

THOUGHTS FROM THE FOUNDER & CEO

by Annemarie Colbin, Ph.D.

NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR  
THE NGI

There have been some very interesting developments in growth at the Natural Gourmet. I believe you have heard about our project with the Tai Sophia Institute in Laurel, MD, where we'll be setting up the Annemarie Colbin Center for the Study of Food and Healing. That will be a long term project with many possibilities.



Another interesting connection is happening with the Henry Ford Hospital in West Bloomfield, IL (near Detroit). At the suggestion of Caroline Nation, one of my Food Therapy course graduates, we were invited for a meeting with them in February. I went with George Armiger, a member of the NGI Board and our director of corporate development, to see what was going on there.

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The first surprise was entering the hospital. It looks like a cross between a mall and an airport: there was a gift shop, a clothing shop for specialized clothing, a spa for massages and acupuncture treatments. And, best of all, a cooking demo kitchen that seats 90! Turns out this hospital has set up a cooking school, the Culinary Institute for Health and Healing, and they're just beginning to set up "healthy" cooking classes for the community. They also want to offer classes on the healing aspects of food to health professionals. A hospital!

Turns out that the CEO used to be at the Ritz Carlton hotel, so he brought the whole concept of hospitality to a hospital setting. They aim to become a model for health care in that they are focusing on how to support and maintain health and educating the community, rather than just fixing disease. A novel idea in this setting, to say the least. We were given a tour, and the head chef, Frank Turner, showed us his gorgeous kitchen. I was particularly impressed with the menus, which sounded really delicious. The lunch prepared for us was excellent with its "low fat, low salt" approach – very gourmet to say the least. For the patients, the best thing is that they can order their own food when they want it, instead of being awakened to get some industrial brown junk food. Lots of vegetables and greens, all fresh, nothing canned or frozen.

We have since set up an internship possibility for our CTP students. Henry Ford Hospital will even provide housing. If you're interested, do contact Rosemary, of course.

The other project we're working on with them is setting up a satellite NGI there to teach public classes. That should be happening fairly soon – these people don't drag their heels! Anyone interested in learning more about this who is in the Detroit area or planning to move there, let Rosemary know, and she will pass this on to me.

All the best!

## ON THE PRESIDENT'S MIND

by Jenny Matthau

### OXALATES IN FOOD AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO A VARIETY OF HEALTH PROBLEMS

Last November I attended Wise Traditions 2009, the 10<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Weston A. Price Foundation in Illinois. I look forward to going every year, as I get to hear fascinating lectures on a wide variety of topics related to food and health. One of the most engaging speakers I heard was William Shaw, PhD. He received his doctorate in biochemistry and human physiology and is board certified in clinical chemistry and toxicology by the American Board of Clinical Chemistry. Dr. Shaw's lecture on oxalates was one of the most interesting that I heard at the conference.

According to Dr. Shaw, kidney stones will be diagnosed in 10% to 15% of adults during their lifetimes. In the United States, one million adults develop them every year, and approximately 80% of these stones are caused by oxalates. Furthermore, about half of these oxalates are made by the body, and the other half are derived from oxalic acid contained in food. Dr. Shaw estimates that roughly 20% of the human population has a genetic variant that makes their bodies more susceptible to oxalate formation than the general population. He also maintains that many people without this genetic variant suffer from stones as well as many other disorders caused by oxalates.

While oxalate stones or crystals are most commonly found in the kidneys, they can form anywhere in the body, including the heart, brain, eyes, thyroid and even the bones! We were shown slides of the crystals, imbedded in various organs and tissues. They come in a variety of colors and shapes, and many are very beautiful. It would be cool to discover them growing on the walls of a cave, but very painful and damaging when embedded in body tissue because they are quite sharp and pointy. Elevated oxalate levels are much more common in autistic children than in normal kids. Researcher Susan Owens found that autistic kids are often afflicted with diarrhea, pain in the stomach and urinary tract, Candida, as well as impaired cognitive and motor skills. When they were put on a diet low in oxalic acid and treated with the anti-fungal drug



Nystatin, their pain lessened, Candida markers were substantially reduced, and their skills improved. Other hallmark symptoms of autism such as aggressive behavior, hyperactivity and lack of eye contact decreased significantly with the treatment and diet.

