



Sophie Uliano's
*Gorgeously
Green*
Starter Guide



Hello Gorgeous! WELCOME TO A GORGEOUSLY GREEN LIFE!

I am honored and delighted that you are ready to take the simple steps toward not only becoming way healthier, but also to leave the world a better place than you found it.

We all tend to short change ourselves – we really do! We spend our days thinking of all the things that we should be doing more of, or better: I SHOULD drink more green juices, exercise harder, eat cleaner, and just (darn it) force myself to meditate – If I do all this, I'll finally be happy (and lose my muffin top and cellulite to boot). While there's merit to all of these endeavours, there is also a great deal of confusion. This is spurred mostly by erroneous Internet information, and bizarre wellness tips that trend on Instagram or Pinterest.

Allow me to simplify things for you. Allow me to be your health coach. I have been living a gorgeously green life for over a decade. I have written four books on the many aspects of healthy living, and I am a stickler for scientific evidence and peer reviewed research when it comes to our health. The truth is that there isn't a one-size-fits-all. The nutritional advice that I would give to an eighteen-year-old marathon runner is quite different than the advice I would give to a sixty-year-old diabetic woman. So we have to find a lifestyle that works for YOU. We have to discover your sweet spot.

There are, however, a basic set of rules (I know, don't we *hate* that word!) which I live by. I don't sugar-coat it. My job as your coach is to push you beyond your perceived limitations, so you feel your absolute best. I don't "invite" you to do certain things, I "insist!" This is because I know that there are certain non-negotiable rules, or "no matter whats" that I would be lost without.

We all have in-built resistance to what is good for us. Why meditate when you can whip out your phone and check your Instagram feed? Why pull on tight yoga pants to exercise when you're in your cozy robe (with a huge latte)? But, my friends, unless we learn to tell resistance to eff-off, we'll never be that person we wished we could be. Life is short. It's not a rehearsal. Why not become that best version of you today?

I believe that every aspect of our life needs to be addressed in terms of longevity and wellness. I take an integrated approach because every action you take affects your whole life: clean food, optimal nutrition, detoxifying your beauty products, and your home – it all intertwines and comes together beautifully.

But, like anything in life, you have to *want* it. You have to make it a priority. So, allow me to be your coach (plenty of tough love), and your cheerleader (constant inspiration).

Read through this guide, and then stay closely connected to our wonderful [Facebook](#) community, which is truly supportive and loving. It's a great way for us to stay connected, share our insights, inspirations, help each other, and for me to give you my daily updates, tips, and videos. Most exciting are my live chats, which you are always welcome to join.

So, are you ready to start on taking your wellness to the next level? Let's not waste another day because, as my all time favorite quote reminds us:

WHATEVER YOU CAN DO, OR DREAM YOU CAN DO, BEGIN IT.
BOLDNESS HAS GENIUS, POWER AND MAGIC IN IT.
BEGIN IT NOW.

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GOETHE



YOUR HEALTH

CARDS ON THE TABLE

It's important to know what you are dealing with health-wise. A lot of us have a bunch of symptoms but no real knowledge of what is actually going on. As a health coach I always take an integrated approach to my own health, I never treat my symptoms because I know that there is always a cause. It might be stress, poor diet choices, unknown allergies, and many other reasons why I might be experiencing stuff that I don't love. This is where I need support.

YOU CAN'T DO IT ON YOUR OWN!

With healthcare costs escalating and Google at our disposal, it's tempting to become our own doctor. While I believe that we do need to tap into our intuition when it comes to health issues, I also think it's important to consult a doctor if you have worrying symptoms that aren't going away. Getting a blood panel done is never a waste of time or money. Granted, it can take a bit of dedication to find a good "integrative" or naturopathic doctor, but it's time well-spent because you never know when you might need that number on speed dial. It's also vital to consult with your doctor before starting any new supplement regime. Just because they're not prescription doesn't mean that they don't have powerful health effects. Be particularly careful if you are already on medication. And, this goes for the whole guide: When in doubt, consult your doctor.

TAKE BACK YOUR POWER!

If you are working with any healthcare professional, it's vital that you feel in control of the care that you are being given. I recommend that you ask questions, get all the info, and then ask more questions. If you aren't satisfied, move on! Never give your power away to a healthcare provider. I think my doctor is relieved that I clearly take responsibility for my own health – He doesn't have to waste his time trying to give me generic nutritional or exercise information because I'm already set in those areas – And I want you to be too. Can you imagine how overjoyed your doctor will be for you to bounce in saying that you don't

smoke, don't drink, don't eat meat or dairy, exercise every day, and make a mean green smoothie – It's a healthcare gamechanger!

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

How do you want to feel? What do you want to change in your life? It's important to establish this from the get-go. Spend a few moments writing your goals down in a notebook.

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:

I want more energy

Lose 10 pounds

Clear up my skin

Figure out if I have food allergies

Get rid of feeling bloated after eating

Detox my home

Clean & green my beauty products

Go meat-free

Go dairy free

Quit sugar

FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION!

The reason why many fitness plans and diets don't work long-term is that they are too complicated, too flimsy, and/or they don't work for your particular lifestyle. The first step in creating a gorgeously green life is to set definite goals, make these goals a priority, be honest about your limitations, and most importantly, create your personal set of rules or "no matter what's."

SOPHIE'S DAILY NO-MATTER-WHAT'S

WHAT ARE NO-MATTER-WHAT'S?

These are the minimum requirements that I have to hit every single day in order to feel healthy and well. I cannot expect to feel happy, joyous, and free if I don't put in the work. But unfortunately, I have an in-built resistance toward doing anything that is good for me! A classic example is meditation: I know that it makes me feel amazing, that it reduces my stress levels, and makes me more efficient in my work, and more loving toward my family. BUT, when faced with a spare 20 minutes, my default is to pick up my phone instead. Resistance is a little monkey that sits on my shoulder and tries to sabotage me at all times. Steven Pressfield wrote a brilliant book about resistance called [The War of Art](#). He outlines how to take that monkey off your shoulder and put him where he belongs - I highly recommend this. It not only helped me through the sometimes torturous journey of writing four books, but also helped me to stick to my "no matter whats."

Although we all have different needs, depending on our individual circumstances, there are a basic set of rules (10 total), which will keep you on track.

GORGEOUS NO MATTER WHAT'S

- 1 Take responsibility for your wellness (because no one else will!)
- 2 Connect to a power greater than yourself (and ask for guidance)
- 3 Eat a mainly plant-based diet (or 100% plant-based if you can)
- 4 Eat a diet that is low in sugar, light on dairy, and minimally processed
- 5 Eat greens with every meal (the more the merrier)
- 6 Drink half your bodyweight in ounces of filtered water daily
- 7 Make sure you get a minimum of 8 hours sleep a night
- 8 Challenge yourself physically everyday (yoga, running, weight training - you choose)
- 9 Disconnect for 20 minutes of deep relaxation per day (meditation is best!)
- 10 Make at least 3 people today feel how you would like to feel

A NOTE ABOUT RESISTANCE:

Another word that you might use for resistance is "ego" - It's that nasty little voice that tells us that we're either too good, or we are the lowest of the low. Humility is the opposite of resistance. Humility is strength because it requires us to get out of our own way. It asks us to rely on the power of the Universe (God, spirit - of whatever name you use). It asks that we ignore those nagging, belittling thoughts (you can't, you don't deserve, may as well throw in the towel etc), and just GET ON WITH IT. I use this same approach for wellness. When faced with those tennis shoes, that blender, or the meditation cushion, I just DO IT. Thank you, Nike!!!



NO-MATTER-WHAT'S EXPLAINED

1. Take responsibility for your wellness:

This might seem obvious, but so many of us don't. Taking responsibility means letting go of both the excuses and the victim-mentality. I had my "victim" mentality stamped out of me in my early twenties by an important mentor. At the time I loved to complain about how hard everything was for me. I have to admit that self-pity was a default. But this mentor taught me to always look at the glass as half-full instead of half-empty. And she insisted that if I didn't like something, I had to change it - And that it was within my power to do so (as much as I wanted to insist it was not!). All this to say that the knowledge about and responsibility for our strength and health is incredibly empowering. We start to realize that we have this responsibility to be the healthiest we can be for our partners, our kids, and our extended family. We can truly be a useful member of society when we are strong, flexible, energetic, and happy. It's up to us.



This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no "brief candle" for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

2. Create a daily spiritual practice

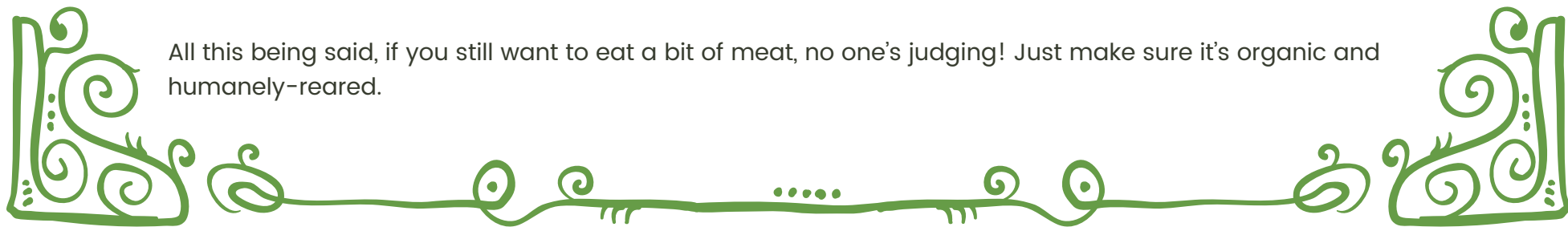
Do you remember a time in your life where you were thrown a two-by-four, which hit you smack in the face? Most of us have gone through some pretty challenging times in our lives. During hard times, I have to draw on my "spiritual" bank account. This means that everyday that I invest in a spiritual practice, I fill up that account. I never want to find it empty. Creating anything meaningful in my life requires discipline and structure. So, when I commit to just a few minutes of meditation a day, where I connect to a power greater than myself, I am giving myself the greatest gift. It's self-care at its very best. When I meditate, or commune with nature, I find my way to love and forgiveness. And when I love and forgive myself, I am able love and forgive others. A day that I sincerely remember to do this is almost always a very powerful and quite wonderful day.

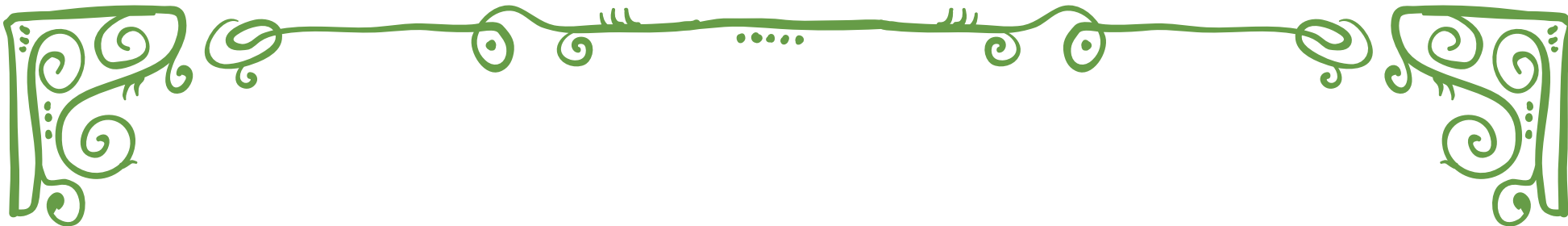


3. Eat a mainly plant-based diet:

I was raised as a meat-eater, and still occasionally cook it for my family. I decided to stop eating animal flesh because I could find absolutely nothing positive in it! Meat contains cholesterol and saturated fat, it's expensive, and it's rarely humanely-raised. Moreover, the consumption of meat, fish and dairy has been linked to so many adverse health effects, it just doesn't make sense. From an ecological point of view, eating plant-based is absolutely the way to go too. Are you missing out when you stop eating meat? Hell NO!!! You are filling your plate with delicious plant based foods, which are nature's pharmacy. These foods contain fat storage-prohibiting compounds, and disease-fighting compounds. And yes, you CAN get more than adequate amounts of protein. I get it - The taste of roasted animal flesh is delicious for many, and we evolved that way. But with the new generation of plant-based "meats," it's now hard to tell the difference.

All this being said, if you still want to eat a bit of meat, no one's judging! Just make sure it's organic and humanely-reared.





4. Eat a diet that is sugar-free, dairy-free, and minimally processed:

This is a no-brainer for optimum health. Giving up sugar, and especially cheese, is really hard for some of us – I totally get this. But this is where I kick into major cheerleading, because if you give up these foods, your skin will clear up, your energy levels will stabilize and your hormones will balance out. When I say sugar, I mean all the sneaky names for the stuff (see below), and I especially mean any kind of artificial sweetener like Splenda or those used in diet soda.

A SUGAR BY ANY OTHER NAME

Sugars and sweeteners are pesky ingredients – They hide in the most tricky of places. But knowing the names can help you avoid unwanted (or unintentional sweeteners)! Here's a list you should be on the lookout for:

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- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| Agave (nectar or syrup) | Honey |
| Barley malt | Invert sugar |
| Beet sugar | Lactose |
| Blackstrap molasses | Malt syrup |
| Brown rice syrup | Maltodextrin |
| Brown sugar | Maltose |
| Buttered sugar | Maple syrup |
| Cane sugar, juice, or juice crystals | Molasses syrup |
| Caramel | Muscovado sugar |
| Carob Syrup | Organic raw sugar |
| Caster Sugar | Oat syrup |
| Coconut sugar | Panela |
| Confectioners' sugar (or powdered sugar or icing sugar) | Panocha |
| Corn Sweetener, syrup, or syrup solids | Penuche |
| Crystalline Fructose | Raspadura |
| Date Sugar | Raw sugar |
| Demerara Sugar | Refiner's syrup |
| Dextran | Rice bran syrup |
| Diastatic malt powder | Rice syrup |
| Diastase | Sorghum |
| Ethyl Maltol | Sorghum syrup |
| Evaporated cane juice | Sucrose |
| Fructose | Sugar |
| Fruit juice concentrates | Syrup |
| Galactose | Table sugar |
| Glucose | Tapioca syrup |
| Golden syrup | Treacle |
| High-fructose corn syrup | Turbinado sugar |
| | Yellow sugar |

5. Eat greens with every meal:

Greens contain chlorophyll, which is the most important nutrient we can eat. Greens are full of vitamins, minerals and alkalizing compounds. You can have greens powders in your smoothie at breakfast and dark, leafy greens with every other meal. Just make sure you switch up your greens on a daily basis. Like every food, we need as much variety as we can get.

6. Drink half your bodyweight in ounces of filtered water daily:

The water must be filtered to make sure you are not downing contaminants. Most of us don't drink enough. Work out how much your body type needs per day, and get those reusable bottles filled!

7. Make sure you get a minimum of 8 hours sleep per night:

This is the most important "no matter what" because without enough rest your body cannot heal. Without enough sleep it will be impossible to be the best you. If you have trouble sleeping, it might be time to get to the bottom of it. It might be lifestyle, lack of exercise, hormonal disturbances, or other issues. But it's worth doing a deep dive to find out the cause, and create a solution.

