

From Poison to Provision: Nourishing Ourselves as God Intended, is a book designed to help women find freedom in their relationship with food. Tia Power teaches you how to focus on the gift of real food so you can thrive as God intended.

From Poison to Provision

Nourishing Ourselves as God Intended

by Tia Power

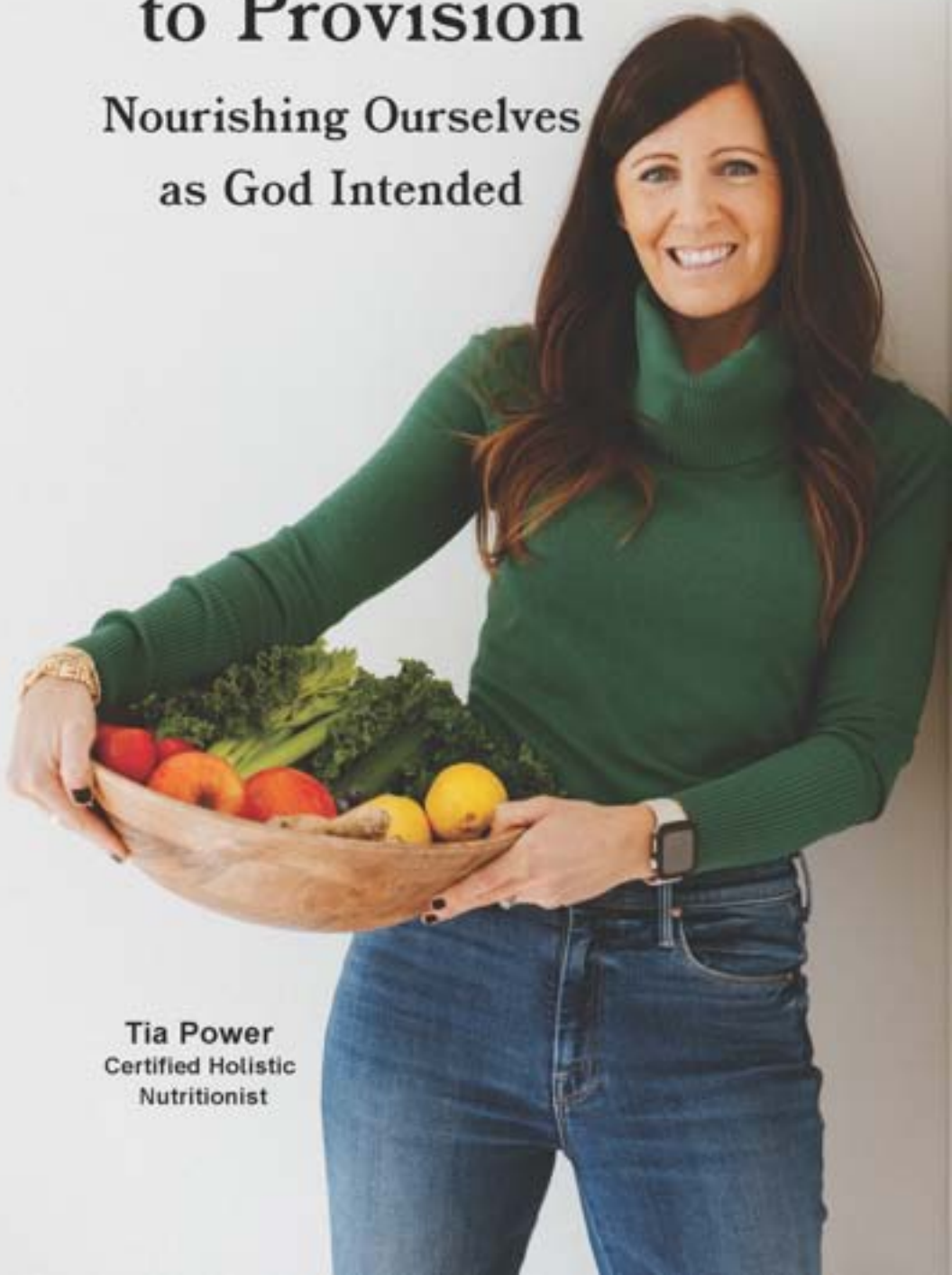
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From Poison to Provision

Nourishing Ourselves
as God Intended



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Chapter Two: What is Food: What are We Eating?

