

Smart ways to live well

JANUARY 2008

Prevention

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FAST!**
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Get the Scale Moving

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(THAT WILL HELP
VIRTUALLY EVERYONE)

TURN UP YOUR BRAINPOWER!

REMEMBER
EVERYTHING

THINK FASTER

**Better
Body
Foods**
10 TO EAT
5 TO AVOID

LOVE YOUR AGE!

Be Confident,
Healthy
& Beautiful

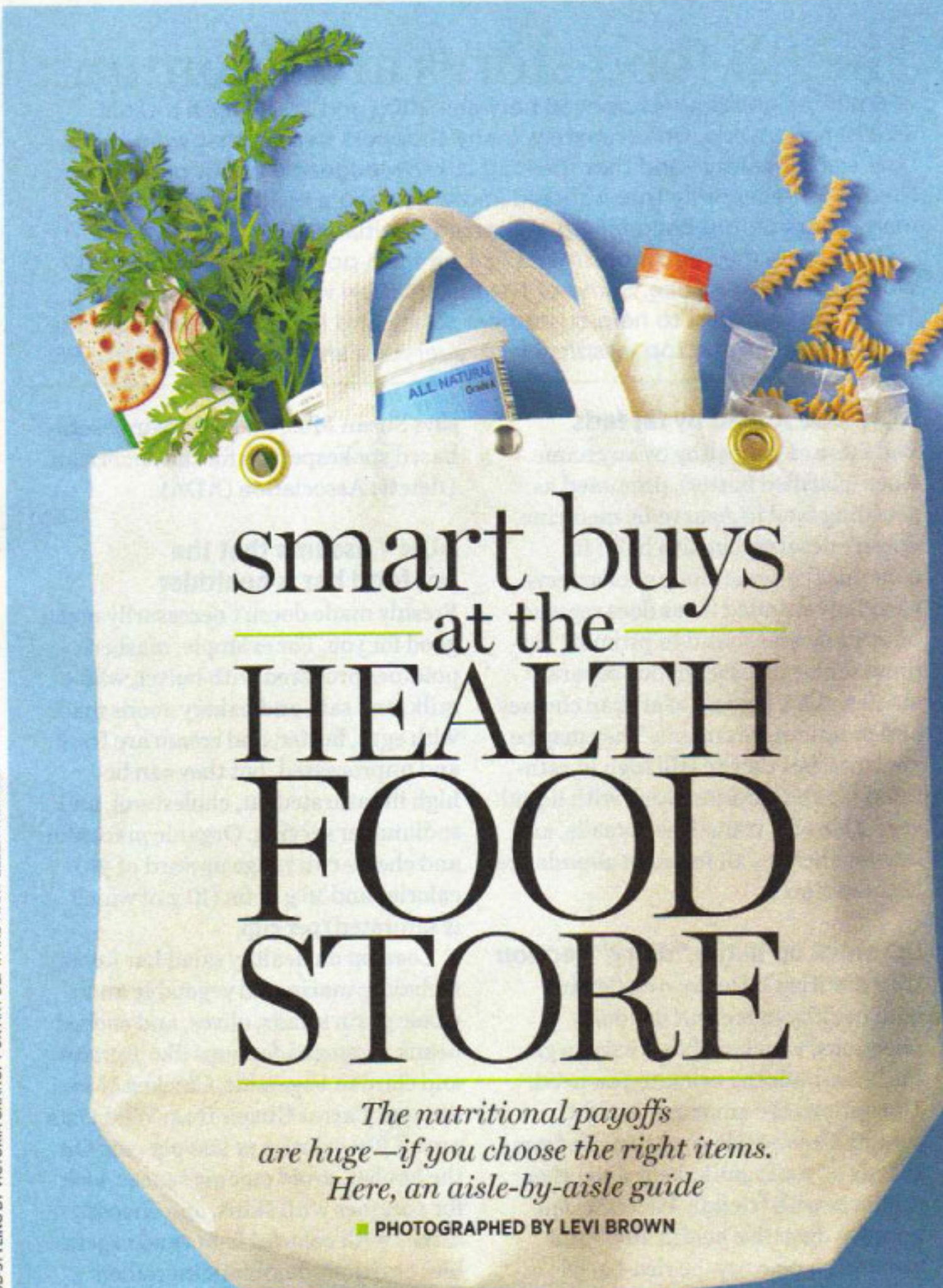
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smart buys
— at the —
**HEALTH
FOOD
STORE**

