BOOK TOUR SPEECH

FOR

ANNA PLEWA

FINAL

Hello everyone!! It’s such a pleasure to be here today to meet all of you and share my “spicy and herbal adventures in wellness.” I want to thank all of you for taking the time to be here today and I am really so happy to meet such a well-diversified crowd. We’re never too young to learn what it takes to eat delicious, nutritious food and we’re never to old to appreciate and explore simple, tasty, and affordable ways to feed our bodies and our selves. For me, the journey to wellness has been an almost lifelong adventure punctuated by some “pit” stops along the way. On that route I made some discoveries that have provided me with the inspiration to transform my relationship with food and nutrition through the exploration and use of herbs and spices. I have researched and developed a comprehensive guide to preparing and enjoying simple, delicious meals inspired by eight of the most enduring and popular cuisines of the world.

I’d like to paraphrase Benjamin Franklin and say, “ I may have seen or heard of thousands die of hunger, but of **eating**, **hundreds of thousands**.” As with life, it is usually the case that what we need in order to identify a personal issue, solve a problem or “address an opportunity” can be found right in front of us… if we are dedicated to being observant, if we know where to look and if we are aware of how to use the bounties we’ve discovered. My book, ***Herbs in My Kitchen: Reference Guide for Everyday Cooking***, is designed as a treasure map… so let’s go and explore!

… But first, I’d like to do a little exploring of my own…. I would like to get a sense of who **YOU** are… So, by a show of hands, who wants to be healthy? Who wants to eat delicious, satisfying, nutritious meals? And now I need everyone’s help here… what do you think “healthy” means? (**If you want, you can ask a couple of people to shout out some responses**). We’ve all heard so many inspirational ideas from wise people throughout the years and many have found guidance from Buddha. Here’s some of his wisdom. He said, “To keep the body in good health is a duty… otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear.” I also want to say that eating healthy is **NOT** deprivation. It is **NOT** dieting. It is **NOT** doing without. To eat healthy is to be **conscious** of what we put into our bodies- to be aware of the ingredients that are in the foods we eat, to be informed of consequences should we eat food that is not so good for us, and to be able to make choices when it comes to nourishing ourselves. Most of us may not have as much control over many aspects of our lives but we can make smart decisions when it comes to how we choose to plan, prepare, and select our food.

I have another question… How many of you think that the way you currently eat is the **best** you can possibly do to feel your best? Do any of you have any chronic conditions? Do you feel tired at times when you think you should have energy? Is your body functioning in such a way that it supports you in achieving your goals… no matter how easy or hard your checklist might be? If there was a tasty way to help you …to literally find more **zest** in life and it involved normal every day preparation with just a little tweak, would you be willing to try to make some small but meaningful changes in your routine? I want to know…. you see I’m not an expert… I don’t claim to know everything but I do know that I have been and am really interested in this topic… and I’m fascinated enough to do a lot of exploration in order to bring this book and it’s lessons to you… I should say to **us**… and since I know that none of us exists in isolation and all of us have opportunities every day to learn from each other, I am eager to share my story… that resulted in the making of this book. Believe me, I have learned that this is a lifelong journey… one that shifts and changes, grows and feeds everyone… just like the herbs and spices in our kitchens.

