

*“Wellness, spirituality, and delicious food: all for a better life!”*

**Paul Kahan—Celebrity Chef-Restaurateur**

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THE

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# WHOLENESS COOKBOOK

TIMELESS RECIPES FOR GRACEFUL AGING



**ASHA PAUL**

Integrative Nutrition Health Coach

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**THE**

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# Reviews for *The Wholeness Cookbook*

*The Wholeness Cookbook* is a saucy and gorgeous feast of wisdom, guidance and delight. It is far more than just another cookbook. It is a passionate manifesto for holistic health, practical, emotional and spiritual written by a profound mystic and wise health coach who knows that “health is an ongoing process, but requires sustained engagement.” Everyone should read its instructions with joy, especially sacred activists who will need a foundation of glowing health for their selfless service. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Andrew Harvey— Oxford University’s youngest fellow  
and author of *The Hope: A Guide to Sacred Activism*

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Having spent most of my adult life in professional kitchens, Asha Paul’s *Wholeness Cookbook* provides a timely and welcome perspective that enriches my soul. Wellness, spirituality and delicious food all for a better life!

Paul Kahan— Celebrity Chef-Restaurateur

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In this era of high stress and intense emotions, Asha Paul enlightens us with a naturalistic understanding of the relationship between food, mood and wholeness. You’ll love her authentic way of sharing a sacred view of cooking. *The Wholeness Cookbook* offers a sweet morsel of natural wisdom.

Deborah Sandella, PhD, RN — Author of *Goodbye Hurt & Pain*

*The Wholeness Cookbook* is a warm and friendly reference that is chock-full of wisdom, philosophy and deeply nutritious recipes. It's a beautiful addition to my kitchen library.

Ami Parkerson — Wholesale Sales Manager, New World Publishing

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We've all heard the phrase "You are what you eat." Integrative Nutrition Health Coach Asha Paul takes a different approach—what you eat supports who you want to become. In *The Wholeness Cookbook* you will find so much more than delicious recipes for refreshing Blackberry Soda or a comforting Weary Traveler's Régénérer. Paul will take you on a holistic journey exploring the mind-body connection, spirituality and food, and pressing conversations about politics, diets, and the trap of "healthy foods." If you're a human who eats, this book is for you!

Laura Thomas — author of *The Magic of Well-Being: A Modern Guide to Lasting Happiness* and founder of Next Level Story

## DEDICATION

To my biological and spiritual fathers: S.R. Muthayah and Dom. Bede Griffiths. Thank you for encouraging me to shine and to speak the truth. Most of all, thank you for your unconditional love.



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SECTION 1

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*Preface and  
Introduction*

# Preface

Although this is technically a cookbook, it is my ardent desire that you will see it as much more. For health comprises more than just what we put in our bodies.

There are four sections to this book:

- \* Section One: ***Introduction***
- \* Section Two: ***Food, Philosophy, and Healing***
- \* Section Three: ***Recipes***
- \* Section Four: ***Final Words and More***

Over 25 years ago, as I was about to join the faculty at a graduate program, I was told by the director of the school that my course could be listed as a simple cooking class, but nothing more. Nothing related to the health benefits of food, or lifestyle changes for well-being—just cooking.

Instinctively, I felt that it was not something I could bring myself to do. Even though working in the university circuit would have been an asset to my budding career, I knew this opportunity was not the right fit. It broke my heart to say thank you, but no thanks.

You see, I had learned firsthand that cooking is more than a means to an end. Not only have I personally experienced the healing power of food through the act of cooking, but I nursed our eighty-year-old mentor back to health during his three-month stay with us in a remote corner of icy Vermont. That was thirty years ago.

Since then, I have learned that no matter how much broccoli someone eats, they can still feel lousy if they are not taking care of their whole self.

Why? Because:

- \* There are **no** diets or magic pills to be, feel, and look our best.
- \* The path to health is triune, i.e., practical, emotional, and spiritual.
- \* Our bodies change, and what worked when we were younger often does not continue to work as we age.

So, what helps? A way of life! In other words, the composite of every aspect of our life affects our health and well-being. This is what I want to share with you in this book: how to cultivate a healthy lifestyle that supports all areas of your life, while using cooking as the backbone of our journey.

I got into this line of work because it was personal. Although I was not a sickly child, I grew up to be a frail teenager with excruciating, long menstrual cycles. This condition lasted into my forties, which is when I made life-altering changes. You see, I thought I was eating healthy and making good choices. But the fact was, my notion of “clean eating” was the very cause of my problem. It took two scary biopsies and the verge of losing my uterus to change my health outlook and philosophy. I’ll be sharing more later in the book.

