



Thoughts from the Founder & CEO



To Vegan or Not to Vegan

by Annemarie Colbin, Ph.D.

When I started the NG in 1977, my intention was to share everything I learned or would learn about how food affects health. I started by teaching how to put vegetarian (or vegan, as I used no dairy) meals together, because people who were interested in cutting out meat were sort of using the family meal minus the meat as a base - vegetables, salad, dessert. I designed nutritionally balanced meals based on grains and beans, plus vegetables, salad, and dessert with no sugar (only natural sweeteners). I felt the vegetarians had been

disrespected and ignored, and felt they deserved a seat at the table, so to speak. My vision was that restaurants would ALSO have meals for vegetarians.

Thirty-five years later, this has come about, and I can't take the credit. The time has come. And what I have noticed over the years, as

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vegetarian/vegan eating has become trendy, is that interesting attitudes have crept into the mix.

In the early days, people chose alternative diets mostly for health reasons. Nowadays some people choose their diet for moral, ecological, and spiritual reasons. Particularly, they choose to go vegan because they don't want to kill animals, or think it's more spiritually evolved to eat only plants, and they want to do good and be "good people" by their food choices. This would be a laudable position, and not be a problem except for one small, unintended effect: there are some who choose this route and then pass harsh judgment on those who don't. They end up with an attitude of "I'm a vegan, and you're an un-evolved caveman who kills and eats animals; therefore I'm better than you. You slob!" And they can get really nasty about it. Some of us at the NGI have been on the receiving end of that nastiness.

This is counter-productive. Vegan eating is supposed to be peaceful, loving, evolved, and indicative of higher consciousness. Many times, however, it is also spiritually arrogant and disdainful of those who choose to eat differently. "By their fruits ye shall know them" – by our actions, our spirituality and moral fiber are shown. If we are loving towards animals, it makes no sense to be unloving towards people, regardless of their actions.

The idea that meat eating denotes cruelty is misplaced. The universe is set up so that one creature feeds another, all around the life cycle. This is inevitable, and ecologically sane – another word for it is "recycling."

Eating kills – it kills plants no less than animals. See this *New York Times* article about the responses of plants towards those who would eat them! <http://nyti.ms/shsSSV>

Humans can live by eating both plants and animals – that's how we are designed. Some humans actually are healthier if they eat animal food. Some humans are healthier if they eat just plant foods. Either way is valid, because the point here is to live, and to be healthy so as to be able to contribute positive energy to the world. That's why in the Natural Gourmet we teach "*health-supportive cooking*." That means, whatever food supports your health is what we promote.

So let's be careful with making moral judgments about what others eat. It's not our business. If we are to be healthy and happy, let's support others in their road there, whatever it takes. After all, there are a lot of kind and loving people who eat burgers and fries – and there are some who eat really well and are unpleasant and angry. When considering the value of eating systems, let's factor in compassion and kindness towards anyone's life path. Even for those with whom we disagree.

New Books by CTP Grads



The Inspired Vegan

by Bryant Terry
CTP 87E



Spork-Fed

by Jenny Engel
CTP 123
and her sister,
Heather Goldberg

On the President's Mind



Accreditation Update

by Jenny Matthau

Most people are impressed, or at least comforted by the knowledge that the school they are attending is accredited. For some, it is a requirement. Being accredited somehow enhances the credibility and stature of institutions, yet I suspect that very few individuals are familiar with what it actually entails. Under my direction, the Natural Gourmet Institute for Health & Culinary Arts first became accredited in 2000. Prior to this time, I had very little idea of what it takes to achieve this title. Over the years, we have undertaken the process of re-accreditation, which is necessary every three to five years, depending on the term your accrediting agency confers upon your institution. I am very happy to report that we recently received the maximum five-year term from ACCET (Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training).

The first step to becoming accredited or reaccredited is attending a two-day reaccreditation seminar in Washington D.C. In the past, Merle Brown and I have done this, but last year Jeri Rostron took my place. I have fond memories of dining at Restaurant Nora and taking a night tour of the presidential monuments. I highly recommend these activities to anyone visiting for the first time.

The second step is completing an Analytic Self Evaluation Report (ASER), consisting of eight standards: Mission, Management, Financial Practices, Curricula, Instructional Delivery, Instructional Personnel, Admissions and Student Services, and Evaluation. Each standard consists of subsections, and there are several questions in each of these to be answered.

The "Mission" section is subdivided into Mission Statement, Goals, and Planning. It includes questions about the relevance, conveyance and success of the institution's mission, including short-term and long-term plans.

The "Management" section is subdivided into Governance, Operational Management, Personnel Management, Records, Communications, and Professional Relationships. This section focuses on ownership, organizational charts, legal entities, job descriptions of key positions and various governing boards and organizational associations.