8. Challenge yourself physically everyday:

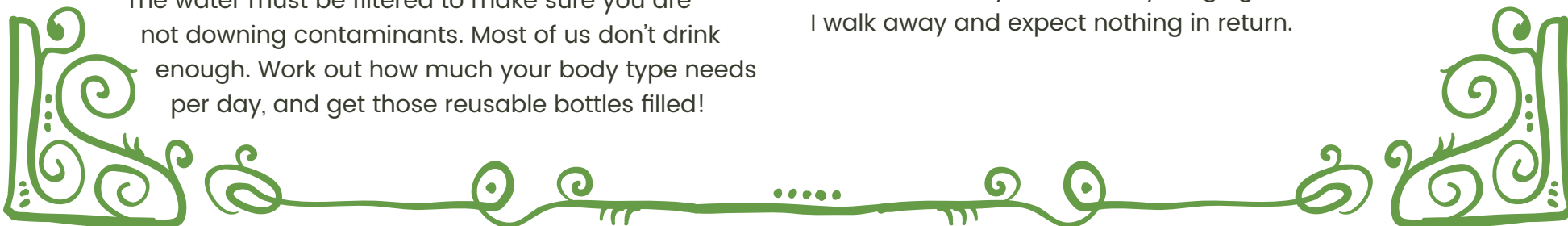
The reason I say *challenge* yourself is that it's the only way you'll create change in your body. This is especially true for toning and building muscle. As we get older, we have to work extra hard to prevent losing muscle mass. In my experience, this means taking my repetitions to the edge (where I literally don't have another one in me). No one likes pain, but it really is true that in terms of toning and keeping our muscles strong: No pain, no gain! Of course, find a form of exercise that you love (especially for cardio), such as dancing, tennis, swimming or yoga, but the hard graft of strengthening has to be part of your weekly routine if you want to stay in optimal shape.

9. Disconnect for twenty minutes per day (hint: meditation!)

This can be any time of the day. You can even break it up into two ten minutes sessions – even five minutes if that's all you can manage. But taking time to turn off our phone and rest by practicing a little breathing or meditation is vital. It allows our cortisol levels to normalize, and our thinking to clear. If we are in fight or flight mode 24/7, our adrenal glands become fatigued, or even burned out. When this happens, it affects all our bodily organs. And if meditation and breathing is impossible, just whip out a good book and kick back with a cup of green tea for twenty minutes.

10. Make 3 women feel GORGEOUS about themselves today!

I want to feel that I'm wanted, needed and loved. And I want to feel gorgeous. If I go out trying to get the world to make me feel that way, I'll inevitably come back empty-handed. However, if I go out and consciously try to make at least 3 people feel wanted, needed, loved, and GORGEOUS, it will probably come right back to me! However, the key is that everything I give is unconditional. I walk away and expect nothing in return.





YOUR HOME

Let's talk about making our environment healthy!! Fortunately, detoxing your home is pretty easy. Remember that your indoor air quality is 7-10 times worse than outdoor air quality.

So here's your checklist of things to cover:

- ☐ Get rid of toxic cleaners such as Pledge, Windex, and 409 Spray, replace with eco-friendly cleaning products such as [ECOS](#).
- ☐ Vacuum your home twice weekly with a vacuum with a HEPA filter. Remember that fire retardants that can be toxic, and adhere to the dust in your home.
- ☐ Remove your shoes (and get family and friends to do the same) on entering your home. This is to stop pesticides being tracked all over your floors.
- ☐ Cease to use synthetic pesticides in or around your homes, and on your pets.
- ☐ Either get a whole house water filtration installed, or have plenty of filtered drinking water ready. Replace your shower heads with models that filter out chlorine.
- ☐ Stop using any synthetic fragrances in your home such as air fresheners, candles or home scents (diffuser sticks). Many of them contain harmful phthalates.
- ☐ Fill your home with air-cleansing house plants such as Boston Fern, rubber plant, English Ivy, Peace Lily, and Golden Pothos.
- ☐ Keep your home well ventilated by cracking a window whenever possible.
- ☐ Always use non-VOC paints and varnishes.
- ☐ Avoid using toxic craft materials such as epoxy sprays, paints and varnishes.
- ☐ Purchase hardwood furniture in place of particleboard.
- ☐ Be mindful of purchasing "eco friendly" furniture, especially upholstered couches, chairs, and mattresses.

Creating a green home is a process. You don't have to do everything at once, but once you are in the mindset, you'll find everything you need to protect the health of you and your family.

Resources:

Whole Home Water Filter by [LifeSource Water](#): This is the one I have, and love.

Water filter jug: I love the one my [Mavea](#)

Bottled Water: [Castlerock](#) is the purest

Cleaning supplies: I love [ECOS](#) - They have amazing products that won't break the bank

Essential Oils to make home fragrances and cleaning supplies: [Mountain Rose Herbs](#)

NUTRITION & DIET



As I said earlier, there is not a one-size-fits all approach to nutrition. You have to find the a way of eating that suits you.

It's vital that you create an eating plan that is a *lifestyle*, not a diet. Diets don't work. They never have done, they never will. But changing your lifestyle is deep and lasting. So, when you think about the changes you want to make in how and what you eat, take you time. Within the framework of certain rules, or your "no-matter-whats," you need wiggle room. If you don't enjoy your food, you won't be healthy.

THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET VS. THE SAD DIET (STANDARD AMERICAN DIET)

Out of all the diets ever tested in studies and trials, the only one that was said to have real and lasting effects was the Mediterranean Diet.

The great thing about this diet is that it makes sense, and it only asks that we eat real, whole food, rather than to obsess over individual nutrients—making it easier to stick to and understand.

While extreme diets promise us everything from quick weight-loss to cancer remission, keep in mind that these are often a flash in the pan. These diets sell really well, because they offer a quick fix and a lot of hope. And most of these quick fixes and cleanses do work short term (wow the pounds are falling off!), but ask someone a couple of years down the line, and it's extremely unlikely that they will have stuck with it.

So what exactly is the Mediterranean Diet? It's more a lifestyle than a "diet" – Think about the fabulous, beshawled, wrinkled, smiling women you see in your mind when imagining a Greek Yaya. Do you think they look stunning at 90 because they drank diet soda and ate exclusively bacon. NOPE.

So, here's the Mediterranean Diet in short: Whole foods (predominantly fruits, vegetables, and grains), modest portion size, three meals a day, and way less meat. Practitioners of this diet get their healthy oils from olives and olive oil, but in modest amounts. They use a small amount of olive oil to finish off dishes, as opposed to sloshing it in frying pans to sauté everything (American style). They get their sugar from the naturally occurring sugar in the fresh fruit that they eat. And that's it.

BALANCE IS KEY

As soon as we hear that a certain food has “amazing” health benefits, we tend to eat way too much of it. For example, most of us have heard of the benefits of consuming raw, virgin coconut oil, but to shove it into smoothies, baked goods, and everything we eat is a mistake because, much like olive oil, it’s still a fat, and too much fat isn’t good for us. Come to think of it, too much of anything isn’t good for us.

A “balanced” diet sounds boring and uneventful, but the truth is that it doesn’t have to be. Once we slow down to appreciate the incredible colors, textures, and tastes of the whole foods that come straight from nature, our palettes come alive.

Our bodies are miraculous, and when we nourish ourselves with the miraculous foods that nature provides for us, we have a chance to heal, to maintain optimal health, and to really, truly stay gorgeous for good.

FEELING FULL

One thing that many diets have in common is that they don’t make you feel full. This goes completely against nature. Our stomachs are designed to need to feel full. They respond to a “stretch,” which acts as a built-in radar that tells us when we are full. Small, calorie-counted meals leave you hungry because your stomach doesn’t stretch. And on the other end of the spectrum, high-calorie foods that are devoid of fiber and water (chocolate, potato chips, baked goods, and so on) don’t stretch the stomach either. So, we’re completely unsatisfied on both our low-calorie or high-calorie diets.

Fortunately there’s a really easy way to fix this: eat tons of foods that are full of water and fiber (almost all fruits and veggies) and you’ll feel really full and satisfied after eating. When you’re eating out, ask them to keep the breadbasket and serve up a plate of cut-up raw veggies instead.

HOW TO DETOX

There are many detox/cleansing diets, programs, powders and supplements on the market. While some of them are helpful, it’s important to remember that your body has an in-built detoxifying system in place already. Our liver is one of our main detoxifying organs, and our lymphatic system and skin also come into play. We are literally bombarded with toxins of one

kind or another all day long, and as long as we are in good health, our body will deal pretty well with this assault. However, we can do a lot to aid this process, and the first thing to look at is the foods we put in our shopping cart.

HOW TO DETOXYFY YOUR SHOPPING LIST!

When you’re cruising around the store, list-in-hand, try to avoid:

Anything that contains artificial dyes, flavors, or preservatives

Any food that contains artificial sweeteners

Any food that contains high-fructose corn syrup or added sugar of any kind

All meat (including fish) and dairy

Hydrogenated and fractionated oils (mainly palm and palm kernel oil found in a variety of sweets and baked goods)

Non-organic produce in specific items (see “The Mean and the Clean 15” below)

“What am I going to eat then?” is the plea that I hear a lot. My reply is that they are going to eat bucket loads of the most feel-good foods on Earth. It takes a little while for some families to adjust their palates, especially if they are accustomed to eating a lot of sugar, salt and fat (particularly fat from animal products). But we humans are extremely adaptable, and after a few short weeks, anyone who follows these guidelines will crave beautiful fresh foods more than toxin-laden food. Trust me on this.

FOODS THAT ARE AS FRESH AND CLOSE TO NATURE AS POSSIBLE

Along the same lines, I recommend eating foods that are as fresh as possible in order to get the best nutrition. A fruit or vegetable begins to lose its nutritional value as soon as it’s picked. This is why you want to eat food as close to its source as you possibly can. I make it a priority to get to my farmers’ market every Sunday morning because many of the farmers picked their produce the night before to bring to the city. If my green beans or red bell peppers have been trucked in from another state or, even worse, flown in from another country, I’m not going to get the full nutrient profile that nature intended for me. Beautiful fruits and veggies that are as fresh as possible are the mainstay of a really healthy diet.

MAINLY PLANT-BASED FOODS

Next up: Eat a mainly plant-based diet. It sounds like a new fad, right? It's not - This is how ancient cultures subsisted for thousands of years. When we look at some of the healthiest and longest-living people on Earth, we see that they eat meat occasionally (maybe two or three times a month), fish every week, and fruits and veggies for all other meals.

keep in mind that modern-day fish and meat is very different from what it was even a hundred years ago. Our meat and fish products today are loaded with environmental toxins because the pollution in our air, food and water slowly make their way up the food chain and sequester in animal fat. Moreover modern meat is way more fatty than our Paleolithic ancestors ate, and thus not at all healthy. The American meat/dairy-eating culture is one of the prime reasons why our life expectancy is shorter than any other industrialized nation. If you cannot go without meat, try to cut your portion size in half, and load up the space on your plate with beautiful, fresh veggies.

But, what about protein? Don't we need to eat a lot of it? Actually most of us eat too much of it, mainly in the form of meat. Protein is comprised of 20 amino acids, 8 of which are essential, meaning that we need to get them from our food. Many people believe that we can only get these from meat, but this is not true. The World Health Organization says that we need to get 5 percent of our daily calories from meat. Proteins have 4 calories per gram, so if I eat around 2300 calories a day, I will need about 29 grams of protein daily. This is pretty easy to get, and even over-do, by eating whole plant foods. Look at charts on the right.

Beans and Nuts

- 1 cup soybeans, 29 grams
- 1 cup lentils, 18 grams
- 1 cup refried beans, 15.5 grams
- 1 cup black beans, 15 grams
- 1 cup garbanzo beans, 14.5 grams
- 1 cup pinto beans, 12 grams
- ½ cup almonds, 8 grams

Fruits and Vegetables

- 1 avocado, 10 grams
- 1 cup peas, 9 grams
- 1 cup broccoli, 5 grams
- 1 cup spinach, 5 grams
- 1 cup asparagus, 5 grams
- 1 medium artichoke, 4 grams

Grains

- 1 cup cooked quinoa, 9 grams
- 1 medium bagel, 9 grams
- 1 cup cooked spaghetti, 8 grams
- 1 cup oatmeal, 6 grams
- 2 slices of whole wheat bread, 5 grams
- 1 cup cooked brown rice, 5 grams

Meat Substitutes

- 1 cup tempeh, 41 grams
- 3 ounces seitan, 31 grams
- 1 cup tofu, 22 grams
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter, 8 grams

FAVORITE FOOD RECOMMENDATIONS

BEST FAKE MEATS

- Gardein** - I call this a "training wheel" brand. The foods are delicious. They are highly processed, but without any toxic chemicals.
- Hilary's Eat Well Burgers** - These are awesome, and suitable for anyone with allergies.
- Field Roast** - The best sausages I've eaten are Field Roast, and they have a range of other products.
- Beyond Meat** - Wow this is as close to ground beef as you'll ever find!
- Native Forest Canned Jackfruit** - A great alternative to pulled pork!

BEST FAKE CHEESES

- A girl can't live without cheese, right? And even if a vegan, she doesn't have to. I'm obsessed with:
- Kite Hill**
- Parmela Dairy**
- Treeline**
- Myoko**
- Follow Your Heart**

BEST SOURCES OF SOY

- Best Sources of Soy
- Edamame beans
- Tempeh
- Miso
- Organic tofu

BEST EGG REPLACERS

[Flax eggs](#)

[Chia eggs](#)

[Follow Your Heart Vegan Egg Replacer](#)

BEST BUTTERY VEGAN SPREADS AND VEGAN MAYO

Melt Spread

Earth Balance

Just Mayo by Hampton Creek

Follow Your Heart Mayo

Nutiva Buttery Spread Coconut Oil

MUST-HAVE SEASONINGS TO DIAL UP

THE FLAVOR IN ALL PLANT-BASED RECIPES

Tamari (gluten-free soy)

Aged balsamic vinegar

Cooking sherry

Miso paste

Rice wine vinegar

Dijon mustard

Chipotle paste

Harissa paste

Tomato paste

Bragg's Nutritional Yeast

Bragg's Apple Cider Vinegar

BEST OF GLUTEN-FREE

truRoots Pasta & Quinoa

Lotus Foods Ramen Noodles

Pamela's All Purpose Baking Mix

Enjoy Life Cookies

TEAS AND NON-CAFFEINATED BEVERAGES

[Jade Leaf Match Tea](#)

Dandy Blend Decaffeinated Beverage

Teechino

BAKING AND COOKING SUPPLIES

Nutiva Shortening

Earth Balance Buttery Vegan Sticks

Pamela's All Purpose Baking Mix

Xyla (xylitol to use in place of sugar)

Enjoy Life Baking Mixes

SPREADS AND JELLY

Artisana Raw Almond Butter

Nature's Hollow Sugar Free Jam

SWEETS & TREATS

Addictive Wellness Sugar-Free Chocolate

Lily's Sweets Sugar-Free Chocolate

Coco Polo Sugar-Free Chocolate

SUPERFOODS AND SPECIALITY FOODS

Navitas Natural Acai Powder

Manitoba Hemp Pro Fiber Protein Powder
(I love this for smoothies)

Medicinal mushrooms such as Reishi, Chaga,
and Ashwaghandha [Jing Herbs](#)

Organic Chlorella Powder (better and safer than
Spirulina to add to your smoothie)

Macro Reds Powder (a great smoothie addition)

You also might want to sign-up for

THRIVE MARKET. It's a discount online store for healthy foods. This is where I buy staples such as rice, lentils, quinoa, jelly etc.

FOODS THAT ARE ORGANIC/ NONTOXIC

You are way better off eating organic food because if it's USDA Certified Organic it means more than just an absence of pesticides - It means that you food has not been treated with herbicides or pesticides, is not genetically-modified, has not been irradiated, and has not been covered in sewage sludge. With so many environmental toxins in and around us everyday, food is a very powerful area in which we can make some seriously healthy changes.

Also be aware of the toxins in food packaging:

Many companies still use can linings that contain the hormone-disrupting Bisphenol-A (BPA), and toxic chemicals leach from plastic coverings and polystyrene.

Finally, beware of all the toxic chemicals that can be found in processed foods such as preservatives, additives, texturing agents, dyes, and so on. If you stick to whole, minimally processed foods, you won't have to drive yourself crazy looking for all these sneaky little ingredients.

THE MEAN AND THE CLEAN 15!

If you're worried about the cost of moving to all organic food, check out the lists from the Environmental Working Group about which ones it's most important to buy. First, what I call the Mean 15—an expanded version of EWG's original Dirty Dozen.

