



What feeds us: matter

We tend to reduce food to its ingredients although it is the forces which a foodstuff contains which are important.

We drink green tea and eat red berries because of the polyphenols, add chia seeds to bread and smoothies because of the minerals and vitamins, and use turmeric because of the positive effects of the curcumin. So we catch ourselves reducing foodstuffs to their ingredients. If we accept the nutritional recommendation for the daily diet, mix 72 grams of protein, 66 grams of fat and 264 grams of carbohydrate with 2.5 litres of water and add some fibre and minerals plus vitamins and flavourings, then we will supposedly be adequately nourished. But we will have a semi-liquid porridge and not food. This does not feed us!

This was obvious to Angelus Silesius: "The bread is not our food. What feeds us in the bread, is God's eternal Word, is spirit and is life." What actually nourishes us is the forces which a foodstuff contains and which make the body active, not the substances, according to Rudolf Steiner in the 1924 Agricultural Course (Lecture 4). Ahriman wants us to devote ourselves to matter and therefore to him. We follow him when we make our healthy eating decisions in our daily diet dependent solely on the ingredients. The inner activity, the vitality and the forces are essential for us as human beings to feel activated and be able to develop ourselves in freedom.

What feeds us: activity

What is more important than the matter itself is to deal with the forces which form it.

Here on the earth we human beings are living, feeling, thinking and creative beings. All these levels need to be fed. Nutrients are only one side of this, the other is the inner activity of which Rudolf Steiner spoke (GA 327, Lecture 4). In general everything that we perceive evokes an inner reaction, an activity which stimulates us. We see something and our inner being adds the recognition that this is a flower. A sense organ is developed and maintained by its activity. So the eye can only see because it sees. A child learns to taste from a range of taste experiences and a perfumer's perceptions become better and more discerning because they are constantly smelling. A muscle is also developed and maintained by movement. Activity is fostered by activity, not by resting. The human being needs activity so that substances are totally broken down during digestion. Everything that we eat is completely destroyed, for example we do not turn into a leek if we eat leek and we do not turn into an egg if we eat egg. The food is actually a foreign body whose foreign nature has to be broken down. This happens to the matter but also to its nature. This stimulates our digestive forces. Generally, the inner activity is the realm which is healthy. It is the forces which regenerate us. We remain healthy because we are the active creator of our life, starting with our food.

What feeds us: encounter and genuineness

The act of dealing with the food feeds us – as long as it is true to its own nature.

If we eat an apple we have a meeting with it. This starts with seeing, then its smell reaches our nose. With cooked meals the smell spreads out even before we can see them. The taste finally follows when we bite into the apple. At this point, if not before, the encounter becomes conscious. In digestion the further breakdown is actually a confrontation: the apple is completely taken apart, mechanically by chewing, biochemically by enzymes. Breaking down the apple in terms of the matter, the form and the being is important so that we do not turn into the things we eat. If this meeting does not take place properly, if our boundaries are not developed, intolerances can result. There is then too much of a foreign nature in the body and it defends itself.

An encounter is a real enrichment if the other party is as different as possible. The apple really has to be a genuine apple so that the meeting with it can have a stimulating effect. This is a matter of quality. In biodynamic wine, for example, the terroir is expressed more fully than in conventional wines because, due to the biodynamic processes, the vine has a stronger interaction with its environment and reflects this: just as foodstuffs which express the uniqueness of their species, their variety and their growing conditions are genuine.

Hanni Rützler calls this nutritional trend "meet food". And this means: meet the foodstuff instead of merely consuming it.

What feeds us: warmth and light

The ripe plant is a model for the human body – so ripe fruit is particularly nutritious.

All processes in the soil and in the metabolism of plants and the human being require warmth. It is a necessity for all life. Every person has their individual warmth in which their ego incarnates. Without warmth there would be no love, no mutual interest and no appreciation. The human being's warmth body also needs to be fed.

In addition, the human being needs light for their well-being and in their bones. The form of a plant arises through the effect of light. Compare a dandelion which has grown in the shade with one which was in the sun. The latter is finely divided and has a short stem.

Light and warmth allow the fruit to ripen. When growth is complete, the fruit starts to ripen: these are opposite processes. The ripening fruits have no chlorophyll, the green pigment.

They turn red, yellow or orange. Structural substances which make the fruit hard are broken down and the fruit becomes soft and sweet. Colour, taste and smell develop. In terms of matter, it is the secondary plant compounds which become important. Incidentally, studies have shown that organically grown vegetables have a higher content of secondary plant compounds than conventionally grown ones. The biodynamic preparation horn silica which is sprayed onto the plants promotes ripening. It supports the plant in dealing with light and warmth. If we want to mature, we need stimulation from the ripening quality in food.

What feeds us: the meal as a meeting zone

Eating provides a contact to foods – this requires a relationship to yourself.

Nutrition is more than the foods that we eat. Nutrition is activity and encounter. Human beings need warmth and light physiologically, but also for their soul and spirit. A bright idea kindles the fire of enthusiasm. And a beautifully laid table in lovingly-cared for surroundings speaks to our heart. I can sit down at the table, pause for a moment, perhaps say a grace and look at what is on my plate, how it smells and tastes. This attentiveness is part of many concepts for healthy nutrition. It promotes the relationship to myself (connectedness) and therefore to my own tastes. Modern nutritional therapists call it 'somatic intelligence'. This was practised by Hermann Spindler, the chef of the former Lukas Klinik over 30 years ago. He asked the patients three questions: What is on the plate? What does it taste like? How easy is it to digest? This brought them to a meeting with themselves.

Another aspect of meeting is a meal eaten in company. The Brazilian health ministry recommends eating with other people as an integral part of a healthy diet. What gets lost if there is no longer a daily meal together in the family? The encounter! It is important for personal enrichment and building inner strength. I develop from encounters. This shows how a conscious healthy diet makes a contribution to the overall development of the human being.

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