*The nutritional payoffs
are huge—if you choose the right items.
Here, an aisle-by-aisle guide*

■ PHOTOGRAPHED BY LEVI BROWN

FOOD STYLING BY VICTORIA GRANOF FOR ART DEPT. AND MARY-ELLEN WEINRIB

Health food stores are booming:

469 new establishments opened between 2005 and 2006, for a total of 35,876 nationwide. Unfortunately, many shoppers believe that everything they sell is healthy—and that the staff is knowledgeable about nutrition. Neither is necessarily true. I should know. I owned a health food store for many years before becoming a registered dietitian (RD).

Back then, my “nutrition smarts” came from popular bestsellers and word-of-mouth advice. Some of the information was valid; a lot wasn’t. Today, I’m qualified to help customers safely and healthfully navigate the aisles. Here are the top lessons I wish everyone knew. —David Grotto, RD

DON'T be fooled by fat fads

Bad fats are unhealthy by any name. Ghee (clarified butter), promoted as a healing food in Ayurvedic medicine, doesn’t deserve a health halo. It contains the same amount of artery-clogging saturated fat as does regular butter and was found to promote cardiovascular disease in four separate studies. Also, beware of artisan cheeses and premium ice creams. They may be gourmet, but they’re still high in saturated fat and calories. Stick with liquid vegetable oils, trans-free spreads, and low-fat cheeses, all found in abundance at these stores.

DO stock up in the “dairy” section

It’s a dietitian’s dream, overflowing with healthy dairy *and* nondairy selections, which makes it easy to get the bone-building calcium you need. The options are amazing: low-fat, creamy Greek-style yogurt made from sheep’s or goat’s milk; kefir and other products with friendly bacteria that improve digestive health and boost immunity; plus soy- or rice-based items that are low in saturated fat,

says Susan Moores, RD, a Minnesota-based spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association (ADA).

DON'T assume that the hot food bar is healthier

Freshly made doesn’t necessarily mean good for you. For example, mashed potatoes prepared with butter, whole milk, and salt, and bakery goods made with eggs, butter, and cream are fresh and unprocessed, but they can be high in saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium per serving. Organic macaroni and cheese can range upward of 410 calories and 16 g of fat (10 g of which is saturated) per cup.

Load up on healthy salad bar items including marinated vegetable and whole grain salads, olives, and cooked beans. Homemade soups like Tomato and Garden Vegetable, Chicken Noodle, and Carrot Ginger from Wild Oats are all 120 calories or less per cup. On the hot bar, avoid creamy sauces, look for potatoes with skins, and choose dishes with colorful fruits and vegetables as the predominant ingredients, recommends Moores.

DO check out the faux meats

They're one of the few places that carry an extensive variety of "vegetarian meats," including ready-to-eat, high-protein, fiber-rich, cholesterol- and saturated-fat-free lunchmeats, hot dogs, burgers, and sausages. Incorporating more vegetarian proteins into your diet and eating less saturated fat helps reduce the risk of developing heart disease. You can find a meat-free version of just about everything, including pepperoni, bacon, even chorizo. Choosing veggie chorizo saves 7 g of saturated fat, compared with the real thing, and adds 6 g of fiber for double the portion.