These are the fruits and vegetables that were found to contain the highest amount of pesticide residue:

1. Strawberries
2. Apples
3. Grapes
4. Celery
5. Peaches
6. Spinach
7. Sweet Bell Peppers
8. Nectarines (Imported)
9. Cucumbers
10. Cherry Tomatoes
11. Snap Peas (Imported)
12. Potatoes
13. Hot Peppers
14. Blueberries (Domestic)
15. Lettuce

And here are those with the least pesticide residue—the Clean 15:

1. Avocados
2. Sweet Corn
3. Pineapples
4. Cabbage
5. Sweet Peas (frozen)
6. Onions
7. Asparagus
8. Mangoes
9. Papayas
10. Kiwi
11. Eggplant
12. Grapefruit
13. Cantaloupe
14. Cauliflower
15. Sweet Potatoes

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY FOODS

It's now been discovered that chronic low-grade systemic inflammation is a common manifestation of premature aging. Diet isn't the only factor that contributes to inflammatory conditions, but it's certainly a very large part of it. So, what are inflammatory foods? The main culprits are sugar, cheap (not expeller-pressed) cooking oils, trans-fats, dairy products (particularly cow's milk), feedlot-raised poultry and pork, red meat, refined grains, gluten, and food additives.

I include gluten in my "inflammatory foods" list because it often creates digestive issues such as bloating, gas, and irregularities in the bathroom department. Even if you don't have an autoimmune disease such as Celiac disease, where you absolutely cannot eat any kind of gluten, you may experience some uncomfortable symptoms after eating bread, pasta, or anything with gluten in it. If you aren't feeling vibrant and full of energy, if your skin has any inflammatory issues such as rashes, rosacea, or extreme sensitivity, you might want to avoid gluten. My brother suffered from rosacea for years, and saw a complete transformation in his skin when he eliminated gluten, dairy, and meat from his diet.

I encourage you to load up your plate with as many of these top 8 anti-inflammatory foods as you can.

- Kelp (You can add this seaweed to soups and salads or take a supplement)
- Extra virgin olive oil (make sure it is certified by the [California Olive Oil Certification](#), the only certifying organization in the U.S.)
- Cruciferous veggies such as cauliflower and broccoli
- Blueberries
- Turmeric
- Garlic
- Sweet potatoes
- Cooked asian mushrooms, such as maitake and shiitake.

Also look out for any foods you might be allergic to, as food allergies can add a great deal to inflammation. The following foods account for over 90 percent of all food allergies in the world:

- Peanuts
- Eggs
- Fish
- Tree Nuts
- Wheat
- Shellfish
- Milk
- Soy

MIRACULOUS TURMERIC

India has one of the lowest rates of Alzheimer's disease in the world, and it was recently discovered that turmeric might be the reason for this. A specific compound, curcumin (which is found in turmeric), is a potent antioxidant, which reduces inflammation and may be extremely helpful in many degenerative diseases including Alzheimer's. These findings are helpful because turmeric is an inexpensive spice (a root from the ginger family) that we can add to a variety of dishes. Here are my favorite ways to use turmeric:

- Sprinkled on egg or potato salad
- Added to soups, stews, and tagines
- Added to salad dressings
- Mixed with extra-virgin olive oil and salt, and drizzled onto steamed veggies
- Added to smoothies

I also love to make a turmeric tea by simmering 1 teaspoon ground turmeric in 4 cups of boiling water for 10 minutes. Then I pour this over a cup containing 1 teaspoon of raw honey and a couple slices of raw ginger root.

ALKALINE FORMING FOODS

Our cells and blood must stay at a pH balance of around 7.4 to sustain life. So, our bodies miraculously regulate the foods we eat to make sure that this pH level is maintained. Some studies, however, suggest that by eating more acid-forming foods, our bodies have to work harder to neutralize the acid by releasing minerals into our bloodstream. The theory goes that these minerals have to be pulled from our bones in order to carry out this heavy lifting, so we aren't getting the benefit we should from them.

Since most of the foods considered to be "alkaline-forming" are also the healthy anti-inflammatory foods, it makes sense to follow the alkaline/anti-inflammatory diet protocol. Keep in mind here that protein, by virtue of being made up of amino acids, is acid forming, which is why it makes a lot of sense, particularly in the case of meat and fish, to reduce the amount we eat.

Here's a list of some of my favorite alkalizing foods - Adding these into your diet is a killer way to help your body stay healthy!

- Cayenne pepper
- Garlic
- Dark leafy greens
- Cruciferous veggies
- Root veggies

YOUR MICROBIOME

Simply put, your microbiome is all the bacteria that are living on and in your body. If this sounds alarming or gross, stay with me! Each of you has a unique and varied collection of living bacteria, which is the result of your history, diet, lifestyle, and environment. This completely unique colony of bacteria affects your mood, immune system, digestion, and virtually every biological function in your body. Research is now showing that understanding each person's personal microbiome will be part and parcel of the future of medicine.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating areas of recent research is the correlation between mood (particularly depression and anxiety) and gut health. The microorganisms in your gut, when inflamed, trigger the release of cytokines, which regulate how your body responds to inflammation. Think of these cytokines as little messengers that travel up a giant nerve (the vagus nerve) from your gut to your brain. In the brain, cytokines can significantly affect the metabolism of neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and dopamine. So, can you now see how an inflammatory gut (or less-than-healthy gut biome), can directly affect your moods?


HOW DO I KNOW IF MY MICROBIOME IS LESS THAN HEALTHY?

It's pretty simple. If you check two or more of the following statements, your microbiome probably needs some love:

- You experience gas and bloating during the day, and especially after eating.
- You suffer from recurrent yeast infections.
- You have inflammation in your body, which may show up as pain in joints.
- Your skin is inflamed (rosacea, eczema, dermatitis).
- You suffer from recurrent infections such as sinusitis and/or colds and respiratory infections.
- You suffer from asthma.
- You suffer from anxiety and/or depression.
- You have taken 3 or more courses of oral antibiotics in the past five years
- You have food allergies

WHAT CAN I DO TO HEAL MY GUT?

The first thing to address the potential cause of inflammation in your gut. Inflammation can be caused by a number of factors including stress, lack of exercise, SAD diet (Standard American Diet), and food allergies.



If you have a hunch that you have gut inflammation (see the list above), I recommend going on a cleansing diet for 30 days, where you eliminate foods that might be contributing to your symptoms, and foods which are common allergens. If you try the [**30-Day Gorgeous For Good Diet**](#), you will feel a massive difference at the end of 30 days.

Now, let's discuss the difference between "good" and "bad" bacteria. Most of us think of bacteria as being bad, in the sense that it can make us sick. "Bad" bacteria is known as a pathogen. Pathogens like salmonella, streptococcus and E. coli can obviously make us very sick.

But, our body hosts a range of bacteria, both good (probiotics) and bad (pathogens). And here is the key: we need to increase the population of the good guys, so they can crowd the bad guys out.


Good bacteria includes lactobacilli, which resides in the small intestine, and bifidobacteria, which resides in the colon. These probiotics produce lactic acid, which makes our gut inhospitable to the bad guys. These probiotics also perform a number of important functions such as metabolizing our food, absorbing minerals, and even producing vitamins.

Keep in mind that they are not native to our gut, we get them from our diet. This is why there is way more to this issue than just throwing a bunch of probiotics down the hatch! Probiotic supplements are actually a small (but important) part of the whole healing regimen that needs to take place. The most important thing to think about first is:

FEED THE LITTLE GUYS WHAT THEY WANT!!!!

The good bacteria need to be fed with certain foods in order to multiply and fully populate your gut. They are hungry. The best food for these guys is called a "PREbiotic." A prebiotic is a specific kind of carbohydrate fiber, which [**cannot be digested**](#) in the small intestine, and so makes its way to the colon where it ferments and feeds the good bacteria.

BEST PREBIOTIC FOODS TO ADD TO YOUR DIET:

- Raw jicama
 - Raw garlic
- 

- Raw or cooked onions
- Raw dandelion greens
- Raw asparagus
- Under ripe banana
- Raw chicory root
- Acacia gum (get the powder and mix with water)

I recommend a coffee substitute, which is delicious, called [**Dandy**](#). It contains prebiotics such as chicory and dandelion root.

In order to get some of these foods into your daily diet, try my delicious [**Ultimate Prebiotic Salad**](#), which is a great way to get in as many probiotics as your can into one meal.

PROBIOTICS


Certain fermented foods are "probiotic" which is why they have become so popular. Its interesting to me that almost every traditional culture has some kind of a fermented food as part of their diet. Fermented foods to include in your diet include:

- Sauerkraut
- Kimchi
- Tempeh
- Kefir ([**I like coconut water kefir**](#))
- Yogurt (yogurt must be unsweetened – also check for other additives).
- Pickled vegetable and pickles
- Kombucha

But don't go crazy with these foods. We tend to think more is better, and this just isn't the case. In some instances, you can feel more bloated or gassy with these foods if you overdo it. Start with very small amounts, and if it makes you feel better, add a little more. Keep in mind that fermented foods are supposed to be used as condiments – 1 tbsp of spoon of fermented red cabbage, or pickled veggies might be the perfect amount 3 or 4 times a week. Also beware of chugging too much Kombucha – this drink is a fad right now. Kombucha is delicious but it only contains a very small amount of probiotic.

WHAT ABOUT PROBIOTIC SUPPLEMENTS?

Probiotics are a useful tool in your mission to populate your gut with good bacteria. But remember that they are transient, which means they visit and then leave. This is why it's important to establish both a PRE- and a PRO-biotic regimen.



Many of you have asked, so here are my top probiotic recommendations

Ultimate Flora Critical Care

iFlora

Dr. Ohhira's Probiotics

FOOD THAT MAKES YOU GORGEOUS

Taking all the above into account, I wanted to lay out some staples that I keep on hand at all times. If you stock your pantry with these things, you'll be well on the way to eating well:

SEEDS: Flax, hemp, sesame, pumpkin, and sunflower seeds. It's best to soak or grind your seeds before using them because it makes them more digestible.

NUTS: Chestnuts, almonds, cashews, and macadamia nuts. I recommend buying raw nuts and then soaking/roasting before eating whole, or soaking before cooking or blending them.

NON-GLUTEN GRAINS: Brown and wild rice, millet, quinoa, buckwheat, and tapioca.

VEGGIE PROTEIN (BEST SOURCES OF PLANT PROTEIN): Lentils, split peas, beans, seeds, green peas, chickpeas, nuts, nut butters, quinoa, soy, and tempeh.

DAIRY SUBSTITUTES: Nut milks, rice milk, hemp milk, coconut milk, and coconut oil/butter.

VEGGIES: Particularly spinach, kale, cabbage, cauliflower, artichokes, carrots, cucumbers, radishes, onions, leeks, garlic, and sweet potatoes.

FRUITS: Particularly apples, pears, bananas, kiwi, melons, mangos, blueberries, and papaya.

SPICES: Particularly turmeric and ginger.

There are also several food that I recommend you eat, but only in moderation:

ANIMAL PROTEIN: Wild Alaskan salmon, cold-water fish such as trout, salmon, halibut, mackerel, and sardines.

SOY: Always in traditional form, such as tempeh, tofu, soy milk, edamame, miso, and tamari. Always make sure that your soy products are certified organic. Always choose tamari or shoyu sauce over soy sauce because soy sauce often contains artificial flavoring and colors.

WHAT ABOUT FATS?

Most of us know that there are "healthy" fats and "unhealthy" fats. The healthy fats are mainly considered to be unsaturated fats, which are liquid at room temperature. Conversely the unhealthy fats are mainly animal fats, which are saturated and solid at room temperature—think of lard!

Out of all these good and bad fats, the only ones we actually need are two essential fatty acids: omega-3 and omega-6. They are called "essential" because unlike other fats, we have to get them from our diet — Our bodies don't produce them at all.

However, as in the case of all "good" things, we can take this a bit too far by downing bucket loads of omega-supplements. According to the National Academy of Sciences, the adequate daily intake of omega-3 fatty acids is only 1.1 grams for women and 1.6 grams for men (this translates as about ¼ teaspoon per day).

The important thing to understand about fats is that it's not about packing in more omegas – It's all about getting the right ratio of omega-3 to omega-6 fatty acids. Since the standard American diet is very heavy on the omega-6s, most of us need to pack a lot more omega-3s into our diet.

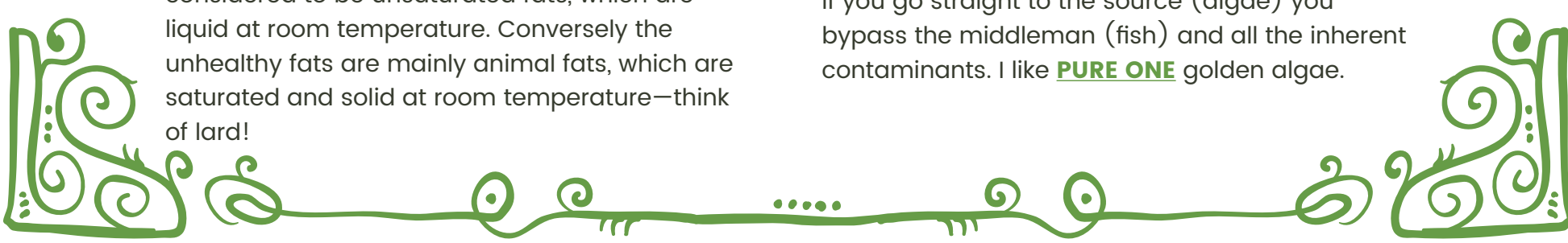
There are different kinds of omega-3 fatty acids: **LONG-CHAIN FATTY ACIDS (EPA AND DHA)**, which confer the greatest health benefits, and which can be found exclusively in seafood and marine algae.

SHORT-CHAIN FATTY ACIDS (ALA), which can be found in many plant foods such as flax, walnuts, hemp, soybeans, and pumpkin seeds. However ALA has to be synthesized into EPA or DHA in order to be used by the body, and the conversion rate in plant foods is very limited. This is why many vegans and vegetarians are deficient in valuable omega-3 fatty acids.

While eating loads of oily seafood is a good way to get your omega-3 fatty acids, it can come with a huge toxic price tag because much of our seafood is contaminated with heavy metals and other pollutants.

THE BEST SOURCE OF OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

One of the best ways to get your omega-3 fatty acids, especially if you are vegan, is to supplement with algae-based supplements. Algae is the base of the food chain for fish, and when they eat it, it concentrates in their tissues, providing fish eaters with EPA and DHA. However if you go straight to the source (algae) you bypass the middleman (fish) and all the inherent contaminants. I like **PURE ONE** golden algae.



For delicious new weekly plant-based recipes,
visit the recipe section on my [blog](#).
But here's a few of my go-to recipes to get you started:

.....

GORGEOUSLY GREEN SMOOTHIE (SERVES 1)

This is my go-to morning smoothie. It's sweet and satisfying and gets me set for the day.



INGREDIENTS

Handful raw kale leaves
Handful spinach leaves
Handful romaine leaves
½ banana
2 dates, presoaked
Handful raw walnuts
1 cup unsweetened almond milk
1 scoop of protein powder (either hemp or pea protein)
¼ tsp ground cinnamon
½ cup ice

DIRECTIONS

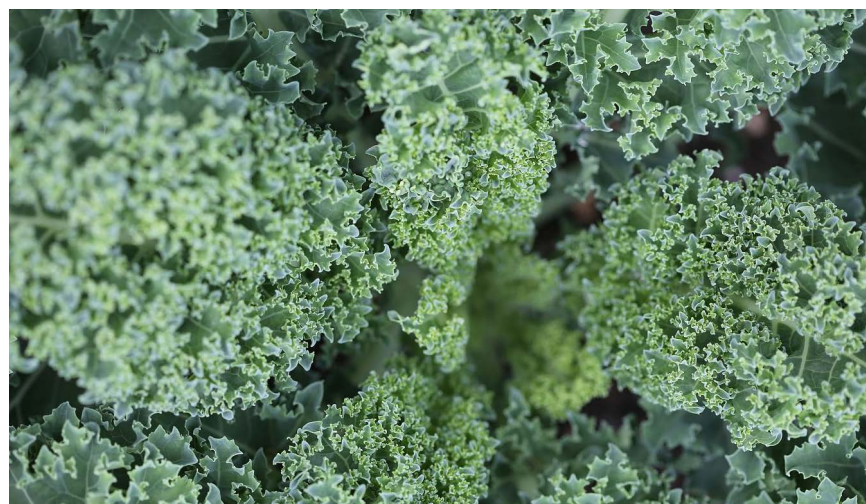
Process all ingredients in your blender

ALKALIZING SALAD FROM GORGEOUS FOR GOOD (SERVES 2)

This crispy salad is so full of clean goodness and will help to alkalize your system. I eat a variation of it at least three times per week.

