

# Coming Home

Ever since I was a young girl I have been fascinated with food. I spent the first eight years of my life in Istanbul, and my memories of the city all have to do with the smells, sounds, sights, and tastes of food. From the time I was a toddler I practically lived in the kitchen, where my mother, grandmother, aunt, and older cousins could keep an eye on me. From my seat, I would watch the elaborate and ancient dance of women preparing food to feed their family.

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When I was young, I was blessed to experience food in this intimate Turkish way. Because I was taught that food comes from the source of life, I came to understand its life-giving qualities. I intuitively understood that food's nourishing capacity far exceeded basic physical survival. Food had the power to bring a family together, to connect me to the earth and our planet's cycles, to nurture all my senses.

As a child, I adored the seasons and loved the cyclical wheel of nature that brought each fruit and vegetable back each year. My favorite fruit was a type of small, green plum that grows in late spring. Each spring I began to look forward to these deliciously sour, crisp plums that were just the right size for my little hands. But I had to be patient and wait until May when large piles of plums suddenly appeared at the fruit vendor who I strategically passed on my way home from school. The taste of those plums has been very vivid for me since 1958, when my family moved to the United States. For me, that delightfully sour-crisp plum was always the taste of the childhood I left behind in Turkey.

Over the years I've traveled back to Turkey many times—first alone and later with my husband and children—but I've never seemed to time my travels right for the plums. Until this year. In March I returned to Turkey again, this time to bring the nourishment programs I've been teaching for over 30 years in the United States to Antalya and Istanbul, where I lead Spring Detox classes.

As I prepared the Detox menus of delicious meals with the chef of the Hillside Su in Antalya, I asked him about the green plums. When were they in season? Where could I buy some? Ercan usta, who worked absolute magic with the Detox dishes, assured me the plums would be available before the Spring Detox programs ended. But the programs finished and I flew back to Istanbul without having found a single plum.

Back in Istanbul, I wandered into an Istiklal Caddesi market one day where I finally discovered the fruit of my childhood. I bought my precious plums and immediately took them home to my dear friend Ayca's house in Taksim where I was staying. With the anticipation of a little girl, I carefully washed them, arranged them in a small clear bowl, sat down, and then ate every last one. And the plums didn't disappoint—they were just as I had remembered for nearly fifty years! Each juicy bite satisfied a yearning that had stirred in me so deeply for most of my life. I felt I had finally come home.

As an international author and nourishment educator and consultant, I have worked with many people over the last 30 years in my private practice in Boston. When I see clients for the first time, we sit down and have a cup of tea together. I always begin by asking my clients the same question: "Can you remember a time in your life when you felt whole, connected, at home within yourself? Every client has been able to remember at least one experience, perhaps one small moment, of wholeness.

Most of the people I work with express a profound desire to return home to that place within themselves where they feel happy, connected, balanced, and clear about their true priorities. To find our way home to our innate wholeness, we usually have to let go of the behaviors or habits that have gotten us off-track from our true center.

I have developed a unique holistic food-based detox program that supports people to make these changes. Through a disciplined approach of feeding oneself healthy and healing foods and allowing the body, mind, and emotions to eliminate excess toxins, the program helps people feel more energetic, focused, clear, and loving with themselves and others. I'm always amazed at how quickly this way of eating reveals so much about who we really are.

During the Spring Detox program at Hillside SU, many people originally came to lose a few kilos. But most participants soon realized they were actually looking for the part of themselves that had been buried under the excess layers of their lives. During the programs, they slowly began to shed not just the kilos but also their pain, sadness, anger, tears, loneliness, and fears. As people eliminated physical excess and released negative emotions, they could think more clearly and their spirits began to shine.

There was the mother of two young children who realized that her obsession with losing a few kilos was driving her to want more, more, more! Her insatiable desire for more manifested in numerous ways, from stuffing her children with so much food they developed severe food allergies to filling her shopping bags with the same item in at least three different colors. One day during the Spring Detox, she threw up. This was her awakening. At that moment, she realized what was truly enough in her life. She did, in fact, lose 9 kilos of the "more" but more importantly she

gained a new respect for her children, husband, and her sense of being at home within herself.

Then there was the 33-year old engineer who lost 10 kilos. Along with the weight, he also released a great deal of anger and impatience with himself and others. This man had always been a classic Turkish driver—aggressive and rude—and he lived his life just like he drove. But as the anger seeped out of him, he began to experience a gentler and slower speed within himself. Now he's content to drive



more slowly, even yield to other drivers as he more courteously navigates the traffic of his life.

The fear of change is so powerful it often prevents us from taking new steps in our lives. We get so attached to our way of thinking, living, relating to others, even eating, that we can't imagine any other way to live. That's why changing how we eat, even for a few days, can set off a chain reaction of other life changes. For instance, ask yourself how you would feel if you limited your daily consumption of carbohydrates, you know, makarna

(macaroni), ekmek (breads), tatlılar (baked goods), alcohol, pilavlar (grains), and so on. If the answer is to panic, then those foods may not be nourishing for you. In fact, they may be keeping you from having a healthy relationship with yourself.

When we make healthy and life-affirming changes in the foods we eat, new directions, new potentials, emerge. As simple as this seems, I have found that when people learn to love and really nourish themselves well—with food and

every other aspect of how they take care of themselves—it becomes much easier to let go of whatever detracts from your most vibrant sense of self. Through this process of feeding ourselves well, we become both more sensitive to the changes that are necessary and more courageous to take steps on the journey of coming home to ourselves.

In my own search for balancing my two halves—Turkish and American—I have sometimes felt like a rubber band that gets stretched, regains its shape, and gets stretched again. All of this stretching has taught me that I need to be flexible and constantly open to change. That's what all life is, after all, systems in constant change. In the midst of change, there's also a place of balance and peace. This is the place

where our heart's truth resides. I have another name for it; I call it home.

Join me here every month for exploration and inspiration on topics of nourishment and healing for our bodies, mind, spirit, our earth, and the environment.

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