

# EATING IN COLOR

DELICIOUS, HEALTHY RECIPES FOR  
YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



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FRANCES LARGEMAN-ROTH

PHOTOGRAPHS BY QUENTIN BACON

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To **Jon**, for giving me the freedom to chase my dreams,  
and for your patience and ever-ready appetite.

To **Willa**, for inspiring me to write this book, and for  
asking so many good questions.

To **Leo**, for trying everything on your plate, and for  
always being there with a smile.

I love you all.





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I was not born a foodie. My love of, respect for, and fascination with food and its health-giving properties are something I had to come around to—or back to.

I grew up in an odd setting. I was born to a German mother and a Jewish, Brooklyn-raised military father, who somehow decided to raise their brood of five children in a small town on a Native American reservation in western New York.

For as long as I can remember, I always had a strong passion for animals and science, and from the age of five, I was hell-bent on becoming a veterinarian. I had little interest in food or cooking, but luckily this didn't deter my mother from teaching me about it from a young age. Mom grew up in the restaurant business in a small spa town in Germany and learned the finer points of hospitality while she was still in diapers. These were skills I wouldn't come to appreciate until college, when I was forced to learn how to cook and shop for the residents of the vegetarian co-op I lived in during my sophomore and junior years at Cornell University. But learn I did, and a nascent interest in food and all that it can do for us became a full-fledged obsession by my fourth year of college, leading me to stay an extra year and switch my major from animal science to human nutrition.

The hippie co-op may have piqued my interest in nutrition, but once I dug into it, I realized, for very personal reasons, I would make it not just a career choice but a life path. My father had type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and central adiposity. (The latter is science-speak for excess fat in the belly. I'm sure he would have preferred being called barrel-chested.) He had also loved food, but leaned toward fatty and cured meats, like pastrami and corned beef. And while my mother loved fruits and vegetables, her cooking style involved a fair amount of butter and was not what I'd call "light."

Though Dad had been a dentist and had a general understanding of nutrition, he hadn't ever applied it to his daily life. He didn't manage his diabetes well through diet and he didn't take time out of his busy work and home life for exercise and stress reduction. All of these factors led him to die of a massive heart attack at the age of sixty-two. I was twelve years old.

Later, my classes at Cornell taught me the basics

about human nutrition, and the pieces to the puzzle of why I lost my dad came together. I realized that he didn't have to die so young—his multiple health issues were a result of his diet and lifestyle. I wanted to turn the clock back and teach him everything I had learned; ultimately, I put those energies toward teaching other people about how to eat right and live healthy, active lifestyles.

Fruits and vegetables contain compounds that reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, some cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, and obesity, which is why nutrition experts have been trying to get Americans to eat more of them for years. I realize now that what my dad was missing, along with regular exercise, was more of these disease-busting, nutrient-packed foods. Most Americans are extremely challenged when it comes to getting enough fruits and vegetables in their diets. A 2010 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that only 26 percent of Americans are getting the recommended three servings a day of vegetables. We do slightly better in the fruit department—33 percent of us eat the suggested two servings daily. The majority of messages that aim to entice us to eat more of the good stuff focus on the fiber or phytonutrient content of these healthy foods. I could be wrong, but apart from a few health zealots, it seems most of us are moved by flavor when we make our food choices, and not the latest clinical research. People don't go to the store to buy zeaxanthin or anthocyanins, they go to pick up a few zucchini for dinner and blackberries for tomorrow's breakfast.

Although you'll find detailed information about the ingredients I use in *Eating in Color*—when they're in season, how to choose them, how to store them, and, of course, how to use them—I don't want you to get too hung up on the details. My goal with this cookbook is not to get you to focus on specific nutrients, but just to eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains each day. Since hardly any of us are getting enough, there's lots of room for improvement! I hope that this book gets you to look at the contents of your shopping cart a bit more closely and gets you to head back to the produce department for a few more items, take your kids to a farmer's market, join a CSA, or try a tough-to-pronounce whole grain. And I hope that you'll then share that experience of wanting more with others. More color, more flavor, and absolutely more fun.



# What Eating in Color Is About

Like most moms of young kids, each night for me is a mad dash to put something on the table that my kids will eat. And of course as a dietitian, I want what I'm serving to also be nutritious. But two-year-olds can be picky, and I found myself offering a slate of foods that were bland and colorless: pasta, chicken, cheese, and sometimes corn. Though my husband didn't complain, I was bored with what we were eating, and I knew I had to be proactive about fixing the problem.