SALAD INGREDIENTS

1 bunch dinosaur kale, washed, stalks removed, and finely shredded
1 bunch watercress, washed, stalks removed, and roughly chopped
2 stalks celery, finely chopped
4 large radishes, halved and sliced
2 cups alfalfa sprouts
1 cup unsulfured apricots, chopped

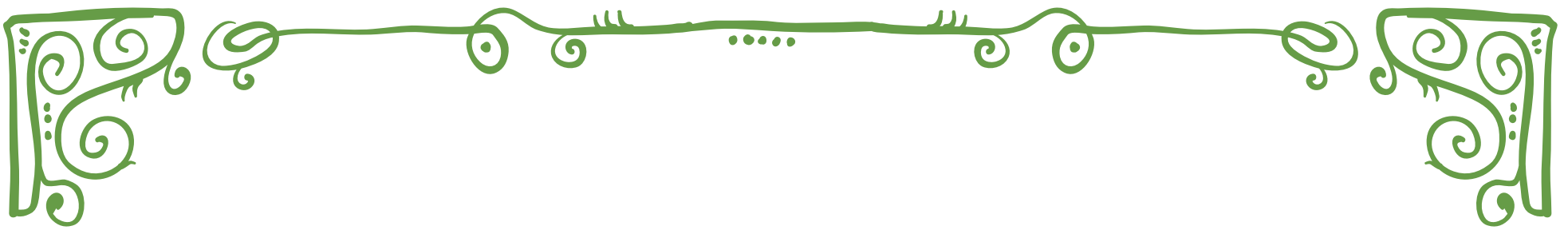


DRESSING INGREDIENTS

½ avocado	1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
3 tablespoons silken tofu	1 teaspoon lemon juice
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or flaxseed oil	1 teaspoon raw honey
3 tablespoons filtered water	½ teaspoon sea salt

DIRECTIONS

For the salad, simply combine all ingredients in a large bowl.
For the dressing, blend all the ingredients in a food processor or blender until smooth and creamy.
To serve, split salad into two dishes and top with 1 large tablespoon of dressing each.
This dressing will keep for up to three days in a sealed container.



CAULIFLOWER MASH FROM GORGEOUS FOR GOOD (SERVES 4)

This is way healthier and more delicious than regular mashed potato. It's also easier to make!



INGREDIENTS

1 large organic cauliflower, chopped
(whole, not just florets)
2 tablespoons veggie broth
2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
1 teaspoon lemon zest
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

Steam the cauliflower for 15 minutes or until tender when a fork is inserted. Transfer to a high-speed blender or food processor. Add the other ingredients and blend until smooth.

VEGGIE CURRY FROM GORGEOUS FOR GOOD (SERVES 4)

I could eat curry almost every night! Not only is it warming and satisfying, but it is a great way of using up veggies that might be hanging around your crisper drawer, or that you don't know what to do with from your CSA box!

INGREDIENTS

2 medium portobello mushrooms, cubed
1 large yellow onion, chopped
3 medium carrots, sliced
2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
2 cups vegetable broth
1 cup coconut milk
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon curry powder
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger root
2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
2 cups cauliflower florets
½ cup chopped cilantro



DIRECTIONS

Add all the ingredients except the cilantro into your slow cooker and cook for 4 to 5 hours on a medium setting. Garnish with cilantro.



SPICY VEGGIE CHILI FROM GORGEOUS FOR GOOD (SERVES 4-6)

I make this once a week because beans are pretty much the most healthy form of protein that I can eat. Beans lower cholesterol (dramatically), and they taste delicious. I love to use cumin in my chili because it adds a sweetness and depth to the mingling flavors.



INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons veggie broth
1 large onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
1 teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon sea salt
One 28-ounce can organic chopped tomatoes
1 cup pinto beans

1 cup black beans
2 cups cubed butternut squash
2 cups cubed zucchini
2 teaspoon chili powder
1 chipotle pepper in adobo sauce, finely chopped (optional)*
1 cup fresh cilantro, chopped (optional)
Plain yogurt (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Heat the veggie broth in a large skillet. Add onions and “sauté” until soft. Then add the garlic and spices and sauté for another minute. Transfer to a slow cooker. Add tomatoes, beans, and veggies. Stir well. Cook on a low setting for 6 to 8 hours. Garnish with cilantro and yogurt if desired.

HEARTY ONE-POT- DINNER MINISTRONE SOUP

(SERVES 4)

When in doubt, I make a huge pot of this delicious, hearty soup, which everyone loves. I serve it with a giant hunk of warm Sourdough bread, or a side of nutty brown rice. I sometimes also serve it with a crunchy, green salad.



INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp avocado or grapeseed oil
1 onion, finely chopped
2 celery sticks, finely chopped
1 large carrot, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups green beans, chopped into inch-long pieces
1 medium zucchini, cubed
1 potato, cubed
¼ green cabbage head, shredded
1 small eggplant, cubed
15-ounce can of Cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
15-ounce can of fire-roasted tomatoes (I love San Marzano brand)
5 cups veggie broth/stock
Salt and pepper to taste
2 cups cooked macaroni elbows (easy to find these in a gluten-free version if you prefer.
4 tbsp fresh pesto

VEGAN PESTO

2 cups fresh basil
1 clove garlic
1 tbsp Nutritional yeast
½ cup toasted walnuts or almonds
3 tbsp olive oil
Juice of half a lemon

DIRECTIONS

Heat the oil in a large stockpot, add the onion, celery, and carrot. Cook over a low heat, stirring frequently, for about 5 minutes.

Mix in the garlic, green beans, zucchini, potato and cabbage. Stir-fry over a medium heat for 3 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients, with the exception of the pasta.

Cover the pot and simmer over a low heat for 20 minutes.

Add the macaroni, simmer for a further 8 minutes.

Spoon the steaming soup into the bowls (warmed) and add a generous scoop of pesto to each bowl.



BEAUTY

YOUR HEALTHY BEAUTY STARTING PLACE

How on earth do we begin to choose a skincare or makeup brand that is not only going to be good for our skin and our health, but also will deliver outstanding results? It can be very confusing, because most of the reviews you read in magazines and on blogs only focus on the performance aspects, and those, of course, are very subjective. What may work beautifully on a 23-year-old beauty editor might be a terrible waste of money for you.

Here are some questions I like to ask myself as I search for new products:

- Does the brand have a healthy track record? Is it known for more natural formulations? This shouldn't be hard to figure out, because if the company's focus is on healthier ingredients, it will make that very clear on its website.
- Does the company share my values? This is very important for me because I want to purchase from a company that embraces strong ethical and sustainable principles.
- Does the company disclose a full ingredient list? This is imperative. I don't trust any brand that doesn't fully disclose every single ingredient it uses. I don't want to have to don my Sherlock Holmes hat to find out.
- Does the brand offer samples? This is important if the company is not carried in a large beauty chain store (where you can always get samples). You always need to get samples when it comes to primers, BB creams, and foundations.
- What is the company's return policy? The good news about buying from a large beauty chain is that you can always return an item, even if it's been opened. This also holds true for many department stores. If you buy online, check to see if the company has a return policy that works for you should the product not perform as advertised.



DATABASES

There are a couple of databases such as Skin Deep (EWG) that you can find online, which evaluate the safety of your skin care products. While some of them may provide a useful overview, you have to use your own careful judgement because the “hazard” or “danger” scores can sometimes be misleading. In their effort to be rigorous, their rating protocol can be confusing, and downright scary! Moreover, due to the sheer volume of information, they are way behind in updating, which means that a brand’s newly formulated products may not show up. To get a more accurate picture of a formulations safety and effectiveness, I recommend that you become your own sneaky detective. Armed with the information I give you in this starter guide, you’ll be well on your way.

NATURAL VERSUS SYNTHETIC

I would love to imagine that the ingredients in all of my products come from wild botanicals grown in the Swiss Alps rather than from a lab in an industrial park. It makes sense to me that ingredients that are as “natural” as possible are going to be way better for my health and my skin.

However, it’s a bit more complicated than it seems at first blush. The term “natural” doesn’t mean much because in the food, skin care, and cosmetics industries, the term is not adequately regulated or quantifiable. Anyone can slap the label “natural” on a box or jar and hope we won’t bother to read the actual ingredient list, which may be chock full of synthetic additives, preservatives, and other lab-made ingredients that our skin won’t love.

To assist you in getting ready for some product selection, I want to lay out some definitions here that can help guide you.

NATURAL

The first definition of natural in the dictionary is “existing in, or formed by nature.” So, when I think about the ingredients in my beauty products, it seems to make sense that something that sprouted straight from the earth will be healthier than a laboratory concoction. This is why my heart sings when I see that a product contains aloe vera and organic, cold-pressed plant oils. Keep in mind, though, that no matter how natural the ingredient, it’s highly unlikely to have jumped straight from the farm or forest into

its recyclable container. There’s always a degree of physical processing, which may include heating and the addition of other not-so-natural ingredients. Unless you’re pulling the plants up from your yard and mashing them with a pestle and mortar to smear on your face, the meaning of the word “natural” can get a bit muddy!

ORGANIC

“Organic” is another term that has become a bit problematic because it’s really hard to qualify. The first thing is not to confuse “organic chemistry” with “organic plants and foods” (as in those that are grown without synthetic herbicides or pesticides). Organic chemistry is the science of substances that contain both carbon and hydrogen, and many are made in the lab as molecularly exact matches for original ingredients that were pulled up from the earth.


Why does a skin care ingredient need to be “organic?” In fact, truth be told, you are not necessarily smearing pesticides on your skin if your ingredients aren’t organic — The processing involved in getting your ingredient into a formulation has likely removed every last trace of pesticide.

However, I will say that if a company takes the trouble to source organic ingredients, then you can be pretty sure that it is concerned with quality. Another reason that I love to buy formulations from companies that use at least some organic ingredients is that I like to support organic farming.

If a food or agricultural product is certified to be organic, it should be:

- Produced without synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides
- Non-GMO
- Nonirradiated
- Not fertilized with sewage sludge

If it’s important to you to purchase skin care products made with organic ingredients, you need to make sure that a bona fide organic certificate is involved. In the U.S., the FDA does not define or regulate the term “organic” as it applies to beauty or personal-care products. However, it does regulate the term “organic” when it comes to agricultural products with a USDA-certified organic seal. The facility that produces the agricultural ingredient(s) needs to be certified by a USDA-accredited organic certifying agent.



Once certified, a product might be eligible for one of the four following categories:

- 100% Organic: Every ingredient (except water and salt) is organically produced.
- Organic: Contains at least 95 percent organically produced ingredients.
- Made with Organic Ingredients: Contains at least 70 percent organically produced ingredients. The product label may list up to three of these ingredients on the principal display panel (for example: "Made with organic lavender, chamomile, and rosemary").
- Less than 70 percent organic ingredients: This product cannot use the term organic anywhere on the principal display panel, but it can identify specific ingredients that are organically produced on the information panel.

RAW BEAUTY

Because the terms organic and natural can be rather misleading in the beauty space, the term "raw skin care" has mercifully appeared, and it much better describes what many of us are after. A raw product's ingredients haven't been treated with any kind of heat. This is very important when assessing the efficacy of many ingredients, especially pure plant oils, which lose many of their nutrients when they are exposed to heat. Just as a raw food diet provides valuable enzymes that would have been destroyed during cooking, a raw skin care product retains its

basic nutrients. Almost all raw beauty products are vegan and preservative free, so unless they're in dry powder form, you need to keep them in the fridge.

SYNTHETIC INGREDIENTS (YIKES!!!)

What about synthetic ingredients? Surely an ingredient that's made in lab is worse than one that comes straight from nature?

Not necessarily. Some synthetic ingredients can be safer and way more effective than their natural counterparts. This is where I take off my natural-ingredient-zealot hat. An example of a good synthetic is L-ascorbic acid (aka vitamin C). You know that white, powdery Vitamin C that you can buy in a jar at the health-food store? It's a form that's made in a lab and therefore far from natural — Bit of a shocker, right? As far as skin care is concerned, L-ascorbic acid is a potent anti-aging ingredient, but it must be in a stable form when added to formulations, or it will oxidize and lose its efficacy. The stable forms that are used in skin care (and I'm talking natural skin care) are almost always synthetic. So when it comes to the term synthetic, all I want to make you aware of is that it isn't inherently bad. Don't count something out entirely because it contains these ingredients—it simply means that there's more to learn.

..... HOW TO READ THE LABELS

Here are the most trusted labels to look for:



NSF

NSF is a public health and safety organization that works with third-party certifiers to ensure that a product meets very strict regulatory standards in specific fields. Due to the explosion of the natural and organic skin care industry, they created an American national standard that specifies labeling and marketing requirements for the term made with organic.

Here's the thing: if a skin care or cosmetic product claims it is made with 95 to 100 percent organic ingredients, it can apply for the USDA certification, which is usually granted to food products only.

Very few products meet the requirement, so the NSF came up with this certification, which considers the intricacy of skin care product formulations. With the NSF label, you can be assured that the product contains at least 70 percent organic ingredients. This also means that the product avoids a plethora of petroleum-based functional ingredients, such as preservatives.



THE NATURAL PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION

This nonprofit organization has been around for years, and it certifies personal-care products that are 95 percent natural, allowing for only synthetic ingredients that are eco-friendly. You can visit their [website](#) at to find a list of ingredients they allow in products with their seal.



NaTrue

NaTrue is an international organization that offers three levels of certification, which include both natural and organic personal-care products. Their strict criteria specify that no petroleum- or silicone-derived products can be used, and all ingredients must be non-GMO.



SOIL ASSOCIATION (Great Britain)

The U.K.'s Soil Association awards organic certification to farms and businesses that meet its organic standards based on strict rules set at U.K., European, and international levels. This is a respected and trusted certification in Great Britain.



LEAPING BUNNY

I always look for cruelty-free certifications. I'm an animal lover, and it doesn't make sense to me to beautify myself with ingredients that have caused a furry friend to suffer in any way, shape, or form. I often visit [PETA](#) to see which companies have signed their statement of assurance.



FAIR TRADE

I like to try to purchase from companies who use ingredients that are fair trade, meaning that the farmers who grow and harvest the crops are fairly compensated for their labor and that their working conditions meet certain basic standards. This certification often encompasses taking care of the environment, too. Ingredients such as shea butter, coconut oil, and red palm oil most often do not qualify for the Fair Trade Certified seal, so look for companies that are invested in taking care of their producers. [Alaffia](#), for example, was one of the first skin care companies to pledge that all its ingredients are fair trade, and it has continued to be an industry leader.



INGREDIENTS TO AVOID

Unfortunately, there's no catch-all list for ingredients you should absolutely avoid since there's so much speculation involved. However, the list below names some of the ingredients I avoid or try to minimize. You will see instances where certain ingredients could combine with others to form possible carcinogens.

In other cases, certain ingredients could be endocrine disruptors. However, many medical journals consider these combinations to be perfectly safe in the trace amounts in which they are added to personal-care products. Luckily, there are now hundreds, if not thousands, of companies that eliminate most of these risky ingredients, so we mercifully have choices.

BHA/BHT (butylated hydroxyanisole/butylated hydroxytoluene): These two chemicals are synthetic antioxidants that are used to stabilize and help preserve all kinds of food and cosmetic materials. There is a lot of controversy about whether or not BHA is a possible carcinogen, so I choose to avoid both of them. They can also cause allergic reactions.

Bismuth Oxychloride: This is a drying skin irritant that is often used in mineral powder makeup. I often wondered why my skin felt itchy and dry when I tried some well-known mineral powder makeups. I now understand that it was probably because of the bismuth, so now I avoid it.