You may be wondering…. I **HOPE** you’re wondering… what is **MY** story? How did I get here? Here goes… and maybe you can hear a little of your own story in mine… About thirty years ago I had a persistent health problem and although I searched for all sorts of remedies, I could not find a cure, nor could I find relief. I went to various doctors, all of whom were powerless to help and then one day, through a friend of a friend of a friend, I met a homeopathic doctor who was able to make constructive suggestions. He mentioned something called “**detox**.” Thirty years ago this was a new one for me… especially with regard to something as “simple” as food! No one was talking about this at the time, much less to someone like me, and after all, I didn’t smoke. I didn’t drink. I didn’t take pills… As far as I knew, I was clean as a whistle!! I thought… from what would I detox? The doctor then explained that even food can cause problems and create toxins that need to be eliminated from our bodies and daily routines or we run the risk of getting very sick. In a nutshell he placed me on an incredibly strict diet for three weeks… It was the hardest three weeks of my life and quite frankly, the fact that I have any friends or family left that had to endure me during that time period is a testament to their patience and loyalty… it… and I were **THAT** bad. Believe me…. I **DON’T** recommend it. Today we hear about celebrities and starlets going on juice fasts and cleanses and somehow we may tend to think that witnessing their struggle and their unrealistic end result is somehow glamorous… we may think we desire the effect they are after, but even from my short experience, I have to say that it was really, **REALLY** difficult…. and from that I also learned that I am an individual. I have my own issues and unique problems and although something may look interesting, it is important to do research and be informed before beginning a process of any kind. But getting back to my detox, although I was suffering… and I realize that is a relative term, I began to notice changes… after one week any skin problems I had been finding in the past had somehow gone away … and so had the color in my face. I was as pale as a ghost. If I stood in front of a white wall, **no one was able to find me**… (**Say** **that kind of deadpan expression and wait for the laugh**). After the initial three-week detox, I was guided back to some form of normalcy but I was told that I would slowly have to add back foods that I would be able to eat in stages. I was warned that finding the balance would take time as I might have reactions in the process of reintroducing the foods that may have unknowingly caused problems before. It was also almost an added bonus that I found that the detox cleansed my mind and thought process. I really felt that II was able to think more clearly. I also recognized that a lifestyle change was really needed and I no longer wanted to suffer, nor did I want to have the symptoms or the condition that had existed and that quietly had a negative impact on my life. In addition I want to say that many times in so many different aspects of life, we have no idea how conditions affect us until they are no longer present. The singer Joni Mitchell wrote a song with the lyric, “Don’t it always seem to go that you don’t know what you’ve got til it’s gone…” … and that goes for good and for bad. Sometimes we don’t realize how much and how long we’ve suffered until the cause of the suffering is eliminated. I know of a person who had cardiac symptoms and had to have an operation to put in a stent. She had no idea she had discomfort under her left shoulder blade until the stent was in place and all of a sudden there was a sensation of calm and a feeling of release of tension. Please keep in mind that everyone has their own blueprint and distinctive set of issues, symptoms, and ailments… this example is just a reminder of how important it is to know your own body, the signs and warnings experienced in everyday life functions, and how to appreciate when things are **good**.

The whole detox experience sparked my interest and I started to read and research all about food and in the process I made a wonderful discovery…. learning about food can be fun! It didn’t have to silently attack me and my organs and bodily functions. It didn’t have to stress me out. It didn’t have to cause me to feel deprived and yearning for something. I found interesting information and the more I read, the more I was eager to learn and experiment. I wanted to try food from all over the world but in the beginning I found challenges in how to season my dishes so that my meals were interesting and distinctive. What would I have to add to get that Indian taste? What was missing for me to really appreciate my own prepared Chinese meal? The world offers such riches with cuisines and food from so many different cultures… and the accents and additions made for such an interesting puzzle to solve… and I wanted to find the way to nourish my body and feed my mind and my soul… all at the same time.

On my new path I explored the “wonderful world of herbs and spices” and I learned that each cuisine has their own special “spicy herbal identity.” They are the key to bringing forth the flavors and essences of the beloved cuisines of the world. But before I could begin to use them, I had to be able to identify them… I had to know what each one looked like, what they smelled and tasted like, what they were known for, with what they blended best, and how they enriched and enhanced each dish I wanted to make. Here are some examples of herbs…. let’s see how good you are… and let me just say that when I started on this course I knew very little! Let’s face it, for many of us our education in “herb technology” begins and ends in the spice aisle in the grocery store… all ground up in little bottles and shaker tins… although in the present day with the growing popularity for natural foods and more awareness of need for eating healthy, the possibility to learn is somewhat easier than it was when I began, but don’t lose sight of the fact that there is still always something new to learn and discover. In a way it’s like peeling an onion and finding new layers to discover underneath each over layer (**It might be nice to have the opening slide be an image of ground spices and herbs in an Indian market- showing the rich colors in those big burlap bags and then show the slides of different herbs- use some comparisons that look very similar and engage the audience**).