Did you grow up with a Betty Crocker cookbook in your house? As a child of the 80's and 90's, I did. I remember it well. One of the most interesting things I learned while in my master's program for Holistic Nutrition was that the Betty Crocker Cookbook was actually written by staff members at General Mills.¹ When I heard this, I went back and looked at those recipes and sure enough, so many of them call for canned and processed "foods" created by General Mills. Betty Crocker was not some sweet grandmother or special relative that created a cookbook from centuries old food tradition, this was the food industry creating a lucrative way to sell us an idea that processed "food" was actual food. Unfortunately, most of us bought it (literally and figuratively). It was very normal to cook without any real, fresh vegetables and use canned everything instead. It was common to use canola oil, shortening and margarine which wreak havoc on your health because they're not actually food at all.² We were duped and all for the big pockets of the food industry.

Food: any nutritious substance that people or animals eat or drink or that plants absorb in order to maintain life and growth. (Oxford Languages Dictionary)

While going through my master's program, I was amazed to see that so many of the items we refer to as "food", are definitely not food at all. Prior to that, I really

did think of myself as a healthy individual. I thought that by (loosely) counting calories and choosing “low fat” or “sugar free” options instead of their counterparts, I was smarter and better off. I couldn’t believe how unhealthy I had truly been all those years prior. I couldn’t believe how often I was consuming “food” that really wasn’t food at all. I cringed thinking about all the inflammation my food choices had likely caused within my body. It led me to really rethink my understanding of what food and nourishment actually is.

So, what is food? “Food” to most people is not real food. When we think of food, my guess is that the general population doesn’t think of it as defined by the Oxford Languages Dictionary; something nutritious. The general population probably thinks of fast food, processed, bagged and boxed foods, canned foods, frozen dinners and such. To answer this question, it’s probably easier to state what food isn’t.

Food is not that margarine we are used to spreading on our toast in an attempt to watch our cholesterol or fat intake. Food is not those airy, cheesy puffs that are made to be addictive. Food is not that crunchy salty chip. Food is not that “plant-based” veggie burger loaded with factory made substances. Food is not that protein bar with more confusing ingredients than you can count. Food is barely the yogurt loaded with more sugar than a dessert and just as many chemicals. Some of these items may have some little semblance of a once real food (potato chips), but I assure you, none of these things are real food. These are ultra-processed foods. These are the things your body has to work really hard to digest. They wreak havoc on

your hormones, blood sugar balance, cause inflammation and lead to all sorts of issues both internally and externally. Many of these issues eventually lead us to becoming sick with Heart Disease, Alzheimer's, Type 2 Diabetes, Cancer and more.³⁴⁵⁶ We generally think of these as "aging" diseases, but these are now referred to as "lifestyle" diseases. This is because lifestyle plays such a vital role in preventing them. Please read that again. *Lifestyle can play such a vital role in preventing them.* We don't have to succumb to the fate of lifestyle diseases.

Lifestyle Disease: any medical disorder or condition thought to be produced or exacerbated by aspects of a person's lifestyle, such as diet and level of physical activity. (Oxford Languages Dictionary)

One of my favorite quotes that has been used often in the holistic nutrition and wellness space is "Genetics load the gun, but the environment pulls the trigger." We have been taught that genetics play a huge role in what diseases we may end up with, but truly, environment (toxins, foods we consume, alcohol and more) plays a larger role.⁷ We have the power (God willing) to escape the fate of these lifestyle diseases through every bite of food we eat. We get to choose to make better choices for our bodies. Real food is healing and nutritious, even medicine at times. Every bite we take is a chance to either help or hurt our body.

Back to the original question. What is food? Real food is ultimately what God has provided us. It's that simple! It's fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds, legumes, unprocessed grains, grass-fed meats, free-range eggs

and chicken, fish and dairy from animals who have been fed well themselves. Real food was designed to nourish our bodies with vital nutrients, good fats, protein and complex carbohydrates. Our bodies were made to thrive off of real food. Our bodies know how to digest real food. God designed them to have the innate ability to absorb all the amazing nutrients we need and to rid the body of the rest. I'm always in awe of God when I really think about this. Our bodies are so intricately designed to thrive off of the food he has provided us. It's our job to take care of our body and to nourish it well.

