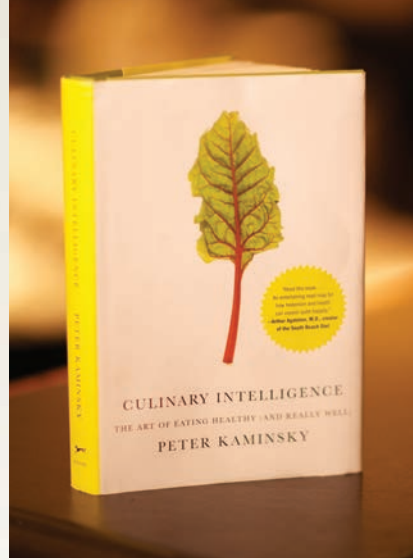


INTELLIGENT CUISINE

Around 300 B.C., Greek philosopher Epicurus implored his followers to subscribe to a modest form of hedonism, urging them to find an agreeable use for their faculties in “the intelligent enjoyment of the pleasures of the table.” Longtime food writer, cookbook author, and food critic Peter Kaminsky’s latest book, *Culinary Intelligence*, is a modern take on this Epicurean thought. He joined me for lunch recently with nutritionist Amanda Canada of SPE Certified.



BRET CSENCSTIZ: What inspired you to write this book?

PETER KAMINSKY: I wrote the book when I found out my health insurance had been rejected because I was borderline diabetic.

BC: That’s inspiration . . .

PK: It was actually at a time in my life when I felt good. Sure, I was always eating, but I was exercising routinely—and I was completely shocked.

BC: Andrea, your story and career change—from a supply-chain analyst to culinary nutritionist for SPE Certified—parallels Peter’s experience.

ANDREA CANADA: I can’t say I was eating as well as Peter, but one day I realized that I just didn’t feel good. So I began, as Peter writes, “tweaking some of the little things.” I stopped putting sugar in

my coffee and started cooking at home more often. I began paying attention to what I ate, and as I began to feel better I thought, “Maybe we really are what we eat.” This revelation led me to go back to school and study nutrition.

PK: It was actually my insurance agent who first advised me to cut out the white stuff—the white flour, rice, pasta, and sugar in my diet. Over the next six months, I lost 20 pounds while working on *Seven Fires: Grilling the Argentine Way*, which involved lots of red wine and red meat.

BC: Both of you state that “delicious” and “healthy” are not

mutually exclusive, and in fact often go hand in hand more often than we might think. Certainly, Andrea, I’ve enjoyed some fantastic food at your associated restaurant, Rouge Tomato. And I love what you say, Peter: “This book is the result of my truly insatiable appetite for the pleasures of the table and my equally strong desire to survive.”

AC: In essence, that is our mission. The *SPE* in SPE Certified is derived from the Latin phrase “*sanitas per escas*,” or “health through food.” We’ve taken that Latin expression and created our own SPE that revolves around three key elements: sourcing, preparing, and enhancing. SPE developed as an outgrowth of Rouge Tomato, which is a Michelin-starred restaurant. So while we are all about taste, we add a focus on using whole ingredients prepared in such a way to bring out the best in food without destroying nutrients. We are about working with a chef so you really enjoy the food, while maximizing the nutritional impact.

BC: Peter, I’ve heard you explain that this isn’t a diet book but is more like a memoir.

PK: I really just wanted to tell my story and what I’d experienced. I have written books with an awful lot of science in them. In *Pig Perfect*, I cite every scientist, paper, and so forth. When I first started to write *Culinary Intelligence*, I was dissatisfied because it was very dry. Everything began “According to this study . . .” and “According to that scientist . . .” I said: Wait, I’ve been in this business long enough, and I’m going to be the expert and say this is the way it is. I decided to take a more personal approach. That said, I consulted many scientists. But rather than say “according to this paper and that,” I wanted to tell stories, so I would say, “This person told me that . . .” So you get their science in there but it’s more personal.

BC: I like the experiential approach because I think much of the public is at a loss as to what to believe when it comes to science and nutrition. At first it was no fat, then we were told all fat! We just as quickly went from grains to no grains and back to grains. So where does science fit into this?

PK: People didn’t know what nutrients were 150 years ago, and yet we still survived as a species. We have evolved to consume nutrients that are good for us—which, incidentally, can be found in naturally delicious food. Of course, all the science in the world won’t justify eating all the chocolate or eggs that we want to! It all comes down to the fact that there is no substitute for a balanced diet filled with whole ingredients.

AC: We are really only now starting to understand the way these nutrients—fats, carbs, proteins, vitamins, minerals, flavonoids, or antioxidants—interact with one another once they are consumed. The food industry, in general, is constantly looking for ways to add value to its pet products. Until we more fully understand how complex our bodies process things, it is just safer to eat whole ingredients.

PK: The idea of pleasure and hedonism is what drives us to want to consume food. That is a good thing. Being smart about it makes it great.

AC: Peter’s book is really a great call for people to simply think about what and how they eat. This cultural food revolution of the past few decades, and the knowledge we’ve gained about how food affects and interacts with our bodies, allows us to be intelligent about our culinary choices.

Check out *Culinary Intelligence: The Art of Eating Healthy (And Really Well)* for Peter’s complete story, his compelling equation for getting more flavor per calorie, and the magic of what the Japanese call *umami*.

