



# The Bucket Theory: Transitioning to an 85/15 Way of Eating

By *Stephanie Colo Manning*

Luciano Pavarotti said, “One of the very nicest things about life is that we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating.” What a wonderful way of thinking about something that has such a huge impact on our lives.

We can draw inspiration from this beautiful statement as we think about our life as a bucket and that our lifestyle and experiences fill our bucket. We exercise, we laugh, we breathe deeply, we love, we rest, we think positive thoughts, we do activities we enjoy, and we try to eat right—all these affect our bucket. However, hidden exposures to chemicals, allergens, pollutants, heavy metals in our environment, excess sugar in our diets, GMOs, pesticides, antibiotics, lack of sleep, too much stress, Lyme ticks, flu bugs – all these invisible instigators also affect our bucket.

We can't possibly know where the invisible line is, but since our health is determined by a multitude of seemingly unimportant choices made everyday we may be prompted to take a closer look at “unimportant.”

Our bodies are designed for improvement. “The default state of the body is one of ceaseless regeneration”, according to Sayer Ji, founder of Green Med Info. Since the cells in a person's body are constantly being renewed and replaced, and our new cells are built from the raw materials available, then it stands to reason that if we supply ourselves with plenty of nutrient-dense food and positive experiences, and reduce our exposures to instigators, then we can move our health a little bit closer to the positive side.

When it comes to our food, nutrient-density is not just good for us, but absolutely essential to proper biochemical functioning. Whole foods that are close to their original, natural form are extremely rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, protein, essential fatty acids, enzymes and antioxidants – all vital building blocks for brain, cell, muscle, and nerve health.

Whole foods provide the body many more nutrients than processed or refined foods, and come to the party with all their own vitamins, minerals and enzymes. In fact, whole foods contain a complex combination of nutrients that work together synergistically - the sum is greater than the parts. The natural components found in whole foods produce a much more powerful effect on our health than any one nutrient alone.

I used to think that eating unhealthy food was a net neu-

tral—that empty calories were nothing more than a missed opportunity to eat healthy. What I didn't realize was that eating processed and refined foods high in sugar and chemicals actually burden the body and depletes the body of its existing nutrient supply. A food's natural nutrients are lost when that food is processed or refined, resulting in a net-negative effect on the body. When a food has little or no nutrients to offer, it's like coming to the party empty-handed and drinking all the beer—it depletes the body of these nutrients in order to metabolize and draws nutrients first from the bloodstream, then from the tissues, the organs and the muscles, and finally, from the bones. The body must dive deeper and deeper into its stores in order to metabolize these nutrient-lacking processed and refined foods.

The 85/15 way of eating means that if we eat nourishing foods 85% of the time on average, then the body's nutrient reserves will be rich, and the body will be able to handle the nutrient depleting foods eaten the other 15% of the time.

With hectic lifestyles, it's easy to understand why 85/15 can seem like a long shot. But there are several strategies that can help transition to an 85/15 way of eating:

- Remind yourself that there are vast differences in food quality, and know which foods nourish/deplete. For example, nourishing foods would include clean, high-quality proteins, fresh fruits and vegetables, seeds, nuts, perhaps whole grains, herbal teas, water, fresh squeezed juices, homemade broths, and healthy oils. Depleting foods would include most ingredients found in processed or refined foods: sugar, white flour products, additives, preservatives, flavorings, colorings, sweeteners, and unhealthy fats.

- Set realistic goals. Move up gradually from 30/70 to 35/65, etc. You can't go from zero to hero overnight; take baby steps, one bite at a time.

- Don't try to completely eliminate the things that mean most to you, otherwise you risk being controlled by the impulse to eat the tempting food all at once.

- Gradually squeeze out the depleting foods and squeeze in more nourishing foods. Start with the easier items first. Eat a hamburger without the bun; ask for a green veggie instead of French fries; make an egg for breakfast instead of the usual cereal; sip more slowly on a glass of wine; go to bed an hour earlier; breathe deeply when feeling stressed. Gradually up the ante with the harder choices (e.g., choose an apple

## The Bucket Theory (Continued)

instead of cookies; give the kids two unhealthy snacks a day instead of three; instead of goldfish, pack them grapes; ask the waiter to skip the bread basket).

- Consider the philosophy: Fitness = 30% exercise + 70% nutrition.
- Research and read about the damaging effects of the ingredients found on processed food labels. Knowing the ugly truth can help you resist these items, as you start viewing them through a different lens.
- Start talking about what you are doing, so you become accountable.
- Enlist a friend to do this with you.
- Think ahead: We know for a fact that we always eat multiple times per day, so we don't have to allow ourselves to be caught off-guard and hungry. Prepare for the day ahead, otherwise, we will have no choice but to reach for the convenience of processed food or fast food.
- Get used to bringing your food with you: Grab a banana, hard-boiled egg, or bag of nuts on your way out the door. Pack a lunch in a small cooler. Bring a plate of food in the car on your way to practice.
- Cook in large batches. Leftovers are great to reach for when time is short.
- “Eat with intention and focus on nourishment, as well as entertainment. When you eat, close your eyes, and savor the texture, taste, and flavor of the food. Eat with a sense of gratitude and be fully present while dining. Think like an animal in nature and just eat to fuel your body.” — SweetLife Diabetes Health Centers, LLC
- And remember these wise words: “To live a long life, eat foods with a short shelf life.”

If you have any questions or for more information, please feel free to email me at [colokitchen@gmail.com](mailto:colokitchen@gmail.com) or visit my website at [www.colokitchen.com](http://www.colokitchen.com).

## “Food For Thought” Initiative

### Who We Are

By Anne Flam and Stephanie Colo Manning

**We are a sizeable, growing community of people who want healthier options in our schools.**

**MISSION:** We would like to support the efforts of our respected school authority figures (principals, teachers, and administrators) in achieving a reduction in sugar and chemicals in the snacks and foods provided to kids in school, as these contribute to today's growing rates of diabetes, cancer, allergies, auto-immune diseases, absenteeism, poor grades, and behavioral issues. We would like to facilitate a dialogue that encourages people to share ideas, recipes, new articles on real food, so that we can make getting real food on the school lunch plate and dinner table easier.

#### Accomplishments to Date:

- Snacks sold at schools are getting healthier, as we work with schools in their efforts to roll out new USDA SmartSnacks standards.
- Classroom parties are getting healthier, with more whole-foods menu items and access to healthy party menu planner.
- Bringing more nutrition awareness to families, with Katie Couric's *Fed Up* documentary community screenings and articles in *Reflections Magazine*. Over 56 people attended the showing of *Fed-Up* when it was shown at River Creek Club.
- Fostering relationships with influential change-makers and organizations, and considering ways to empower students to make changes in their schools and practice healthier lifetime habits.
- Building momentum with a growing list of supporters.

#### Join Us:

We are looking for ways to help schools with positive ideas and assistance in rolling out and testing options. We are not trying to change everything overnight; we want to make changes in a thoughtful, helpful manner. Do you have healthy vending machine ideas? What healthy foods or non-food items can you sell at fundraisers? What have you noticed in our schools that can be improved? Please email us if you'd like to be part of this initiative or just stay in the loop ([manning.steph@gmail.com](mailto:manning.steph@gmail.com) or [anneflam@hotmail.com](mailto:anneflam@hotmail.com))