

# Eating to Live

## After a Heart Attack or Stroke



by Michael Erlewine

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## INTRODUCTION

This is not intended to be a finely produced book, but rather a readable document for those who are interested in my particular take on dharma training and a few other topics.

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## EATING TO LIVE AFTER HEART ATTACK OR STROKE

[This is a long article, but those who don't need this information can just ignore it. Those that do, may find it helpful.]

If we have has a serious heart condition or stroke, we have to pay close attention to our diet and what we eat. I grew tired of trying to dress-up what I can eat so that it resembles what I used to eat. It's just too much trouble, IMO. For me, what is important to know is what is best to eat in order to better stay alive. Here are some guidelines I use. Feel free to ask questions. This will be a rather quick once over.

Since I have both of the above conditions, my diet is pretty restricted. Those of you trying to get back to what you used to love to eat (or close to it) can stop reading, since I will not comment on that. I have given up on trying to relive the past food habits, which were bad for me anyway! Here is what I find I can eat now and I might as well learn to like that. Ultimately, I find that I am adaptable and soon enjoy whatever I can eat..

Also, I am not (or no longer) interested in recipes with more than a few ingredients. I have no time or interest in complex recipes, even if they taste good. Natural and simple foodstuffs, without a lot of spices, taste good enough for me and will do just fine IMO.

I never liked the word "vegan, but it turns out I am a super-vegan, as I don't eat sugar. And, of course I don't eat dairy. I don't eat red meat. I don't eat meat,

in general, although all of my stroke doctors are telling me to eat omega-3-rich fish at least twice a week. I am doing that, at least for the time being.

What follows are not just MY druthers, but the takeaway from combining what my cardiologist, two primary-care doctors, and two stroke doctors say I should eat. They pretty much agree with each other, so this is their advice, not mine. And I agree with them. In no particular order, they all stress what is called the Mediterranean Diet, so you can Google that for more information, but it is mostly as follows:

#### NO PROCESSED FOOD

We don't eat processed food. What process we have, we do ourselves on the spot. We process (i.e. cook) and then eat.

#### WHOLE GRAIN OR NO GRAIN

The big thing is to eat whole grains. And don't trust the labels. Read carefully to make sure you are getting whole grain and not SOME whole-grain along with a lot of white or non-whole-grain flour mixed in. There are more and more whole grain breads starting to become available as the big bakery companies are getting on the organic, whole-grain bandwagon.

Be especially careful with whole-grain pastas, as there are few of them that are healthy. I used Organic, 100% whole-grain Udon noodles from Eden Foods a lot. I buy it in the 10 lb. box. Here is a link:

<https://www.edenfoods.com/store/udon-organic-100-whole-grain-12316.html>

And EdenFoods also has 100% whole-grain kamut, spelt, wild rice, soba (buckwheat), and so on. We eat these also on occasion.

As for rice, of course I don't eat white rice. I eat Lundberg short-grain brown rice and little other rice. Perhaps I include a little sweet rice mixed into the brown rice. However, I no longer enjoy long-grain or basmati rice. Lundberg organic short-grain brown rice is all I need. We soak it overnight (or not if we can't wait).

## VEGETABLES

As my stroke-doctor said to me "You can eat all the vegetables you want, 24-hours a day if you wish." So, have at it. Go easy on the Solanaceae family (tomatoes, tomatillos, eggplant, bell peppers, etc.), unless you crave them. We eat broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage (love that), zucchini, summer and winter squash, carrots, peas, corn, Brussel sprouts and on and on. And then there are greens.

## GREENS

You can't get enough greens. I eat them raw, cook them plain, mix them with rice or noodles, etc. I didn't used to like greens, but when I had to eat them, I soon got to love them. My daughter May wrote a wonderful song about greens. Here it is:

"Greens" by May Erlewine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bR-qzqieMYQ>

We eat all kinds of greens, collards, the kales, mustard, spinach (cooked only), arugula, chard, totsoi, and so on. We have a local farm the grows organic greens (and other things) and they send out a list once a week as to what's available. We then sign up for this, that, and the other. These are the best greens (including very delicate salad lettuces) I have ever had. Young turnips (and their greens) are heavenly, as are radishes.

Mostly I cook up some greens in just a minute or so, mix in some rice or noodles, stir them around a bit, add some tamari or rice wine, etc., and have a very healthy and delightful lunch. IMO, greens are key for the above health concerns.

## DAIRY

I don't eat any dairy, milk, cheese, cream, etc. I sneak the occasional forbidden bite of cheese or dollop of half-and-half in my Cafix, but that's about it.