Vulvodynia (pain in and outside the vagina) is also linked to oxalates and Candida. The crystals become embedded in the tissue, causing a stinging, burning sensation. This condition has been successfully treated using anti-fungal drugs and a diet low in oxalates. The relationship between oxalates and Candida is also illustrated by the fact that children who are given oral antibiotics often have high oxalate values. This happens due to the imbalance in normal gut flora, paving the way for opportunistic Candida to proliferate. The yeast then forms oxalates in the gut.

Restricting dietary oxalic acid is one of the most effective, practical means to prevent oxalate formation. Oxalic acid can bind with minerals to form oxalates. Vegetarians need to be particularly vigilant, since several plant foods are rich sources. According to Dr. Shaw, textured soy protein is the most problematic, followed by spinach. One small soy burger contains 638 milligrams of oxalate, about the amount in an average serving of spinach. The amount of oxalate in the "typical diet" ranges from 97 to 930 mg, and the recommended amount to reduce kidney stones is less than 30 to 50 mg daily. An occasional spinach salad should not be a problem for most people, but Dr. Shaw warns that virtually everyone will develop kidney stones if they consume a large spinach salad every day.

Oxalates are very stable and are not destroyed by cooking. However, simmering spinach in water will reduce the oxalic acid load, because some of it will precipitate into the cooking water. It is important not to drink the pot liquor, something we highly recommend when cooking other greens such as collards or kale. The same caution applies to Swiss chard.

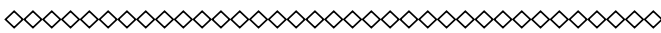
Before you swear off spinach and chard, remember that they provide an abundance of nutrients including calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium, vitamins A, B6, C, E and K, as well as several phytochemicals. You don't have to follow Popeye's diet. Rotate them with kale, collards, dandelion greens, escarole and broccoli rabe.

Other foods that are rich sources of oxalic acid include tofu, peanuts, pecans, rhubarb, sweet potatoes, chocolate (woe is me!), instant coffee, leeks, tea, okra and wheat germ. Again, the take-home message for most of us is moderation, rather than

complete avoidance. Lemon peel, lime peel, parsley and black pepper are also quite high, but are usually consumed in such small amounts that they do not pose a problem for most people.

Dr. Shaw recommends certain supplements to reduce oxalates in the body. Calcium citrate is effective if taken at the same time as the oxalate-containing food. The dosage is 1000 mg daily in divided doses. Another option is 300-400 mg of magnesium citrate for adults. These minerals can be very helpful for those people suffering from oxalate-related disorders. Probiotic bacteria contain enzymes that break down oxalates. Omega-3 fatty acids and cod liver oil do a very good job of preventing oxalate deposition, while omega-6 fatty acids have the opposite effect -- another reason to maintain a balanced ratio. Dr. Shaw takes 100 mg of vitamin B6 daily and recommends the pyridoxine form. He maintains that this supplement is the most helpful, and that this amount is very safe.

Oxalate status can be determined using urine panels that measure oxalates and yeast markers at The Great Plains Laboratory for Health, Nutrition and Metabolism. Dr. Shaw serves as Director of the laboratory that specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of metabolic disorders of adults and children, along with autism, PDD, hyperactivity, inborn errors of metabolism and adult disorders such as depression, fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue.



## ADVENTURES IN COOKING

by Sue Baldassano

What do I have in common with Anthony Bourdain? Urban, sardonic, well-traveled ex-smokers?



While I cannot claim to be in Mr. Bourdain's league, we both recently visited Istanbul and were both pleasantly surprised at the plethora of exciting foods we encountered. We also both dined at one of Istanbul's most notable restaurants, Asitane, specializing in the cuisine of the Ottoman Empire (1299-1923).

At the height of its power (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries), this empire spanned three continents controlling much of Western Asia, Eastern and South Eastern Europe and North Africa. The food is a unique mixture of Central Asian, Middle Eastern and the Balkans in terms of flavor prints and ingredients.

The chef/owner of Asitane, Batur Durmay, has the glazed look of a man on a mission. His dishes are inspired by the Ottoman empire's shopping lists, as detailed recipes are nonexistent. All his ingredients are seasonal and local, and he spends a great deal of time and energy procuring the "best of the best" in terms of his proteins and produce.