It was around the same time that my daughter Willa's daycare class began a "color study." The children didn't just learn to identify colors, they also discovered what happens when different colors are blended together and where to find various colors in nature. She was obsessed with telling us the color of everything, from her crayons to her carrots. Color! That got me thinking . . . now that Willa was excited about colors, I realized I could entice her to expand her palate by offering up reds, oranges, and greens instead of beets, sweet potatoes, and broccoli.

I figured that if I was feeling challenged to add more color to our meals, other families must be having the same struggle. And so we set off on a new, vibrant food adventure. I started thinking about ingredients differently—not only about their health-giving properties, but how they'd add to the brightness of a dish, or how an unfamiliar ingredient could be used in a tried-and-true way. This is how quinoa ended up in a quiche and chia seeds found their way into my panna cotta.

Joining a CSA was an important step in our colorification. After debating its merits (lots of low-cost fresh produce) and drawbacks (another thing to do on the weekends) for a few years, I finally convinced my husband

it was worth it. We started getting our shares of locally grown Long Island vegetables, fruit, eggs, and flowers in early summer and continued all through the fall. Not every haul was amazing: There were mangy looking herbs, aphid-eaten Brussels sprouts, and sun-cooked berries, but for the most part everything was high quality. We made great use of our twice-monthly pickups, and brought a whole world of color into my kitchen and ultimately onto our plates. We got to try lemon cucumbers, red turnips, donut peaches, and Brandywine heirloom tomatoes. And I got to have lots of fun experimenting with it all! The delicious results are within these pages, and I hope you and your family find them to be just as enjoyable as we do.

Naturally, in a book about eating in color, you'll find lots of brightly colored ingredients like fruits and vegetables. But you will also find more subdued, earth-toned ingredients like whole grains, seeds, and even chocolate (happy dance!). There's so much promising research that shows that all of these foods can help make our diets healthier and more nutrient-packed. From a culinary perspective, they also add texture, flavor, and interest. That's why, in addition to the traditional ROYGBIV colors of the spectrum, you will find an entire chapter devoted to Black and Tan foods.

And while I'd estimate that 90 percent of the ingredients in the book are plant-based, this is not a vegetarian cookbook. You'll find seafood, eggs, poultry, lamb, and even bacon in the recipes. Why? Because they're all delicious and I want you to love the dishes! Used judiciously, I believe there's room in our diets for animal protein, cake, cocktails, and other celebratory foods. And if you eat close to the earth 90 percent of the day, my philosophy is that you can be less than perfect the other 10 percent of the time.

If you can incorporate even a few of the recipes in this cookbook into your repertoire each week, you'll be significantly upping the amount of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains you and your family consume. And that means lots of goodies: more fiber, more nutrients, and more antioxidants to improve your long-term health. Consider this book a jumping off point—it should get you thinking about ways that you can add color to your go-to recipes, possibly adding an extra vegetable to a basic salad, or mixing a fresh or dried fruit into a favorite muffin recipe.

# My Rules for Eating in Color

This isn't a diet book, but it's always nice to have a few healthy principles to live by:

**1. Eat color often.** Antioxidants don't stay in our bodies very long, and we are constantly being barraged by damaging free radicals. It seems that nearly everything causes oxidative stress, from pollution, cigarette smoke, and the sun's rays to innocuous-seeming activities like eating, breathing, and exercising. So it's smart to pack some color into your diet daily, preferably with each meal. I like to think of the antioxidants in colorful fruits and vegetables as my own personal security detail.

**2. Don't be monochrome.** It's easy to get into a routine and just start eating kale salads every day. Yes, kale's great for you, but it's not going to give you a full complement of nutrients. Mix it up! Just like an all-black wardrobe can be boring, so can an all-green diet.

**3. Go beyond your comfort zone.** Even if the idea of mustard greens really freaks you out, try them once. If you don't like them, you're out less money than you'd pay for a new lipstick. Seems like a good deal to me!

**4. Make a date with your kitchen.** It's easy to pick up lots of healthy produce, but then deadlines, fatigue, and hungry kids can get the better of you, and those crispy greens start to wilt along with your motivation to cook them. I find that it's just as important to set aside time to cook as it is to have the ingredients on hand. You might need to cook early in the morning, during naptime, or even late at night—whatever works for you. Use your smart phone to block out some time to cook and set an alarm. Seriously! Most of the recipes in this book are great at room temperature or reheated, so it's fine to make them in advance.

