

“Why Food Really Matters”  
Natasha Harvey - Section 021 - Date: 3/05/13

They say; “you are what you eat,” this is precisely what I will be discussing in my first topic. The documentary *Food Matters* focuses a great deal on the value and nutrients of fresh, uncooked and unprocessed food in our diets. We don’t often think about how old the food we are eating really is, but it does play a large role in the amount of valuable nutrients we get from that food. In actuality, the “fresh” fruits and vegetables that we are getting from the grocery store have, on average, already traveled anywhere from 1,500-2,000 miles to get to us. At that point, that food is at least 5 days old and is missing about 40% of the nutrients it originally contained, so the fresher the better. Cooked foods lack the nutrients and enzymes needed for digestion that raw foods offer. Our body actually goes through a process to defend itself against cooked foods called glucocytosis, where an excessive amount of white blood cells are created. As you can see, fresh, raw foods are fundamental to our health.

In the documentary *Forks Over Knives* the importance of a fresh, plant-based diet in our lives is a main focus. In the average western-diet, there is a much greater amount of meat, wheat and dairy being consumed rather than fresh fruits and vegetables. When our bodies are getting artificial, processed foods rather than the whole, natural foods that we need, our body actually feels a greater need to consume more and more food until we feel full. This is exactly why people become so overweight and addicted to fast food. It really is like a drug, and it’s affordable, quick and we continually crave it. The problem is that people cannot afford to buy good, fresh food so they turn to fast, fried food and pay for it with poor health.

Though the two documents address the same subject of food and it’s importance in our diet, they do approach the subject very differently. The first documentary, *Food Matters* gears its attention towards the value in fresh foods and uncooked foods in our diet and what types of

nutrients those foods are providing our bodies. On the other hand, *Forks Over Knives* focuses more on processed foods and the difficulty for the average American to afford fresh food rather than fast food. It also talks about the western-diet consisting mainly of meat, wheat and dairy, which *Food Matters* did not really address. Both of the documentaries ultimately communicate the importance of diet and food in our lives and create a better understanding of what we are consuming.

The next topic that *Food Matters* addresses is clinical medicine and how it does not incorporate the importance of nutrition in health. The documentary refers to the health industry, as the “sickness industry,” where sick people go to have their symptoms treated, not cured. In actuality, 80-90% of patients who go to the hospital are there for a reason relating to poor nutrition and 26% leave the hospital more malnourished than when they went in. Sadly, medical doctors receive little, if any, training in nutrition. Drug companies would like to keep it that way of course, because their main consumers are those who have poor nutrition and suffer from chronic disease. There is no money in health for the drug industry; they would rather prescribe “a pill for every ill,” than get to the root of the problem. Unfortunately, as consumers, we are berated with enormous amounts of advertising, 25% of TV ads are for drugs, so instead of becoming savvy and understanding that all we need to do is change our eating habits, we become consumers of clinical drugs to help ease our discomfort. What we really need is “education not medication.”

*Forks Over Knives* also addresses the problem with the health industry and the underlying issues with healthcare in this country. A massive amount of money is spent on healthcare, about 2.2 trillion dollars annually. Even then, 30 to 40 million people in the United States don't have healthcare. One of the huge problems with drug companies is drug regulation.

First of all, the regulators who are supposed to be ensuring the safety of a new drug are actually receiving their paychecks directly from those same drug companies that they are supposed to be regulating. The second problem is that a drug only has to have two successful trials to then be licensed and sold in the US. To qualify as successful, only means that the drug proves more effective than a placebo pill for its intended purpose. This means that a relatively new drug on the market, that has been “regulated,” may have only been tested on a few hundred people before being consumed by millions of Americans. As you can imagine, the documentary suggests that there be a greater divide between the regulators and the drugs being regulated.

On the subject of clinical medicine and the health industry, both of the documentaries share a common goal, which is to make consumers more aware of what really is going on with our health care. *Food Matters* communicates well, the problem with the health industry not incorporating nutrition into their treatments. Instead of leading people towards better health and better diets, they prescribe drugs for a quick fix. The drug company has no intention of curing the patient; they’d rather provide a drug that helps treat symptoms so it’s continually needed. *Forks Over Knives* talks about the huge amounts of money that are poured into the health industry each year and the shortcomings of drug regulation. It seems that both documentaries are in agreement that change needs to take place and that the health industry is doing us all a great disservice.

My last topic of discussion is based on the two biggest killers in America, heart disease and cancer. *Food Matters* states that 220,000 people died of cancer in 1971. That same year, President Nixon allowed the government to pour over 39 billion dollars towards cancer research in an attempt to find a cure. Dramatically, 25 years later in 1996, the death rate more than doubled to 560,000 deaths in just that year alone. Incredibly, it has been found that natural

vitamins such as high doses of vitamin C can help to treat cancer and kill cancer cells. In most countries, including the US, nutritional therapy is illegal for treatment of cancer patients, even though there is proof that nutrition can not only treat cancer but cure it altogether. The number one killer, cardiovascular disease can also be stopped and reversed with a change of diet. It is unfortunate, that so much money is being poured into the treatment of cancer and cardiovascular disease when the answer and the cure to both of those problems is to simply eat better. The documentary states that you cannot heal selectively, one vitamin will not cure just one ailment but all of them. What vitamins really do is enable our bodies to heal ourselves, and that is the best cure.

The documentary *Forks Over Knives* largely focuses on cancer and heart disease and the simple cure to both maladies. It also addresses the growing diabetes and obesity problem in America. Today, 1,500 people die a day in the United States of cancer alone. One out of three babies born today will develop diabetes and just less than 40% percent of the population is already considered obese. We are headed deeper and deeper into a health crisis and the only way out is through a change of lifestyle.

When you compare these documentaries on the subject of heart disease and cancer it's very easy to see the similarities. In both documentaries, Nixon's "war on cancer" in 1971 was mentioned. They both suggest that the cure to both heart disease and cancer can be obtained through good health and they seem to agree that nutrients and vitamins we put into our bodies help cure all of our sicknesses, not just one. *Forks Over Knives* goes deeper into the diabetes epidemic and the problems we face with obesity than *Food Matters* does, but both are focused on a tangible, natural cure through nutrition. Hippocrates stated; "let food be thy medicine," and it truly can be if we all choose to make a change.

## **Bibliography**

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