

CHRISTINA CAMPION

TIME *to* EAT

*Healing Mind, Body and Soul
with a Modern-day Macrobiotic Lifestyle
The Story of a Once-Starved Survivor*



Time to Eat

Healing Mind, Body, and Soul
with a Modern-day Macrobiotic Lifestyle

The Story of a Once-Starved Survivor

Christina Champion

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Within each of us exists all the information of the entire universe. But we have either forgotten it and/or it is blocked or stuck deep within our DNA cells due to all the generational afore years of inappropriate diets and lifestyles that took us further and further away from our most natural and divine source of knowledge and knowing.

To the great good health and well-being of all sentient beings and our magnificent planet Earth.

I was happy to guide Christina and be part of her journey to health. I always admired her courage and tenacity in following everything to completion. This is the spirit that always leads to lasting health.

—Denny Waxman

Denny Waxman is a senior macrobiotic counselor, teacher, and author of *The Great Life Diet*, *The Complete Macrobiotic Diet* and *The Ultimate Guide to Eating for Longevity*.

Denny is the founder of the Strengthening Health Institute (SHI) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Contents

Introduction.....	xi
Chapter 1: The Roots of the Problem	1
Chapter 2: My Early Life: Food Memories.....	4
Chapter 3: Dramatic Changes.....	7
Chapter 4: Life with MM	9
Chapter 5: Day School and Queen Margaret's Boarding School ...	17
Chapter 6: 1973–1977: College, Love, and Eating Disorder	25
Chapter 7: Working Girl.....	28
Chapter 8: New Boyfriend	32
Chapter 9: 1977: Attempted Suicide.....	34
Chapter 10: 1977–1978: First Trip to the United States on a Ship and Pregnancy	36
Chapter 11: Birth of a Beautiful, Healthy Daughter.....	40
Chapter 12: Beginning New Life in America	44
Chapter 13: Separation and New Business Venture	46
Chapter 14: The Art of Chewing.....	50
Chapter 15: Travels.....	55
Chapter 16: My Prison Pen Pal	57
Chapter 17: Trip to South Africa 1988	58
Chapter 18: Starved	62
Chapter 19: Dying?	64
Chapter 20: Struggling to Stay Alive and Miracle Appointment...	67
Chapter 21: Beginning to Treat the Condition.....	72
Chapter 22: Return to USA	86
Chapter 23: Living with My New Family in Upstate New York 1993–1996	90
Chapter 24: A Recurrence and a Return.....	97

Chapter 25: August 1996: Purchasing Land and Building a Cabin	101
Chapter 26: Starting a Community Barter System and Practicing a More Sustainable Lifestyle	108
Chapter 27: 1997: Outhouse and Tent Platform	112
Chapter 28: 1997: Mummy and Winnie Visit the Homestead ...	114
Chapter 29: Winter Quarters	117
Chapter 30: Caring for MM and a Relapse	119
Chapter 31: Back on the Land	123
Chapter 32: Hawaii 2000 and Grandmother's Death	125
Chapter 33: Back Home	127
Chapter 34: Move to Hawaii via West Turn, 2001	130
Chapter 35: Great Changes 2002: New Life, Work, and Relationship in Hawaii	137
Chapter 36: Losing Mum	140
Chapter 37: Life after Mum and the Book	143
Chapter 38: Lyme Disease	146
Chapter 39: New Orleans	148
Chapter 40: Seasonal Commutes and Ongoing Cabin Projects	150
Chapter 41: Life Changes	152
Chapter 42: Hurricane Sandy: October 28, 2012	154
Chapter 43: February 2014: Sharing Macrobiotics with My Daughter in a Whole New Way	156
Chapter 44: My Sewing Hat	159
Chapter 45: Around the World Again! Western United States of America Trip: Eastern Around the World Trip	160
Chapter 46: Cook, Pray, Eat	162
What I Have Come to Know about Myself	173
Fifteen of Some of My Favorite Recipes	195
Acknowledgments	213

Introduction

Half Starved

I had been away for three months, and when I returned, my husband said, “You look like death.” I hadn’t looked at myself in a mirror naked until then, and I was so deeply shocked at how malnourished I looked. And suddenly, I was very afraid. I had turned from a healthy, full-fleshed young woman into a near skeleton.

This is the story of how I almost died of starvation and malnutrition from an eating disorder. I am writing this very intimate story in the hope that it may help others improve their health. My condition had such complex origins that came to include multiple diagnoses, and many readers may very well identify with one or more of my afflictions.

On my last day of boarding school in 1972, an accidental food regurgitation incident caused me to become generally fearful of food and eating and triggered a pattern of behavior that would plague me for the next thirteen years.

From that day forward, I struggled on and off with both acute and chronic anorexia, bulimia, and some alcohol-dependency. I also experimented with some psychedelic drugs and various alternative dietary, fasting, and cleansing programs, eventually embracing wholeheartedly and with great naivete and ignorance, a macrobiotic diet and lifestyle.