**5. Move it.** I don't care what you do, but work up a sweat at least three times a week for 30 to 45 minutes (60 is ideal). Zumba, power walking, gardening, swimming, snowshoeing—whatever gets that heart pumping. It all counts! And make sure your kids see you in your sweaty workout gear. Just like it's important to have them see you eat your broccoli, you set the best example for your kids by being active.

## WHAT ARE ANTIOXIDANTS?

*We hear a lot these days about how antioxidants help fight the damage caused by free radicals, but what the heck does that really mean? Think of your body's cells as the parent who is trying to keep things in order, but is countering constant attacks from free radicals, which we can think of as unruly toddlers who bash into the furniture, scuff the floor, and use markers on the walls. Antioxidants work as Mom's helper, sweeping up the various messes*

*and leaving things as they were. Free radicals are formed when certain cells are damaged by oxidation, or exposure to oxygen. Oxidation causes a loss of an electron, which creates instability in a cell. Antioxidants have the ability to lend an electron to the free radicals, making them stable again and unable to cause damage. Oxidative stress is the cumulative damage done by free radicals when they have not been counteracted by antioxidants.*

## Eating in Color Kitchen Gear

I live in a relatively small apartment in Brooklyn that doesn't have extensive storage space, so I've whittled down my kitchen gear to the essentials. My recipes aren't very complicated and don't require much in the way of fancy kitchen tools. But you will need the following:

**Chef's knife:** These knives can tackle everything from carving a roast chicken to slicing through a hard winter squash. Since they're an investment, I recommend going to the store to handle them and find the one that's right for the size of your hand and feels balanced. And please wash your knives by hand. Running them through the dishwasher dulls the blade, and you're more likely to cut yourself with a dull knife.

**Paring knife:** I like using a paring knife for slicing small fruits and doing other more detailed work.

**Bread knife:** The serrated blade on these knives make it much easier and safer to cut through crusty bread and bagels.

**Kitchen shears:** These are super-handy for mincing herbs without bruising them, cutting up long strands of pasta for little eaters, snipping kitchen twine—I could go on and on. Keep them dedicated for kitchen tasks only. If you start using them for paper and such, they'll become dull.

**Microplane grater:** This is essential for zesting citrus and grating hard cheeses and chocolate. I have several different sizes, but you can get away with the "classic series" zester/grater that was originally used for woodworking.

**Two rimmed baking sheets:** You'll need a baking sheet to toast nuts, roast vegetables, and bake pizza. One is fine, but it's better to have a pair.

**Silpat mat:** These are wonderful for baking cookies or making chocolate bark and are amazingly nonstick. You can always use parchment instead, but a Silpat (or other silicon baking mat) is a nice splurge—and you'll have it for years.

**A 12-cup muffin pan:** For making muffins, of course, but you'll also need them for my mini frittatas (page 102).

**Multiple cutting boards:** Yes, they take up space, but I find that if I don't have a cutting board that's ready to go, it can derail my dinner plans. Who wants to clean and dry a board before getting started? I keep two large plastic boards, plus a mini plastic one (excellent if you're just slicing a lime or a few garlic cloves), and a wooden board—which only gets used for bread and nuts because I can't disinfect it in the dishwasher.

**A 2-quart (2 L) saucepan:** I find that a 2-quart (2 L) saucepan with a lid can handle most recipes, from grains to sauces. It's also nice to have a 6-quart (6 L) saucepan when you're making larger quantities or doubling recipes.

**Large sauté pan:** There's nothing worse than finding that your shrimp or vegetables won't fit into your pan. Okay, there are worse things, but it's annoying to have to cook things in multiple batches if you don't have to. A 10-inch (25.5cm) pan is great, but a 12-inch (30.5cm) is even better. If you have a huge kitchen and lots of storage, go nuts and get both!

**Fine-mesh sieve:** You'll need one of these for specific recipes like my Matcha Panna Cotta (page 146), but it's also handy for scooping vegetables out of blanching water, rinsing grains, or transferring pasta to a bowl when you don't want to use a colander.

**Two colanders:** Since most of my recipes call for multiple fruits or vegetables, it's nice to have a couple of colanders on hand. Several companies now make the collapsible kind, so they're easier to store.