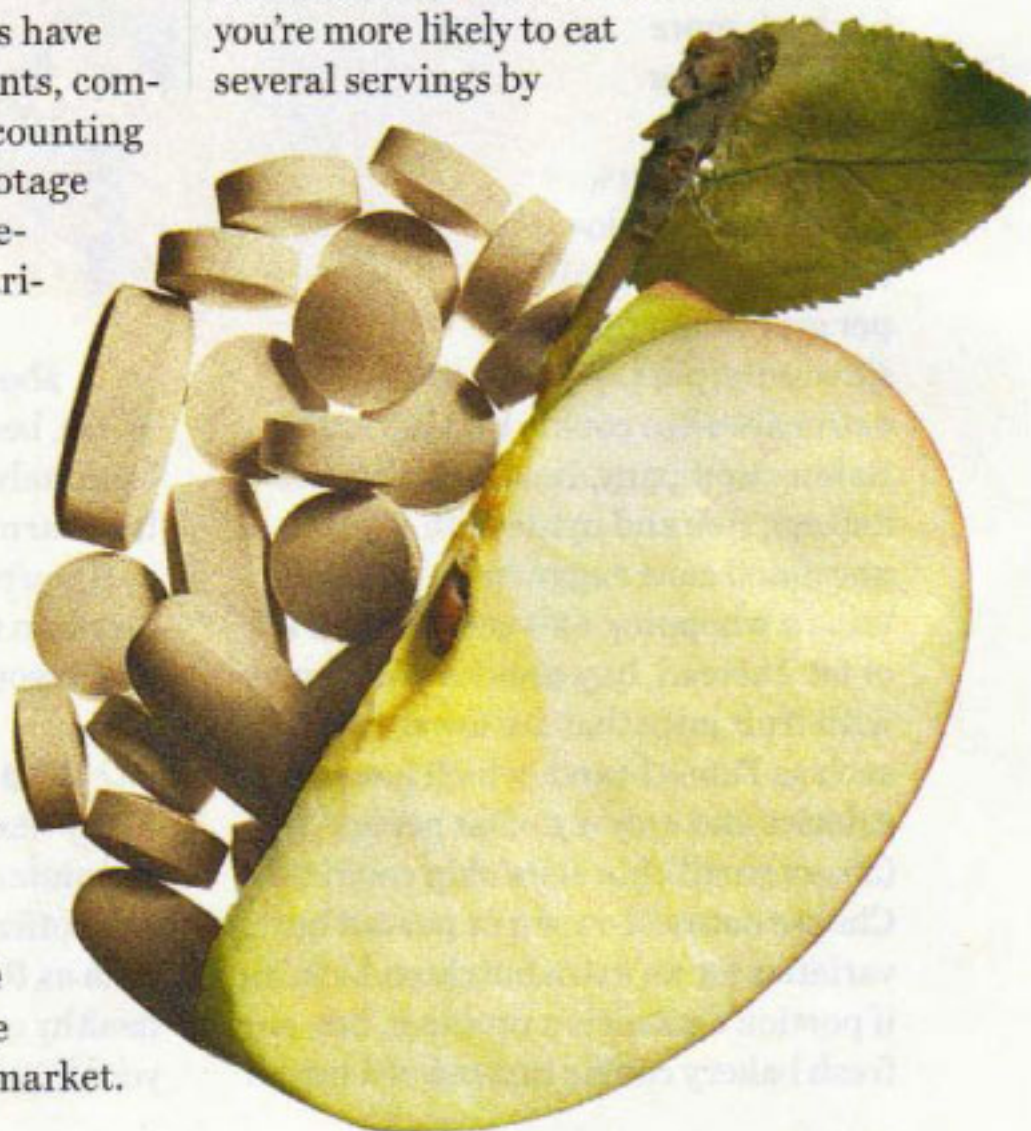
DON'T get your vegetables in the supplement aisle

Most natural food emporiums have sizable supplement departments, compared with supermarkets, accounting for up to 15% of the square footage of some stores. Though supplements can help round out nutritional shortfalls, they can't replace the thousands of natural nutrients in whole foods. "Never spend more on supplements than you do on groceries," says Dawn Jackson Blatner, RD, a spokesperson for the ADA. "Healthy food does a much better job of meeting your body's wide-ranging nutrient needs for much less money."

DO look for local produce

A health food store can be the next best thing to a farmers' market.

