

An Apple A Day – The Myths, Misconceptions and Truths About the Foods We Eat

By: Joe Schwarcz, PhD

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Dr. Joe Schwarcz is Director of McGill University's Office for Science and Society. He applies nutrition and chemistry to real life with a sprinkle of humour through his courses, presentations and in the media. *An Apple A Day* is his fifth book.

The book is divided into four sections, each covering a key issue:

- Naturally occurring substances in our food supply (such as lycopene in tomatoes and vitamin D in cod liver oil);
- Manipulating our food supply (such as iron fortification and organic farming);
- Contaminants in our food supply (such as pesticides and PCBs)
- Tough to swallow (such as goji juice and DHEA).

Pros

An Apple A Day is a “pick-up, put-down” reference book on nutrition. Its 66 short, easy-to-read chapters give no-nonsense advice on nutrition topics that we hear about every day. The tone of the book adds lightness to the science of nutrition as Schwarcz connects the strength of Popeye the Sailor Man to spinach, and World War II pilots to eating carrots before their night missions.

There is matter-of-fact guidance on who to believe when it comes to nutrition and also a helpful conclusion that helps consumers apply the information to their daily eating.

We like the insightful information such as the difference between Ceylon cinnamon and Cassia cinnamon. Schwarcz is not afraid to take a stand on issues and he supports his opinions with science. For example, he states that most people can benefit from reduced salt intake. Also, he supports his opinion on the controversial issue of aspartame with scientific facts.

Cons

At times, Schwarcz verges on letting humour get in the way of communicating science clearly. In certain areas such as fish recommendations and organic meat, he could have provided a bit more detail. Science keeps advancing and when the book was written in 2007, Schwarcz states that stevia was not approved as a food additive in Canada and the US. In September 2009 Health Canada approved stevia as an ingredient.

The Bottom Line

We recommend this book because we are confident in Dr. Schwarcz's science-based opinions. It serves as a useful reference book for health professionals and is handy for consumers who are looking for the bottom line when they feel confused about all the latest food issues in the news.

Schwarcz's philosophy can be summed up in his two sentences: "There's more to life than worrying about every morsel of food we put in our mouths" and "There are no safe substances, only safe doses."