Coal Tar Dyes: Coal tar dyes are synthetic and derived from petroleum. Many of them can be contaminated with heavy metals. (More on heavy metals below) Where possible, I try to avoid: D & C Red 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 17, 19, and 33; Green 3 and 5; Orange 17; FD & C Blue 1, 2, and 4; Red 4 and 40; and Yellow 5 and 6.

DEA (diethanolamine), cocamide DEA, lauramide DEA, ETA (ethanolamine), MEA (monoethanolamine), and TEA (triethanolamine): These ingredients are added to creams and foamy products to make sure they don't separate. They also adjust the pH in a product. The problem is that these ingredients can combine with nitrites in the formulation, which in turn creates carcinogenic nitrosamines. Also, cocamide DEA itself is a possible human carcinogen.

Formaldehyde-releasing chemicals including DMDM hydantoin, diazolidinyl urea, imidazolidinyl urea, methenamine, and quaternium-15: These are preservatives that can interact with other chemicals to release formaldehyde,

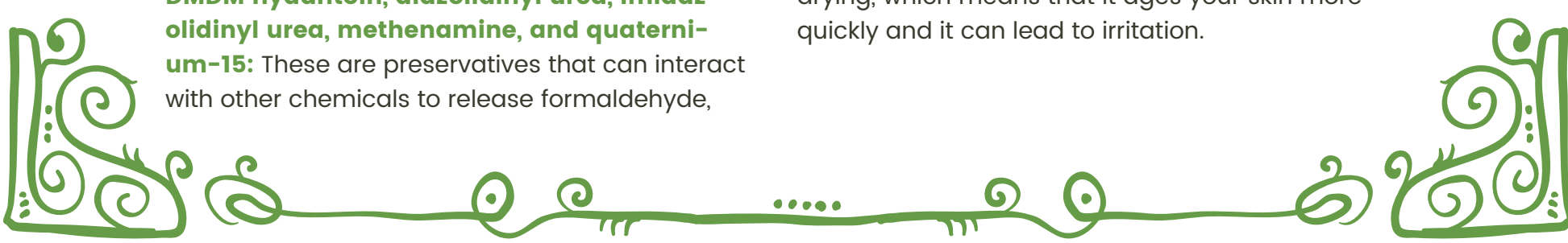
a known carcinogen and neurotoxin. Although the amounts released are considered by many to be negligible, I play it safe because there are so many great alternatives.

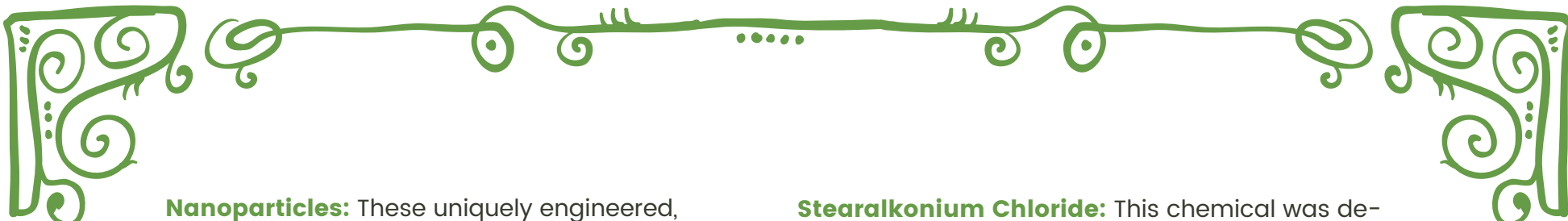
Fragrance/Parfum that includes DBP, DMP, or DEP: Unless it's clearly stated that a formulation is fragranced with pure essential oils, it's likely that the fragrance cocktail, which is often made of hundreds of chemicals, will contain a class of hormone-disrupting chemicals called phthalates. DBP, DMP, and DEP are all phthalates and are sometimes listed as ingredients. If you adore the fragrance of a particular product, just pop the company an email asking if its products are phthalate free. If the company knows its stuff, it should be able to tell you. Obviously, a mildly scented foundation or bronzer isn't going to kill you, but it's better to look for makeup that is fragranced with pure essential oils instead.

Heavy Metals (lead acetate, chromium, thimerosal, and sodium hexametaphosphate): Heavy metals are generally found in makeup such as lipsticks and eye shadows, and they are a worry because they can be neurotoxins and hormone disruptors. I don't fancy the idea of these on my skin. Products containing hydrogenated cottonseed oil may also be contaminated with heavy metals.

Hydroquinone: Found in skin lighteners and facial moisturizers, hydroquinone can cause irritation and has been restricted in Europe and Japan because it is a possible carcinogen.

Isopropyl Alcohol: This ingredient can be very drying, which means that it ages your skin more quickly and it can lead to irritation.





Nanoparticles: These uniquely engineered, uberty particles may pose a health risk when brought into your body, either through inhalation or application to the skin. Little is known about the long-term health effects of nanoparticles, as they're a relatively new science, so it's best to avoid them where possible. If in doubt, ask a company if its products contain them.

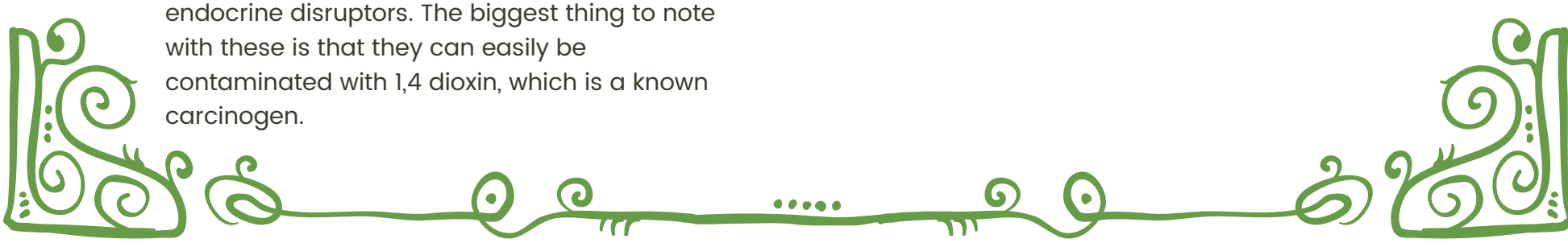
Parabens (methyl-, ethyl-, propyl-, butyl-, and isobutylparaben): You've probably heard of parabens because they are now the most widely recognized endocrine disruptor. Some people also warn against these as carcinogenic. However, there is no conclusive scientific evidence to date that provides a causal link between parabens and any kind of cancer. What has been shown is that they most likely have weak estrogenic effects on humans.

Propylene and Butylene Glycols (also listed as "mineral oil"): These are forms of mineral oil made from petroleum that are used in food, cleaning products, industrial products, and skin care products. These mineral oil derivatives are effective at preventing moisture loss, and they make the product feel smooth (think of Vaseline, which is pure petroleum jelly). Aside from possible contamination with carcinogenic by-products, mineral oils can be comedogenic, meaning that they can clog up your pores. There are so many beautiful cold-pressed plant oils that do a better and healthier job that it makes no sense to buy products containing these cheap ingredients.

PVP/VA Copolymer: This film-forming chemical is found in hair spray. If you use it daily, you could be putting yourself at risk of developing lung disease, as a result of the propellants.

Siloxanes (cyclomethicone) and ingredients ending in "-siloxane": These synthetic chemicals (cyclotetrasiloxane, for example) are used in moisturizers and hair products to soften, smooth, and moisten. They may be endocrine disruptors.

SLS (sodium lauryl sulfate and sodium laureth sulfate): These are foaming ingredients that may cause dryness and irritation and may also be endocrine disruptors. The biggest thing to note with these is that they can easily be contaminated with 1,4 dioxin, which is a known carcinogen.



Stearylalkonium Chloride: This chemical was developed by the fabric industry as a fabric softener, but it is now used in hair conditioners to impart a soft feel. I prefer to use botanicals and proteins that actually nourish my hair instead of a chemical that sits on top of it, masking dryness.

Talc: There's a lot of scaremongering about the dangers of talc. These fears largely arose in response to the finding of tiny asbestos fibers in mined talc. However, today's laws require that any toxic metals be completely removed from all cosmetic talc. Some also believe there is a connection between talc and cancer (specifically lung and ovarian), but it is extremely controversial. Although the cancer connection has not been scientifically substantiated, you may wish to go talc free because a bunch of companies now offer wonderful, talc-free formulations. You also may want to ditch makeup with talc because it tends to block pores and just sit on top of your skin, which simply looks bad.

Toluene: This is a VOC (volatile organic compound), a compound that can "off-gas" toxic chemicals as it breaks down. Nail polish contains it unless otherwise stated.

Triclosan: This little guy is found in deodorants, cleansers, and most antibacterial products such as hand and dish soap. It could be an endocrine disruptor and in some cases is irritating to the skin. The biggest worry for me is that the ubiquity of this ingredient in products across the board will contribute to an increase in super bugs (strains of bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics).



WHAT'S UP WITH NANOPARTICLES AND MICRONIZED MINERALS?

There's a huge debate about the nanoparticles that may be lurking in your makeup and skin care and whether or not they can harm your health. Nanoparticles were developed for powder mineral makeup because the finer the particle, the silkier the finish.

A nanoparticle is defined as a particle between 1 and 100 nanometers (billionths of a meter) in diameter. Minerals are pulverized into particles that small. Nanoparticles, though, are different from the micronized minerals often found in "natural" sun protection, which are bigger—they measure between 100 and 300 nanometers.

There are two main health concerns when it comes to nanoparticles: The first is that they are so tiny that they could be absorbed into your skin, making their way into your bloodstream and causing internal damage. There is no evidence to date that micronized minerals can actually get beyond the layers of your skin. However, this particle technology is relatively new, so to err on the side of caution, you may want to avoid them.

The second concern is that you can easily inhale both sizes of tiny particles. My common sense tells me that this is probably true. If you've ever swirled a brush around in powder mineral makeup, you have to take great care that it doesn't dust more than just your face—those particles fly everywhere.

WHAT ABOUT PEGs?

There's so much confusing information about PEG (polyethylene glycol). While some "experts" think of them as the devil incarnate, much of the serious scientific research that I've uncovered leads me to understand that there is a big "it depends" here.

PEGs are found in about 80 percent of beauty products. They act as emollients, emulsifiers, and penetration enhancers, and they always come with a number after them that show their particular molecular weight. Typically, the lower the number (which ranges from 1 to 100), the better the product can be absorbed into your skin.

The main concern with respect to PEGs is their possible contamination with measurable amounts of 1,4-dioxane, which is a known carcinogen. However, dioxanes can be (and often are) removed in manufacturing. A company with a good, healthy track record tests the PEGs it uses to ensure that they are 1,4-dioxane free.

Another concern about PEGs is that they can help other ingredients drive deeper into your skin. This is only an issue, of course, if those "other" ingredients are harmful.

Finally, PEGs can irritate skin, but this is typically only a concern if your skin is highly sensitive or broken. My trusty peer-reviewed studies concluded that PEGs are safe for use in cosmetics but shouldn't be used on "damaged" skin (such as that of a burn victim). Well, I would say that 90 percent of ingredients shouldn't be applied to burned or damaged skin.

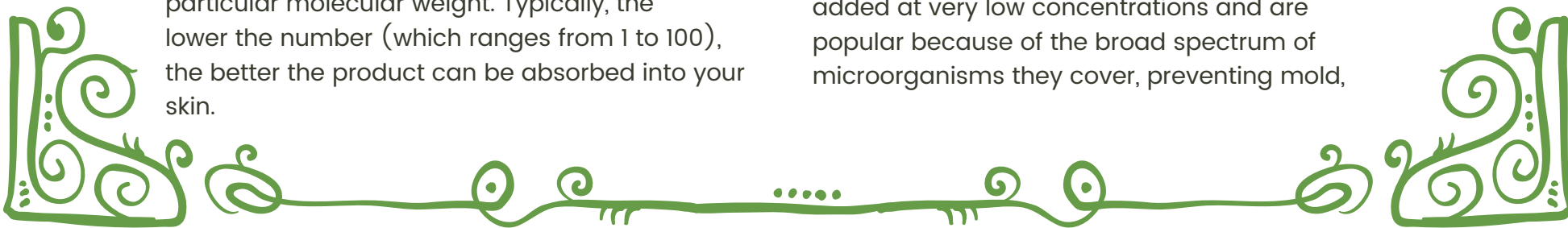
AND WHAT ABOUT PRESERVATIVES?

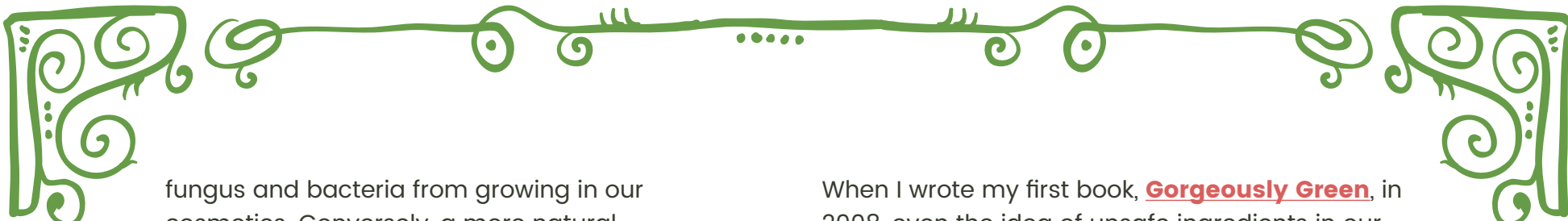
Common preservatives in skin care products were the first ingredients to raise the red flag that all might not be well with our lotions and potions.

Parabens were the first culprits to be dragged into the limelight for public scrutiny. A 2004 study found parabens in breast tumors; however, since then, no scientific proof has connected parabens with any kind of cancer. There is also a great deal of concern that some parabens might be xenoestrogens.

Many argue that the miniscule amount of these compounds in our skin care products has a negligible effect, and they may be right. Although more research is needed, studies have found parabens to elevate estrogen levels, so I always play super safe with them. This is not to say that I freak out if a paraben comes into contact with my skin. Many of us have been using them for years with no ill effects, but as with most of these suspect chemicals, it's all about cumulative damage.

Beauty products must have really good preservatives, or they'll go bad. Parabens are added at very low concentrations and are popular because of the broad spectrum of microorganisms they cover, preventing mold,





fungus and bacteria from growing in our cosmetics. Conversely, a more natural preservative such as vitamin E may only affect as few as one type of microorganism, making it a bit dicey.

Many natural skin care companies now use a preservative called phenoxyethanol in place of parabens. There's a spirited debate among purists as to whether or not this preservative is safe.

Here's my take: All formulations need a really effective preservative, especially if you don't keep them in the fridge. If our skin care products are improperly preserved, bacteria, mold, and fungus can easily grow in them, and these organisms can cause your skin to become irritated or even infected. When phenoxyethanol is added to a formulation at one percent or less, scientific and toxicology reports deem it perfectly safe. Even the strict European Union has given it the thumbs-up. Remember: it's the dose that makes the poison.

The healthiest choice is to look for carefully formulated blends of essential oils, which will drive up the price of the product because they are way more expensive than broad-spectrum synthetics such as parabens. It's smart to ask a company whose products you are considering what blend they use, and more important, you should ask if all its products have been subject to preservative and stability challenge tests.

Finally, they should be able to tell you the exact shelf life of each product both before and after opening. You can also inquire if the company recommends any specific storage specs to keep the products fresh for longer. I keep all of my skin care products in a mini-fridge in my bathroom (which my husband thinks is beyond bizarre) because it extends the shelf life considerably.

YIKES! SHOULD I STOP USING EVERYTHING NOW?

I've had so many emails from women freaking out about certain ingredients in their cosmetics, terrified that with a few more applications, they'll be struck down with a terrible disease. There's a lively and healthy debate about what we should avoid in our skin care products, but I have to emphasize again that you are not going to be in danger from one or two applications of any one ingredient.