Now if you are wondering what really is “clean eating” and where did it come from, here is a brief summary.

The basis of clean eating stems from choosing foods in their natural state such as whole fruits, vegetables, etc., rather than consuming processed or packaged foods. This concept is similar to how our ancestors ate just a couple of hundred years ago, around the world. And if you do consume processed foods, do make sure that the processing is nominal. So far, so good.

The problem arises when this notion becomes a fixation which turns to an obsession and takes on a cultlike following. Unfortunately, it gets promoted by major cooking shows and celebrities where words like “low-fat,” “low-calories,” “organic,” and so on, get thrown in to make it enticing for the consumer, with hardly any education or understanding about nutrition and/or how each food affects our body and our brain function.

The term “clean eating” needs to be treated with caution. Why? Because of eating disorders such as orthorexia nervosa. I speak about this more in Chapter 4. For now, it suffices to say that it disproves the marketing gimmick of one-size-fits-all propaganda that hoodwinks us into indiscriminate buying because a product touts certain health benefits.

Keep in mind, like a snowflake, each human being is unique. This scientific fact is known as bioindividuality.<sup>1</sup> I see this played out in my own life as well as in students. To emphasize this point further, let me share with you a student’s history. Just last year, I started working with a student who is presently in his nineties. I had coached his son successfully in getting his health back on track through my methodology. Since they shared a household, the parent witnessed the spectacular results and transformations first-hand. And even though the man shared my recipes and coaching techniques with his father, it was only after the nonagenarian started working with me that he overcame years of digestive disorders and sleep problems.

The concept of bioindividuality is hard for our quick-fix culture to accept, as we have grown accustomed to accumulating lists of healthy foods and pill popping. We prefer this approach over behavioral changes, but it comes with a high cost to our physical and mental well-being.

As a health coach, it is important to me to provide my students with current information. I avidly research cutting-edge discoveries in biology, nutrition, new psychology, and healthy aging. I would be doing a disservice to my profession if I were not studying up-to-date scientific inventions/discoveries in the field of health and well-being. Beyond that, to put it simply, I’m just in love with good health!

My interest in cutting-edge information goes way back. I have always been bookish. The joy of reading preserved my sanity, especially between ages fifteen and eighteen, as I had an emotionally absent mother. Every weekend, from the time I woke up on Saturday mornings until late Sunday night, I was left to my own devices. My mother preferred to spend her weekends in the company of her friends, far away, rather than home with her daughter.

Looking back, this was a blessing in disguise. Even as a teenager in India, the works of great minds such as psychologist Carl Jung or the revered

Benedictine monk Bede Griffiths attracted me. This interest was utterly atypical of my generation in that milieu. I can say I was an oddball. Interests in the more profound dimensions of life's mysteries always fascinated me. However, about thirty years ago, I was genuinely hooked on discovering that health and healing were also a hidden mystery. And the key to unlocking it lies in our active participation on a day-to-day basis.

In the last ten to fifteen years, I began to discover other aspects related to health beyond merely the food we eat, especially in the realm of mental and emotional well-being. If I could summarize my years of education and coaching in one simple phrase, it would be this: Health is not a destination! Health is an ongoing process that requires sustained engagement, and this is particularly true of mental health. I know from hard-earned experience that lasting change in our well-being happens when we integrate and align the mind's understanding with the heart's sensitivities.

With all this in mind, I have included more than just recipes in this book. However, I have intentionally made the chapters bite-size for easy reading and quick absorption. Some of you may be well versed with this material. If so, I invite you to see it as a refresher course.

On the other hand, if the concepts discussed in this book are new to you, and you don't believe they belong in a cookbook, I invite you to reframe your expectations of a cookbook. Remember Forrest Gump? "Life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you're going to get." Treat these new concepts like chocolates you've never tasted before. Try to keep an open mind and see where it takes you. If an idea does not speak to you, disregard it. However, the next one might. And if the whole lot of them turn out to be a bunch of baloney to you, well, that might be something you throw into a recipe. At least, you can enjoy the recipe section. 😊

Happy reading!

# Introduction

I come from a farming community in India. My ancestors, for the past 500 years or so, have tilled the ground and cultivated food.

As India gained its independence from colonial rule, they branched into professional careers, starting with my father's generation.

