

Country report: Spain

Mercè Vancells Flotats

I would like to introduce myself: I studied agronomy and became an agronomist engineer, specialized in Food agricultural engineer. But then I changed to nutrition. My dedication is integrative nutrition. I've studied anthroposophic medicine and anthroposophic psychotherapy, and in my practice I love to find this way of dealing with the food in our digestion. So I'm very interested in the whole topic of digestion. And I mean by this, both our etherical forces and the etherical forces of the food. And how it interacts with our soul and our biography. And whatever all this kind of etheric forces, the astral character and the I and see the individuality of the people.

Now, we have a lot of digestive problems in Spain. There are a lot of young people with a lot of digestion problems. The people want to avoid foods and change diet from one to another, from one polarity to another. I love to work with the soul forces and the biography of the person to see how everything affects the digestion and the nutrition. This is from the background to have deeper insights and greater forces to manage the food and the digestion of food and the mystery of the digestion. And I work a lot with this kind of people. How the food changes your thoughts. How depression can change a lot with changing the food. Not putting the people in one diet, it's better to increase the health and the vital forces in order they can digest and get the essential nutrients in the best way.

I try to put more light in the profound and the deeper sense of the food.

We are in the materialistic way of understanding the food. People want protein or carbohydrates. They don't know what carbohydrates are, because they don't know about the chemistry. And I always say that all the vegetables are carbohydrates. I educate them to see the whole food and what it means, instead of not only see the nutrients separately. We have to talk for example about an apple. It's an apple and consists of forces. I'm working a lot with this approach, because in Spain we have a lot of agriculture.

Last day I saw that in Spain we have 12% of organic farming, but only 3% of it are consumed in Spain. The rest is exported, mainly to Europe. So, we export a lot of food, nutrients, etheric forces and water. Concerning biodynamics, it's about the same relation that most of it is exported and very little remains for the people in the country. Biodynamic agriculture and food are not very well known here. It's more well known, in all the fashion foods or the restaurants with Michelin Star, and this kind of exclusive and luxury things. In fact, it is only available for small groups of restaurants and consumers. But, for example, I live in Barcelona and it's very difficult to find biodynamic food here. We have some biodynamic agriculture near Barcelona, but all the production is sold to this kind of fashion restaurants, because they pay the price that farmers want or need, and as they have small production there's nothing left to the rest of the people.

But there are consumers who want to buy biodynamic food in Barcelona and support biodynamic agriculture. But it's very difficult. The majority of people don't know it, don't know Demeter. I think, that is something that has to change. People want cheap vegetables, cheap food and everything. But then they spend a lot of money with insurance, health insurance and health products and things. This is a contradiction we have to work with.

Here in Spain we have a lot of farmers, we are an agriculture country, so we have to emphasize on information to the people about healthy farming, healthy food and the link to the health of the people.

We have a typical eating culture, which is very much linked with the kitchen and the food. The way of eating here is very well known, it is the culture based on Mediterranean food, Mediterranean diet. The basis is olive oil, vegetables, fruit. And it's based on a richness of aromas and tastes. We have talked about smell and taste and the importance for eating and digesting the food. We treat food as

something very precious and with a lot of pleasure. We have a culture of a pleasure. And Spanish people are asking for sensory experience, and they expect it as one whole impression, it should be observed all at once. There is a kind of hunger for all the aspects of food, all the different tastes, and everything in abundance.

And I think that we have to simplify it and return to simplicity. The abundance and all this kind of tastes, this is too much. We have to go back to our own culture. In the end I think that the kitchen and the food is very related with the culture of the country. And right now we are a little bit losing it because of the overflow of different food and nutrition information. It's true that the people don't search for information, but they are flooded with it. There is so much information related with nutrition. People get confused and lose their orientation. They no longer know what to eat, what is best, what is worthy and good food. It is no longer possible for them to connect to their body. I always tell them you have to be your own sommelier. You have to taste the food consciously. And taste what it is and if it's good for you today. And tomorrow we will see. We have to train the senses and the perception of food. I think this kind of sensory activation and testing, that we have talked about so often. I think we have to investigate more in this and empower the people that they realize they have the tools and they are their own laboratory inside. We all are our own alchemists.