You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:20

When I started to think about the “foods” I was consuming and how many of them weren't foods at all, it drastically changed my relationship with food for the better. I completely changed the way I ate. I thought my morning coffee was healthy because I was adding “sugar-free” syrup without any added calories. I never even thought about the gross chemicals and dyes that were in that coffee syrup. I thought the margarine in my fridge was better than real grass-fed butter that is loaded with good fats. Again, I never even thought about how disgusting margarine really is, and the dyes it's loaded with. I thought that my whole wheat, low calorie toast was good for me. Turns out, it was loaded with sugar and ingredients I couldn't pronounce. I was shocked at how often I was consuming food my body didn't recognize at all. No wonder maintaining a healthy weight took so much work. I was working against my body by flooding it with

ingredients and chemicals that messed with my hormones and caused all sorts of issues. I was rarely feeding it real, whole and fresh foods.

Every afternoon I would have sugar cravings that I satisfied with my favorite candy, only to crash a few hours later until I had a glass of wine. My body had no good fats or proteins to stave off these cravings. My whole day consisted of cravings for more and more sugar. I look back now and wonder how I was ever really functioning. I was basically running on caffeine, sugar, stress and alcohol.

I'm so grateful to God for the mindset shift he gave me during those months in my master's program. I had no idea I would come out of that time of learning with such a different and healthier perspective on food. God provided me with so much freedom and peace around food. This season changed the course of my life massively and I will forever be grateful for it. There was a peace that replaced my anxiety when it came to eating food. An excitement about adding nourishing foods to my body. There was no more restriction, just the addition of whole, real foods He provides for us. I want this for you as well.

These days I love adding a few tablespoons of grass-fed butter to my pan when I make scrambled eggs with beautiful orange yolks because they're from pasture raised chickens. I love my smoothie that's loaded with blueberries, calorie-dense nut butter, greens, hemp seeds and almond milk. These are foods my body was made to consume. These are foods my body loves to use to keep me healthy and fueled. It knows what to do with

these foods. My hormones are more balanced and I feel satisfied when I'm done eating. There is so much freedom in that. My skin, cells and hormones thank me. There is no more exhaustion counting calories. Calorie counting leaves out the necessary requirement of real foods for our bodies. Eating to nourish our bodies allows us to focus on what our body will thrive off of, not calories.

What are nutrients?

Nutrients are vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and macro nutrients like your fats, carbohydrates and proteins. When you don't have the proper nutrients your body needs, you become malnourished and negative consequences follow.

When you hear the term "malnourished, you might picture someone who looks thin, ill and sickly. Yes, this sounds like someone who's malnourished, but even individuals of normal and excess weight may also be malnourished. Often, people aren't getting the proper nutrients they need from the standard American diet. The excess weight may mean excess toxins and bad health. We are a country of plenty without proper nourishment. What a sad reality.

Malnourished: not properly nourished; suffering from malnutrition (Oxford Languages Dictionary)

Maybe you're reading all of this and thinking to yourself "great, real food is loaded with nutrients that are nourishing to our bodies, but what does that mean and why does it matter?" First, it's important to know that ultra-

processed foods are usually void of naturally occurring vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that your body needs to function properly. Ultra-processed foods are things like chips, cookies, crackers, processed meats, frozen pizza and mass-produced baked goods. Essentially most things that come in any kind of package. They may have a label that touts “vitamin B enriched” or “high in Vitamin C”, but likely if it has a label, those vitamins are synthetic (man-made) and aren’t as easily absorbed by your body.⁸ You’re going to be better off getting your nutrients from a naturally occurring source. This is why real food is so vital to your health, you need nutrients your body can easily absorb. In the next few chapters, I’m going to go over what nutrients are so we can better understand why we want to nourish our body with real food.

Chapter Six: Do Calories Matter?

Oh calories! The bane of my existence for years, I'm sure for some of you too. Calorie counting is one of the most controversial and confusing topics within the health and wellness world. There are experts who stand by this method completely and others who are on the exact other end of the spectrum. My stance? They don't matter as much as you likely may think. You can argue that you can't completely ignore them, but I would argue even more that giving them too much credit will do more damage than good. So many other facets of your health should be prioritized first, even when trying to lose weight. Ask yourself this; has counting calories worked long term? My guess is that you're with the majority of people in answering that question with a resounding "no".