My dad was an engineer by profession. All the same, his generation (including him) retained their love for agriculture. Each week, he made a gruesome ten-hour roundtrip, changing four separate buses to manage his ancestral land. After retirement, he moved back to his native village and became a full-time farmer until a stroke incapacitated him.

My darling father passed in 2015. I will tell you that, despite his flaws, he was a good man and a phenomenal dad. I miss him dearly, almost daily.

I am no different from him. Even though I immigrated to North America 30 years ago, my love for our ancestral lands has never waned. Presently, I am fighting for my legal share of my tiny piece of land as I write this. I confess it pains me deeply that I wasn't given a fair share, being a girl child. However, to add insult to injury, even lands bequeathed legally to me were seized by a male relative in the family.

It is not my intention to burden you with my woes. However, for years I erroneously believed that it was solely my fault—that my gender made me less worthy. I did not discern the gender bias that ran rampant in my own family.

The reason I share this with you is because it takes courage to be vulnerable. And I am just starting to find my voice in these matters. So, here's an opportunity to exercise it even though it feels like airing my dirty laundry. On the positive side, handling food is such an integral part of my healing process that it feels okay to share this with you, knowing we're on a journey of food, health, and reclaiming what is rightfully ours: a joyful life.

In this book, I want to take you on a journey towards wholeness through home cooking. Cooking, for me, is not only a way to create healthy meals for consumption; it is a means to heal. So, I will pepper this book with stories with the intention that they inspire you to heal as well. As you may know from my first book, it was the health of my spiritual mentor, the late Rev. Bede Griffiths, that introduced me to the healing power of food.

Since we're combining food, spirituality, and healing throughout this book, I would like to introduce you to the goddess Lakshmi, in whom all three come together. She represents health, wealth (material as well spiritual), and fertility in Hinduism. Lakshmi is arguably one of the most prominent goddesses of the ancient world, perhaps the original harvest goddess, who is revered and worshipped to date in India and worldwide.

More importantly, Lakshmi is the cosmic representation of the abundance in all of creation, specifically our planet Earth. But does she have a place in the kitchen? And what has she got to do with cooking?

The answer to the first question is a resounding YES! Remember, she is the personification of Mother Nature, and farmers invoke Lakshmi for a bountiful harvest. Each of our home kitchens is the localized version of Mother Nature's generosity transforming from farm to table.

Unfortunately, today, our connection to nature is easily lost through our culture of packaged foods and stocked aisle.

Our pantries often resemble mini-supermarkets filled with colorful boxes of cereals. The eye-catching plastic bottles containing beverages and so-called "healthy foods" barely preserve the wholeness of nature. If someone from the early part of the last century time traveled into one of our kitchens or supermarkets, they would infer that we are an alien planet estranged from nature's goodness.

The second question about Lakshmi's role in our cooking today is that she is an essential aspect of our "Sacred Kitchen." Suppose you have a copy of my previous book, *The Blissful Mouthful Cookbook*. In that case, you may recall I introduced the concept of Sacred Kitchen there. I will offer a quick recap here.

The Sacred Kitchen concept is that, in a Hindu household, especially in India, the kitchen is considered a sacred space, so much so that an altar with a goddess (and god) adorns the kitchen. The idea behind this concept is to establish a connection between the material and spiritual dimensions.

It might be good to keep in mind that I did not grow up with the notion of the Sacred Kitchen. My birth family is Christian, and therefore my mother did not practice it. The concept became familiar to me when I visited my Hindu friends' homes and was invited to share a meal with them.

You see, quite a few of my Hindu friends' families ate their meals sitting on the kitchen floor. The kitchen was kept spic and span. I would gaze adoringly at their kitchen altar, for it nourished my soul even though, as a child, I was not consciously aware this was happening. When I had my kitchen in North America, it didn't occur to me for several years to create my Sacred Kitchen here in the west.

However, this changed when we started our first annual pilgrimage to India taking a group from the west. In 1999, I came back from India with an armload of goddess pictures. I created my Sacred Kitchen altar in our tiny, dark California kitchen, and ever since, an image of Lakshmi has adorned my kitchen altar.

I don't know why I was drawn to the image of Lakshmi for my kitchen altar. She is a common sight in Hindu homes, although not necessarily in the kitchen. However, as I began to understand her connection to nature, the harvest, and food, I realized that, subconsciously, I had attuned to her vibrational energy.

Suppose you would like to create your Sacred Kitchen but are unable to relate to Lakshmi. In that case, my suggestion is to use holy pictures, even statues, of deities that speak to your faith tradition. This substitution is what I suggest to some of my coaching students. I, too, maintain a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes in my kitchen, gifted to me by my mother.

