

# EATING WITH INTENTION DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

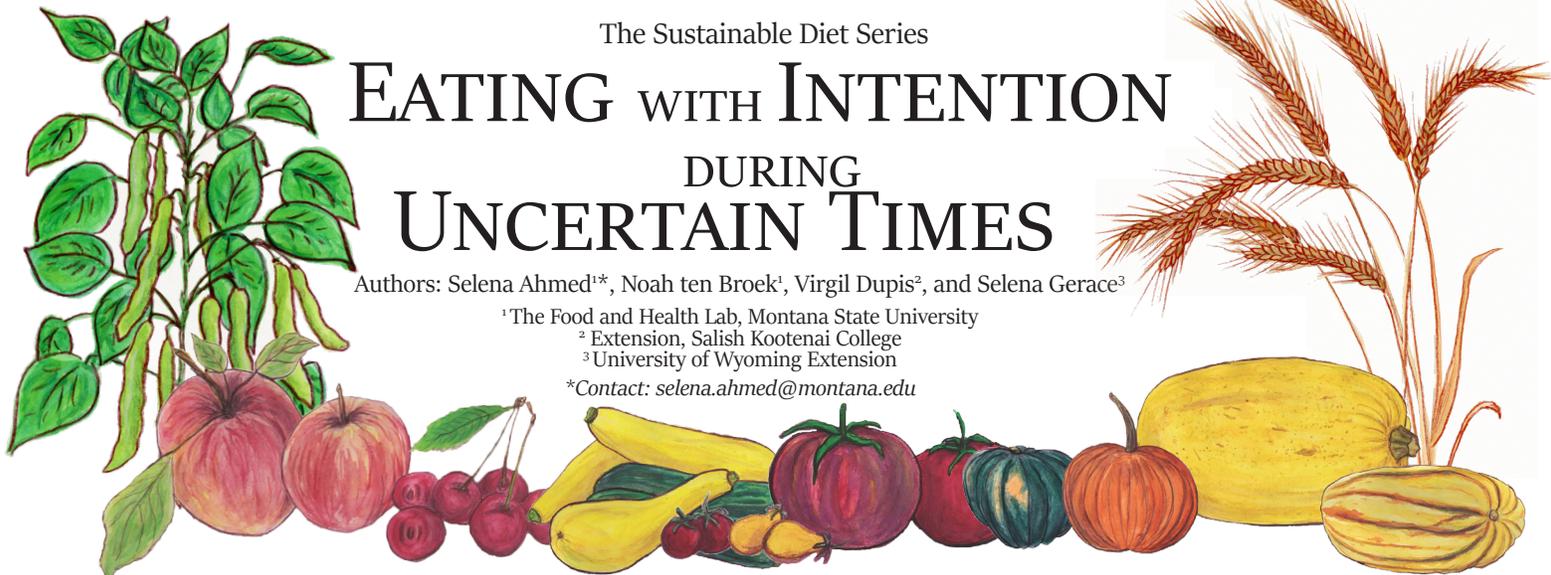
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**MEAL PLANNING, COOKING, AND EATING WITH GOOD INTENTION** is essential to nourish ourselves during these uncertain times of a global health crisis. With limited food access with measures to mitigate the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), we find it helpful to reflect on principles of indigenous food systems and sustainable diets in making food choices. Here, we share food systems principles that are helping guide our meal planning that may be helpful to you. We look forward to learning what you are finding helpful in guiding your meals during these times. We hope to learn from each other as we strive for nourishment and give gratitude for our food.

## FOOD SYSTEM PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE MEAL PLANNING

### 1 FOOD AS MEDICINE

We have learnt from community elders that healthy and whole foods provide medicine for the body and spirit. Research studies validate that **nutrient-dense whole foods help support wellbeing** including the immune system.

During this time, we are selecting and cooking with **whole foods that nourish the body, mind, spirit, and soul**. We are limiting our purchase and consumption of foods high in saturated fats, added sugars, and sodium.

We are **enhancing our meals with herbs and spices** that have longed been used in traditional diets for their healing properties. A revitalizing beverage we are preparing is a ginger infusion with lemon and honey.

### 2 PLAN MEALS WITH GOOD INTENTION

**Meal planning is essential** in times of food shortage and limited food access. We are planning our meals for each week by seeing what foods we have access to.

We are focusing on **simple recipes with a few whole ingredients** while being flexible and creative with substitution in recipes. A staple dinner has become dhal from Montana-grown lentils prepared with canned tomatoes, dried spices, and onions with a side of rice and local roasted root vegetables.

When cooking, we are **making extra for 2-3 days and for freezing**. We are combining leftover foods with other ingredients to create a new dish that feels fresh.

### 3 DRIED AND PRESERVED FOODS

Dried and preserved foods have longed provided communities with a **diversity of nutrients and flavor** when fresh foods are not available. For example, fermented foods such as sauerkraut provide unique probiotic properties from live bacteria that supports gut health while having high vitamin C levels and other nutrients.

We are stocking up on **dried meats, grains, seeds, nuts, pulses, and fermented foods** including sauerkraut, kimchi, and miso.

## 4, LOCAL, WILD, AND ORGANIC FOODS

Wild foods from the surroundings such as **berries, fish, wild game, seeds, and roots often contain higher levels of micronutrients** than cultivated and commercial foods. We are tapping into the frozen and preserved huckleberries, cherries, and plums from last year's harvest to add a burst of flavor and nutrients to our meals.

**Local foods have short supply chains and are less likely to be disrupted** by global shocks. Purchasing local foods helps support the local economy and requires less energy and resources for transport. We are stocking up on locally-grown root vegetables such as squash, carrots, and beets as well as lentils, oats, and ancient wheat. When possible, we are purchasing organic options.

## 5 HARMONY OF WHOLE FOODS

Whole foods such as whole grains **provide more nutrients and fiber** than their highly processed and refined counterparts.

We are stocking up on **whole grains including wild rice, barley, whole corn, oats, rye, ancient wheat, and buckwheat**. A staple breakfast has become bircher muesli prepared with oats soaked in lemon juice and topped with grated apple and nuts.

## 6 DIETARY DIVERSITY

Eating different types of foods **helps ensure we are getting all the nutrients our bodies need**. For example, for protein-rich foods, we are stocking up on lentils, beans, peanut butter, buckwheat, quinoa, meat, and eggs.

With limited food access, we are **preparing ingredients in different ways to bring out unique flavors** such as steaming, sauteing, and pan roasting.

## 7 FOOD SAFETY

Food safety is of **utmost importance**. We are carefully **washing fresh foods as well as our hands** before preparing meals and before eating.

## 8 COMFORT FOODS TO SOOTHE THE SOUL

**Comfort foods can soothe the soul during times of distress**. We are exchanging our favorite family recipes with others. One is grandma's "lip-smacking sour potatoes" made with curry leaves and mustard seeds long used in Ayurvedic medicine. Do you have a favorite family recipe to share?

We are being **moderate and balanced in our enjoyment of comfort foods**.

## 9 MINDFUL EATING WITH GRATITUDE

With less food access and overall less movement as we shelter in place, we are being mindful to **eat slowly to enjoy flavors and realize when we are getting full**.

We have **learnt from community elders to live in harmony and respect with all living things**. Before our meals, we **give respect and gratitude to all the elements, land, and people** involved in growing food and nourishing our communities.

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