## DRINKS

I drink water. For me, there is no better liquid. I used to drink hot Cafix (grain beverage) in the morning, but now I usually just have a cup of hot water. Through the day I have by my desk a big 2 Qt. glass milk bottle that I fill with water. It is important to drink plenty of water during the day. I don't drink alcohol or any spirits. I seldom drink any juice. And of course, never any pop.

## RED MEAT, FISH, FOUL

I don't eat red meat or chicken. I did not eat fish until recently when both my stroke doctors independently said I should have certain fish twice a week. And that would be those fish that are rich in omega-3s, like salmon, mackerel, herring, lake trout, albacore tuna, and especially sardines (because they are lowest in mercury).

I poach salmon, mix albacore tuna with onions, celery, and Vegemite for tuna-fish salad, and eat sardines out of the can. Instead of making a big thing out of the fish, I just eat it like medicine.

## AVOCADO

I eat a lot of avocados, since they are very high in omega-3 fatty acids, as well as vitamins, etc. Also walnuts, kidney beans, many seaweeds are high in omega 3s.

## FRUITS

We eat bananas, apples, pears, and especially blueberries. I feel blueberries are very important, at least for me. We eat oranges when in season and when my body calls for them. I like dried fruit, and eat dried apricots, pears, Medjool dates, and Turkish figs, all organic.

## JAMS

We eat only organic jellies and jams with natural fruit juice in them. No sugar.

## SWEETS



For sweets, I eat some occasional maple syrup and a teaspoon of honey here and there. Also, a little of very dark chocolate. Other than that, nothing.

## BEANS

For us, beans are a major source of protein. We eat all kinds of beans, but mainly pinto beans, black beans, navy beans, kidney beans, and so on. Chickpeas are my favorite bean-like food. Black beans are another favorite and I like to cook them up with some canned green chiles, chopped onion, and the following chile powder. I eat that on tortillas along with chopped tomato and avocado.

Bueno Chile Rojo en Polvo-suave MILD

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B079839C3N/ref=ppx\\_yo\\_dt\\_b\\_search\\_asin\\_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B079839C3N/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1)

More often than not, I'm the one who has to put one kind or other of beans to soak overnight. I inspect them for stones by taking a large pot, turning the lid upside down on the pot and spreading a handful of beans out on the lid. I then look for stones, and then dump that lid-full in the pot, pour out some more beans and count again, until they all have been inspected.

Then I rinse the beans, fill up the pot with water, and let them soak overnight. We cook them the next day. We eat pinto beans, black beans, dried lima beans, navy beans, red beans, and many other kinds. My favorite is garbanzo beans, which go with everything. To me, they are the "meat" of beans.

In the cooler months (like now) I make a good (but not too spicy) meatless chili with kidney beans. Margaret makes a wonderful baked kidney-bean casserole with miso. Delicious. I'm not going to list recipes here, at least until I get through these basic food descriptions. Anyway, beans are something we eat often. And, indeed, they ARE a musical fruit.

## CONDIMENTS

We don't use spices, much. We use tamari, soya, ume-plum vinegar, hot sesame oil, brown rice vinegar, Mirin, and things like that. I get most of these things from Eden Foods, which I recommend because I have known them since the 1960s and they use the best ingredients..

## SALT

I try to use as little salt as possible, and if I do, it's sea salt. Black pepper I do use and grind it on the spot.

## SEAWEEEDS

Unfortunately, seaweeds are an acquired taste for most folks. I've been eating it since I learned Macrobiotics in the later 1960s and early 1970s. We eat Wakame, Kombu, Nori, dulse, and Hijiki. If you are shy about seaweed, a good way to get used to it (and all its trace minerals) is with gimMe organic roasted seaweed. These are little squares, easy to eat, sprinkle on rice, etc. Here is a link:

[https://www.amazon.com/gimMe-Organic-Premium-Roasted-Gluten-Free/dp/B077G22ZKW/ref=sr\\_1\\_1\\_sspa?keywords=gimme%2Borganic%2Bseaweed&qid=1559456002&s=gateway&sr=8-1-spons&th=1](https://www.amazon.com/gimMe-Organic-Premium-Roasted-Gluten-Free/dp/B077G22ZKW/ref=sr_1_1_sspa?keywords=gimme%2Borganic%2Bseaweed&qid=1559456002&s=gateway&sr=8-1-spons&th=1)

## OILS

We are VERY careful what kind of oils we use. I use predominantly organic virgin olive oil, also sesame oil, and toasted sesame oil, but few others. We are also careful what kind of oils are in any packaged food that we might eat. There are good and bad ways to press oil, so you would be wise to learn about them.

## SOY

Aside from soy sauce, tamari, and miso, we don't use much soy products. We eat no tofu, but we eat a lot of tempeh. Tempeh is an important food for us, but you have to know how to cook it. Here is how we do it.