Lakshmi's energies create a sense of the sacred in our cooking space. If you feel comfortable with her, I recommend her highly. If you don't, feel free to create a sense of the sacred in your kitchen with images that work for you.



SECTION 2

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# Food, Philosophy and Healing

## CHAPTER 1

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# Foods & Moods

*“The food you eat can be either the safest and most powerful form of medicine or the slowest form of poison.”*

— ANN WIGMORE

I dare say that most, if not all, of our food-related issues have an emotional flavor. Coupled with the way our food industry has been hijacked, we have a recipe for a tumultuous relationship with one of our most basic needs: food!

It is safe to say that our thinking feeds our emotions. Did that pun jump out at you—“feed”? Exactly! For better or worse, we feed our emotions. We even have terms devised for this today. For example, “hangry”—a word newly added to the dictionary—describes our emotional state concerning food! Suppose you haven’t come across this word yet. In that case, “hangry” is defined as an informal adjective that means “irritable or angry because of hunger.”<sup>2</sup>

While researching foods and moods, I was thrilled to come across an article published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine. In this article, four studies examined how emotions are metaphorically associated with taste; specifically, the associations between taste words and emotional words, referred to as “taste–emotion association.” The article’s intriguing title, “The Taste of Emotion: Metaphoric Association

Between Taste Words and Emotion/Emotion-Laden Words,”<sup>3</sup> conveys the message succinctly.

And the results?

“Sweet” was associated with positive emotion/emotion-laden words. “Bitter,” followed by “sour” and “spicy,” was related to negative emotion/emotion-laden words. There was a consistent metaphoric association in both taste-to-emotion and emotion-to-taste directions, such as:

- \* “Bitter” and “sad”
- \* “Sour” and “envy”
- \* “Spicy” and “angry”
- \* “Sweet” and “happy”

Most importantly, these studies have the capacity for a greater understanding of the embodied cognition theory.<sup>4</sup> The gist of this theory is that what we experience bodily can influence what we process in mind. And vice versa. Put simply, our body and mind influence each other.

I don’t mean to go all geeky here, but the embodied cognition theory is very different from dualism. Dualism originated with Descartes. Remember René Descartes, who declared in the 17th century that our body and mind are entirely different and that there is no connection between them whatsoever? This outdated philosophical model continues to influence our present-day science and society.

We now know that Descartes’s model is no longer valid! This erroneous way of looking at what is now known as the “body-mind connection” has caused us significant damage over the past several hundred years. The body-mind connection is no longer just a theory. Our emotions affect our health, and in turn, the foods we eat affect our emotions. It is equally important to recognize that the foods we are supposed to eat—or not eat—also influence our emotions.

Despite the new information available, most people are not aware of the relationship between foods and moods, including my well-educated coaching

students. They are often surprised at how their food consumption could profoundly impact their emotional well-being, which they discover through our coaching process. My biggest success story is my husband and his battle with PTSD. Once he began to accept my recommendations (spouses, you know that this is no cakewalk, ha ha...) and found the relationship between foods and moods for himself, it made a huge difference in managing his condition.



*“A successful marriage  
requires falling in love  
many times, always  
with the same person.”*

*– Mignon McLaughlin*



***“A saucy and gorgeous feast of wisdom, guidance and delight, The Wholeness Cookbook is far more than just another cookbook. It is a passionate manifesto for holistic health, practical, emotional and spiritual written by a profound mystic and wise health coach.”***

**Andrew Harvey—Oxford University’s youngest fellow  
and author of *The Hope: A Guide to Sacred Activism***

In the Wholeness Cookbook, Health Coach Asha Paul goes beyond her delicious original recipes to address critical issues impacting optimal health and wellness, including:

- ✦ Soy or no soy?
- ✦ Food and moods
- ✦ Karma, aging and the brain
- ✦ Food, politics and manipulation!
- ✦ Addiction and the pharmacy in your kitchen

Asha makes it simple for anyone to understand this vital information in addition to sharing her plant-based recipes while also including some egg dishes.



Asha Paul is a health coach who has been researching holistic health, food and mood for more than 25 years. A graduate of the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, the world's largest health coaching and nutrition school, she is also the author of *The Blissful Mouthful Cookbook*.

To read her blogs, watch recipe creation videos, schedule a consultation and learn about Asha Paul’s health coaching program, *Manage Your Waist With Taste*, visit her website [www.ashapaul.com](http://www.ashapaul.com)

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