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## How to really eat well in 2024

### Trying out new restaurants is not the benchmark

Manila Bulletin · 11 Jan 2024 · 1 · By MARIE BUENAVENTURA Images Freepik SUPPORT LOCAL Buying from small markets helps fund the livelihood of our local farmers (Photo Noel B. Pabalate | Manila Bulletin)

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What does it mean when one knows how to “eat well?” Is it about going through a list of Michelin-starred restaurants? Or being chummy with chefs who can whip up a fiesta at a moment’s notice? Is it being culinary adventurous and ticking off food goals? Is it about familiarizing yourself with exotic cuisines?

Maybe—but in these times, eating well also means approach

Incorporating veggies as much as possible

Maybe you’re not ready (or never will be ready) to go vegan, but a plant-based diet will help make you healthier, cut your risks of chronic illnesses, and contribute to environmental sustainability. Plus, if you’re eating healthy most times, you’ll feel less guilty when you do indulge. Start by incorporating a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes in your daily meals. Later on, start to experiment with plant-based recipes, and you’ll be surprised by how easy and even delicious it is. Help your body have the balance it needs. ing food in a holistic manner. We are no longer only using merely just taste as the barometer, the more progressive foodie also wants to know where their food comes from, how healthy the dish is, with some even going so far as knowing the politics and principles of the person or restaurant who prepared your food.

But how do we really enjoy our food? Also no, you don’t need deep pockets to be able to say you eat well (because you can eat some of the best dishes of your life at roadside cenderias and be disappointed at really fancy restaurants).

Here are ways to approach what we put into our mouths in a holistic, positive, sustainable manner so we can truly savor good dishes.

Mindfully eat

Seems like a no-brainer, except that we are all guilty of checking our phones or messaging or doing social media as we eat. Mindful eating means being 100 percent there during meals. Mindfully chewing your food, mindfully savoring each bite, and mindfully respecting the quality of your intake is the goal. It helps you eat less, with each bite a conscious decision. You're not just shoving food inside your mouth.

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### Choose whole foods

In an era of instant anything, whole foods are a true luxury. Whole foods, if they're available, should be prioritized over highly processed ones. Whole foods like fruits, veggies, nuts, seeds, and lean protein, which you should be able to identify as they look the way they were harvested, are packed with vitamins and minerals, help makes sure you meet your daily nutritional needs, and taste just the way nature intended them to do.

### Support local if you can

It's always better to eat lettuce you've grown yourself, or grown 10 kilometers from you, then eat lettuce that's prepacked and vacuumed sealed from a huge factory from another city or country. Every morsel of food that passes our lips has environmental impact, and one of the ways to truly enjoy your food is to buy local, because it helps reduce carbon footprint—and also makes it much more nutritional. Supporting local helps you eat with less guilt.

Visit weekend markets, explore your neighborhood talipapa, buy from small roadside stands during vacations, and always mindfully choose to buy from businesses or people within a few kilometer radius.

### Hydrate with a twist

I have a friend with such a beautiful life she does things with flair—even just when she preps her water. I admire the way she puts care into everything because it entails effort, creativity, and sophistication. In 2024, hydrate with panache. Here are a few things I'm copping from her.

**Herb-infused water:** Add fresh herbs like mint, basil, and rosemary in your water. This not only adds flavor but also makes your water smell wonderfully.

**Fruit ice cubes:** She freezes small pieces of fruits into her ice cubes, and then when she needs to use ice cubes, she drops these flavorful ones into her water.

**Sparkling water:** She makes her own blends by mixing plain sparkling water with agave syrup or honey, and then garnishes them with fruit slices

**Coconut water:** Using coconut water as base, she plops pineapples, kiwi, and other tropical fruits into her drink. Fancy and full of electrolytes.

**Chia seeds:** She adds chia seeds into the water. That's it. The seeds absorb liquid and becomes gel like, so it's like you're drinking pearls. Fun, but also adds an extra boost of hydration.

### Don't be afraid to try new cuisines

This year is when you step out of your gustatory comfort zone, and try new things you haven't tried before. It's not just about bragging rights. When you explore new cuisines,

you get introduced to the culture, history, and soul of its people. You'll gain a deeper understanding of their country, which helps break down cultural stereotypes. Your taste buds also get a treat when you introduce it to never before tried herbs and spices, and that refines your palate— meaning you'll get a more sophisticated one. You're also going to be introduced to ingredients that have unique nutritional values. For example: Kelp, which is common in East Asian cuisine, is a type of seaweed rich in iodine, which is essential for thyroid function. It also provides vitamins like A, B, C, and E, along with minerals such as calcium and iron. Turmeric, which is a normal ingredient in Indian cuisine but exotic for many, especially in the West, contains curcumin, a powerful anti-inflammatory compound with potential health benefits, including improved joint health and antioxidant properties. Trying new cuisines is also a good way to create new memories with someone, so there's that boost in your relationships.

### Plan your meals

You're not eating well if you rush and prepare your meals haphazardly. Always devote a day in the week to prepare and freeze meals that you can easily thaw and heat, especially if you work outside in the office or your children need baon for school.

To eat well, it is super important to plan and prepare so you don't get tempted to cook unhealthy food or order fast food. Create a shopping list, prep ingredients in advance, and plan for what to eat on days you know you'll be pressed for time.