### Cooking Tempeh

[https://www.facebook.com/MichaelErlewine/media\\_set?set=a.10154705020752658&type=3](https://www.facebook.com/MichaelErlewine/media_set?set=a.10154705020752658&type=3)

### Why We don't Eat Tofu

We don't use tofu anymore. In the early 1970s, Margaret and I used to make our own tofu, which is a lot of work. Back then, there was no tofu available except some at Chinese markets, but we never could be sure what those market tofu had in them aside from soybeans. We will still eat tofu if it is served to

us, but we no longer buy it, cook, or eat it at home. The reasons for this are legion, stemming from the basic indigestibility of unfermented soy products, their phytoestrogens, possible thyroid disruption, anti-nutrients, vitamin B12/D deficiencies, possible heart issues, and the fact that most soy is GMO (90% in U.S.). This does NOT pertain to fermented soy products like Miso, Tamari, Tempeh, etc. We eat those a lot, but have to watch the salt.

## FAKE MEATS

I don't like fake meats, but do eat some. Veggie-based hot dogs are many and almost all of them are terrible IMO. I have tried far too-many and held my nose at all of them, except one brand.

"Field Roast" makes a pack of six hotdogs that actually come close to the real deal, if you follow one simple rule: don't fry them. Instead, cook them like you would ballpark franks in water and put them in a bun, add your condiments, and enjoy. They actually are good.

Field Roast" sausages, while not perfect, are IMO as good as it gets in the fake sausage department. I love their Apple-Sage and Italian sausage and eat them all the time. They also make a Mexican Chipotle Sausage, Bratwurst, Italian Sausage, and I have them once in a while.

## OATMEAL

In Michigan's winters, oatmeal is ubiquitous and we are very fussy how it can (and should be) eaten. For example, we almost never have instant oatmeal and seldom even use regular rolled oats, except maybe in crusts or fruit crisps. And, as mentioned, we don't just cook rolled oats and call it oatmeal. I find it funny that some folks even like cooked rolled oats, perhaps only because they are used to it and not for reasons of taste or texture.

For years we sought out steel-cut oats, which basically are just whole oat groats cut up by a steel blade to make cooking them easier. The only problem is that cutting up the oats obviously exposes them to the deterioration of their insides. However, their texture and taste is far superior to the rolled variety.

And then we found that cooking the whole oat groats was very much superior to cutting them. However, to cook whole groats takes a long time on the stove and you needed to use a flame tamer so as not to burn them. We have to start them in the early hours of the morn and hours later they would be ready to eat, but they demand to be vigorously stirred ever fifteen minutes or so by kind of scraping the bottom of the pan, etc.

Then, my dear wife Margaret came up with a marvelous idea. Why not just soak the uncut whole oat groats overnight and THEN cut them up with a Nutribullet just before cooking them. And, just as important, is that cooking them this way shortens the cooking time to something like 15 minutes. We just take the soaked whole oats, put them in a Nutribullet, fill it up with water, and pulverize it. Then put it in a pan on the stove and cook it, adding water as needed

to keep it from drying out. It is fast, easy, and produces the best oatmeal I have ever eaten.

This then has become for us the ONLY way to cook oatmeal around here. And the whole groats are not violated until the last moment. Try it sometime.

## BREAD

We get kamut and spelt breads from a special bakery and slice it ourselves. We try for sprouted-grains if we can. I find some of the sprouted-grain breads too “heavy” for me to enjoy chewing, so I eat a lot of whole-grain bread with sees, etc. in it.

## DESERTS

We don't have them other than the occasional banana bread that I make. I make baklava once in a while, but mostly for sweets we just use maple syrup, honey, and some bitter dark chocolate. Dried or fresh fruit is a desert for us.

So, there you have kind of what we eat. We don't have menus and we go from day to day having little idea what we will eat tomorrow. I try to follow my cravings for certain kinds of foods, based on the foods described above. Quite often, I just can't think of anything that I want to eat. I might have a peanut-butter and jam sandwich and call it a day. LOL.

I'm sure I left things out, so remind me. Or, ask any questions you have. This is not meant to be a diet for everyone, but it does closely follow what heart and stroke victims need to eat. It's pretty darn healthy.

I am sure I have not covered all the topics, so feel free to remind me of some and I may or may not have comments.

For those of you who would like to have access to other free books, articles, and videos on these topics, here are the links:

[http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links to Michael Erlewine-V2.pdf](http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links_to_Michael_Erlewine-V2.pdf)

“As Bodhicitta is so precious,  
May those without it now create it,  
May those who have it not destroy it,  
And may it ever grow and flourish.”