

# Deconstructing Cravings

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***Nobody can give you  
wiser advice than  
yourself.***  
-Cicero

## In the Garden

I turned 50 at the end of August and thought, in addition to getting my AARP card, I should celebrate in a way that gave me great pleasure. So I invited two friends (the same age) to join me and we went to France for two weeks. We spent a week in Provence at a B&B where we took a day of cooking lessons and then rented an apartment in Paris for the second week.

Traveling and eating in France is a wonderful experience: the food is fresh, locally grown and eaten in season. Each town, or neighborhood of a city like Paris, has a weekly market of fresh produce, meat and fish. Restaurant menus feature what's in season, and at the end of August and early September, that means you get figs. Figs in appetizers, figs in salads, figs for desert.

(Next time you hear complaints from the international community that the French government is being difficult about farm policy remember that most

## Deconstructing Cravings

The body is an amazing source of intelligence. It is always there for you, pumping blood, never skipping a heartbeat, digesting whatever food you put in it, and maintaining homeostasis. Is this reliable, intelligent bio-computer making a mistake by craving ice cream or a hamburger or chocolate? Are cravings due to lack of will-power or discipline? I'd like to suggest that cravings are not a problem. They are critical pieces of information that tell you what your body needs.

The important thing is to understand why you crave what you crave. Perhaps your diet is too restrictive or devoid of essential nutrients. Perhaps you are living a lifestyle that is too boring or stressful. Your body tries to correct the imbalance by sending you a message: a craving. A craving for something sweet could mean you need more protein, more exercise, more water, or more love in your life. The key to stopping the sugar craving is to understand and deliver what your body really needs.

Your body knows best and is always trying to create balance. However, products like refined foods, sugar, caffeine, alcohol and drugs (which have little or no nutritional value) are confusing to the body. They throw the body off-balance and can create serious cravings as your body tries to get what it needs to restore internal harmony. The more your food is whole and healthy, the easier it is for your body to stay in balance and provide you with a happier, healthier life.

No book or theory can tell you what to eat. Only awareness of your body and its needs can tell you. Of all the relationships in our life, the one with our body is the most essential. It takes communication, love, and time to cultivate a relationship with your body. As you learn to decipher and respond to your body's cravings, you will create a deep and lasting level of health and balance.

The next time you have a craving, treat it as a loving message from your body instead of a weakness. Try these tips to respond to your body:

- Have a glass of water and wait ten minutes.
- Eat a healthier version of what you crave. For example, if you crave sweets, try eating more fruit and sweet or root vegetables.
- What is out of balance in your life? Is there something you need to express, or is something being repressed? What happened in your life just before you had this craving?
- When you eat the food you are craving, enjoy it, taste it, savor it; notice its effect. Then you will become more aware and free to decide if you really want it next time.

food in France comes from less than 100 miles from where it's served, and that it's grown by small family farmers.)

The French value beauty in their public spaces - the flower pictures above are from the Tuilleries Gardens in Paris and the others are from the market in St. Remy that we visited as part of our cooking class. Here's one from our cooking class itself: vegetables ready for roasting

Traveling provides the opportunity to experience new things and meet new people and we did both on our trip. It was a fitting way to celebrate our birthdays. I hope you have the chance to do something similar.

September and October are harvest months in the northern US, so keep buying great, healthy foods at your local Farmers Markets!

Natalie

## Quick Links

[Register Now for the Sugar Blues Workshop](#)

[B&B and Cooking School in Provence](#)

[Resources & Books](#)

## Food Focus: Natural Sweeteners

Who among us doesn't love sweets? The sweet flavor releases serotonin in our brains, the chemical responsible for our sense of well-being and contentment. But when it comes to sweeteners, not all are created equal. There are side effects and health risks from refined sweeteners like white table sugar and high fructose corn syrup, and from artificial sweeteners like NutraSweet, saccharin and Splenda. Because they have been stripped of vitamins, minerals and fiber, refined sweeteners can spike blood sugar, which can often lead to cravings and mood and energy fluctuations. Instead, using naturally and minimally processed sweeteners can reduce cravings for sugary things, level blood sugar ups and downs, stabilize moods and have a dramatically positive effect on long-term health.

Here are a few natural sweeteners to substitute in drinks, food and baking. Since they are all approximately 1.5 times sweeter than refined sugar, you can use less. You can find them in most supermarkets or natural food stores. When replacing sugar with liquid sweeteners in a recipe, reduce the amounts of other liquids.

### Raw Honey

Everyone seems to love honey, one of the oldest natural sweeteners on the market. Honey will have a different flavor depending on the plant source. Some are very dark and intensely flavored. Wherever possible, choose raw honey, as it is unrefined and contains small amounts of enzymes, minerals, and vitamins.

### Agave Nectar

Agave is made through the extraction and purification of the juice of the agave cactus. It does not stimulate insulin secretion as other sugars do, so it does not create a "sugar rush." It has a delightfully light and mild flavor.

### Maple Syrup

Maple syrup is the concentrated extract of the sap of maple trees. It adds a rich, deep flavor to foods and drinks. Make sure to look for 100% pure maple syrup, not maple-flavored corn syrup. As with all sweeteners, organic varieties are best.

*Adapted from "The Cane Mutiny," New Age Magazine, March/April 1999.*

## Recipe of the Month: Maple Fruit Compote with Honey - Toasted Nuts

Prep time: 10 minutes  
Cooking time: 20 minutes  
Serves: 4

### Ingredients:

2-3 apples  
2-3 peaches or pears  
1/3 cup water  
2 tablespoons maple syrup  
1/2 cup raisins  
juice of 1 lemon  
1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 cup walnuts, or nuts of your choice  
1/2 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced  
2 tablespoons honey

**Directions:**

1. Wash, core and chop fruit into slices or chunks.
2. Place fruit in a large saucepan with 1/3 cup of water. Add the maple syrup and raisins.
3. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally for 10 minutes.
4. Add lemon juice and cinnamon. Cook for another 10 minutes, until soft.
5. While fruit is cooking, place chopped nuts in a skillet over medium heat and toast, stirring often for 5 minutes.
6. Drizzle honey over the nuts and add ginger, but keep stirring since the honey can easily burn.
7. Put warm fruit on a serving dish or in a small ramekin, spoon the toasted nuts over the top and enjoy!

**There are many ways to become a client:**

- Individual coaching programs to help you meet weight loss or healthy living goals
- Employer programs to reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, and teach employees about things like healthy eating on the go and stress reduction
- Group cooking classes to learn how to put healthy meals on the table in fewer than 30 minutes - if you have a group of four to ten friends we can do a single or series of cooking lessons based on the skills of the group
- Eating for Peak Performance - Programs for athletes of all ages from middle school to adulthood to learn to fuel your body correctly
- Group coaching programs if an individual program is too much of an investment

[Contact me](#) to learn more about any of these services

**Upcoming Event**

**Beating the Sugar Blues**

*A one hour interactive workshop*

Tuesday, October 3 at 7:45 pm  
@ Chiropractic for Life, 5138 N. Clark Street, Chicago

No fee to attend

For more information or to register, contact Cornell Health & Nutrition at 773 - 427 - 6630 or visit our web site: [Sugar Blues Info & Registration](#)

Thanks for reading this issue. If you are in the Chicago area, I hope you can come to the Oct 3rd workshop. We hope to do more workshops, so stay tuned.

Warmly,

Natalie

### Contact Info

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