I will tell people that calories don't matter as much as they think and I can instantly tell it goes in one ear and out the other. We've been so ingrained with the philosophy of calories in versus calories out in order to maintain a healthy weight, that it's hard for all of us to let it go. I get it, it took me a while to believe this too. Now I want you to know better so you can get off of the hamster wheel and see things in a new light.

Author Gary Taubes wrote a book called *Why We Get Fat* and he was an early pioneer in the argument that calories aren't the whole picture. He states "Of all the dangerous ideas that health officials could have embraced while trying to understand why we get fat, they

would have been hard-pressed to find one ultimately more damaging than calories-in/calories-out.”¹ When you think about it, this way of thinking really has caused damage. It’s taken our sights off of what we should really be counting; toxins and chemicals in our “food”.

Did you know that calories only measure the amount of heat generated by something? That’s it! I love the way Jessie Inchaupse explains calories in her book, *Glucose Revolution*, “One hundred calories of fructose, 100 calories of glucose, 100 calories of protein, and 100 calories of fat may release the same amount of heat when they burn, but they have vastly different effects on your body.”² We have been so ingrained to simply count the calories, that we’ve completely ignored what the actual food we’re consuming does to our body.

Before I knew better, I used to look right to the calories on a nutrition label. A lot of times I didn’t even have to flip the package over, “100 Calories” was often touted right on the front. Unbeknownst to me at the time, all this was really telling me was that the processed food I was holding would generate enough heat when burning in a contained space to equal 100 calories. The actual scientific process is a bit more detailed, but essentially that is what a calorie count is. When you’re comparing a 100 calories of processed cookies to 100 calories of organic blueberries, the only thing those two things have in common is the calories calculated when they generate heat. That’s it. Your body will definitely notice that there is indeed a difference between the two.

When you eat 100 calories of a processed cookie, you're eating inflammatory ingredients that wreak havoc on your hormones.³ Your body will have a hard time knowing what to do with the "food" you just consumed. It will do its best to rid the toxins through your detox pathways, assuming they're clear and working properly. Whatever toxins it can't get rid of will be stored in your fat cells (those flexible little buggers). The processed sugar will likely give you a blood sugar spike resulting in a glucose spike because there was no decent amount of fiber, fat or protein in the cookie. That blood sugar spike will cause you to crash soon after and feel tired, cranky and reaching for more sugar. The excess glucose (sugar) from the cookie is also stored in your fat cells.⁴ All of this for 100 calories and likely lackluster taste.

When you eat 100 calories of organic blueberries, you've just consumed vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fiber. Your body recognizes blueberries. It knows what to do to take up the nutrients and easily digest them. There are no toxins or fake ingredients and chemicals to try and rid the body of. God made your body to consume blueberries and to work synergistically to get all of the beautiful benefits of them. We were beautifully designed to consume real food.

You're now familiar with one of my favorite books, *Deep Nutrition*. Author, Dr. Catherine Shanahan states,

"The tendency for processed foods to cause inflammation is one big reason we have to go beyond the calorie content listed on a package to understand how the foods we eat will make us gain or lose weight."

Real food (unless one is allergic or doesn't tolerate it) doesn't cause inflammation within the body. So, 100 calories of real food will be beneficial, while 100 calories of processed food will be harmful.

I will say that calories play a minor role in our overall health, but they aren't the star we've made them out to be. You can't exercise your way out of that Big Mac or large cheese pizza. When it comes to weight management specifically, there are so many other various factors that come into play when trying to maintain or lose weight. Calories are only a small portion of the big picture. We have to also consider a person's lifestyle, hormones, toxin levels, how effectively a body is detoxing, food sensitivities, inflammation levels, stress levels and of course overall diet.

We are each uniquely made and have very different lifestyles. If we tell two different people that they both need to consume 1500 calories or less daily to lose weight, we are leaving out so many other vitally important factors when it comes to weight loss. No two people are the same, so why would we assume that those two people could follow one rule and expect the same result? Let me use two hypothetical people to explain this further.