We received real star treatment there, especially when he was informed that I was employed at a mostly plant-based, New York culinary school -- a curious concept for the lamb-loving Turks.

He did have some vegetarian items on his menu that were decent, though not as good as our Friday Night Dinners. Other interesting items included a Scorpion Fish Soup, Stuffed Grape Leaves with Cherries, Lamb simmered in Honey and Almonds and an awesome Pomegranate Sherbet made with the bursting pomegranates that can be found all over the city in late November.

As much as I enjoyed the Asitane dining experience, the highlight of the trip was visiting NGI graduate, Idil Sanal (CTP 156). In November, Turkey celebrates Bayrum, a holiday where almost everything is closed, so we were lucky to be invited to the home of Idil's aunt for a traditional family meal. Idil not only picked us up in Istanbul proper and drove us to the Asian side of the city, she accompanied us back via a small ferry boat and made sure we were safely back in our hotel. There is nothing like being carted around by a local when you are in an unfamiliar city, and I am appreciative of Idil's gift of her time to us.

The eggplant dish her aunt prepared was meltingly tender, sweet and seasoned with butter and milk (so creamy and unctuous). It was served over braised lamb. Other dishes served included a colorful plate of pickled vegetables, 3 or 4 fabulous items with phyllo and a soup prepared with homemade noodles.

Later that week we toured Istanbul with Selin, another native. She seemed to know every good restaurant and item to eat and purchase in the entire city. She is also quite the schmoozer, trading small talk with all the local merchants and getting us nice deals on some of our purchases. By ferry, we accompanied Selin and her husband, Ali, to Buyukada, one of several islands off the coast of Istanbul. Overlooking the Marmara Sea, we enjoyed a fabulous lunch of perfectly grilled bluefish accompanied by a variety of tasty fish appetizers (mezes) and a sampling of Raki, the traditional anise-flavored signature drink of Turkey. Later we experienced what I thought would be a cheesy buggy

ride around the car-free island. It turned out to be a short yet relaxing romp through a forested and hilly landscape past the typical white painted wooden houses and sea views tucked behind the leafless autumn tree line. We completed this wonderful afternoon at their summer cottage drinking homemade sour cherry liqueur prepared from cherries grown on her small and intimate property.

In one week we had so many unique experiences, but I would like to share just one more for now -- my visit to the Baklava factory.

The owner of the company, Nadir Gullu, is another one who is just crazy about his product. The wheat for the phyllo is local, the butter comes from a little town in the middle of nowhere, the pistachios are incredible -- as good or even better than the famous Bronte Sicilian pistachios. There is only one location so that quality control can be fully monitored. What impressed me most was that the owner of this company actually knew how to prepare the product himself. You can check out my fun time at the baklava plant on the NGI facebook.

The baskava were outstanding. For another taste of one of those perfectly formed gems, a return trip to Turkey (group tour August 16th-23rd) is definitely on the menu.

## UPCOMING COOKING TOURS



### To Grandmother's House We Go...

#### **Turkey**

August 16-23, 2010

#### **Oaxaca, Mexico**

February 21-28, 2011

Groups limited to 12 people per trip

[www.tograndmothershousewego.com](http://www.tograndmothershousewego.com)

e-mail: [grancooks@earthlink.net](mailto:grancooks@earthlink.net)

Tel: 718-768-4662

## FARMERS' MARKETS: THE R<sub>x</sub> FOR A HEALTHY FOUNDATION

by Nathan Donahoe, CTP 113



"I think I may be low in dopamine. I'm thinking of taking dopamine shots." So said one of my clients to me during a recent dietary consultation. Although this was the first time I had heard of dopamine shots, there was something very disturbingly familiar about the experience. A client who is having health issues, read or heard from a friend about the newest, latest cure or treatment and is debating on whether to spend the time and (usually large amounts of) money.

While many of these products have science to back them up, it reminds me of the fashion industry. People will try magic pills and miracle cures depending on what's hot and in style. "Goji Berries are the new Black!" Like fashion, as soon as the new "It Thing" comes along, they leave the old one on the shelf to gather dust alongside their colon cleansing pills and nutritional yeast. Not only is this not optimum for my clients, but it is very unsatisfying for me! Thus began my new quest as a natural chef: finding something that is guaranteed to improve my clients' health, yet is easy enough to stick with.

