

# Big Food Propaganda ‘Designed to Produce Wealth But Not Health’

*As early as the 1970s, the late Adelle Davis blamed processed foods for the “appalling amount of sickness in America.” Americans’ diets have only deteriorated since then, as the food industry promotes more and more processed foods over real, whole food.*

**By Dr. Joseph Mercola**

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## Story at a glance:

- The late Adelle Davis, who passed away in 1974, is known as the most famous nutritionist in the early to mid-20th century and was my first nutrition mentor.
- Time has proven her correct about many of the foundational nutrition basics; she was far ahead of her time on many issues.
- Davis promoted a whole-food diet and warned that refined and processed foods were the cause of most chronic health problems.
- Davis basically seeded the modern health food movement, the whole food movement in particular. That was her key advice. Just eat real, whole foods, nothing processed or refined.
- As food processing has become more intense and our food more artificial, chronic disease rates have skyrocketed and now even affect children.

The late Adelle Davis, who passed away in 1974, was my first mentor in nutrition. She’s known as the most famous — and controversial — nutritionist in the early to mid-20th century.

Her first publication was a 1932 promotional pamphlet for milk. Between 1935 and 1965, she wrote several books, four of which were written for the public: “Let’s Cook It Right,” “Let’s Have Healthy Children,” “Let’s Eat Right to Keep Fit,” and “Let’s Get Well.” Some 10 million copies of these four books were sold during her lifetime.

I purchased all of her books and read them in the ’70s. As my first nutrition mentor, she was my inspiration to adopt a healthy diet. Of course, my concept evolved quite dramatically over time, from fasting and low-carb eating to my current adoption of Ray Peat’s Bioenergetic principles that include loads of ripe fruit and avoidance of all fasting.

Was she right about everything? No, but she was correct about many of the foundational nutrition basics and was far ahead of her time on many issues.

The 50-year-old Associated Press interview below gives you a taste of her down-to-earth, commonsense approach.

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### **Davis seeded the whole food movement**

Davis basically seeded the modern health food movement, the whole food movement in particular. That was her key advice. Just eat real, whole foods, nothing processed or refined.

Davis grew up on a farm, studied home economics at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, and later got a degree in dietetics from the University of California at Berkeley.

After that, she moved to New York City, where she worked as a hospital dietician. She told the AP she became “very disillusioned” by this work experience. She’d entered the field thinking she would “make people healthy with good nutrition,” but instead, they were feeding patients “diets that were just horrible.”

She understood that whole foods are the key to good health — whole grains, whole milk, eggs, meats and organ meats, fruits and vegetables.

Today, however, we’ve come to realize that grains and certain vegetables can be highly problematic for many, even when cooked from scratch, due to their naturally high content of linoleic acid and/or anti-nutrients, and the fact that undigestible fermentable carbs promote endotoxin production.

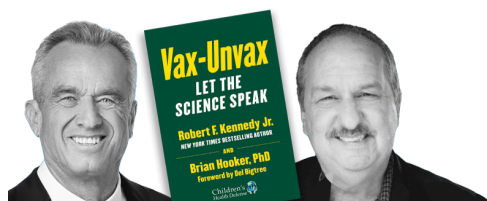
Granted, back then grains weren’t as loaded with gut-destroying chemicals like glyphosate, and they weren’t genetically modified organisms (GMO).

The first GMOs didn’t emerge until the 1990s. Genetically engineered glyphosate-resistant grains are loaded with glyphosate, and most processed foods are now made with GMOs.

That said, her overall message is as correct now as it was then. For good health, you need REAL food, and to keep virtually all processed foods out of your diet. The rest largely comes down to individual sensitivities and circumstances.

“Just [eat] natural foods ... Nothing refined. It’s that simple,” she told the AP.

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## 'Appalling amount of sickness'

In the interview, Davis laments about the "appalling amount of sickness in America" — and that was in 1974, a time when the obesity rate was a mere 6.2% when only 25% were considered overweight, the diabetes rate among people under 45 was in the single digits, and 87.1% of Americans self-reported being in good to excellent health!

Today, the obesity rate is at 41.9% and another 30.7% are overweight; 11.3% across age groups have Type 2 diabetes, and 45% of Americans have at least one chronic disease.

One wonders what she'd have to say about the state of public health today!

A key part of her message was that refined foods lack essential vitamins and minerals. She was among the first to emphasize the importance of trace minerals for good health, and she warned about the destruction of soils. "If these minerals are not in the soil, they won't be in the plants grown in the soil," she said.

