



EDITORS CHOICE BOOK REVIEW

By-Carol Hardin

THE COMPLETE ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET FOR BEGINNERS

A No-Stress Meal Plan with Easy Recipes to Heal the Immune System

By- Dorothy Calimeris and Lulu Cook, RDN (Available through Amazon.com)

So many illnesses start with inflammations these days that, when I saw this book, I thought there might be some interest in seeing what is being done to cut down on anti-inflammations, not with meds but with our diets. So, join me as I see what these experts have to say to advise us on beating inflammations through our foods.

1. First she writes about diet: which foods can soothe inflammation and which ones can worsen it, including appropriate food lists.
2. How to plan and prepare meals, including menus, recipes, shopping lists and time-saving suggestions to start eating well now.
3. Eat, store and reheat. This plan helps you cook recipes in bulk so you have leftovers or extras to freeze.

Lulu says her commitment to this kind of eating started when she was a new mother with a family to feed every night and a commitment to eating with good nutrition. She said by eating these foods, she felt better every day and it had a very positive impact on her energy levels. She said she became a registered dietician nutritionist to help others gain the healing power of whole foods and balanced diets.

Dorothy cooks for a living and says we may be surprised to hear that she and others in her field are plagued with what to cook for their own families. So easy when you come home very tired to just throw something easy together and eat! She said she broke this habit by planning: Every week, before grocery shopping, she makes up her menus for the week and, from those, prepares her grocery lists and then spends one day a week cooking for the week and freezing extra meals. She said, “As a culinary instructor, I understand that the novice cook may feel overwhelmed...” so she has developed a guideline, step by step, to plan meals, cook and eat in a way that is “realistic, manageable and even fun.”

Chronic inflammation does not have to drag you down, sap your energy or contribute to your poor health!

Part one gives you the Anti-Inflammatory Diet Basics and teaches you how to prepare for a healthy change in your eating/cooking habits.

Part two gives you weekly meal plans with recipes such as Banana-oat muffins, sweet potato frittata, coconut pancakes, vibrant salmon salad, brown rice bowl, chopped chicken and apple salad, chickpea and kale salad, balsamic glazed chicken, green smoothie bowl, overnight oats, pan-seared pork loin, spinach and pork salad, turmeric-almond smoothie and many, many more.

Part three gives you anti-inflammatory recipes for life: Breakfast and Brunch recipes such as cinnamon-brown rice pudding, buckwheat granola, vegan frittata. Vegetarian and Vegan recipes such as roasted

butternut squash soup with sage and pomegranate seeds, quinoa with mixed vegetables, herb omelet, lentil stew and many others. Fish and shellfish recipes include elegant white fish soup, smoked trout fried rice, dill salmon with cucumber-radish salad, shrimp coleslaw and grilled shrimp with mango-cucumber salsa among others.

Next in the recipe categories is poultry and meat including comforting chicken stew, sesame miso chicken, chocolate chili and garlic-mustard steak plus several more. This is followed by snacks and sweets including recipes for kale chips, spiced nuts, coconut-mango lassi, avocado fudge and caramelized pears with yogurt among others. And there is a whole section on sauces, condiments and dressings which include apple chutney, zesty spice rub, lemony mustard dressing and lemon-ginger honey.

Author Dorothy says that, in addition to exploring new recipes that she knows will reheat well, she makes batches of simple things like grilled meats, grains and steamed vegetables which she can use in salads, stir-fries or grain bowls. That way you can make many of the same things (or large batches of the same foods) and not feel like you are eating the same thing all the time because you can use these foods in such a variety of recipes. Advance planning is the secret and it is not onerous since it saves so much time later in the week if you just do a lot of cooking on one day and reheat or freeze batches for later meals.

When the immune system is working properly, inflammation plays an important role in our body's healthy response to injury or infection. Upon getting an injury or infection, the body responds with a period of acute inflammation which promotes healing as the body's defensive process repairs and restores integrity. Once the problem has been successfully managed, the immune response deactivates and the inflammation around the area of injury or infection subsides. When you notice that a paper cut on your finger is red, swollen, warm and painful, this is all part of inflammation which is taking place as a result of a smoothly running immune system. Immune cells have been activated to the site of the problem so blood flow in the area increases, leading to swelling and heat which will subside as the wound heals. Conversely, a little cut that seems to hang on too long, remaining puffy and painful might indicate a bigger issue, perhaps a chronic inflammation that is more problematic. An unhealed infection like hepatitis B or C, prolonged exposure to environmental toxins like cigarette smoke or existing health conditions like auto-immune disease or even a bad diet or stress can amplify the inflammatory response. This can increase risk for, or exacerbate, a variety of diseases including type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, some cancers-especially colorectal, gastric, esophageal, pancreatic, breast, endometrial and ovarian, heart/cardiovascular disease, hypertension, rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and pancreatitis.

Repeated or unchecked inflammatory responses play a role in the many complex biological pathways by which disease may result or be worsened. The good news is that consuming anti-inflammatory foods can help straighten out the body, supporting healing if inflammation already exists and providing a foundation for resilience in the future.

Which foods are which? Briefly (and you can learn much, much more by reading this excellent book!), experts agree that a diet consisting of a wide range of plant-based foods, accompanied by moderate amounts of whole grains, lean proteins and healthful fats is the type of eating pattern that will reduce inflammation and ensure a robust immune system. On the other hand, we constantly learn more about the negative effects of heavily processed, packaged foods, which are often high in inflammation-promoting sodium, added sugars, refined grains and detrimental fats. This book emphasizes fresh, whole foods prepared using healthy cooking techniques and using vibrant herbs and spices which are not just good for punching up flavor, many bring their own health-supporting qualities to your meals.

So, to sum up: Eat more plants...a wide range of fruits and vegetables that provide fiber, antioxidants and other nutrients to support optimal health. Discover whole and ancient grains. Ancient grains are those that predate modern varieties created through selective breeding and hybridization...think oats, barley,

chia, sorghum, quinoa, bulgur and the like. Choose healthy fats. Plant-based options like olive oil contain unsaturated fats that support immunity....no trans fats and saturated fats from animal products. Enjoy nuts and seeds...which provide healthy fats and proteins as well as valuable micronutrients and fiber. Add flavor with herbs and spices like turmeric, ginger and garlic which are anti-inflammatory powerhouses. Support your microbiome. High-fiber foods like beans and whole grains provide nourishment for your beneficial gut bacteria to thrive. Consume power beverages such as coffee and unsweetened black or green tea which offer antioxidant compounds that promote resilience against cell damage (bet you didn't see that one coming!) and enjoy red wine on occasion to maximize inflammatory benefits. Plain water is always the best choice for keeping your body hydrated and energized. Eat fewer processed foods and consume less meat. AND RELAX! Stress is a significant contributor to inflammation and disease...in fact, chronic elevation of the stress hormone cortisol leads to ongoing negative impacts on health. Get more sleep, boost your physical activity and try new activities such as mindfulness meditation...these all help manage stress and keep inflammation down.

Your reward will be a healthier body and less illness and more energy to do what you want to do and who doesn't want that?!!