I love hearing that some of you had your own “**AHA**!” moments looking at those slides…. and believe me, as I researched I had plenty of my own. I remember that when I began my exploration I had a difficult time finding good, informative, and easy to read reference information. Many times critical points that I wanted to know were buried within pages of recipe instructions. I have to confess, I usually don’t like to follow a set recipe. I must say… and I am not making excuses but I think most of you will understand, I too, have a full time job and when I come home I want to be able to prepare and make my meal quickly and as easily as possible… within minutes. Generally speaking, I do not have time to study a recipe that is pages long, only to discover I’m missing half the ingredients needed to make the dish. Such experiences ended badly- I was frustrated, in need of my dinner, and in no mood to run out to a store to load up on more provisions… or… to paraphrase the commercial, “You know I’m not me when I’m **HANGRY**.” (**Wait for the laugh**) Back then, more often than not, until I learned otherwise and I would find myself in a one-on-one battle in a staring contest with a wet and unseasoned chicken, asking the age-old question. “What do I do **NOW?**??” (**You can say this with exaggerated despair and wait for the laugh**). Do I bake? Do I broil? Do I fry? Do I **CRY**??? (**Wait for the laugh**). Oh please tell me you can relate!!! Of course when all else failed, I pulled myself together and opened the cabinet doors to see what ground up “knight in shining glass shaker” was there to rescue me. Between the hunger and the confusion… “Is this spice good with chicken or do these two in combination work better with fish… and what’s a good side dish and how do I enhance **THAT** flavor …” I realized that I needed a system, a plan and some knowledge…. There’s **ALWAYS** room for more knowledge…

As I calmed down and fed myself… with information and increasingly tasty food, I realized there was not a comprehensive and reliable book that I could go to for reference. I was learning that with one or two herbs I could create appealing flavor and with a bit of salt and pepper to taste, I was on my way to “redemption.” As my education progressed and as my senses and sensibilities got sharpened, my reliance on salt naturally diminished… and we all know, that’s a very good thing. Studies have shown that there are three ingredients found in food that have the most potentially detrimental effects. They are, sugar, processed foods, and yes, salt. Please remember that with salt a little goes a long way and if possible, it’s better to do without. I found, and hopefully in time you will also discover, that herbs and spices … in infinite combinations… provide satisfying flavors, so keep that in mind whenever you can. Herbs have more benefits than just being flavorful and colorful additions to a dish. They enhance the taste of food, they preserve food and the use of herbs allows you to prepare food ahead of time. Marinating your protein a day in advance allows the herbs to infuse the food with flavor and makes for easier cook time once you’re ready. All you would have to do is take the food you prepared out of the refrigerator, place it on the grill or in the oven for the required amount of time… maybe even as little as fifteen minutes depending on cut and thickness, and your delicious dish is ready!

Every time of the year boasts its own bounty of fresh vegetables and one of my favorite gifts of this time of year is the summer squash in our garden that is ripe and ready for the picking. They smell so delicious and they’re warm, crisp and so fresh. As an example of the easy and tasty cooking I love to promote…. remember… no really formal recipes from me!!... I take the summer squash and grill it with garlic and olive oil. It’s a perfect companion with chicken or fish that can be prepared like this- and believe me, this is the simplest and tastiest of dishes: sprinkle a little olive oil and a little lemon, add a little bit of garlic, rosemary, basil, and oregano- any or all will do… you can pick what you like… place on the grill for twenty minutes or until done. In the meantime, cut the summer squash either in the length or across in slices and grill for three minutes on each side. I strongly suggest that you also consider making a little more than you need for dinner because you **WILL** want leftovers for lunch the next day!