Rebecca is a 45 year-old mom of three who is in the midst of peri menopause and experiencing all kinds of hormone changes day-to-day. She has a diet heavy in processed foods but does try to eat vegetables occasionally because she knows she should. She feels sluggish, tired, stressed and seems to be experiencing new food sensitivities. Her gut health isn't great and her

digestion is suffering. She can no longer handle that glass of wine each night and getting a good night of sleep is rare. She is killing herself tracking her calories and keeping her caloric intake to 1500 calories a day, yet she's still gaining weight.

Tara is a 22 year-old college student. She can drink more alcohol than she should, lives off of processed foods, still sleeps through the night, waking up feeling great. She is single without a family and the only stress she has is finishing up her last year in college. She has no current food sensitivities and her body is still able to properly detox. She doesn't experience cortisol spikes due to stress and can almost eat whatever she wants and still maintain her weight. Her body isn't working against her (now). She doesn't have erratic hormones, a slow digestive system and her liver can efficiently detox. Tara's lifestyle will catch up to her, but she's not there yet.

Rebecca has several other factors to contend with if she wants to lose weight. Calories in versus calories out is not the answer. Addressing her hormones, digestion, detoxification, stress, sleep and gut health are what will help Rebecca. She needs real food and nutrients her body will recognize. Tara will need these things soon enough.

Innately we know there is a difference between a 22 year-old woman and a 45 year-old woman, especially when we look at the whole picture of health, hormones and lifestyle, yet we're still expecting that the same method of calories in versus calories out should apply to both. We are all uniquely made and we all deserve to look

to our own unique needs when addressing our health and wellness concerns. This is what biochemical individuality is all about and why it's important to understand. Each of us is unique and we require a unique plan to be our best.

If you take away anything from this book, I hope it's around this concept; counting and restricting calories should not be your top priority. If this is currently you, believe me, I get where you're at. This is what we were taught for so long. I thought about only calories for years when it came to my food intake. It was exhausting and such a waste of time when I could have instead been adding nutrients to my body. We were meant to add nourishment to our bodies, not restrict calories and count them in a way to lose weight. I thought I was healthy for years because I basically stayed under 1800 calories a day. I've already said it, but I was barely providing nutrients for my body, not to mention the blood sugar rollercoaster my body was on day-in-and-out. Between stress, lack of nutrients, lack of hydration and exercise, it was no wonder my body hit a wall.

During this time, I started my day with coffee and either a sugar-free flavor or honey added to it. If I did have lunch, it may have been Subway, or some salad out at a restaurant that was never made with organic ingredients or homemade dressing. Each afternoon I would crash and usually have some of my favorite candy to help. After work I would have a glass of wine followed by popcorn for dinner. My poor body was barely getting what it needed. I thought I was doing well considering my calorie consumption wasn't too high. I rarely drank water and I remember feeling so tired all the time. I even went to my

family doctor to have him run bloodwork. He couldn't see anything wrong. Now I know it was dehydration and a lack of real food. I feel so much better in my forties than I did in my mid-twenties. My body just needed the right fuel, not a set number of calories.

If we're eating mostly real, whole foods, our body knows what to do with that food and it uses those nutrients properly. When we're eating processed foods laden with chemicals and toxins, our body has a really hard time processing these foods. Toxins then begin to build up and store in our fat cells. Our hormones get out of balance and weight gain naturally happens. Again, counting calories is missing so much of the big picture. Adding in real food that God provided for us, and removing the toxic junk, will be one of your best weight loss tools. Our bodies are influenced by everything we ingest, whether positively or negatively. Our job is to nourish it with real food and let it do the rest.

If you're feeling overwhelmed and don't know where to start, it's okay to start slow. Your eyes will continue to be opened as you make changes and you'll continue to see other areas you can improve in. I'm a firm believer in having balance and I'll go into more detail about that in the next chapter. A great place to start is to think of making eighty percent of your food intake from real, nutritious food that doesn't contain an ingredient list, and allow twenty percent from food that maybe isn't as real, fresh or nutritious. A good guideline is to aim for having about half of your plate filled with organic produce of some sort. This could be in the form of salads, roasted veggies, stir fry or even raw veggies. Have one-quarter filled with

a good clean source of protein such as grass-fed beef, pasture-raised and organic chicken, organic nut butters without added rancid oils, organic dairy like hard cheeses, yogurts (full-fat and low sugar), pasture-raised eggs, wild salmon or quinoa. The last quarter should contain good complex carbohydrates from root vegetables, beans, whole grains and fruits. Again, the more colorful the produce, the better it is for you. Don't be afraid to add good fats to your meals. Think of high-quality olive oil for your salads and veggie dips, coconut oil or grass-fed butters.