The "Financial Practices" section is subdivided into Stability, Financial Procedures and Financial Assistance/Scholarships. The purpose of this section is to determine if the institution is fiscally sound, uses policies and procedures that ensure accurate monitoring of all financial transactions, and operates in a manner that guarantees fair and ethical treatment of all students.

The "Curricula" section is subdivided into Educational Goals and Curricular Objectives, Program/Instructional Materials, Performance Measurements, Curriculum Review/Revision, and Certification and Licensing. It is designed to ascertain whether the institution's curricular design, materials and outcomes measurements follow sound educational practices. This includes lesson plans, books, handouts, grading methodology, quizzes and exams.

The "Instructional Delivery" section is subdivided into Instructional Methods, Externships/Internships, Equipment/Supplies, and Facilities. It focuses on the various ways in which students learn and are motivated, methods and materials used by the instructional staff and a detailed description of the physical premises, including layout and

equipment.

The "Instructional Personnel" section is subdivided into Qualifications of Instructional Personnel, Supervision of Instruction, and Instructor Orientation and Training. This section is designed to ascertain whether instructors are qualified and receive the direction and supervision required to effectively deliver educational and training objectives.

The "Admissions and Student Services" section is subdivided into Recruitment, Enrollment, Transfer of Credit, and Student Services. It is designed to determine if the institution recruits and enrolls only qualified students who can reasonably be expected to benefit from the education and training services and provides student services appropriate to their needs.

The "Evaluation" section is subdivided into Student Progress, Attendance, Participant Satisfaction, Employer/Sponsor Satisfaction, and Completion and Placement. This section includes questions regarding whether the institution utilizes appropriate methods of evaluation to ensure that outcomes are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.

We answered 163 questions in total (yes, I counted!), some requiring a brief answer and others requiring several pages. An equally important part of the ASER is providing documentation for all of the submitted answers in the form of exhibits. For example, it is not sufficient to state that you conduct Board Meetings every three weeks. You must provide minutes of the meetings to prove that you do this. We compiled over 100 exhibits for our report. There must be written policies and procedures for virtually every job and every conceivable action/expectation pertaining to staff, students and graduates.

After the ASER is submitted, a three-person team consisting of a management specialist, an education specialist and a representative from ACCET visit the applicant institution for two full days. During this time, they conduct in-depth interviews with office staff, instructors and students in order to verify the accuracy of the ASER. The team also writes a report, citing both strengths and weaknesses of the school. The institution then writes a response, addressing all the cited weaknesses and offering solutions (usually as written policies/procedures).

The Accrediting Commission then votes to either deny reaccreditation or to continue

accreditation for either three or five years.

Attaining the title “Accredited Institution” is a very arduous undertaking that involves the participation of the entire staff.

Communication and dedication to the process are absolute prerequisites to success. Once accredited, the hard work continues, but the benefits of increased access to funding for some students and a better school and education for all our students makes it a worthwhile endeavor.

I hope you are all well,

Jenny



Adventures in Cooking Tea Anyone?

by Sue Baldassano

Barely 6 years old, diagnosed with a brain tumor and recovering from brain surgery, Amelia Scheffs-Bevington instinctively knew how to best navigate those first early treatments.

Facing 30 days of radiation, Amelia grabbed Ralphie (her from-birth stuffed doggie) and a couple of other stuffed doggie friends to physically “book end” her in the big, scary radiotherapy machine while she lay perfectly still for over an hour each day.

Post radiation, not only was Amelia more medically stable but Ralphie, with help from Amelia’s mom, somehow found the time, strength and energy to author *Ralphie’s Radiation Rescue*, a book full of “helpful hints” for coping with new and sometimes frightening situations.

This book includes powerful day-by-day photos of Amelia and her friends as she faced the first of many medical and emotional challenges.

For me, the most amazing photo in the book was taken the day after the treatments were completed, when back at home, Amelia hosted an impromptu tea party for all her doggie friends, who were literally at her side when she needed them most.

It seems no matter who we are and what we are going through, sharing sustenance around a table with loved ones (even stuffed ones) makes everything, even brain cancer, a bit easier.

As a long time friend of Amelia's parents and a visitor to their home before she was ill, Amelia's gracious hostessing for her stuffed doggie friends sparked something deep inside me. I decided then and there that I would help this family get through this ordeal by cooking for them, nurturing the family as they worked valiantly to care for Amelia.

Once a week, after work, for 4 years and 9 months I trekked up to their 4th floor walk-up in Long Island City and cooked dinner for them.

I was often assisted by volunteer chefs, mostly students, who wanted some private cooking experience and more importantly, wanted to help a family in need.