When I wrote my first book, [Gorgeously Green](#), in 2008, even the idea of unsafe ingredients in our skin care products was new and pretty shocking to most women. Since then, the knowledge has become commonplace; however, searching the Internet for information about what to avoid can be confusing and overwhelming—and the “information” is often wrong.

If you do find scaremongering information on the Internet, be on high alert, because the “research” behind it might be coming from a skin care company that's trying to frighten you as part of a sales pitch.

There is a good reason that many companies use certain ingredients that I might not love. For example, parabens are very effective broad-spectrum preservatives that are ostensibly safe at the low concentrations found in cosmetics and skin care products. Parabens and ingredients such as mineral oils are also cheaper than pure essential oil blends and cold-pressed plant oils used as preservatives. So, one downside to choosing fewer synthetic ingredients is that products cost more.

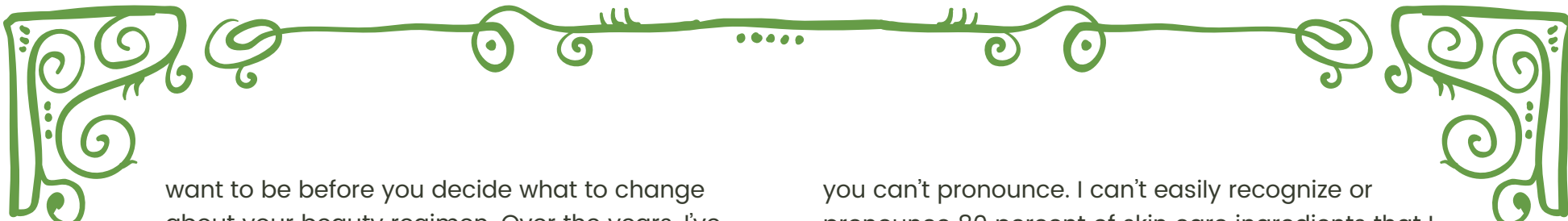
WHAT ABOUT CARCINOGENS?

One of the scariest words linked to certain personal-care ingredients is carcinogen, right? It doesn't matter whether it's a “possible,” “probable,” or “known” carcinogen—if there's any link, however tiny, I don't want it near my bathroom cabinet.

However, in my research, I've come to understand that there is a huge difference between possible carcinogens and known carcinogens. To put the point in perspective, the World Health Organization has determined that electromagnetic fields, including those connected with cell phones, are possible carcinogens. Does this concern me? Heck, yes! Am I going to stop using my cell phone anytime soon? No.

So, in short, you need to look at the spectrum of concern. Don't jump to conclusions when you hear the word carcinogen unless you want to avoid a solid portion of products on earth.

It's useful to evaluate how much of a “purist” you



want to be before you decide what to change about your beauty regimen. Over the years, I've realized that I have friends on one end of the scale who don't really care what's in a skin care product as long as it works, and I have friends on the other end who freak out at the mere mention of anything that isn't a cold-pressed plant oil.

I stand somewhere in the middle, embracing the amazing advances of science while being hugely mindful of my health and the environment. I'm also acutely aware that some women have very good reason to be uber vigilant about ingredients in their personal-care products. Many of my readers have had to make big changes in their beauty routines because of their health. They may have had a scary diagnosis, a compromised immune system, or a growing sensitivity to chemicals.

Incidentally, many women (including myself) get more sensitive to chemicals as we age. If you are facing a health challenge right now or if you are pregnant, I suggest you err on the side of caution.

INGREDIENT TIP

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Always check out the ingredient list of any cosmetic on the company's website before you head to the store. If there isn't one there, a little Internet research should pull up a full list. Yep, thank goodness for all those obsessive beauty bloggers who snap photos of ingredient lists on the backs of boxes for us all to see.

HOW TO READ AN INGREDIENT LIST

I wish shopping for beauty products were as simple as deciding to be vegan and never going near a piece of meat ever again, but it's way more complicated — Largely due to the fact that we are subject to the health- and green-washing marketing tactics of giant cosmetic companies with their myriad “proprietary” formulas. If a product has a fancy, proprietary formula with a fancy trademarked name, you'll rarely be able to find out which ingredients make up the concoction because it's a trade secret.

It's also not as simple as declaring that you won't eat anything or apply anything to your skin that

you can't pronounce. I can't easily recognize or pronounce 80 percent of skin care ingredients that I love. For example, acetyl hexapeptide and magnesium ascorbyl phosphate are both beautiful, proactive ingredients found in some of my favorite formulas.

This is why I think it's simpler to look at the company or brand as a whole rather than try to decipher every individual ingredient, the effort of which will drive you crazy. Many companies just show us their “key” ingredients, which I don't love. I want full exposure so I can make an informed choice by going through my checklists before purchasing.

If you work by the guidelines below and look into the company making the products, you'll be on solid footing.

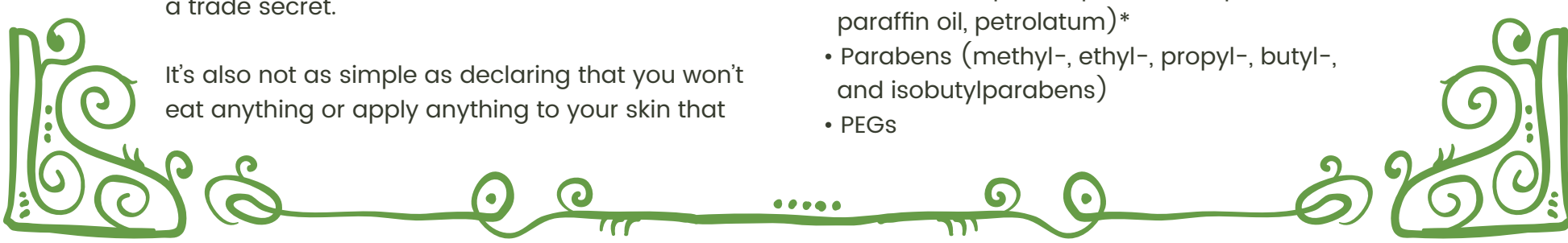
RED FLAG INGREDIENTS:

If I spot any of these on a label, the formulation probably won't do me any favors.

- DEA, TEA, MEA
- BHA/BHT
- DMDM hydantoin
- Triclosan
- Coal tar dyes: D & C Red 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 17, 19, and 33; Green 3 and 5; Orange 17; FD & C Blue 1, 2, and 4; Red 4 and 40, and Yellow 5 and 6
- Lead acetate, chromium, thimerosal, sodium hexametaphosphate (heavy metals—which can even be found in hydrogenated cottonseed oil)
- Aluminum (heavy metal)
- Quaternium-15, Bronopol, imidazolidinyl or diazolidinyl urea, Germall II or 115.
- Stearalkonium chloride (in hair conditioner and some creams)
- PVP/VA copolymer (in hair spray)
- Hydroquinone (in skin-lightening products)
- Nanoparticles (typically used in antiaging products, sunscreens, and mineral makeup)

ORANGE FLAG INGREDIENTS:

I try to avoid these where possible because I know that although they won't harm me short term, years of repetitive application could pose a health risk that I'd rather not take.

- Fragrance/Parfum (unless confirmed phthalate free)
 - Propylene and butylene glycols (also listed as mineral oil, liquidum paraffinum, paraffin wax, paraffin oil, petrolatum)*
 - Parabens (methyl-, ethyl-, propyl-, butyl-, and isobutylparabens)
 - PEGs
- 



YELLOW FLAG INGREDIENTS:

I use or avoid these on a case-by-case basis. If the company has a good track record of watching out for consumer health, I figure that its use of these ingredients is unlikely to harm me. Are there better alternatives? Absolutely! But if an otherwise great formulation has a sprinkling of one or two of these ingredients in it, it doesn't unduly concern me. My caveat is that if you have broken or inflamed skin, I recommend steering away from these ingredients, too.

- Dimethicone*
- Phenoxyethanol (preservative)*
- Isopropyl alcohol

GREEN LIGHT INGREDIENTS FOR GREEN PURIST

If you are a green purist—and kudos to you if you are—you should avoid all of the ingredients on the red, orange, and yellow lists, particularly the ones that I've marked with a star because they are not biodegradable and thus not great for the environment.

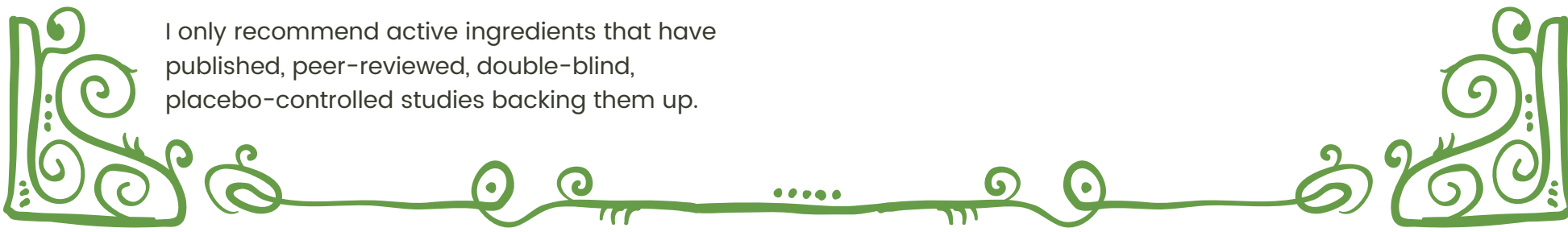
If I spot these green light ingredients in a product, I'm probably onto a good thing. Note that this is only a partial list. You will find much more detailed lists of ingredients to look for on pages xx.

- Aloe vera leaf
- Coconut oil
- Shea, mango, cocoa butter
- Rose hip seed, borage, carrot seed, and sea buckthorn oil
- Vegetable glycerin
- Oat beta glucan
- Green or white tea
- Zinc oxide

WHAT ANTI-AGING INGREDIENTS SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

There are only a handful of active ingredients that have been scientifically proven to work. The important thing to realize is that no one ingredient on its own is a miracle-worker. I look for products that contain a carefully formulated blend of specific ingredients.

I only recommend active ingredients that have published, peer-reviewed, double-blind, placebo-controlled studies backing them up.



I'm a stickler for this kind of scientific research because there are so many bogus marketing claims out there, and I don't want you to waste your hard-earned money on something that doesn't really work.

There's a big distinction between active ingredients that can actually reverse damage and signs of aging and active ingredients that can help minimize any further damage. Let's take a peek at the hard-hitters first. These are the 4 ingredients that you might want to look for in a skin care product.

- Retinol
- Vitamin C
- AHAs/BHAs/LHAs
- Peptides

To learn more about these specific ingredients, and how they might work for your particular skin type, grab a copy of [Gorgeous For Good.](#)

NATURAL DAMAGE CONTROL

Scientifically proven-to-work ingredients aren't your only options for keeping your skin looking fresh and healthy. Some natural ingredients can work toward this as well. Antioxidants are the rock stars of natural damage control and help with one of the most aging processes in the skin: inflammation. Here are some of the antioxidants that I look for in a skin care product:

- Alpha lipoic acid
- Coffeeberry[SC.CE3]
- Ferulic acid
- Genistein
- Grape seed
- Green tea
- Lycopene
- Niacinamide*
- Resveratrol
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin E

*Niacinamide is sometimes known as vitamin B3, and it's absolutely an ingredient to look for in your skin care products. It has a plethora of proactive benefits, including improving your skin's elasticity, barrier function, discoloration, texture, and tone.



THE BIG QUESTIONS

Finally – here are the main questions to ask yourself before purchasing a product:

Health: Is this product healthy, or could it harm me?

Effectiveness: Does the product's ingredients deeply nourish my skin, or do they just make my skin feel good for a few minutes?

Freshness: Are the vitamins and antioxidants still good (is the product fresh)? I always check to see if the company mass produces and ships internationally (which requires a super-long shelf life), or if it is more locally produced in small batches.

Environment: Is the manufacture of this product good or bad for the environment? I pay attention to the packaging, making sure that it's as minimal and as eco as possible.

Ethics: Does the company I'm considering buying from have good, ethical practices? Does it treat its workers well and pay them a fair wage? Does it give back in any way? Are the products cruelty-free?

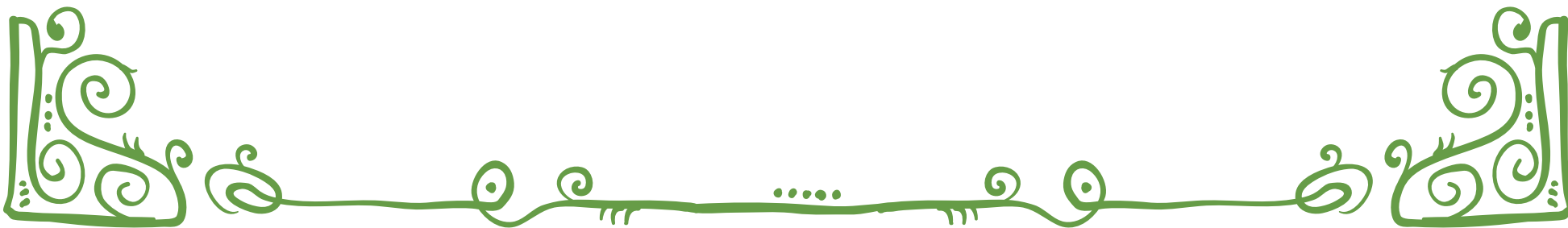
Finance: Does the product seem reasonably priced? If it's expensive, do the high quality/specialized ingredients justify the cost? Is it within your budget to splurge?

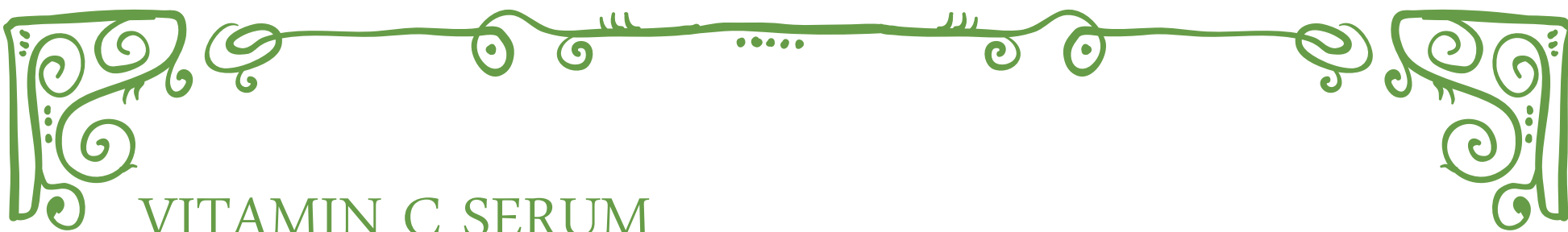
SOME BRAND RECOMMENDATIONS

For more in-depth information about natural, green skincare, grab a copy of **Gorgeous For Good**. And you can visit **www.sophieuliano.com** for new beauty product reviews weekly.

Here are just a handful of some of the brands i love:

- **Andalou Naturals**
- **MyChelle**
- **AnnMarie Gianni**
- **The Detox Market** is a great online store for gorgeous high end, luxury beauty products
- **Credo Beauty** has a fabulous selection of makeup and skincare at great prices
- **GoPure Naturals**





VITAMIN C SERUM

Vitamin C in the form of L-ascorbic acid is one of the most powerful tried and tested anti-aging ingredients. That being said, it's very unstable. As soon as it's added to a lotion or cream, it begins to oxidize and lose its efficacy. The best way you can deliver it onto your skin is to dissolve the dry L'ascorbic acid in a liquid and get it on your skin right away. This is why I love this serum. It also saves me a lot of money.

- You will need a small glass jar or dropper bottle (opaque is best)
- 1 tbsp aloe vera gel
- 1/4 tsp L'Ascorbic Acid (needs to be water soluble and fine, so I recommend **THIS ONE** from Making Cosmetics.
- 1 tsp distilled water

Simply mix the ingredients together and seal into the bottle or jar. Keep it in a cool dark place, and use every morning after cleansing. You only need a few drops for your face and neck. You might want to make double quantities if you are using on your neck, too.