Another delicious and informal preparation takes a little longer but is also an excellent choice if you have company for dinner. Who isn’t fascinated by the curious natural strands of spaghetti squash? If you’re not you will be after you taste this… Get a spaghetti squash and place it in the oven on a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**Should you clarify type of pan and if this requires any olive oil?**). Cook for thirty minutes on each side. That may sound like a while but it will give you time to set up your protein. Have your chicken or fish or both… it’s up to you… ready. Halfway through place your chicken in the oven… of course fish doesn’t need as much time and if you choose to make meat, be sure to cook thoroughly… and of course add herbs and spices of your choice…In the meantime, chop some zucchini, some minced celery, finely chop a few cloves of garlic as you prefer, and add some olive oil, fresh oregano, basil, ground pepper, and just a bit of salt and sauté on high heat for about three to four minutes. Do this right before your protein and spaghetti squash are almost done. Turn off the heat and carefully remove the squash from the oven… make sure you have gloves on because it will be **HOT**! Cut in half, scoop out the seeds and discard them and scrape the squash off the shell. The texture is very similar to spaghetti… thus the name!!! Place that delicious bounty into a bowl and take your sautéed zucchini mixture and place on top and toss a bit…. What a delicious and healthy accompaniment to your chicken, fish or other protein and what a great and balanced meal! As an option you can prepare the same zucchini sauté and serve it on whole grain pasta. These are just two examples of the ideas that await you when you get my book. Just about every spice and herb I discuss can be treated as cleanly and simply and I have worked extra diligently to be true to the mission of this book, and that is to keep it as an easily understandable reference guide to preparing and cooking healthy meals quickly and simply. It was my intention when I wrote and compiled the book that it saves precious time and effort for the user. It was also my intention that **YOU** take that time you save and invest it in **YOU**. Nourishing the mind and the soul is just as important as eating well. With any newfound time, read a book…. meditate… exercise… take a walk…. but remember to turn off the stove first!! **(Wait for the laugh**). And let’s see the great returns you get on your investment!

As you might have guessed, through this journey and on this path, I took some notes… actually, I took **A LOT** of notes… enough to fill a book… so I did… and here we are!! The “**story of my life in spices and herbs and pictures**” may sound like a song… and believe me, throughout the process there were times I thought I was hearing things or seeing things… like dancing lemongrass…. (**Wait for the laugh**), but here we are and here’s how it goes.

The portion of the book on cuisine is divided into eight sections… we can think of it as “eight courses” … although that would make us very, **VERY** full… or we can think of it as “eight easy pieces” … but each section is dedicated to a favorite world cuisine. Please also note that in general, although meat is a part of each type of cooking, it is not considered to be in the majority in any of the meals of these international foods. Each one finds a balance and for the most part each relies more heavily on vegetables and fruits.:

(**Note from Helene- In the below section I did not mention onion or garlic as herbs even though you have them listed in your manuscript. It is up to you if you want to add them to the sections where they are featured but when I checked to see if they are considered a vegetable, a spice, or an herb I discovered that both onion and garlic are bulbs from the lily family and they grow underground. They are the roots of the plant. And so they are considered a vegetable. The article I read described herbs as being green, and spices can be roots, bark or seeds but in ground up form**).