When you need to purchase items that are more processed; like breads, crackers, nut butters or even yogurt, always remember that less is more when it comes to the ingredient list. I now always look at the nutrition label and go straight to the ingredient list. If it's full of ingredients I can't pronounce, I'm going to keep hunting for a better option. You want to keep an eye out for, and avoid, products that have added oils like canola, palm, vegetable oils and seed oils. These are especially found in nut butters and salad dressing and are rancid and horrible for you to ingest. Even when I frequent my favorite "health food" stores in my area, it's really easy to find these dicey ingredients in items on the shelf. Not every almond butter or peanut butter is created equally. Not all "healthy" processed foods you find in these stores are created equally either. You have to be your own best advocate for what you consume.

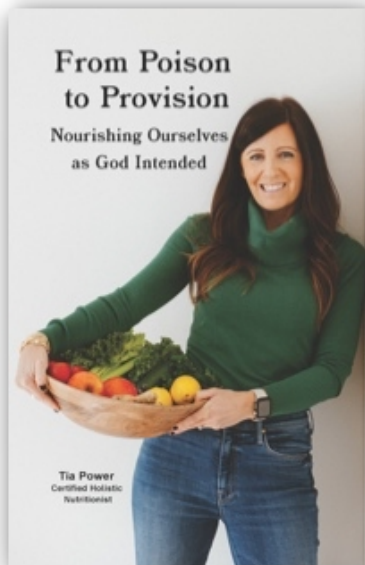
There are so many great cookbooks and resources for clean and healthy eating. If you have a favorite indulgent food you love, I can almost guarantee you that a cleaner

and healthier way to make it exists. This is one of my favorite things to do in my kitchen. How amazing is it that we can hop online and find almost any recipe we want? Hundreds of healthier versions of our favorite meals are out there. We eat very typical “American meals” that I’ve transformed into healthier and cleaner versions. I lived for years on popcorn for dinner, so if I can transform meals, I promise you, you can too. We love spaghetti, enchiladas, chili, chicken pot pie, taco bowls, and occasionally even nachos. I also love making cleaner versions of our favorite desserts like chocolate chip cookies, ice cream with coconut milk, “peanut” butter cookies and more. It’s so fun to be creative and still enjoy the foods you love while nourishing your body.

When you initially begin making changes, you’ll likely feel some pushback, especially if your family doesn’t know anything different from the way they’ve been eating. Take it slow, give yourself grace and take your small wins. Change is possible. Once you begin feeling better because you’re truly nourishing your body, you’ll crave even more change. It’s not always easy to convince those around us to try something new, but making the effort is worth it. Being healthier as a family is worth it. Aging healthier is worth it.

If you live someplace on this planet where you have access to more nourishing foods and you get to make these food choices for yourself and your family, you’re fortunate. Again, God intended for us to thrive off of what he has provided for us. Now it’s up to each of us to choose better and make change.

My hope and prayer over this book is that as you continue reading and learning more, that a mindset shift happens for you as it did for me. I hope that you start to think about what your body needs and truly craves versus what you have to restrict. Once I understood that what my body really needed was more nutrients and not less calories, I was actually excited about what nourishing foods I could eat. I was excited to learn about the foods that contained the best nutrients to help with my skin, hair, hormones, gut health and more. I was grossed out by processed foods that weren't nourishing at all and that were actually stealing nutrients from my body. I was excited about feeling better and about all the freedom I had found. There were suddenly so many endless possibilities to fuel my health and truly thrive. I was excited to eat real butter and good olive oil without fear, and to enjoy my meals versus trying to maintain so much control. I really did suddenly see how much damage I had been doing to my body by denying it nutrients. I couldn't wait to start flooding it with nourishment. I couldn't wait to actually enjoy real food! I hope learning all of this ignites the same passion and excitement for adding in nourishing whole foods for you as well!



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