO10MO one month when you sign up to get a one month grace period on your new account.

The link and the code are also in the show notes below for you. Now let's get back to today's episode.

Clara Cohen: That's great because you wanna appeal to as many people as possible. 'cause the idea is, like we said, we all have to eat, so might as well eat

to nourish the body. So that's great. So I wanted to ask you, just for everybody that's listening, just for fun, what are your go-to?

Two best food for spleen qi deficiency, since you mentioned that, and that's such a common pattern. And for the people who are listening, if you're not sure, that's basically you have a weak digestion, you easily fatigue, you have probably cravings, you are feeling, tired mentally, probably as well as physically.

You worry, maybe you overthink. there's a bit of loose tools in your digestive tracks. So those are the basics. There's more to it, but we could start with that. give us an idea.

Dr. Melissa Carr: Absolutely. So for a lot of people with spleen qi deficiency, it could be because they're overeating. They maybe have quite a strong sweet tooth and they're overwhelming their spleen with too much sweet and damp foods.

And when I was first studying, so just as you were having the salads, I thought I was eating healthy because I would go get a blueberry bran muffin and a. is gonna date the time a Snapple or a fruitopia, which what I thought, okay, fruit juice, healthy and so those were the foods that I was having when I started studying.

And then I realized, oh, this is like really not good for me. The replacement for the muffin for me, I do have a sweet tooth and I love sweet, and I also love the texture. Of a muffin. So for me, sweet potatoes roasted. I could eat that as a snack. It makes me happy. I don't feel like I'm missing out when I have that, I recognize, of course, I don't need a lot of it, but there's a lot of fiber in there too, so I don't necessarily have to have very much of that.

And I add a little bit of cinnamon to help balance the blood sugar and enhance the sweetness flavor there. And ginger is, just Nourish this stomach qi and clear out some of the dampness as well. So I'd say those would be two go-to foods that I would choose because I feel like they'll make me feel a little bit more alert and a little bit more energized. I could never do carb free thing. Because I feel like if I do that, or fasting for me just doesn't work.

And the thing is for me, if I did that, I would have no brain and I would be hangry. Nobody wants to sit near me if I'm doing that because my I'm googly brained. And I'm just. Irritated. So for me, I think it is, for some people the sweet potatoes not a good plan. For I think soups and stews, like for spleen qi

deficiency, obviously in Chinese medicine. Those are easy recommendations for us. I'm like, what do you like that? Our soup stews, slow cook meals.

We have so many options. Pressure cook meals, the instant pot. If you wanna do a fast cook I would do slow cooker meals often where I'd throw a bunch of stuff in there and. Walk away so easy, right? And as I mentioned, I don't like to cook. So this is the kind of thing that would be easy to cook and nourish the spleen.

And then especially if it's in the colder months, and even if it's in the summer, if you're doing it in a slow cooker or pressure cooker, it's not gonna heat up your kitchen.

Clara Cohen: I love that. 'cause I always think of spleen qi deficiency is your digestive system is weak. Like you were a newborn baby, or you are a young baby. So what do we do with baby? First, of course is mother's milk, but when we start feeding them, it's baby food, which is basically all mushed for you.

So when you said sweet potato, I'm like. That's the first thing you could give to a baby is okay, a mashed banana, a mashed sweet potato and with sweet potato, I could see, when you were talking about the carbs, I could see a great breakfast. You have a couple of eggs with a sweet potato and cinnamon over it, and you got the protein that balanced the carbs and you have fiber and this is beautiful.

Like it's a beautiful nourishing breakfast for the spleen and it's warm. That works perfectly.

Dr. Melissa Carr: So for a lot of people, the kanji is just, you cook the rice extra and you add things in. When I was growing up, and I have this in the book if we were sick, my mom would make something called Ochazuke. My mom. Japanese Canadian, third generation. So I'm half fourth generation Japanese Canadian. and Ochazuke rice with green tea. And then sometimes you add a little bit of a protein or a plum or something like that to it. And that was like, I still think of that as my comfort food.

Clara Cohen: Yeah, I could see that. I've seen online a lot of people saying, I don't understand why I am supposed to not eat rice or carbs, because people in Asia all have rice and they're okay with it. I think it's just because in North America people have been used to have so much carbohydrate that they're telling them that basically, okay, stop it so you don't have to go over it because everybody eats popcorn and chips and whatever it is.

Burgers and cereals and it's just carbs. In Chinese medicine. A lot of it is sweet food, right? It's all sweet. It's cheese is sweet and the burger, the meat is sweet and the bread is sweet. And they have sweet cookies and the cereal that is sweet. And it's okay, so where's the other flavors like sour and bitter and balancing with, other things.

So I think that's what's missing. Maybe that's why they go one way or the other instead of just, making it more balanced. I think that could be why. So in your book you have a few recipes and you don't cook, so they gotta be simple recipes.

