



SOS-Free

In July this year (2022) we started giving our attention to going SOS-Free. What's SOS-free? It means not adding any additional Salt, Oil or Sugar to the meals we make.

So, what's the big deal about not adding salt, oil or sugar to what we eat? More and more research is pointing out that adding salt, oil or sugar to our foods may tax the body in ways it wasn't designed for causing health conditions.

When we were evolving, we ate only whole foods, food in the form nature packaged it in. We didn't have a choice. There was nothing added and nothing taken away. No extra salt, oil or sugar. As a result, our physiology developed around the nutrient profiles of whole foods.

Now, it may not seem like a big deal to add some salt, oil or sugar. But day in and day out, year after year, research shows it has an effect. Like the slow working of water over rock, it may not seem like much is happening, but in time you can end up with a Grand Canyon.

It makes sense to us that if we eat closely to the way we ate as we evolved, i.e., without adding anything and not taking anything away (processing), we could return to the natural balance and thriving our systems are designed to provide. What do you think?

About the salt, we haven't had a saltshaker on the table for probably 30 years. But we would often add salt to the recipes we made while making them. In fact, I remember hearing and reading many times that a pinch of salt brings out the fullest flavour in the foods. That doesn't seem so true to me anymore.

As much as we enjoyed the salty taste and believed it contributed to our enjoyment, now that we're SOS-Free, we've begun to taste a depth and richness of flavours we never tasted when we salted our foods. We've both had the same experience.

But it did take some time. At first, the dishes seemed rather flat. But, sure enough, just like the different MD's and WFPB advocates are saying, our taste buds changed. As we became accustomed to not having the extra salt, there were flavours in the food that were masked by the salt. So, we're delighted with our experience of not adding salt to our dishes.

And let's take a brief look at the health concerns that Dr. Joel Fuhrman points out about eating excess salt. Basically, he says salt increases your risk of stiffening arteries, high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke as well as osteoporosis. It's also been associated with kidney stones and stomach cancer... not to mention it's addictive.

So, that's the story as we see it about salt and the benefits of not adding any to what we prepare. We've been SOS-free for a while now and liking the benefits we've found: lower blood pressure and tasting more flavours in our food.

Let's go on now to oil. Why no added oil?

At first this seemed a bit like a deprivation. We loved the richness that oil brought to a salad dressing or lentil dish. And there's lots of evidence that we need healthy oils every day. And how would we sauté without oil?

Well, we found ways to get the healthy oils and richness in our foods quite easily. We started making dressings with nuts and seeds instead of the free-oil (oil that has been pressed free from its source) like olive oil or avocado oil. This gave us the healthy fats we wanted, but in the whole food form instead of free-oil form from a bottle.

And then we realized that an advantage of getting the fat and oil in our diet from whole foods is that there are added nutrients. The calories you get in free-oils are relatively empty. With the whole food form, you get all the nutrients and fibre of that food at the same time that you get the benefits of the healthy fat in it.

The other benefit of getting fat in the whole food form is that those fats don't impair artery function the way free-oils can. It's been shown that the fat goes into the blood stream more slowly with whole food forms because of the fibre and this allows the body to utilize it or store it before it becomes an impairment to blood flow. We like the sound of that.

Oh, and about sautéing, we simply substitute 3 tablespoons of water for each tablespoon of oil we used. Works great.

Finally, let's look at sugar. That's probably the easiest element of SOS-Free to understand as a detriment to our health.

Sugar is often referred to as "empty calories" because it is stripped of the nutrients in the whole food it's made from. Sugar beets, for instance, have lots of good nutrients and fibre. But the sugar made from them has none. So the sugar does nothing to support our health. It just adds calories and weight, which contributes to health problems.

We had been free of sugar for a long time before going SOS-Free, substituting maple syrup, brown rice syrup, barley malt and things like that to add the sweet in our recipes. But we're understanding now that all of these are also processed, just not as fully as sugar. There are some nutrients in them, which is good, but none of them have any fibre, so the calories from these sweeteners goes into our blood stream quickly, just like sugar, taxing our system.

To replace the refined sweeteners, we're using whole foods like raisins and dates. We add raisins to our fruit crumbles and dressings where we used maple syrup before. And we're discovering a myriad of ways to use dates in dishes and smoothies, and even make a date "paste" in the Vitamix that we use in baked goods.

Using these whole food forms to sweeten have covered our needs in everything we make now. Try some of the [desserts](#) in the recipes section and see what you think.

One refined sweetener that we still use a little is liquid stevia. It's calorie free and extremely sweet. It's made from the leaf of the stevia plant and can have a slightly bitter taste, so we never use it exclusively. We always combine it in the recipe with a whole food like dates, raisins or fruit.

The bottom line then, is that we haven't found a down-side to being SOS-Free, and plenty of upside, including losing weight naturally.

If you would like to learn more about going SOS-Free, contact us on our [website](#).