## Eating in Color Ingredients—A Cheat Sheet

A cook is only as good as the ingredients she has on hand, so make it easy on yourself by staying stocked up on items that help meals come together quickly and add a boost of flavor without much fuss. Here's my go-to list:

**Agave nectar:** This natural sweetener is made from the blue agave plant. It comes in both light and dark (or amber) varieties, which simply refers to the color of the nectar. Since it has a syruplike consistency, I like using it to sweeten drinks, smoothies, and vinaigrettes. It's also wonderful in marinades and pickling liquid. The texture is similar to honey, but the flavor is more subtle. I love honey, too, but I think agave is more neutral. Since agave is sweeter than sugar, you can use less of it to sweeten things up.

**Berries:** I go for fresh in the spring and summer and mostly frozen in the fall and winter. I buy organic whenever possible. Berries are a delicious snack, of course, but I also throw the fresh ones into salads for a bit of sparkle. And frozen berries are perfect for smoothies or my Triple Berry Sauce (page 153).

**Canned fish, such as tuna or smoked trout (good-quality stuff):** These are a no-brainer way to turn a salad or pasta into a main dish.

**Chicken sausage:** There are so many great companies now making really flavorful and healthy sausages. I keep a few packages on hand for weeknight dinners and throw them into pasta dishes and quiche. If I notice that the sausages are getting dangerously close to their sell-by dates, I just throw them in the freezer.

**Chocolate (semisweet), chips, chunks, or bars:** When the urge to bake strikes, I like knowing that I don't have to run to the store. I keep my chocolate supplies in the freezer so my husband doesn't snack on them (sorry, honey!).

**Dried fruit:** I like to keep an assortment around, including apricots, blueberries, cranberries, mangos, raisins, and plums (prunes). They're a great snack to throw into your purse or diaper bag as you're running out the door and can liven up a salad or a grain dish in an instant.

**Extra-virgin olive oil:** We use extra-virgin olive oil for nearly all our cooking. (I keep canola oil for baking and for cooking certain things like fish, which I don't want to impart a fruity, olive flavor to.) Extra-virgin olive oil is the first press of the olive to extract the oil, so the antioxidant-rich plant phenols are intact. Regular olive oil has gone through several pressings and has fewer health benefits. Since extra-virgin oil is sensitive to heat and light (and it's expensive), I store ours in a metal decanter. If you don't, make sure to keep it in a cupboard that is not next to the stove. If you buy it in bulk like we do, transfer some to a smaller container for everyday use, and put the rest in a cool, dark place.

**Garlic:** Nothing adds flavor quite like garlic. An unbroken bulb can last up to eight weeks, but check on it weekly to make sure the cloves are not dried out or sprouting.

**Grana Padano:** In several recipes I call for Parmesan—an informal and general term to refer to an entire family of hard grating cheeses, the most famous of which is Parmigiano-Reggiano. Grana Padano is a deliciously nutty cheese and is very similar in taste and texture to Parmigiano-Reggiano, but generally a few dollars cheaper per pound. And since we use so much of it on pasta and over vegetables, it's a great substitute.

**Greek yogurt:** I keep plain fat-free as well as 2% fat plain Greek yogurt on hand for making dips, smoothies, and baked goods. I'll use fat-free in otherwise rich dishes to help lower the saturated fat. Greek yogurt contains two times the amount of protein as regular yogurt because it's made with more milk.



**Lemons and limes:** Essential for brightening the flavor and color of dishes, making salad dressing and marinades, and enhancing flavor without salt; we keep several of each in the fridge at all times.

**Nuts and seeds:** I always have almonds, walnuts, pecans, pistachios, pepitas (pumpkin seeds), pine nuts, flax, hemp, and chia seeds on hand. I like to store them in the freezer so they stay fresh longer.

**Pasta:** I don't need to tell you that pasta makes a quick meal. But I think what's key is having an assortment on hand, like whole-wheat and regular versions of spaghetti and linguini, and penne or rigatoni, plus fun shapes like orecchiette (little ears), farfalle (bowties), campanelle (bell-shaped), gemelli (twists), and chioccioline (snail shells). Switching up the shapes helps combat the boredom that can set in when you serve pasta often.

**Quinoa:** I keep other grains on hand, too, but quinoa is my go-to when I don't have much time. Unless you're going with instant rice, you really can't beat a 15-minute cook time.

**Sea salt:** I use sea salt exclusively at home and in all these recipes, unless I'm pickling vegetables or making a roast, and then I'll use kosher salt. Both of these salts have a larger crystal size than regular table salt, which means you need less of them to achieve the same amount of salty

flavor. Sea salt and kosher salt also do not contain the additives used in table salt, which gives them a cleaner flavor.

