

Yoga of Food

At dinner last week in a back yard in Ubud (Bali, Indonesia), a man across the table whom I'd just met, who'd just been informed of my dietary choices (raw) and why I was not eating the grilled fish (I prefer not to eat animals), said:

"What does it really mean that something is raw?"

In a few sentences of greeting I'd learned that he's a medical student, well traveled. He's intelligent. There's a range to the tone of questions that people ask me about my eating choices: accusing, defensive, attacking, inquisitive, argumentative, curious, judgmental, flabbergasted. His tone was direct to the point that others at the table froze a moment, wondering if there was a confrontation on the rise. I paused. He was too bright for the question to merit as simple an answer as seemed obvious.

I bought time: "Ahhhh," chewed a bite of tomato and avocado. And, still not knowing what to say, as well as being a literalist, I phrased my response as a question: "That it's not cooked?"

I looked to my sides, across the picnic table, to see if my answer made sense. The other diners chewed, smiled, nodded and looked from his face to mine.

He began to explain: "Because what cooking does is cause a chemical reaction in the food. That's what the heat does. And you can cause chemical reactions without using heat." He went on deeper into the science of his train of thought. We talked about the raw-food axiom that enzymes are destroyed at 118% Fahrenheit.

Somewhere in the conversation it occurred to me that, besides the fact I'm

interested in science too, I don't actually care what percentage and which enzymes are rendered useless at what exact temperature or whether it's technically correct to call a food "raw" or not. What about frozen foods? Fermented? Blended? These all cause reactions in the food. Is wine raw?

What I do care about is how food tastes, how it contributes to how I feel and its effects on the rest of the world we live in. Of course that may not be such an easy question to answer.

Like most of the really important and profound aspects of life, it's simple – yet simple isn't always easy.

My first meditation teacher said the same. "Meditation is very simple. You just sit. Instead of thinking, you pay attention to your breath." Yes, simple. Easy? Not for me (or anyone I've met).

Yoga's simple too. It's the art of standing up straight. It's one of the most common nags I heard from my mother when I was a kid, way before I spent thousands of dollars to hear yoga gurus say the same thing in very technical and complex ways.

There was a time when I would have animatedly argued that the food that makes me feel the best is spicy Italian sausage. Plenty of times I would have asserted chocolate cake is the answer; I still would, actually, though

my definition of chocolate cake has changed considerably. The more times I go around the sun (the older I get), the smarter I get – healthier, happier, wiser, younger – and the more I refine my response to what makes me (and contributes to everyone else) feel good.

Beef and pizza might cut it for a while. Cheese was my favorite when I was vegetarian and before I learned about veganism. When I first got into raw food, dates and almond butter were my holy sacrament.

If there's a point in all this, it's that it's all relative. What works for me now might not be what works for me later. Principles aid more than rules do. A glass of wine a day is probably a much better contribution to feeling good, to health and vibrancy, than a pint of Jack Daniels a day. A juice made from celery, kale, apple, ginger and fennel might contribute better than a glass of wine.

What works for you? Of course, your habits and your impulses might not always be the best guide. While our bodies contain a magical intrinsic wisdom, a lot of us have gotten out of touch with that intuition (that's a hint toward the value of cleansing). Education can help. Experimentation is key. In order to feel differently (better), we might be well advised to do some things differently (i.e. eat more effectively).

You could check out what I've shared about food (<http://danielaaron.com/food.php>), and there are lots of further resources there. If you keep asking the right questions, you'll get the answers: what makes me feel great? How good can it get?



Daniel Aaron, founder of www.RadiantlyAlive.com, has devoted his life to the art of vibrant living. Awareness of our incredible potential for happiness, and that we are naturally encoded with everything we need to realize it, has led him on amazing personal and professional explorations in the fields of health and consciousness. From yoga with the modern masters, to world travel with enlightened teachers, to radical nutrition and cleansing, this zest for life has resulted in a treasure chest of gems.

Now, thriving in Ubud, Bali, he feels blessed to guide others to experience their maximum delight - through yoga, astrology, nutrition (raw food), writing, counseling, humor and whatever is holistically helpful. He leads a one-month Yoga intensive teacher training every year in Bali and retreats and workshops around the world. For more on Daniel, please see www.DanielAaron.com.

About Vibrant Living Yoga:

The aim of Vibrant Living Yoga is to guide students to greater freedom and happiness in their lives. It combines traditional and modern approaches to timeless wisdom with challenging asana (posture) to create conditions conducive to experiencing our truest self. Daniel draws on extensive yoga practice and training with dozens of modern masters (Astanga, Jivamukti, Iyengar, Anusara and more), Vinyasa (breath and movement), meditation, music, humor, creativity and spontaneity to create classes that are eclectic, fun and inspiring.

YOGA magazine 67