

Food Combining

by Raymond Francis

Digestive aids are one of the biggest selling over-the-counter drugs in America, and sales of prescription drugs for heartburn are in the many billions of dollars. A vast number of people have trouble properly digesting their food and this is a major contributor to our epidemic of chronic and degenerative diseases. Where is all this poor digestion coming from? Modern medicine may be the single largest cause of poor digestion through its irresponsible use of antibiotics, birth control pills, and anti-inflammatory drugs. However, another major contributor is the foods we select to eat at a given meal. This last problem can be completely solved by learning which foods digest well together and which do not.

Having evolved as hunter-gatherers, our digestive systems are not designed to digest different types of food all at the same time. Yet, due to today's technology, we can eat a variety of foods, at the same time, at every meal. This makes it difficult to digest that food properly and it leads to disease by causing both deficiency and toxicity. When food is not digested properly, nutrients are not made available to the body so we become deficient. At the same time, the undigested food rots in our digestive system producing a variety of dangerous toxins. The answer to this problem is to learn how to do proper food combining.

The rules of food combining are rather simple, and if you apply them at every meal your body will digest its food better and you will be healthier (not to mention not needing that Maalox or Alka Seltzer). Certain kinds of foods digest well together and others do not. While eating many different foods in your diet is a great idea, we are not designed to digest them all at the same time. Learning which foods go well with each other is what food combining is all about.

Our digestive systems have adapted and evolved over many thousands of years. Until very recently, humankind did not eat the combinations of foods that are now "normal" to us. Remember, our ancestors evolved by hunting and gathering. Foods were often eaten directly from their source, usually one at a time, because there was no way to preserve or store them. When food was found, people would eat whatever they could and then move on, bringing along only what they could carry. Our ancestors certainly did not cook up three or four course meals that combined all sorts of different proteins, starches, sugars, fruits, and vegetables. This is why our digestive systems are ill equipped to digest particular combinations of food.

While we are young and our digestive systems are working at peak performance, it is possible to appear to get away with a lot of digestive indiscretions. However, as we age and digestive capacity diminishes, forcing the body to digest incompatible foods puts a tremendous strain on us, and it results in incompletely digested food. Incompletely digested food not only rots, ferments, and putrefies in the intestines, producing dangerous toxins, but it deprives us of essential nutrients, which we should be getting from properly digested food.

The key is to learn the food combinations that work well together and those that do not—planning your meals accordingly. In order to do this, think of a few simple food categories that you may already know: proteins, starches, vegetables, and three kinds of fruits (sweet, acid, and melons)

- It is good to combine vegetables with either proteins or starches, but
- Do not combine proteins and starches (meat and potatoes, fish and rice, etc.).
- Generally, eat fruit alone. Acid fruits may be consumed with sweet fruits, in which case, the acid fruits should be eaten first. Acid fruits can also be combined with nuts and seeds.
- Do not combine melons with anything (even other fruits, except other melons).

With these guidelines in mind, take a moment to identify your favorite foods; become aware of which categories they fall into and what they combine well with:

Protein

Eggs, meat, fish, fowl, nuts, seeds, avocado, coconut, sprouts, milk products.

Starch

Corn, wheat, barley, rice, buckwheat, millet, oats, dried peas & beans, potatoes, yams, squash, flour (pasta/bread/pastries), sugar (candy/soft drinks/etc.)

Vegetables

Asparagus, tomatoes, okra, green beans, green peas, broccoli, bell peppers, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, lettuce, celery, cucumber, eggplant, spinach, mushrooms, zucchini, radish, artichoke, beets, carrots, cauliflower, chives, ginger, garlic, leeks onion, shallots, scallions

Sweet Fruits

Bananas, currants, figs, dates, raisins, prunes, dried fruits, grapes

Acid Fruits

Lemons, oranges, grapefruits, other citrus fruits, kiwi, plum, pineapple, mango, papaya, all berries, nectarines, apples, cherries, pears, apricots, and peaches.

Melons

Cantaloupe, casaba, crenshaw, honeydew, banana melon, watermelon.

Food combining principles exist because each food category has different digestive requirements. For example, the requirements for proper digestion of proteins are radically different from that of starches; if you eat them both at the same time, you cannot digest either one well. (This is because proteins digest in an acid environment, while starches digest in an alkaline environment. Your digestive system has the ability to create either environment, but it cannot create them both at the same time.) Instead, combine proteins or starches with vegetables, which are highly nutritious and combine well with either one.

Fruit, however, is a different matter. Fruit has special digestive requirements and should generally be eaten alone. This is because fruit is very easy to digest and is meant to pass through the digestive system quickly. If fruit does not pass through the digestive system quickly, such as when combined with protein or starch, the fruit sugar can ferment in your stomach, often manifesting as bloating and gas. Fruit should be eaten alone, or combined with other fruits (ideal is to eat acid fruits first, if you are combining sweet and acid fruits together). Melons should only be eaten alone or combined with other melons in order to prevent sugar fermentation. Melons take even less time to digest than other fruits and must pass very quickly through your digestive system.

As you probably realize, many of our traditional meals are made up of the wrong combinations of food. What we think of as a "good meal" is most typically a harmful combination of starch and protein-the meat and potatoes diet (or a burger and fries, or a cheese pizza). We make the problem worse by accompanying meals with sugary drinks and desserts. These combinations will cause the food to ferment and putrefy in the digestive system. Learning how to apply proper food combining can do great things for your health.

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