Unfortunately this wasn't as easy as I thought. I felt like I was back in the seitan-making class at NGI, praying that sooner or later the seitan would appear as I was washing the flour. I began researching and looking for something that was guaranteed. While every modality had different techniques, concepts of "building a foundation" and "creating a base" kept on popping up.

Already having a background in Chinese Medicine, I decided to revisit my roots and stop in at Ron Teeguarden's Dragon Herbs ([www.dragonherbs.com](http://www.dragonherbs.com)), the best source of tonic herbs I have ever found. I learned that our foundation is called "Jing." It's the deepest source of our energy, the base from which our "Chi" (energy) and "Shen" (spirit) come from and the starting point for most treatments. Traditionally, tonic herbs such as polyrachis ant (yes, the six-legged bug) are taken to build Jing and to prevent illness before it begins. I soon look forward to lifting 50 times my own weight.

Checking in with the yoga community, I began studying Tantra, an Asian set of beliefs and practices centered on yoga, mantras and meditation. From Charu ([www.embodytantra.com](http://www.embodytantra.com)) and Psalm Isadora

([www.psalmisadorayoga.com](http://www.psalmisadorayoga.com)), I learned that Tantra considers our foundation to be the “Root Chakra.” Physically, it corresponds to our sacrum, sexual organs, sexual health and fight/flight response. Spiritually and emotionally, it is related to instinct, security and survival. Developing and strengthening this foundation is considered essential for the general health of the body and for attainment of higher spiritual experiences.

So I began to understand that the common thread that connects all these different modalities is called by many different names, but they essentially mean “foundation.” And there is no better foundation for a natural chef to promote to clients than Organic Farmers’ Markets.

Organic Farmers’ Markets are one of the only things on the planet guaranteed to improve health and quality of life for every person and every medical condition. Why? First, our bodies are literally made out of the food that we eat. So no matter what diet, pills or meditation you do, poor quality food will make a poor quality body, and our body is literally our “foundation.” At Farmer’s Markets, the food is picked the day before and has a higher nutrient content, so it tastes and feels better. Since there is no middleman, i.e. grocery store, prices are cheaper and more practical for your budget. There is no diet, pill or program in the world that offers such an affordable and clear benefit. It is so simple and obvious that most of the time we can’t see the “celery for the trees” and forget to stress the importance of Farmers’ Markets to our clients before we bring up acid/alkaline and five element theories. What if every single person on the planet had a base diet consisting mostly of food from Organic Farmers’ Markets? With such a strong foundation, would most of these “magic pills” and “get healthy quick diets” even be necessary?

In my experience, not as much. I have been spending less time recommending specific diets and more time at the Farmers’ Markets, giving tours to my clients. Before I set foot in their kitchens, I make it mandatory that they accompany me on at least one Farmers’ Market tour and let them pick out whatever they want. By making their food more experiential and connecting them with their farmers, I have noticed a higher client satisfaction rate, less demand for complex diets, and the ability of my clients to maintain a healthier diet for the long-term.

Learn more about Farmers’ Markets from Nathan’s soon to be released new ebook, *Make Love With Farmers’ Markets: Learn How to Shop Like a Chef*.

## REFLECTIONS FROM ABROAD ON LOCAL, SEASONAL CUISINE

by Nick Beitcher, CTP 107

*When Nick told us he had arranged a few stagiare positions in Europe, we asked him to share some thoughts on his experiences for our Newsletter. He sent us the following last January.*

The first time I traveled in Europe was in the winter of 2005, following a sour experience at a fancy, French New York restaurant much acclaimed for its food, maligned for its business practices, and, as I learned, infamous for turning aspiring young cooks into bitter, disenchanting wrecks. That trip was about rediscovering the essential qualities of food that inspired me to begin cooking and rekindling my desire to return to the kitchen. It worked. In Italy, France, Austria, Germany, Portugal, and Spain, I found that everything I thought I knew about these places and their cuisines was incomplete in a very basic way. Although the flavors and ingredients were familiar, the spirit of the people preparing and serving the food was not. I discovered an ingredient completely unfamiliar to me as an American accustomed to experiencing the cuisines of far-off places on American soil: Tradition, or that intangible, indefinable, but instantly recognizable quality that comes only when eating a dish in the exact place it was created in antiquity, preserved through the ages, and delivered into the present.