We should be more in contact with the cosmic forces, that are the planets and our own organs. The digestive organs are so important and are the basis of our wellbeing. People often think that we eat the food, digest and excrete it, and that's all. But no, that's not everything at all. Here we have the other part of the mystery of the digestion process. This is very related with the air that we are breathing, with the light that we have and not to forget with the resting hours and the stressful times. It's related with everything.

And I think the most important thing is that we must go back to simplicity. We have to recover and revive the culture of each place. Nowadays there are many people who eat raw in Ireland or cold countries, this is not a long-term diet that is advisable in a cold country, and it will also depend a lot on the health and individuality of the person.

I think we have to reconnect with ourselves, not with social networks, which do not help us. I think we have to go more towards recovery, towards healing ourselves, to connect with ourselves, with food and with the world. There are tools that heal and revive the forces that are needed in our time. We have to respect that each of us is dealing with our biography, our destiny and with the circumstances and the country where we live. We have to accept our lives and, therefore, develop power, knowledge and self-efficacy. I always say that my grandmother had no doubts about whether the food they had available and the diet they had was good or bad. But it was a different food than what we have now. At that time, they knew what to do, and it was good.

Today we find ourselves in a situation where everyone doubts whether what they are eating is right or not, they doubt and they constantly ask or seek an external opinion to make sure. There is a lack of feeling and inner certainty of whether something is right or wrong. In general, the connection with oneself is lost. And I think that is what we urgently need to recover and redesign. And as a country, as a society, okay, we can continue with the culture of food as it is. Cultivate this kind of pleasure from things as it is now. But we need to rediscover simplicity. Like the taste of individual foods, instead of combining them all and using remedies for digestion. We need to make people experience these kinds of soul forces and etheric forces that are present in food and that are released in digestion. In my work I follow this approach to help people reconnect with themselves through food, through the sensory perception of food, and know at every moment what their body and soul need. This guides me in my work.

About fast food: and how this food is transforming us. There are studies being done in the UK where they have been able to see for example how people who eat fast food have more aggressive behaviors. I think that in the end food is transforming us, and it helps us do the inner work of self-

knowledge. It keeps us attentive to internal changes, and that is what people can't stand now. People follow diets as dogmas, without feeling what is really good for them, and then they can't maintain, for example, a vegetarian diet for a long time, and they move on to a completely opposite diet, because they can't sustain the internal change and the freedom that it gives them. And it's interesting to see that they can't maintain this transformation that food brings them, because in the end food has always been related to religions or spirituality. So, in the end, the meaning of food: it is very deep, as we can see.

About GMO-Food: I think that all the food industry is apart from nature, no longer working with nature, but against it to make as much profit as possible.

And the food products are empty. I think that there's not only a danger by genetic engineering, but I think that the industry at the end has made us weaker as well, with all the additives and additions. I think that there are a lot of additives that make you very addicted. But it's this kind of addicts or things that the food has.

Of course, industry food it's something different than natural food. You don't have the effect of the forces of the cosmos with GMO-food or vegetables from hydroponic cultivation. They are very perturbed or corrupted and unhealthy. In the end, when you eat these food, you miss the connection with the earth and the cosmos.

With genetic engineering, they separate the plant from natural forces. They want to keep us separate from them, they disconnect us. I think genetic engineering is related to money: more production, less quality, fewer forces, but not only with genetic engineering. This also happens with hydroponic farming, which is widely used. With that type of food cultivation, you don't have life. You don't have air. You don't have soil. There's nothing but the food industry. I think this is a big problem, because people see it as a way to make money and as a way to improve the population's diet. But the diets get poorer and the people get sicker.



Mercè Vancells is an integrative nutrition coach, also combined with the salutogenesis approach, living and working in Barcelona, Spain.

June 5, 2025