Davis also stressed the importance of B vitamins, which she encouraged people to get from whole foods. She was also among the first to recognize the hazards of refined sugar and hydrogenated fats (i.e., seed oils or vegetable oils).

Davis believed "a great deal" of the health problems of her day, including mental health problems, were related to refined foods — the early versions of today's processed and ultra-processed foods — as nutrients like vitamins, minerals and healthy fats are removed during the processing, and then sugars and hydrogenated trans fats are added in.

Indeed, I've become convinced that excessive seed oil consumption is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, contributors to chronic disease in the Western world. I recently published a review paper on the hazards of linoleic acid in the high-impact nutrition journal *Nutrients*, which is available for free download.

## Propaganda has led us astray

Interestingly, back then, Davis realized that a major part of the problem was the food industry's power over medical education.

Then, as now, nutrition was hardly taught, and what little medical professionals did learn was far from accurate, as the curriculum was largely created by the processed food industry, which of course can never find a problem with any of its products, no matter how unnatural they are.

Davis once stated:

“If this country is to survive, the best-fed-nation myth had better be recognized for what it is: propaganda designed to produce wealth but not health.”

In the interview, she again referred to food advertising as false and misleading propaganda, saying:

“We’ve been told that certain cereals builds champions when it did not. You feed it to rats and they die.”

### **Processed foods are killing people prematurely**

Indeed, since Davis’ days, eliminating traditional whole foods in favor of more processed foods has been shown to promote obesity, cardiovascular diseases, Type-2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, depression and all-cause mortality.

Overall, processed foods may kill more people prematurely than cigarette smoking.

Processed food is also a major contributor to cancer. A 2018 study published in *The BMJ*, which included 104,980 participants followed for an average of five years, found that each 10% increase in ultra-processed food intake raised the cancer rate by 12%.

This works out to nine additional cancer cases per 10,000 people per year. The risk of breast cancer, specifically, went up by 11% for every 10% increase in ultra-processed food.

The World Economic Forum now wants to “improve” the food system by further increasing processed foods in the human diet and, as they put it, processing foods in “ways that are better for our health,” such as “fortification (or biofortification) — where nutrients are engineered in, either in the biology or manufacture of food — and the significant reformulation of current foods for fewer calories and more nutrients.”

3D-printed meat and insects are also being suggested to take the place of real meat.

According to the WEF, “Ultra-processed foods’ need not be unhealthy,” but these claims have no foundation in reality.

Ultimately, these kinds of ultra-processed alternative protein sources will only decimate public health further.

### **A nutritionist ahead of her time**

Davis was also ahead of her time with regard to cholesterol. For the past four decades, the U.S. government has warned that eating cholesterol-rich foods, such as eggs, would raise LDL cholesterol in your bloodstream and promote heart disease. But decades’ worth of research has utterly failed to demonstrate this correlation.

The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee finally addressed this scientific vacuum in January 2016, when it announced that “cholesterol is not considered a nutrient of concern for overconsumption.”

In the past, the guidelines suggested a limit of 300 milligrams per day; the equivalent of about two eggs. Now, the limit on dietary cholesterol has been removed entirely.

This is good news since dietary cholesterol is one of the most important molecules in your body. It's just a shame it took half a century for this change to be made.

Cholesterol plays an important role in brain health and memory formation and is indispensable for the building of cells and the production of stress and sex hormones, as well as vitamin D. (When sunlight strikes your bare skin, the cholesterol in your skin is converted into vitamin D.)

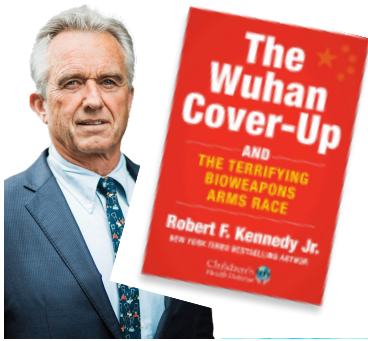
So, what was Davis' opinion on the recommendation to avoid cholesterol-rich foods?

"Cholesterol is high only when the foods are so refined we haven't the nutrients to utilize it well," she told the AP, again bringing the issue back to whole foods.

Davis also advocated for the proper balance of potassium and sodium, which is necessary for healthy blood pressure, and stressed the importance of choline, an essential nutrient found in beef liver and egg yolks that most people are sorely deficient in today.

Among other things, choline plays a major role in energy metabolism and mitochondrial function; it aids in the synthesis of phospholipids; and it's required for making acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter involved in healthy muscle, heart and memory performance.

Deficiency has been linked to the development of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, which is now rampant even among children.