Five years later, I am back in Europe, and overwhelmed once again by how strongly the food here speaks to a sense of place, of belonging uniquely to one region, one city, one restaurant. In Montegrosso, Italy, I had dinner at Pietro Zito’s restaurant Antichi Sapori (<http://www.antichisapori.biz/ristorante/ristorante.htm>), located twenty minutes from a restaurant I will be working at in April. Zito grows all of his own vegetables, uses olives and olive-oil from the next town over, makes his pasta from semolina grain grown 45 minutes away. During a garden tour, I asked Zito how he decides which vegetables go on the menu. He answered, with a slight look of annoyance, “I am not the one who decides. The garden decides, the weather decides, the dictates of cooking here in Puglia decide for me.” If a dish isn’t reflective of Montegrosso, he is not interested. Period. At the table, this commitment takes physical form -- the ingredients are served barely touched by the Chef. After our meal was over, I stepped outside into the night. A light wind carried the perfume of olive trees, fennel, citrus, and it became immediately

apparent to me that this kind of food cannot be found in America, or anywhere else in the world. It belongs to this small town only, and to the people who have lived and eaten here for generations.

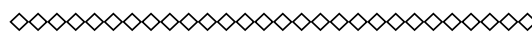
Now it is January, and I'm in Paris, staging at Alain Passard's Michelin 3-Star restaurant, L'Arpege. In 2001, following the Mad-Cow scare, Passard forsook meat and decided to serve only vegetables that he had grown himself in his three biodynamic gardens. Like Pietro Zito, if it isn't coming from the garden, it isn't being served in the restaurant. The upshot of this is that, in the middle of winter, Michelin 3-Star dishes are being prepared using only radishes, rutabagas, carrots, beets, turnips, sunchokes, celery-roots, Brussels-sprouts, and cabbages. Instead of this being an obstacle, Passard has turned the limitations of cooking seasonally and locally in a cold climate (his farms are located in Brittany) into an asset, and a challenge to look deeper into the potential of each of these humble roots. Sunchokes are roasted slowly for three hours in a small amount of salted butter until their flavors are so concentrated, so intense, that one bite is like looking into the collective soul of all sunchokes. His food is not overly rich, but it is focused, meditative even. Beets are baked in salt, presented tableside, and then carved and served with just a touch of clarified butter. The effect is again a shocking, revelatory glimpse into what a beet is when it is treated simply, allowed to express itself unadorned and unadulterated by an over-eager chef. Passard brings to the table the ingredient -- whether it is a beet, sunchoke, or turnip -- in its most honest, integral form.

These experiences have both led me to wonder how I will feel about returning to America, where finding food that is boldly local, seasonal, and evocative of the land is difficult. We haven't been around as long as France or Italy, and our recently reawakened relationship with food hasn't reached the same level of grace and natural expression. However, there are a few things I am looking forward to. I am excited to visit an American farmers' market. I am excited to hear the farmers there speaking with an accent that, to my long-deprived ears, will ring out with familiarity. Maybe they will be making suggestions to the passers-by, "Apple pie, cole-slaw, potato salad....." When I see and hear all this, and only then, after a year of travel, I will know that I am home.

FYI...



To stay on top of what's going on in the culinary industry, you may want to consider a membership in Culintro Culinary Trade Organization. It's free and offers some great benefits. They include discounted tickets to all of Culintro's events, access to the Culintro Job Board, and the chance to stage for some of NYC's most recognized chefs. They even have a Roommate Finder service for students. Their Newsletter offers members a chance to gain inside access to industry leaders, news & events, and to each other. For more information, go to [www.culintro.com](http://www.culintro.com)



Another noteworthy organization is Wellness in the Schools (WITS). It was founded in 2005 as a non-profit, community-based organization dedicated to improving the environment, nutrition, and fitness in NYC public schools. In an effort to combat childhood obesity and improve school environments, WITS developed Cook for Kids, Coach for Kids, and Green for Kids, three NYC based programs poised for replication nationwide.



The Cook for Kids program serves 6,500 children. Under the leadership of Chef Bill Telepan, WITS sends culinary school graduates into public school kitchens to prepare fresh meals from scratch and to educate families about the importance of eating whole, unprocessed food. For more information, go to [www.wellnessintheschools.com](http://www.wellnessintheschools.com)

They'll be hiring cooks for the fall semester and will also accept interns.

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