**Seasonal fruits and vegetables:** I keep two bowls filled with fruit all year round. In the spring and summer, they're brimming with stone fruit like nectarines, peaches, and plums, and in the winter they're loaded with pears and apples. Bananas are a constant. I find that if the fruit is on display, it's more enticing and we're more likely to eat it. The same goes for vegetables—in the summer it's a lot of summer squash, corn, tomatoes, and eggplant. Fall and winter favorites include various winter squash, sweet potatoes, parsnips, and carrots. I try to go through my produce drawers every few days to make sure nothing is languishing.

**Shallots:** I love onions, but my eyes are super sensitive, so I use shallots in lots of weeknight dishes. They're smaller and easier to peel, so the chopping gets done before my eyes get too watery. And they're sweeter and milder than most onions, so they're a better choice for kids or date night.

**Whole-wheat frozen pie crusts:** Yes, they're great for pie, but I really keep them around for making quiche. Just whisk up some eggs, throw in some cheese, and add whatever leftover vegetables and meat you might have on hand. Turn to page 48 for a tasty weeknight idea.







## Reds

Since at least as far back as Roman times, the color red has signified power and wealth. Studies show that women are more attracted to men wearing red, and we all know the impact of a good red lipstick. This bold and beautiful family of fruits and vegetables is certainly physically attractive, but it also boasts a wide range of heart-healthy nutrients. Many members of the red family contain high levels of the antioxidant vitamin C, potassium, and fiber. Vitamin C helps fight damage caused by pesky free radicals throughout the body. Potassium is essential for maintaining normal blood pressure and keeps your heart beating regularly. And soluble fiber, found in many red fruits, helps lower “bad” LDL cholesterol.



# Simply Red **Fruit** Salad

SERVES 8

I usually like to combine contrasting colors in my fruit salads, but something interesting happened when I decided to go with just red hues. The salad became more like a watercolor painting, with each color bleeding into the other. And with the little jewel-like arils (pomegranate seeds) on top, this salad is not only sweet, it's good-looking, too. It's the perfect ending to a spring or summer meal.

½ cup (70g) DRIED CHERRIES

1 pound (450g) STRAWBERRIES, hulled and quartered (halved if small)

1 cup (110g) RED GRAPES, halved

2 BLOOD or NAVEL ORANGES, depending on the season

Finely grated zest and juice of ½ LIME

1 tablespoon STRAWBERRY JAM

⅓ cup (50g) POMEGRANATE SEEDS (arils) (from 1 pomegranate; see Note)

1. In a small heatproof bowl, combine the cherries and enough boiling water to cover them. Let sit for 15 minutes; drain and reserve the liquid in a large bowl.

2. Add the strawberries and grapes to the bowl with the cherries.

3. Over a bowl, using a sharp paring knife, remove the skin and white pith from the oranges, collecting any juices in the bowl. Use the knife to slice alongside both membranes of each segment, releasing the citrus segments and letting them fall gently into the bowl. Squeeze any remaining juice from the membranes. Transfer the segments to the bowl with the cherries, strawberries, and grapes; reserve the juice.

4. In a small saucepan, combine the reserved liquid from the cherries, the reserved juice from the oranges, and the lime zest and juice. Add the jam and bring to a boil, whisking vigorously to break up the jam. Boil for 3 minutes, until the sauce has reduced by half. Let cool completely at room temperature (chilling will cause the sauce to solidify).

5. Before serving, drizzle the sauce over the fruit and top with the pomegranate arils.

**NOTE:** See page 22 for instructions on how to extract pomegranate seeds (arils) from the fruit.

CALORIES 99

FAT 0.29g  
sat 0.03g  
mono 0.03g  
poly 0.1g

PROTEIN 1.3g

CARBOHYDRATES 24g

FIBER 5g

CHOLESTEROL 0mg

IRON 0.5mg

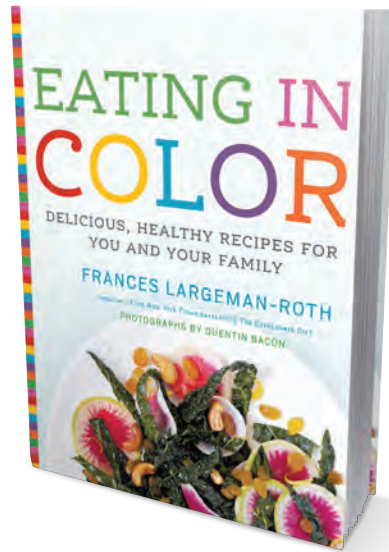
SODIUM 1.2mg

POTASSIUM 143mg

CALCIUM 41mg



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