1. **Italian Cuisine**- characterized by its simplicity, with many dishes having no more than four to eight ingredients, Italian cooks rely on fresh, local elements that highlight each region’s specialties. While the areas in the north may feature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, southern provinces tend to highlight \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in their typical offerings.
	1. Garlic, basil, oregano, rosemary, sage, thyme, fennel and ground black pepper are synonymous with Italian regional cuisine.
2. **French Cuisine** also finds it “DNA” in the unique and varying regions of their country. Also based on locally sourced vegetables, the French have eggs of particularly fine quality and we have this country to thank for the omelet among other timeless staples found in delicious food. French cuisine highlights the use of locally grown fungi such as truffles, button mushrooms, oyster mushrooms, and of course, nearer to Italy, porcini.
	1. The French have taught us well with their use of thyme, bay leaf, parsley, basil, chervil, peppercorns, and tarragon… and there are others… their use of “fines herbes” and bouquet garnis, is world renowned.
3. **Greek Cuisine** is based on ancient culture dating back several millennia. The Ancient Greeks were a truly advanced society and their use of certain identifying elements hasn’t changed much in thousands of years, (**If you want to make a joke you can say**), proving the saying, “If the olive oil cruet ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” (**Wait for the laugh**). At the center of healthy eating is what is commonly known as the “Mediterranean diet,” and all that goes back to healthy Greek food. From the use of olive oil in just about every dish, Greek cuisine also relies on fresh and locally sourced ingredients like figs, Kalamata olives, dates, cherries, tomatoes, grapes, zucchini…. I better stop… I’m getting hungry!! (**Wait for the laugh**)
	1. Some of the herbs that distinguish and define Greek Cuisine are oregano, mint, dill, bay leaves, basil, thyme, and fennel… and of course there are others… waiting to be discovered by **YOU**!
4. **American Southern Cuisine** is truly the brainchild and product of many world cuisines distilled and combined into a distinctive and completely unique hybrid all its own. Mixing elements of English, Scottish, Irish, German, French, Native American, and African cooking, American Southern cuisine has become a “force of food nature.” Its flavorful elements have in turn influenced other regional foods. Although known in many instances for vegetarian dishes, this type of cooking also has strong identity with meat, chicken, fish and shellfish.
	1. Tried and true herbs and spices used in this cuisine are chili pepper, cumin, cilantro, paprika, oregano, and West Indies based jerk seasoning
5. **Mexican Cuisine** is basically a fusion of indigenous Mesoamerican cooking with Spanish elements. Its unique components include edible flowers and the use of cocoa and vanilla in savory dishes. The cuisine also distinguishes itself with liberal and colorful use of tomatoes and avocado, and adds a healthy dose of heat with all sorts of peppers like jalapeno and poblano.
	1. Herbs and spices that form this unique backbone and help to define the language of the Mexican meal are cumin, cilantro, chili powder, cinnamon, cloves and coriander to name some of them.
6. **Caribbean Cuisine** is an exciting mix of Amerasian, African, European, East Indian, Arab, and Chinese cuisines, and just by considering this eclectic list of source inspiration, we can almost sense the history of the region. The character of Caribbean food stems from its special use of green herb and oil based marinades and may include onions, garlic, Scotch bonnet peppers, celery and a variety of herbs. The marinades are used in typical curries, stews, and roasted meats.
	1. Herbs and spices known to be found in indigenous Caribbean food and jerks are allspice, cloves, cinnamon, salt, nutmeg, thyme, cilantro, marjoram, rosemary, cayenne and others.
7. **Chinese Cuisine** varies by region and may also have roots in other Southeast Asian foods. And whether we think of Szechuan, Cantonese, or Hunan variations just to name a few, they all remain true to the ancient Chinese traditions and flavors. Chinese food is as old as the country’s distinguished and varied culture…. and let’s face it… where else can we find “thousand year old eggs?” (**Wait for the laugh**). Don’t worry- they’re not really one thousand years old, but they are **very well preserved**. Many Chinese dishes feature noodles as Chinese culture and tradition teach us that noodles are a symbol of long life and good health, so if you’re interested in being authentic to Chinese cooking, keep those noodles long!
	1. Spices and herbs found in Chinese cooking include fresh ginger root, white pepper, Sichuan peppercorns, star anise, cinnamon, cilantro, parsley, cloves, cardamom, turmeric, lemongrass, bird’s eye chili, fennel seeds, and nutmeg.
8. **Indian Cuisine** completes the list of what I have selected as the top eight world cuisines. This is another type of food that is heavily influenced by its people, it’s history and its regional culture. There are those Indians of the Muslim faith what don’t eat pork while others abstain from eating beef, but other meats are consumed and chicken is popular throughout the subcontinent. The food of India is spicy and flavorful while being tempered with yogurt-based sauces. A variety of oils are used in Indian food and from peanut oil, mustard oil, coconut oil and sesame oil, each element contributes a special touch.
	1. The herbs and spices that contribute to making Indian cuisine as tasty and desirable as it is include chili pepper, mustard seed, fennel, cardamom, cumin, turmeric, ginger, curry-which is a combination of cumin, coriander and turmeric, and star anise, among others. There is also something featured in Indian food known as garam masala, which is a specially blended powder consisting of five or more spices, especially the following: dried cardamom, cinnamon, clove, cumin, and peppercorn. We have also learned that each region has its own unique garam masala and some chefs are also known for their own blends of the powder.