However, the ignorance of my condition and lack of understanding of which dishes and how best to prepare them for that con-

dition slowly but surely got me into a real pickle until in the autumn of 1989 when, at 5'7" and weighing only seventy-eight pounds, it became clear that if help were not found soon, I would probably die.

Thankfully, that help came in the form of some commonsense advice given by a senior macrobiotic counselor. The dietary and lifestyle changes that he recommended and periodically adjusted thereafter saved my life, and as I began to heal on many different levels, I started to understand more clearly the nature of this oftentimes life-threatening disease.

I have chosen to include, in particular, all the different food and drink-related experiences because they surely give reference to my condition, life journey, and vocational interest in both what I was fed and my food choices. My search eventually led to a more healthy, intuitive place.

I have met and studied with some extraordinarily wise and evolved teachers and have been guided to use some interesting tools, including yoga, shiatsu, aikido, tai chi, macrobiotics, do-in, tantra, and nine-star ki. They have all been, without a doubt, slowly but surely helping me to heal on many levels and to know and become who I am and my purpose in this lifetime.

I do not think of myself as a writer, preferring to be more physically active and unable to keep myself pepped up with caffeine, which seems to be the common writers' friend, finds me very challenged to have taken on this task. In addition, as a highly sensitive and rather private person who shies away from attention, I prefer instead to be a quiet observer, listener, and reader.

However, I simply haven't had and don't have a say or choice in the matter, though, as it, the book, seems to have chosen me.

During the summer of 1993, I received a strong message that I needed to start writing an account of my life experiences with food and eating, and ever since, this inner voice has been urging me forward, sometimes gently reminding but more often insisting with urgency.

In the past year, this voice grew especially loud, and at last, unable to ignore it any longer, I was called to the task of finishing this book.

I had thought I would need to be in a very quiet and secluded setting in order to make the final push but found myself in a fairly busy, oftentimes noisy and stressful, urban, albeit tropical, setting for the five months that I allotted to write. The saving grace was being located a mere five-minutes' walk to a beautiful beach on the south shore of Maui, Hawaii, where I walked and swam almost daily. This definitely helped the progress.

Chapter 1

The Roots of the Problem

Saying that a large percentage of the world population suffers from some type of eating disorder, alcohol, obsessive-compulsive, and/or drug dependency will probably come as no great surprise to many people. Moreover, the chances are that many readers of this book may have gone or are indeed even now going through an uncomfortable food, drug, or behaviorally compulsive-related experience and/or know someone who is.

What might be of some news and interest is that these diseases—commonly known today as anorexia, bulimia, obesity, and behavioral and drug addictions—are all symptoms of an underlying condition of *hypoglycemia*.

I was born with this condition.

Now thirty-two years later, I wish to share the account of how my expansive inquiry into achieving good health eventually guided me to use a natural plant-based diet and lifestyle and a simple format that helped me better understand and heal this hypoglycemic birth condition. Furthermore, it seems that very few people are able to see or make the connection of eating disorders, addictions, and drug dependency with this very worldwide prevalent disease, and I attempt to explain how simply it can be addressed, helped, and healed.

Why do I call my story *Time to Eat*?

The title has its origins in my childhood when my siblings and I went to live with our maternal grandmother. Mealtimes were strictly adhered to, and yet the meals themselves were rushed and tense. It was as if there was *no* time to eat with disastrous results. Then years later, I experienced for the first time in my life what it felt like to eat consciously and slowly and to truly take time to eat, especially at regular times. Hence, this very meaningful title.

Mealtimes at Saint Nicholas, the home of my grandparents:

A large, Asian, brass, carved gong or brass bell was rung by one of the house staff when it was time for a meal. These times were set in stone from generations past and only lapsed as the staff either died or left, and the formality of the gong or bell dropped, though lunchtimes remained at 1:00 p.m. Then no time to eat. This wreaked havoc on my nervous system and the already compromised inner organs.

I totally understand that the staff needed to be considered, though we often had to help with setting the tables, clearing plates, and in later years, washing up afterward. I am so very grateful to my grandmother for instilling in me a sense of regularity around mealtimes, which would later serve to help me heal. Also and especially that I was taught these manners of being helpful and considerate. This routine at Saint Nicholas went on daily for years until finally, as funds diminished, there wasn't even a cook to cater to those mealtimes.

My grandmother was born in a 120-room castle in 1901 (Lumley Castle, near Durham, was the seat of her father and mother, the Tenth Earl and Countess of Scarborough). She was raised by a series of mostly very strict, cold-hearted, older spinster governesses. She saw her parents for thirty minutes daily at 4:00 p.m. (tea time) and only if they were in residence, as they constantly moved in between their various other stately homes in England (one of which was at 21 Park Lane in London that was bombed during World War II and on which foundation the London Hilton now stands).

My grandmother told me her childhood was quite miserable, and she vowed that when she grew up, she would always try and

surround herself with loving people for the rest of her life. And she managed to fulfill that promise. She had a premonition at age twelve years that she would marry my grandfather after his first wife (sister of her father) died, and so she did in 1922. I still have her engagement dress and silk-embroidered shawl, both of which I have worn on several occasions!

