

The Starch Solution:

Eat The Foods You Love, Regain Your Health, and Lose the Weight For Good

Reviewed by Dale Lugenbehl

“The Starch Solution? Who wants to read a book about starch?” For many people, the word “starch” has an unappealing ring to it and they would be unable to get past the title of this outstanding book and actually open the cover and read it. That would be a huge mistake. This book is about eating a vegan, whole(unprocessed) foods diet emphasizing complex carbohydrates, and how doing so can vastly improve your health, and contribute positively to reversing climate change and resource depletion. We must realize that the sellers of foods that contain concentrated protein and NO carbohydrates and very little of anything else the body needs (that is, the meat and dairy industries) have been waging a propaganda war against carbohydrates for decades.

Dr. McDougall presents a very convincing case that humans are constructed to use complex carbohydrates as their source of energy: this means that our main source of energy (calories) should be coming from whole grains, beans, and starchy vegetables such as carrots, corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash. This, along with leafy greens and other fresh vegetables and fruit, is what we need to be eating.

McDougall points out that starch does NOT make us fat, though the cheese and butter and oils we put on complex carbs certainly do. With this way of eating, there is no need to restrict calories or ever feel hungry after a meal. McDougall shows how the fats we eat tend to be converted directly to body fat, but complex carbohydrates are used to power the body and, if there is an excess, the body burns off the calories as heat rather than converting them to body fat. In controlled research, “both trim and obese women fed 50 percent more calories [in the form of starch] than they usually ate in a day *plus* an additional 3 ½ ounces of sugar [gained] less than ... 1/8 of an ounce of fat daily... You’d have to overeat all of those extra calories... every day for nearly 4 months to gain 1 pound of extra body fat.” Other research cited by McDougall shows that adding more starch (complex carbs) to your diet can actually help a person to easily *lose* excess weight.

This book has a TON of great information in it. McDougall completely destroys the myth that animal protein is superior to plant protein, and shows that our concerns about getting “complete” protein and enough total protein are totally unfounded. He explains that, if you were to eat nothing else but enough potatoes to meet your daily calorie needs, you would automatically meet your total protein need for the day and you would also meet your daily requirement for each of the 8 essential amino acids that the human body cannot synthesize.

He also conclusively demonstrates the fallacy of drinking cow’s milk for calcium, as well as demonstrating the folly of taking calcium supplements.

The Starch Solution is quite comprehensive, but without being longwinded. There are excellent sections on vegan diet and preventing and reversing heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and arthritis, as well as an entire chapter on the enormous environmental benefits of eating a vegan diet. Dr. McDougall has produced a book that is clearly written and well organized, has excellent citations for the facts and research given, and includes numerous recipes at the end of the book. This book is appropriate both for long time vegans as well as those who are just starting out, and comes with the highest recommendation. (*American Vegan*, Winter 2016, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 17)