You can see by my interest and enthusiasm for these eight cuisines that making this book really took off and had a life of its own. Getting into the research of these very specials regions of the world really did whet my appetite to continue to learn more and experiment with my newfound knowledge. I traveled my own special “spice road” as I searched and learned and it is my privilege to be able to share this with you.

As I continued to research, the next section revealed itself to me. The second section is the largest part of the book… it is “the meat” of the matter, if you will. This is the part in which we find the clear, illustrated list…actually it’s more of a glossary, of the forty-five most important spices and herbs that I discuss. From adobo to white pepper, we have provided explanations, some history, provenance and uses of each element. As an example, you will find that “adobo” is a Filipino word meaning marinade, sauce or seasoning and is commonly found in both Philippine and Caribbean cooking. Anise is found in medicine as well as cooking and is the base flavor for licorice candy. Although it’s traditionally used in Indian curries and Spanish stews, it is also found in Scandinavian breads, and in Italian cuisine, anise can be found in salads that are served mid-meal to cleanse the palate and neutralize and refresh taste buds. As you can see, each entry is featured on its own page with a picture and description to help you in your search as you discover the spices and herbs you want to feature in your own cooking and preparations. (**Show slides of some individual pages as they appear in the actual book and ask the audience if they have any questions up to this point**). Let’s see… does anyone have any questions so far? (**Do you also want to add a comment that although you realize that some of the items included in the herbs section aren’t technically considered herbs- like lemon, garlic, onion, etc, you felt it was important to include them as they are integral parts of so many flavor profiles? If so, you can say the following:**) I also want to say that although several of the items noted on the list of spices and herbs are not technically considered herbs, it was crucial to include them because they are such integral components in flavoring the delicious food of the regions discussed in this book. Our food would lack a great deal of dimension were it not for flavors like garlic, lemon, onion, and the like that work so well with herbs and seasonings and complement the varied and delicious flavor profiles we all love so much.

The next section of the book provides a section featuring categories of various types of foods and how different elements are used in the various regions of the world. For instance, if we think of beef dishes, this is how different global areas offer their distinctive blend of flavors:

* Italian, French, Greek, and Mediterranean beef dishes are probably seasoned with paprika, basil, sage, savory, tarragon, and dome others.
* Chinese cuisine would be more likely to feature cumin, ginger (as a marinade), and five spice.
* Indian beef dishes (depending on the region) would also use cumin and ginger as a marinade but might add cardamom, cloves, masala and lemongrass to their herbal mix.
* Caribbean beef dishes proudly display their specialties by using adobo, nutmeg, allspice and possibly garam masala.

In the fourth section, I share with you my thoughts and principles on finding and maintaining a healthy and happy balance in life. As I mentioned earlier, this book is a testament to and a result of my search to identify and resolve my own personal health issues, my frustration with that, my journey to find and practice wellness, and my mission and commitment to those I know… and those I don’t yet know, to support them and **you** in finding your own path to well being. This is not a “how to” book and it’s not a “you should” book. It is a reference guide to aide you in discovering the benefits of finding the means to tasty and healthy nourishment for mind, body and soul.

As you read you will discover that I am a firm believer that eating healthy does not mean restrictions on oneself. That just leads to frustration and self-punishment. Each year many or most of us may have been conditioned to “make those resolutions… to “promise to be good”… to pledge to eat better… to “swear” on a stack of take out menus that in the new year we will be different. Some of us actually believe that in that one night’s sleep… from December 31st to January 1st, mystical magic occurs and suddenly we’re disciplined! It doesn’t work like that. Bad habits take years to form and best practices take a long time to set in. If you’re an adult and you are here, it’s because something in you wants to be inspired to, as Oprah says, “live your best life.” But it is up to each one of you to look within and define and describe what **YOUR** best life looks like to you. And no matter how “tasty” and tempting it might seem, I ask you, do **NOT** bite off more than you can chew… really. In order for a new idea to take hold, build up to it, want it, commit to it in small steps.