Dr. Melissa Carr: Yes.

Clara Cohen: Okay.

Dr. Melissa Carr: that was really my focus. The recipes that I've offered are super simple. They are things that if I can do it, anybody can do it. And when I look at a recipe, my decision on whether or not I'm gonna try it is often first thing I look at is how many ingredients, if it's got two dozen ingredients. It isn't gonna happen for me. I'm not gonna do it. And I also look at I think about how long is that gonna take? hands on time, because most recipes when they put the hands on time, I'm like, it takes me three times longer than that recipe said it was supposed to take. 'Cause I'm not a chef. I'm not going to chop. Those vegetables so quickly. So the emphasis for me was easy. Now that does mean that sometimes it is more like teas and I do include smoothies in there, but it's suitable for the condition. So I put things in there that I thought you could also modify. Where if you don't have that ingredient, you can swap out something different or you're bored with that ingredient, you can add in something different.

Clara Cohen: That's a great idea because it's true that I'm the same as you. I look, and if there's more than six ingredients, you lost me. I'm done. Like already. And especially when you start with ingredients that the first three, I don't even know where you buy or what it is. I'm like, what is that?

I don't even know where to buy or what it is, so you lost me. But if you're telling me, okay, you're putting a sweet potato with, bone broth and whatever you're putting things, I'm like okay. I can put that in some rosemary and they're good. I can do this. So I appreciate you making it simple because I think a lot of us are not chef.

To start with, my dad was a chef, so my mom never cooked a day in her life because he was a chef until he passed away. And so if you love it, this is great, but not everybody is like that. I really appreciate you being here on the show and coming to share all your wisdom and your knowledge.

And I would love for you to have, a final thoughts for everybody that's listening when it comes to modern Chinese medicine food cures.

Dr. Melissa Carr: I think for me the key takeaway point, like if I'm gonna summarize it, you said it earlier in the podcast, is the mindfulness part. So the paying attention to how you feel when you eat. So for me, the mindfulness part of practicing nutrition is really important. That means that as you're preparing your food, as you're choosing what to eat, you're thinking, what am I feeding? So there's times where you're feeding your goal with that meal or that food is to help support healing your body. There's times where it's to provide some comfort. There's times where it feels like just reward, so just being mindful of what am I feeding as I'm having this and fully enjoying it so that I don't feel guilty if I'm having a piece of cake right now, I'm enjoying the celebration that.

Goes along with that cake. That's why I am choosing to eat this particular thing. So the mindfulness practice of why am I eating this? You don't just scarf down the food and then. You've forgotten about it. You have the bites, you taste the flavor.

You feel the texture. You get the emotion with it. 'cause food comes with feelings and emotions too, and memories. So you get all of those benefits from it if you slow it down. And then when you slow it down, you're also more likely to chew more. And if you chew more digestion starts in the mouth. It means that whatever it is that you're having, even if you're having a raw salad on a cold day, if you chew it.

Extra. You're increasing the surface area of that food. So when it hits the rest of the digestive system, it's easier for the body to handle it. That's my main takeaway is the opportunity to be mindful with your eating and enjoy it. 'Cause it should be fun.

It should be enjoyable. That is. One of the key pieces with food and if you aren't enjoying it, and then get help with finding somebody who can help you figure out how to interpret the healthy food choices into things that you actually can, want to eat and and enjoy eating.

Clara Cohen: I love food. So the joy of food, you speak to me. I grew up, my dad was a chef and like I said, it's just good food makes me happy, and it's social. You're with

Friends, you have good food, you enjoy. Be mindful, enjoy, chew your food. Don't gobble it while you are walking down the street running for the bus. That's just the last thing we need to do. So I appreciate you and the last piece of wisdom you shared. Thank you so much Dr. Carr for coming on the show.

I appreciate your time.

Dr. Melissa Carr: thing in case it's helpful or in case it's useful.

Clara Cohen: Please.

Dr. Melissa Carr: Throughout the book with that idea of food should be enjoyable and joyful. I try to infuse humor in there. Because for me, I want people to be interested in reading and learning. And if it reads like a textbook then it's gonna be boring.

It's gonna be great reading before sleep, but it's not necessarily gonna be things that you're gonna incorporate into your life. I hope that people enjoy the approach that I've taken of trying to infuse a little bit of lightness and humor and my favorite

sections for writing in the

book were about some of the stories behind food, some of the history, the flavor section for me was my favorite part to write.

Clara Cohen: That's so cool. Thank you. Yes. It's all about enjoying having fun and putting some lightness into it, so thank you so much.

Dr. Melissa Carr: Thank you.

Clara Cohen: Thank you so much for spending your time with me today. I truly hope you benefited from this episode, and I would love for you to share it with a friend that may benefit from it as well. Follow the show, live a review, and if you want more, go to my website, acuproacademy.com. I have tons of resources there with treatment protocols, case studies, free courses, and so much more.

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