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### **Modern processed foods are far worse than in Davis' days**

Again, Davis' primary warning was that processed foods destroy health. Unfortunately, things have only gotten worse since her time.

Food processing occurs on a spectrum, with traditionally canned or fermented foods being “processed” but minimally so, whereas ultra-processed foods have not only been cooked or altered but also contain unnatural ingredients.

In Davis' days, the primary issue was refined food, such as refined sugar and wheat. GMOs, artificial sweeteners and synthetic food additives were not yet in use.

Today, ultra-processed foods make up 57.9% of the average American's diet, and what characterizes them are:

- Ingredients that are not traditionally used in cooking.
- Unnaturally high amounts of processed sugar, salt and seed oils.

- Artificial flavors, colors, chemical sweeteners and other additives that imitate sensorial qualities of unprocessed or minimally processed foods (examples include additives that create textures and pleasing mouth-feel).
- Preservatives and chemicals that impart an unnaturally long shelf-life.
- Genetically engineered ingredients, which in addition to carrying potential health risks also tend to be heavily contaminated with toxic herbicides.

That Davis was correct in her assessment that real, whole food is necessary for optimal health is evident by the fact that as food processing has become more intense and our food more artificial, chronic disease rates have skyrocketed and now even affect children.

So, regardless of which foods you eat or avoid, one foundational basic remains true across the board: If you want to be healthy, eat only real food; nothing processed.

This advice alone will set you on the right path. Davis was one of the shining nutritional stars of the 20th century who understood and popularized this foundational biological truth.

*Originally published by Mercola.*

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Children's Health Defense.*

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### **Dr. Joseph Mercola**

Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of Mercola.com.

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3 months ago

Yes, I have gotten several e-mails about how people in the 50's ate meat, dairy, eggs etc and stayed slim. Uh...maybe because food in the 50's was pretty much real food? Not much after that the food production started with these great new ideas. Crisco comes to mind. TV dinners and microwaved garbage. Hello. When you eat garbage you are going to reap garbage in weight gain and health issues. Way back in the 1980's a local alternative medicine Dr. who studied with Linus Paulding, told me to only shop the outer aisle of the grocery store because that was the only place FOOD was located. All the other aisle contained JUNK. I never forgot that advice and still practice it today. On top of that I raise as much as I can, learned to can, freeze, dry and store. I'm 69 and still wear the same size I did in HS. Also haven't seen and MD since about 1995 and take no prescription drugs. I guess I should be dead? Pharma and modern "greatest healthcare in the world" sure wishes I were.

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BChristine → tag

3 months ago

I relate to everything you've said Tag. You've definitely lived your life right when it comes to nutrition and health!

I was lucky to have grown up in the 1960's with a Mother who made all home-cooked balanced meals. Although I recall TV dinners were in the freezer for something quick and easy for us kids. Mom NEVER bought soda - we would drink milk at every meal; and sometimes getting that milk from a nearby farm. Saturday nights were "steak

and sometimes getting that milk from a nearby farm. Saturday nights were steak night, and Sunday was homemade Pizza night. Food was 'cleaner' back then, but with the introduction of BigAg, subsidies and chemical farming, it gradually went to hell.

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**tag** → BChristine

2 months ago

I still have my own chickens that serve me fresh eggs everyday for breakfast too!

1 0 Reply • Share ›



**jann** → BChristine

2 months ago

I thought I was the only child whose meals were all homemade and whose mother only allowed milk. Soda was a special treat at parties. I still remember milk being delivered in glass bottles in the morning by the milkman.

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**BChristine**

3 months ago

Adelle Davis was way-ahead of her time when it came to knowledge of nutrition ... although I'm not sure I agree with her 100%, but she certainly knew the basics!

I heard she died fairly young at 70 y/o, and it was blamed on her diet early on and x-rays. However from my research, a person can change their diet which can make for a whole positive turnover in the body over a very short period of time; that's the beauty of our genetic makeup ... Maybe someone else can chime in on this?

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**Peter van der Stam** → BChristine

3 months ago

I am a traveler, going to Europe every year for about 6 months.

This year Thailand has been included.

Of course I have to feed myself, but very often I can't get Organically grown vegetables, or meat grown on natural pastures.

I am overweight with about 8kg's and working on getting rid of it.

More exercise and healthier foods now I am back in New Zealand.

Even though the food stalls along the roads in Thailand produce ( I think ) pretty healthy food, there are many obese Thai people.

Is that because there is a McDonald around the corner??

I wonder

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**Molly Pitcher**