In my Six Principles to a Healthy and Happy Life, I discuss a slogan I made up: TAQ. That stands for Time, Amount, and Quality.:

1. It’s not how you eat; it’s what you eat. Make conscious choices about the times you eat, the sizes of the portions you consume and the types of foods you are eating.
	1. In this section I share my thoughts and tips on the meals of the day and the “art of snacking.”
2. Food combinations are really important to digestion and well-being and there may be some basic principles to nutritional health you weren’t aware of… until now.
	1. Eat new food pairings and remember nothing is off limits if done at the right time and in moderation. There’s a time, a place, and a portion for everything
3. Plan ahead. And I mean your eating. You would do your best to plan a vacation to make it varied and enjoyable, why not spend some thought on plotting out the meals for the week? Don’t be obsessive about it but aim for a balance of selecting healthy meals to keep your interest and provide you with eager anticipation of preparing, making and enjoying each meal.
4. Preprocess your food- marinate your dinner proteins ahead of time, usually overnight. Then when you get home all you have to do is cook them. Half the work is already done. Also try to remember to make some extra food to take for lunch the next day. Also as I mentioned earlier, remember that herbs have preservative properties and it has been scientifically proven that ground black pepper kills about 25% of bacteria that can lead to the spoilage of food… and in combination with onion, garlic or oregano, black pepper has the amazing ability to kill almost all of the bacteria that might cause food to spoil. Isn’t **THAT** good to know?
5. I hope this doesn’t make you groan, but we all should do our best to get at least twenty minutes of exercise each day. It’s most beneficial if done in the morning, but as the slogan goes, “**JUST DO IT**.” If you can’t or won’t take formal time to exercise, why not try parking your car at the far end of the parking lot or get off the train or bus one or two stops before your usual destination? Just “Keep it moving” if you know what I mean.
6. And finally, enjoy the process… We get one chance at life and it is up to each one of us to find the value and explore the possibilities and avenues that will take us to happy and healthier places. I know what it felt like to be miserable and to suffer from issues that were solved by making conscious and wise choices about the way I ate and what I chose to eat. It is now almost thirty years since I picked up that “fork in the road” and it is one of the wisest choices I have made in my life. Remember I am not lecturing and I am not telling you that you have to be perfect. I am providing a guidebook to assist you in educating yourselves. There are so many issues and sensitivities and maladies that can very likely be food related. I am offering you a handy reference guide to healthy and flavorful eating.

William Shakespeare said, “Our bodies are our gardens- our wills are our gardeners.” By making a place in your life and in your library for this book, it is your opportunity to hone your skills as your own body’s gardener- literally! In today’s too-busy, too-complicated world, a world in which we may find ourselves over stimulated, stressed out by too much information and inundated with work or other responsibilities, I understand that it becomes increasingly challenging to do our best to keep our heads above water and making conscious decisions about choosing to nurture our selves becomes a critical and essential element in living a healthy and satisfying life. While it seems that increasingly we live our lives in a 24/7 environment- meaning we’re perpetually connected and eternally on call, we each need the means to find even a few moments in the day to stop, get off the ever-spinning hamster wheel of our lives, take a look at where we are and where we want to be, and reconnect with our own inner health and desires- no matter how grand or simple they might be. Emotional, physical, and mental health are all united and connected. Address one issue and the process is started to work on attending to the others. Conquer your eating habits and in turn you will find that you will have the awareness to nurture and care for the other parts of your self and your life. I know that sometimes it is easier said than done, but I have been there and I am now here and I encourage all of you to take a look and find even a little wisdom and hopefully lots of information within the pages of this book.

The eternal allure of herbs and spices have been feeding and nourishing our ancestors for millennia. Now it’s our turn to wake up and savor the delicious flavors of health and well being,

I want to thank all of you for being here and for sharing this time with me. It is really been a privilege and a pleasure! Thank you all so much and here’s to good health and happiness to all of you!