

The Experts Dish

By Lisa Turner

What our favorite physicians, nutritionists, and cookbook authors eat.

Their beaming faces grace the covers of cookbooks, and we're riveted by their advice in magazines and best-selling books. These celebrity physicians, nutritionists, and personalities know what they're talking about, but do they practice what they preach? And what secret flaws do they have that makes them human after all?

One thing's for sure: they don't starve themselves. They eat full-sized, flavorful meals and real breakfasts (no breakfast skippers in the bunch). They don't cut out carbs, oils, fats, or chocolate, and most of them drink wine. Some of them—with disarming and refreshing honesty—even admit to occasional forays to the “dark side.” And they share some of their favorite meals, snacks, recipes, and human imperfections here.

What the experts eat for breakfast

The answers range from smoothies to egg whites, and no one runs away from carbs. Walter Willett, MD, DrPH, chair of the department of nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health, and author of *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy: The Harvard Medical School Guide to Healthy Eating*, enjoys a hearty bowl of mixed cooked whole grains, usually Kashi Pilaf, with nuts, blueberries, and dates.

Mark Hyman, MD, author of *Ultrametabolism*, has a whole omega-3 egg (lightly fried in olive oil) on dark, whole-kernel rye toast with a tomato; or a protein shake with rice protein powder, frozen cherries, ground flaxseeds, and hemp milk.

“My favorite breakfast is an herbed egg-white scramble, with avocado [see recipe p. 34], one grapefruit, and 1/3 cup of steel-cut oats with a splash of soymilk and a drizzle of agave nectar,” says Christine Avanti, author of *Skinny Chicks Don't Eat Salads*. “I use one whole egg plus extra whites to add more protein to my meal without adding too much fat. I'd rather consume my morning fats from the delightful flavors of good fats in extra virgin olive oil and avocado, rather than egg yolks.”

What the experts eat for lunch

It may be as homey as a nut butter and jam sandwich or leftovers. But no one skips lunch, and most of them eat something substantial. For Hyman, it's almond butter with whole-fruit spread on a piece of whole-kernel toasted rye bread; sardines; canned artichoke hearts, vegetables, and quinoa; or salad and grilled salmon. For Willett, it's vegetables with grilled tofu, and one of Mollie Katzen's recipes for such whole grains as wild rice, oat groats, buckwheat, or quinoa.

“My lunches are similar every day,” says Oz Garcia, PhD, author of *Look and Feel Fabulous Forever*. “I usually have lots of vegetables, like broccoli, asparagus, and carrots, and some fish—more often than not, it's wild Alaskan salmon, but sometimes I have halibut, cod, mahi mahi, or sardines. Most of my animal protein comes from fish; I don't fear it, but I make safe seafood choices and stay away from fish that has high levels of mercury, such as bluefin tuna. When you look at the overwhelming benefits of eating seafood, it outweighs the potential downsides.”

What the experts eat for dinner

Grilled fish, salad, and “tons and tons of vegetables” was the overwhelming response. In the winter, Willett favors fish coated with whole-grain grain breadcrumbs and olive oil, then broiled in the oven. In the summer, he and his family marinate fish in olive oil and a bit of vinegar and grill it over charcoal.

“Last night, we had organic Cornish hen with Brussels sprouts, broccolini, brown basmati rice, and an arugula salad with tomato and olive oil,” says Garcia. “The night before, dinner was grilled shrimp, roasted endive, and a medley of stir-fried vegetables, including bean sprouts. We flavor everything with a lot of spices, like rosemary, turmeric, cayenne, basil, and garlic. Our starches are typically rice, yams, squash, or beans; we don’t usually eat wheat or gluten. And we eat tons and tons of vegetables.”

What the experts eat when they eat out

Apparently, it’s OK to eat out.

Our experts do, and more often than you might think—some as often as four nights a week. The trick is to eat foods that you’d normally eat at home. “I eat out three or four times a week,” says Hyman. “And I usually order salads, grilled fish, and extra vegetables.” Willett enjoys bluefish with mustard sauce. Avanti has grilled fish, chicken tacos, or turkey or veggie burgers.

Garcia enjoys some flexibility when dining out. “There was a time when I was very inflexible,” he says. “I ate only brown rice, steamed vegetables, and tempeh. There was a time when I was a strict vegan. Now, I’m much more flexible, and adapt to my surroundings in restaurants. I leave room for some recreational eating.”

How the experts indulge

Everyone reported snacking. Snacks enjoyed by our experts include almonds, cashews, walnuts, grapes, low-fat cheese, and “a crisp apple.” They also indulge. Willett admits to an occasional glass of red wine or square of dark chocolate. “The best chocolate contains 80 percent cocoa,” he says. “It’s not too sweet—and you only need a bit.” Hyman indulges in an occasional dark chocolate or a multigrain high-fiber, high-protein cookie from Cookiehead—but not before bed. “I never snack before bed,” says Hyman. “That’s why I am skinny.”

Garcia also has an occasional cookie—a gluten-free, fruit-juice-sweetened variety from Pamela’s. “And I enjoy fine dining,” he says. “I love food, and I have a couple of favorite Italian restaurants where I’ll order a remarkably high-quality dish. I also enjoy novelty eating, trying unique dishes, fine French cooking, and traditional Cuban dishes.”

“On occasion, I indulge in movie theater popcorn and nachos with plastic cheese and jalapeños,” says Avanti. “Every now and then you have to give in to the dark side.”

Habits the experts want to change

Not so many, at least none that anyone confessed to. “My eating habits are awesome,” says Avanti. “I don’t want to change any of them.” Willett is paying more attention to hidden salt, and Hyman says he’s trying to change his habit of eating fast. “It’s a holdover from my days as resident on call,” he says.

Garcia says he already went through all that. "I had my years of horrible eating," he says. "I was a Cuban American kid, and I lived on cigarettes, coffee, and fast food. I used to have a compelling sweet tooth, and there were times when I couldn't control it. But once I came to understand how food affects us, and why we eat the way we do, I started to change my diet. Now, I don't crave foods that are going to make me feel bad. It's completely natural."



Christine's Haute Herbal Scramble Makes 1 serving

This savory scramble is great served with a side of steel-cut oats. Recipe courtesy of Christine Avanti.

4 large eggs

1 tsp. extra virgin olive oil

2 fresh basil leaves, finely chopped

1 tsp. finely chopped chives

1 tsp. finely chopped parsley

1 Tbs. avocado, diced

1. Break 1 egg into bowl. Separate whites from yolks of remaining 3 eggs (reserve yolks for homemade mayonnaise or another recipe). Add egg whites to whole egg in bowl, and beat well.
2. Heat oil in medium-size pan over medium heat. Add eggs, and stir with spatula. Move mixture around pan until almost done. Add basil, chives, and parsley, and continue cooking to desired consistency.
3. Transfer to serving plate, season with salt and pepper to taste, and top with avocado.

PER SERVING: 176 CAL; 17 G PROT; 11 G TOTAL FAT (2 G SAT FAT); 3 G CARB; 215 MG CHOL; 231 MG SOD; 1 G FIBER; 1 G SUGARS