I recommend using every morning after cleansing. Leave it for a few minutes to fully absorb before applying moisturizer and sunscreen. The reason you are making it in very small quantities is that you want it to be as fresh as possible. I make a new bottle weekly.

FAQ'S

My skin tingles and get's red! If you find your skin tingles, or is a little pink after using, don't worry – this will calm down after a few minutes.

I have sensitive skin. Can I use this serum? If you have Rosacea, or broken/inflamed skin, I would advise against using this serum. It may be too strong.

Can I add an essential oil? Yes you can, but only one or two drops. I recommend lavender. I advise against using citrus oils because they might sensitize your skin to the light.

Can I use L'ascorbic acic or Vitamin C powder from the Health Store? It probably won't be water-soluble so may not dissolve.

I am allergic to aloe vera. What can I use instead? You can eliminate this ingredient, and just use the distilled water. Or you can add ½ tsp of vegetable glycerin, which will give your serum "slip" or a serummy texture!



SUPER POTENT VITAMIN C SERUM

This takes you Vitamin C serum to the next level, but requires a few more ingredients, so isn't for everyone. But if you are into DIY, it's well worth making. You would use it in the same way as my original serum.

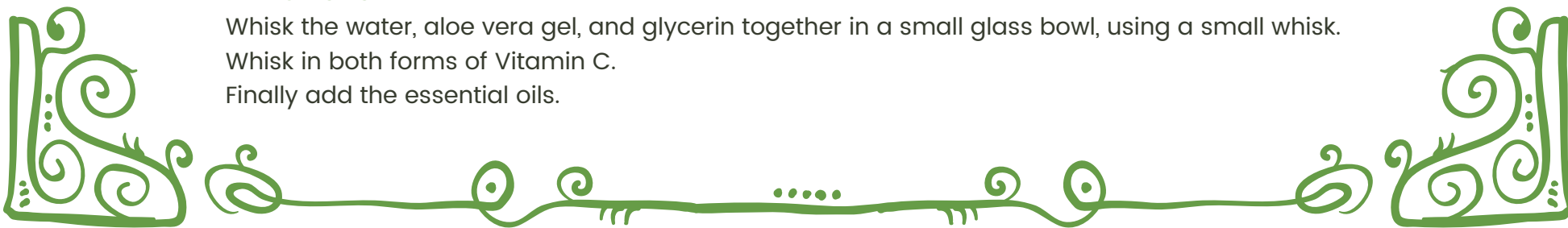
Storing: Since you are making more, you won't need to make it so often. This 2-ounce bottle should last you for 3 months. Although I have added essential oils as a preservative, if you live somewhere warm, you might want to store it in the fridge.

INGREDIENTS

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2 ounce dark glass bottle | 1 tsp vegetable glycerin | 5 drops Tea Tree Oil |
| 2 tbsp distilled water | 1 tsp L'ascorbic acid | 5 drops lemon grass essential oil |
| 2 tbsp aloe vera gel | 1 tsp Magnesium ascorbyl phosphate | |

DIRECTIONS

Whisk the water, aloe vera gel, and glycerin together in a small glass bowl, using a small whisk. Whisk in both forms of Vitamin C. Finally add the essential oils.





FITNESS



MOVING YOUR BODY

The importance of moving your body for beauty and health cannot be overstated — And I'm not just talking about moving in the quest to lose weight. That's a beautiful side effect of movement, but it shouldn't be your only goal.

Movement is all about feeling good. Not only does it help you tone your physique, it helps you reduce stress and fall in love with your body. Moving helps you realize just how much you're capable of. It gives you an appreciation for yourself even with your "imperfections."

Our bodies were designed to move, not to sit at a computer all day. It's pretty simple — When we don't do what our bodies are meant to do, ill health sets in. A sedentary lifestyle wreaks havoc on our systems physically, mentally, and spiritually. You know how great you feel after a workout? Well, you're supposed to feel that way most of the time — Full of energy, with all the feel-good chemicals buzzing around your brain.

But unfortunately, we've gotten rather used to feeling sluggish and even depressed most of the time. This is the main reason that we reach for buckets of caffeine laced with sugary syrups in the early morning and midafternoon. It's also why many of us comfort-eat—if we feel terrible in our own bodies, maybe downing a pint of ice cream or mowing through a bag of corn chips will soothe the ache of not feeling vibrant and alive.

Seriously, the benefits of moving our bodies and getting the right amount of heart-pumping exercise go way beyond losing a few pounds.



LOVE IT!

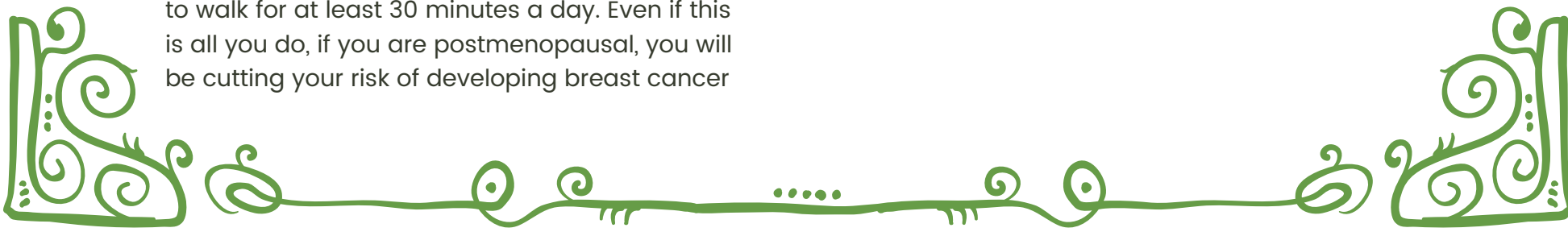
You need to get pleasure from your exercise — Whether it's pleasure from the feeling exercise gives you or pleasure from the activity itself — Or you'll set yourself up to fail because you'll find too many excuses not to do it. Honestly, I don't love all the exercise I do, but I love how I feel the minute it's over — Much like when I'm downing a rather unpleasant shot of wheatgrass juice, I sometimes have to grit my teeth to get to the good part.

Here's my approach to keeping myself in tip-top condition:

- I do a variety of different exercise programs, including yoga, hiking, Pilates, kettlebells, and weights. I love some of them and have to take a deep breath before others, but I feel fantastic after any and all of them.
- The reason I force myself to do workouts that aren't entirely . . . let's say . . . “joyous” is because I know that if I want to see quantifiable results, which I most certainly do, my body has to push through its comfort zone into unfamiliar territory.
- I understand that 80 percent of my resistance to pushing myself comes from my mind, not from my body. My mind begins to freak out way before my body does, telling my body that it can't possibly do one more push-up. Exercise in whatever form is a “no-matter-what” for me.
- I always work out mindfully, which means that I am in tune with my body and my breath and understand that there is a big difference between pushing myself and hurting myself. As I get older, my joints and muscles aren't as strong and resilient as they used to be. Moreover, a lifetime of sometimes crazy exercise and way too many marathons comes back to haunt me with unhappy knees and creaky hips. I have learned how to take care of my body and to listen to the difference between mental or physical discomfort and pain. In yoga, the Sanskrit term ahimsa means not harming ourselves mentally or physically. I always try to practice this.

TAKING CHARGE

One simple way to take charge of our health is to walk for at least 30 minutes a day. Even if this is all you do, if you are postmenopausal, you will be cutting your risk of developing breast cancer



by at least 10 percent. Keep this in the forefront of your mind when you're tempted to curl up on the couch instead of pulling your running shoes on.

A great way to make sure you get this walking in is to rescue a dog. I've had to step up my walking by at least 50 percent since a lively, black Chihuahua found his forever home with us. It's the pleading eyes.

HOW MUCH IS REALLY ENOUGH?

Are two hard workout sessions a week enough, or is it okay to just do yoga every day? The answer depends on so many different things: Your age, the type of exercise you do, and your physical condition are just some of the things that determine how much exercise you need to do on a daily basis.

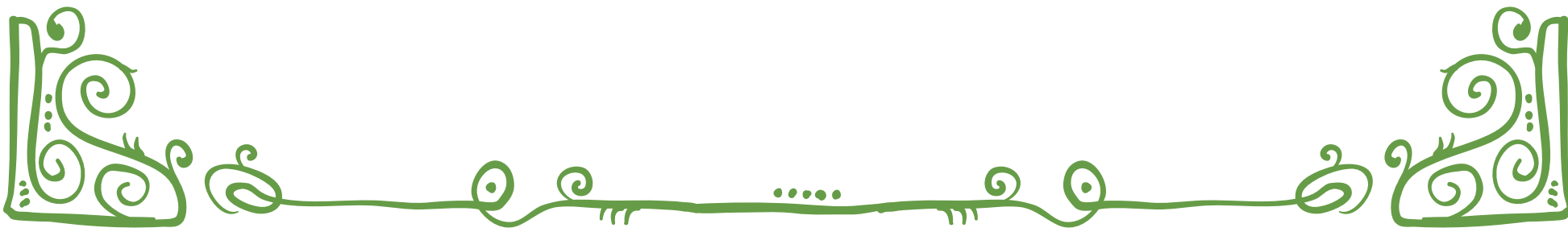
But the biggest question you have to ask yourself is: how much is enough for what? If you want to do the bare minimum to maintain basic good health, you'll have very different goals than someone who wants buns of steel and a six-pack—it all depends on what you really want.

I want to be in the best physical condition possible for a woman of my age. This means that I have to exercise my heart with cardio, my muscles with weights, and my bones with whatever weight-bearing exercises I choose. Also, I want to look toned and feel strong and empowered.



SLEEPING BEAUTY

Getting enough sleep is imperative for beauty, especially when you are upping the ante in your daily exercise. Here are my top tips for getting a full night's beauty sleep.

- Digital detox two hours before bed: If you have trouble getting to sleep at night, turn off your phone, tablet, and TV two hours before you plan to go to bed. Studies have found that self-luminous screens (particularly on tablets and phones) cause a 23 percent drop in melatonin production. Melatonin is a hormone that signals your brain and body that it's time to sleep.
 - A hot bath or shower an hour before bed: Although it's not very eco-friendly due to the amount of water used, a hot bath filled with 1 cup of Epsom salt is just the ticket if you're stressed and have trouble falling asleep. In the bath, the mix of hot water and magnesium will relax your muscles; in the shower, the relaxation comes solely from the heat.
 - Take some tea: Start sipping a "sleepy-time" herbal tea after dinner. Most of the herbs in these teas are also great for digestion. Make your own homemade "sleeping beauty" tea easily: for the dried mix, combine 4 tablespoons dried lemon balm or Valerian root, 4 tablespoons dried chamomile flowers, and 2 tablespoons dried lavender flowers. You can keep this mix in an airtight tin for up to 12 months—so all you'll have to do is steep 2 teaspoons of the mix in boiled water for 3 to 4 minutes.
 - Have optimum magnesium levels: Load up on dark, leafy greens, nuts & seeds. If I am traveling, I take a magnesium supplement. Most people benefit from taking 400–1,000 mg daily. Make sure you take the absorbable forms, which are magnesium citrate, glycinate taurate, or aspartate.
- 

YOUR SPIRIT

I believe that one of the most important things we can all learn to do is to take out quiet time every day to connect with our soul/spirit (God, Higher Power), whatever name you have for that power that is greater than you.

In this digital age, we are becoming even more disconnected from our intuition, and this comes at a great cost. If we spend more time scrolling through our Instagram feed than connecting with our deeper values, we will easily get lost in that lie - the one that tells us that we're not enough. Everyone puts their best self out on social media (I try to!!!), but when I compare my insides to your outside (especially when it's been digitally enhanced), I'm going to come away feeling terrible about myself.

This is why I have trained myself to hit my meditation cushion BEFORE I power up my phone in the morning. It's my way of catching and connecting with my soul before the world takes it away.

One of my most important "no-matter-what's" is to meditate and pray every morning, and then open my journal (I keep a bullet journal), where I write down my goals for the day, month, year, and my life.

I understand that learning meditation is daunting for a lot of people, so my suggestion is to dip your toes in. You don't have to go away to an Ashram or a meditation retreat! There are so many great Apps that can have you meditating away in a jiffy! The key is that you start. This goes back to my beloved Goethe quote (mentioned at the beginning of this guide).

WHAT YOU CAN DO, OR DREAM YOU CAN, BEGIN IT; BOLDNESS HAS GENIUS, POWER, AND MAGIC IN IT

Meditation is simply about starting. It's as simple as sitting in a chair, or cross-legged on your yoga mat, and taking a few slow, deep breaths. Do this of 5 minutes, and you've started your meditation practice.

Many of you have done Savasana (corpse pose)



at the end of a yoga class - this is a form of meditation too. Simply allowing your body to release, and becoming aware of your breath is the first step toward entering the realm of the spirit.

Here are a couple of resources to help you on your way.

STOP BREATH THINK App is great for newbies, and you get to choose exactly the kind of meditation, and length, that you want.

HEADSPACE is another great meditation App, which teaches you "Mindful" meditation.

VIPASSANA MEDITATION is the ancient and beautiful form of "mindfulness" meditation. Here is an easy how-to guide.

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION is the practice that I learned some 25 years ago. I highly recommend it. It is expensive, but in my opinion, worth every penny. It's a simple tool or technique, which people of all Faiths can embrace.

There are many ways, methods and paths to find a way to experience a restful body, and a quiet mind. You will discover the path that works best for you. It might be your church, or a favorite yoga teacher. It's only important that you find a way to disconnect connect from the ever-increasing noise around you, so that you can connect to your truth.



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

I know, this is a lot of information to download, and trust me, I didn't wake up one day perfectly healthy. It was a long journey, a journey that started with a small step, changing one habit, celebrating my achievements, and then taking another step.

If I can make one recommendation - It's start with one thing, and commit fully. It takes 3 weeks to establish a good habit, so commit yourself to something that will make you feel successful. And then try for step two.

Trust me, you're not alone in this journey! There's a fabulous community of people who have accepted the Gorgeously Green challenge - Join us to stay motivated and stay up on the latest ideas, tips, tricks and recipes.

My **WEBSITE** has over 10 years of content available with just the click of a button.

I'm on **FACEBOOK** EVERYDAY, answering questions, doing livestreams, and sharing content that I love.

My **PINTEREST** is like my healthy living mood board - I'm constantly adding recipes, or saving DIYs to try.

You can keep up with my life on **INSTAGRAM** where I love to host giveaways and share my activities.

I love to **TWEET**, you can keep up with the conversation on my Twitter feed.

And definitely head over to my **YOUTUBE** - I'm constantly posting product reviews and long-form recipes and DIYs.

I love to surround myself with inspiration. Whether that's reading a fabulous book (see my favorite reading list below), or following other content creators (another list below), it's about being a part of the community!!

The most valuable thing that we have is our God-given intuition. Ultimately, you have all the answers deep down inside. My hope is that by embarking on a journey of wellness and self-care, you will be better able to access that wisdom, which is your greatest gift.

I wish you love and light on this incredibly exciting journey.

Let's do it together!

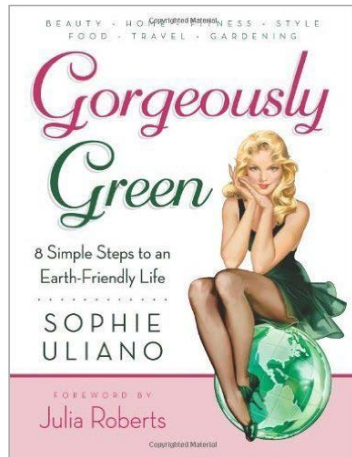
Sophie xx



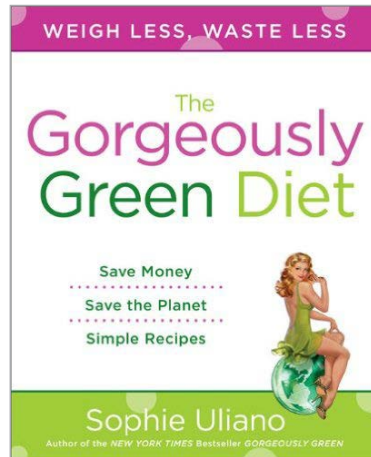
Gorgeously Green

THE BOOKS

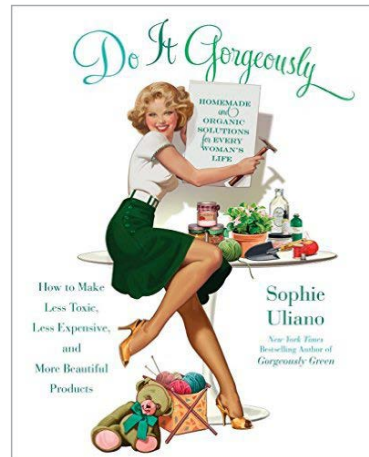
Now that you've started, here are all my books (for further reading)!