Not only did we cook for the family, we sometimes cooked with Amelia. When she was feeling well enough we made healthier cookies in the shape of animals (dolphins and turtles were especially popular motifs). Whole wheat pizza and bread were also attempted, one of our goals being to keep Amelia engaged in life and interested in eating.



Healthy, homemade meals, often inspired by graduate Rebecca Katz's book, *The Cancer Fighting Kitchen*, were piping hot and ready when Amelia's family arrived home -- Amelia and Mommy Kate often arriving after a grueling day of needles, uncomfortable/painful tests or just waiting around endlessly for results at the hospital; Mama Margaret and brother Leon, both tired and worried, returning from work and school respectively.

Amelia was often not hungry but when she was, she was well fed. Some of her favorite

meals included salmon with capers, beef stew, quinoa pilaf, roasted corn, fresh pineapples, guacamole (sans the jalapeno) and mashed sweet potatoes. The last meal she ate on this earth was a quinoa and corn tabouli salad that I prepared.

After her first recurrence, almost 2 years after diagnosis, the family began working with Jean Wallace, a nutritionist specializing in brain cancer. She was recommended by NGI graduate Laura Pole, an oncology nurse and cooking instructor who does a million great things including cancer workshops at Smith Farm Retreats.

Along with her vast knowledge of cancer, Laura uses food, song (she's a musician) and a sheer lust for life to help people with cancer heal. She visited Amelia twice and offered a free consultation to the family. During this process Amelia's Mama Margaret started getting interested in healthy cooking, and through an anonymous donor, she was able to attend classes at the NGI including Laura Pole's *Cooking for People with Cancer* class. She also took a Knife Skills class and Indian cooking class with Chef Rich

LaMarita and a Basics and Inflammation class with Chef Jill Gusman. Amelia's brother, Leon, adores Jill's parsley garlic sauce. I make it for him every time I cook.

Shortly after Amelia's cancer recurred, The Amelia Appeal Foundation was created as a way to assist the family with the astronomical monetary costs of treatment. Even with good insurance there are tons of co-pays, and alternative or complementary treatment is not covered at all.

Somehow I ended up being the President of

this foundation, and in 2010, we orchestrated our first, and to date, only fundraiser. Again, volunteer chefs (mostly students from the NGI) materialized to help prepare healthy hors d'oeuvres for 200. These students received no internship or stewarding hours and no money. They just did it for the experience and to help Amelia. Not only were students involved but many cookbook authors donated books for a raffle.

Today, The Amelia Appeal is focusing on pediatric cancer awareness. We hope to self-publish *Ralphie's Radiation Rescue* and help other families with funds and food while they are dealing with such a devastating experience.

After her diagnosis, Amelia visited Florida on three occasions. In late February of 2011, Amelia wanted to visit Florida again. She was in a wheelchair, too weak to walk, pumped full of steroids and not feeling well at all, yet Amelia had the will to visit Florida, and she and Mommy Kate visited on March 5th (2 months to the day before she passed away).

The foodie in Amelia really manifested on these trips. Viewing sea creatures, especially manatees, might have been number one on her list of things to visit in Florida, but the menu selections were definitely a close second. When in Florida, Amelia enjoyed shrimp, shrimp and more shrimp!

During the nearly 5 years Amelia was ill she enjoyed birthday parties, Christmas, Halloween parties and many "just plain dinner parties." Once again, student chefs often volunteered to cook homemade desserts without white sugar, healthy salads, whole grains and good quality proteins.

I was present when Amelia passed away. High up in a sun-filled room overlooking the East River and the magnificent cityscape, Amelia was surrounded by her loving parents,

her best friend Dee, Jessica, the life specialist at Sloan Kettering, and of course, Ralphie. As her parents held her close, Jessica reminded her she would soon be swimming with the manatees, the animals she so loved and visited often in Florida. At exactly 12 noon, Amelia closed her eyes and drifted from us peacefully.

Standing at the foot of her bed, I made a silent promise to Amelia: to continue cooking for her brother and her parents as they begin their long slow process of healing.

Best,

Sue

Quinoa and Roasted Corn Tabouli

Yield: approx. 2 cups

1 cup quinoa, rinsed
 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
 ¼ teaspoon sea salt
 1 ¼ cup boiling stock
 2 ears corn, roasted and kernels removed from cob
 1-2 cloves garlic, minced
 2 tablespoons chopped mint
 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
 3-4 tablespoons lime juice

Procedure:

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Place rinsed quinoa in a small loaf pan with the oil and salt. Bake in oven until quinoa begins to dry. Add boiling stock. Cover pan with tin foil and bake until quinoa is fluffy and all stock has been absorbed (about 20 minutes).

Remove quinoa from pan and place in a medium bowl. Allow to cool.

Add remaining ingredients. Season to taste and serve.