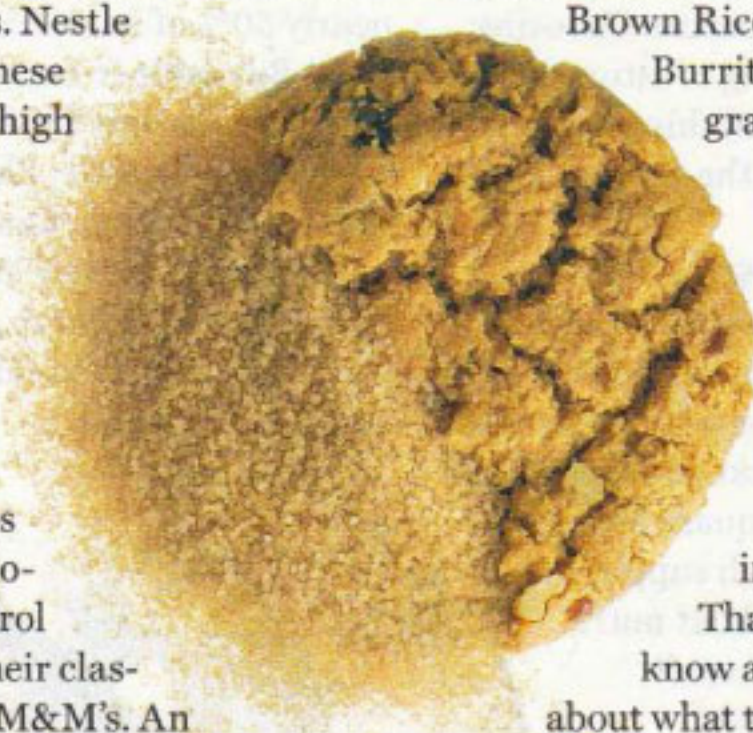
Whole Foods, for example, aims to dedicate 20% of its produce section to locally grown fruits and veggies. Buying local has its advantages: Because the distance from the farm to your plate is shorter, it's good for the planet (fewer carbon emissions are created in transit), and the food is more nutrient packed than varieties from distant lands. Pennsylvania State University scientists discovered that even when spinach was properly stored, it lost nearly 50% of its nutrients in 8 days' time. But aside from nutrition, local produce is simply fresher and tastier, says Marion Nestle, PhD, MPH, a professor of nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University and author of *What to Eat*. That means you're more likely to eat several servings by



day's end rather than tossing out limp, tasteless produce you never touched.

DON'T fall for "natural sugar" traps

It's true that "healthy" snack foods don't contain high fructose corn syrup or white sugar, but they can still be loaded with sugars in disguise, such as turbinado, sucanat, and Florida sugar crystals. The latter are derived from sugarcane or beets, the same sources as refined sugars. Nestle points out that these foods are just as high in calories without any added nutrition value. And they can be much more expensive. For example, all-natural Sundrops provide more calories and cholesterol per gram than their classic counterpart, M&M's. An oatmeal-raisin cookie by Alternative Baking Company, Inc., is cholesterol and egg free and made with organic unrefined cane sugar, but it still contains a whopping 480 calories and 18 g of fat. Instead, buy cookies sweetened with fruit juice that are lower in fat, such as Fabe's brand, which have 90 calories and only 4 g of fat per serving (3 very small chocolate chip cookies). Choose oatmeal-raisin or peanut butter varieties for an extra nutrition kick, and if portion control is a problem, buy one fresh bakery cookie instead of a box.



DO gobble up the whole grains

Whole grain products are typically plentiful at these stores, including 100% whole grain burger and hot dog buns, crackers, cereals, pitas, and pastas. These selections make it easy to feed your kids whole grain versions of the foods they love, like pizza or mac 'n' cheese. The stores also stock many frozen whole grain items such as waffles, pancakes, pizza crusts, and meals (like Ethnic Gourmet Chicken Biryani over Brown Rice or Amy's Breakfast Burrito made with a whole grain tortilla).

DON'T take advice from the clerk

Employees are not required to complete any formal education or training in nutrition science. That means you may know as much as they do about what to eat and why. Even worse, because they aren't health professionals, they could give you advice that harms rather than helps.

If you're looking for a registered dietitian for one-on-one advice, find one in your zip code at eatright.org.

DO take in a lesson

Many health and natural food stores schedule specialty classes not typically offered by mainstream markets, such as RD-led nutrition seminars and healthy cooking demos. Check with your local stores. ■