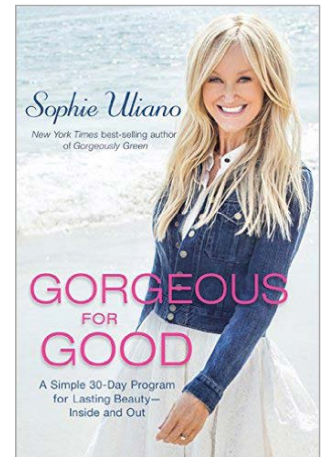
Gorgeously Green



The Gorgeously Green Diet



Do It Gorgeously

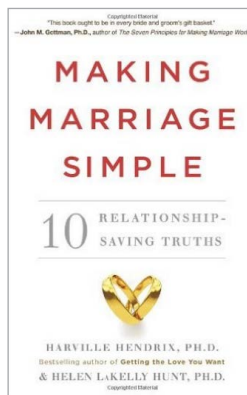


Gorgeously For Good

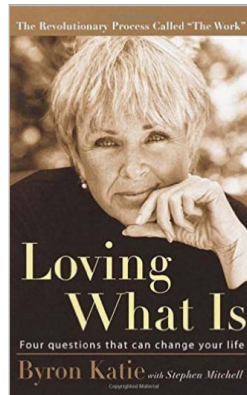
SOPHIE ULIANO'S READING LIST

RELATIONSHIPS

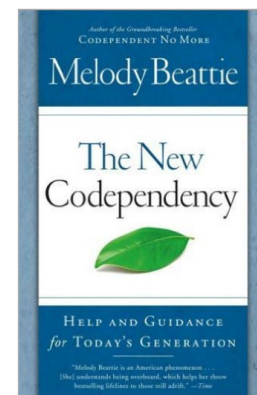
There are so many helpful books on relationships, but these are my favorite peeps in this space:



If you are married, and want to nurture your relationships for years to come, I highly recommend: **Making Marriage Simple: Ten Relationship-Saving Truths.** I think Dr. Harville Hendrix's offering is one of the best books that I've read on marriage.

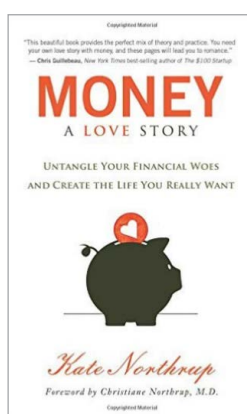


If you find yourself un-happy in relationships, and/or experience a lot of anger, self-pity and fear, then Byron Katie's **Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life** is genius. Byron has you step up to the plate, take responsibility, and do the work – but the rewards are SO worth it.



If you use the word “codependent” to describe your relationships, check out Melody Beattie's (who coined the term) latest book, which clears up a lot of misconceptions: **The New Codependency** by Melody Beattie.

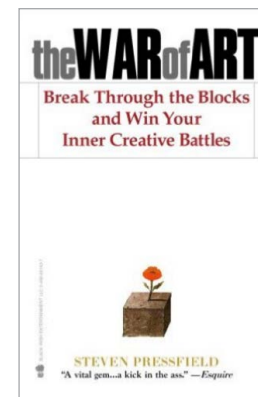
CAREER



Since your career probably involves money, then I highly recommend Kate Northrup's books. A great starting place is **Money A Love Story.**



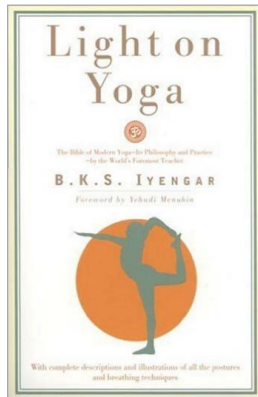
OMG – **Big Magic** by Elizabeth Gilbert (who wrote Eat Pray Love) is awesome!! It's all about how to bring creativity and joy into every single day of your life without necessarily having to change careers or live in an ashram. I love her straight-from-the-hip tone. (On a side note, if you're an avid novel-reader like myself, I adored her book, **The Signature of All Things**).



One of my favorite books on battling through the resistance to success, which we all to some extent experience, is Steven Pressfield's **The War on Art: Break Through The Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles.** This book helped me sit down and write a full novel in less than a year!

..... YOGA

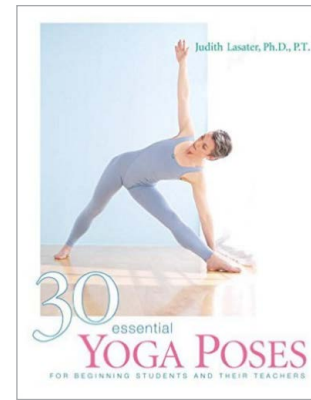
I have quite the bookshelf of yoga books. Even if you are not training to be a yoga teacher, it might behoove you to dig into some of these books so that you have a solid knowledge and understanding of a practice that will benefit all of your future clients. My must-haves are:



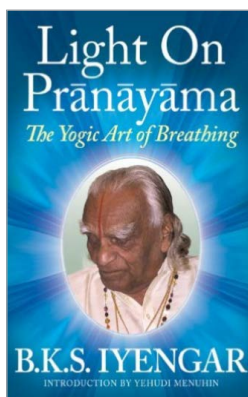
Light on Yoga by B.K.S. Iyengar



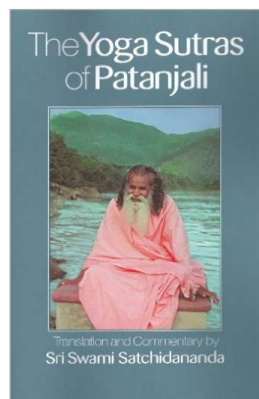
Yoga – A Gem For Women by Geeta S. Iyengar



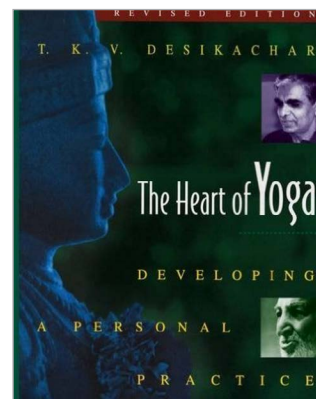
30 Essential Yoga Poses by Judith Lasater



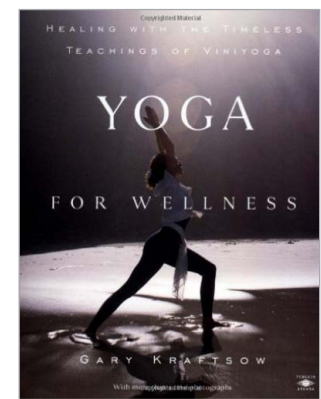
Light on Pranyama by Iyengar



The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

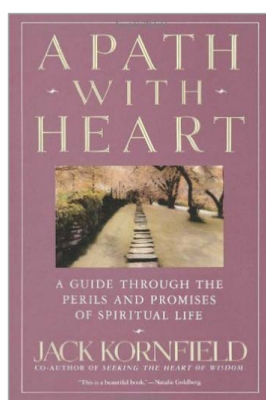


The Heart of Yoga by Desikachar



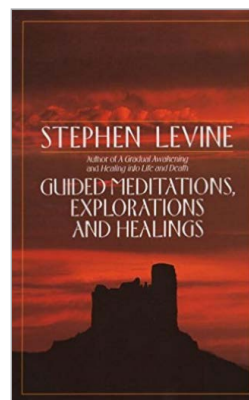
Yoga For Wellness by Gary Kraftsow

..... BOOKS ON SPIRITUALITY

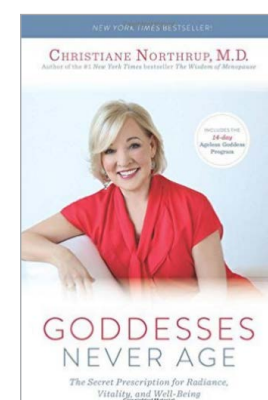


Jack Kornfield is a Buddhist monk, who has been teaching Buddhist philosophy to a Western audience since the 1970's.

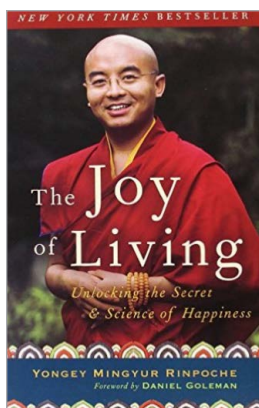
A Path With A Heart is a beautiful, gentle and soothing book, which always serves to foster a deeper connection with my heart. It's truly a nightstand-forever book.



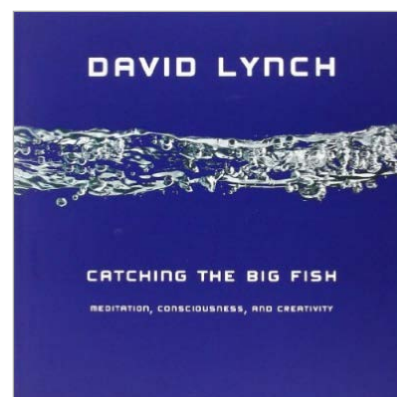
Stephen Levine, **Guided Meditations, Explorations, and Healings**. You will find this book so helpful when any of your clients need a guided mediation. Try some of them yourself for a while, and you'll see how powerfully healing they are.



Dr. Christiane Northrup's latest book, **Goddesses Never Age** is a deeply spiritual book, which encapsulates teaching from the doctor's heart. I have been following her for over 25 years, and regularly dip into all of her books for anything to do with female medical advice.

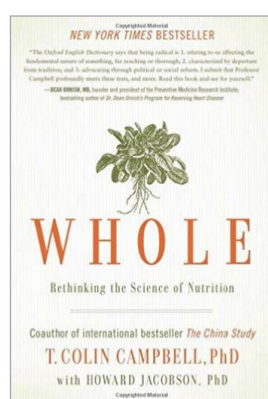


The Joy Of Living by Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche This is another nightstand book, which I dip into every now and again. I love that it's a tapestry of Buddhist insights interwoven with modern science – right up my alley!



Catching The Big Fish by David Lynch: Since I have been practicing TM meditation for well over two decades, I love these book by the legendary filmmaker, David Lynch, who is also an avid meditator. His book is a meditation on meditation – and always makes me want to dive into a deep meditation like NOW!

..... FOOD & DIET

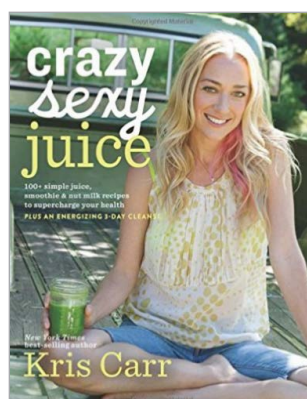


Whole – Rethinking the Science of Nutrition by T. Colin Campbell, PHD is a revolutionary and important book about how modern nutrition often leads to confusion and tragic consequences. This book really changed my thoughts and feelings about so many aspects of nutrition.

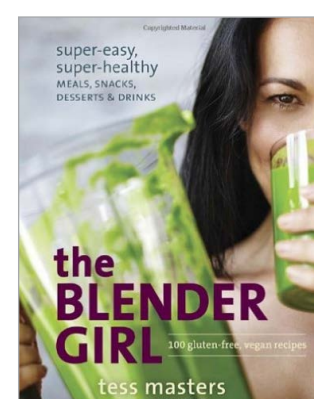
A fantastic online resource for all kinds of important nutritional facts is

www.nutritionfacts.org.

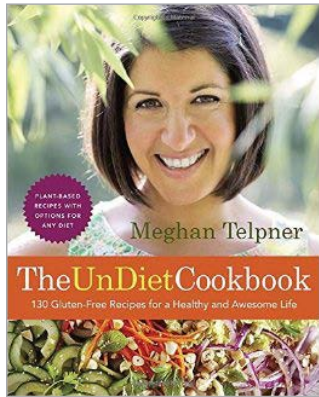
Dr. Michael Greger M.D. delivers the latest research on nutrition in easy to digest short videos.



Kris Carr, **Crazy Sexy Juice** – Kris is queen of the juice space. She has been a friend and inspiration to me ever since we both started out on the path together quite a few years back. Her new book, Crazy Sexy Juice has every juice recipe you'll need to keep you in top shape on wellness your journey.

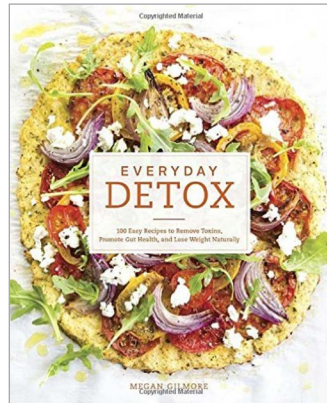


The Blender Girl by Tess Masters – And just as Kris is queen of the juice space, Tess is Duchess of the Blender space. I adore her first book, The Blender Girl, because she teaches us to whip up all kinds of uber healthy goodies (not just smoothies), in our blenders.



Meghan Telpner

Meghan is a recent friend, and a culinary Goddess. If you want to learn to cook from scratch (meaning the nuts and bolts for anyone who thinks they can't cook), then Meghan's your girl. She offers a bunch of great digital classes. Her style is healthy, but not vegan.



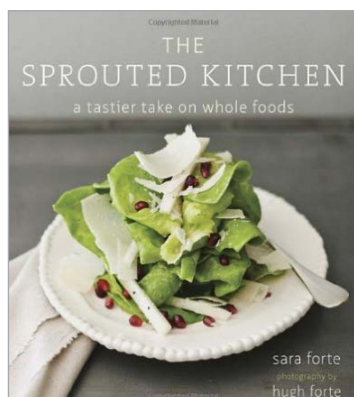
The Dextoxinista

Another healthy diva, whose not vegan, but who takes your overall health very seriously, is The Detoxinista.



My New Roots –

This was one of my favorite cookbooks of 2015. Her photography alone is worth the price of the book, but all of her recipes are simple, innovative, and work! I call her "Flexitarian" in that she her recipes are mostly plant-based, and all gluten-free.



The Sprouted Kitchen is a blog that caught my eye because she cooks very simple, fresh seasonal ingredients into THE most delicious concoctions. I can always find something vegan too. Be sure to check out her amazing **cookbook** as well!



The Minimalist Baker

– So few gluten-free and vegan baking recipes actually work, or are at least as good as the photo promises, but The Minimalist Baker delivers in spades (or in cupcakes!)

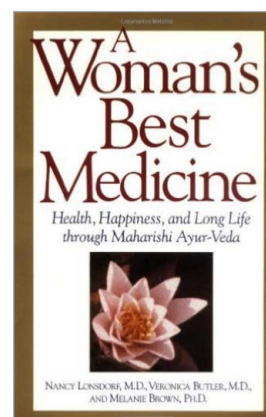


Plan to Eat is a brilliant menu-planner – and some! You basically go find your favorite recipe online, and using the widget, which you'll download, up migrate the recipe into your week's menu, and it even creates a shopping list for you! I really cannot recommend this resource enough – It streamlines everything, works great on your phone, and is an everyday tool for me.

A definite NEED.



Ayurveda: I think **Dr. John Douillard** is a spectacular introduce to Ayurveda. I have had many personal consultations with him (well worth it), and have even done his famous "Colorado Cleanse."



I also love the book, **A Woman's Best Medicine – Health, Happiness, and Long Life through Maharishi Ayur-Veda.**

A
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