She tried really hard to be a wonderful, modern, up-to-date grandmother and succeeded in various ways, but on the other side, she would become rather nasty when crossed, and if she felt she was losing control with any of us four grandchildren, she would dole out punishments similar to those given to her as a child.

She said my grandfather accepted the fact that she was thirty years younger and still had needs that he was unable to meet and so he turned a blind eye to her extramarital goings-on, and she was always very discreet. GP apparently adored and supported her in all her ways.

Chapter 2

My Early Life: Food Memories

I was born in a private clinic near Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland, England, on Tuesday, June 4, 1957, and although the exact time is unknown, according to my father's poetic words, "daylight was in the sky when she took her first breath." I was the second child of what would eventually become a family of four children: three girls and the youngest, a boy.

Simply put, as a newborn, I was unable to accept food initially because of the condition of my internal organs. I have come to understand that my spleen and pancreas, the organs necessary for producing and supplying the blood with insulin, which feed the brain to survive and evolve, were severely compromised and constricted. I was finally tempted to eat when my grandmother intervened and insisted I be given an extremely rich sweet food traditionally given to babies that were either premature, malnourished, or somehow not thriving and consisted of raw, unpasteurized, full-cream cow's milk generously laced with white sugar. This formula served to create an ever-increasing dependency, which over time, exacerbated and further weakened those organs.

(A shocker: Additional information came to me fairly recently on the subject of the family alcohol dependency. In 2012, my father wrote an article for a local newspaper in Bhurmannsdriff, South Africa, where he was living and sent out copies to all his five children. He basically said that he was tired of hearing so many new parents

complaining about what a hard time they were having getting their babies to settle and that they, the families, were all sleep deprived. Dad said that he had used a simple solution. Both he and my mother had a snifter of brandy before bedtime, and they topped off the baby bottles with the same brandy, insuring the whole family slept through the night and woke up refreshed and ready for the new day.)

This first alcoholic "nourishment" added an extra layer to the platform of the next thirty-two years of my life, which were spent for the most part struggling to maintain balance in a body that rarely seemed to be functioning normally and eventually brought me to the brink of death.

Webster's definition of the word *anorexia* as a noun is "a loss of appetite; inability to eat" and *anorexia nervosa* "an eating disorder primarily affecting adolescent girls and young women, characterized by a pathological fear of becoming fat, distorted body image, excessive dieting, and emaciation."

The more commonly held viewpoint and diagnosis of a person who refuses to eat is that they have *anorexia nervosa*.

In the case of a newborn baby who rejects nourishment, the latter is not applicable. Most living beings have a strong survival instinct, and the only factor that would override that would be the inability to act on that instinct or not be offered food that would be life enhancing or create balance.

I do not remember much of those first four years of my life, although certain moments and events are as clear as if they happened yesterday. Our first home in Newcastle was a two-story flat, and I only remember a single instance in which I was there. I was upstairs with my elder sister in the evening, peering through the loft-landing banister to the downstairs area where our parents were sitting with some visiting cousins.

In 1958, around the time of my younger sister's birth, we moved from Newcastle to a small village on the outskirts of Leeds, West Yorkshire, and during the next three years, I had a few eating-related memories.

I remember sitting in a high chair with a mouthful of tinned peas, which I refused to swallow. How do I know they were tinned

peas? The memory of this taste was triggered repeatedly throughout my childhood and adolescence. Nowadays, I actually rather like the taste of some tinned peas, particularly *petit pois*.

I also recall staying with my maternal grandparents to be potty trained, having only just recently begun to walk. On one occasion, I was outside their house walking toward my grandfather, GP, whose arms were outstretched, beckoning me to him, as my grandmother took a photograph from behind. I know this to be true as the photograph still exists. One day, GP showed me how to eat a pear properly. He cut the fruit in half lengthways and then using a teaspoon, carefully scooped out the seed area and then proceeded to scoop the fruit out, leaving an empty shell of skin. Another time when we were having strawberries for lunch, he showed me that he liked to dip his strawberries into the little pile of salt that he had placed on his plate instead of the sugar and cream that my grandmother enjoyed. I tried them both and of course, preferred the sweet, creamy taste. When GP was in his last months of life, he spent most of his days in bed in the dressing room adjacent to their marital bedroom, and I remember climbing into his bed in the mornings and sharing his breakfast of “bud and butta,” fresh white bread and the home-farm butter along with some hot milk.

I remember often lying on the sofa in the sitting room in our West Yorkshire home while a dark-suited doctor inserted, what I later learned was a suppository, into my bum—the resulting remedy of the chronic constipation I suffered since birth.

Chapter 3

Dramatic Changes

Sometime in early January 1962, I was sitting on the banister at the top of the staircase when my father appeared dressed in a suit and overcoat and carried a large suitcase. I said, “Hello, daddy,” and asked him where he was going and then slid down the handrail as he walked down the stairs. He picked me up, hugged me, and said he was going away but that I was his favorite little girl and he loved me very much.

That was the day my father walked out of our home to go and live with another woman, never to return, and my mother was left with her four children ages six, four, three, and three months. She struggled to take care of us all on her own for a few days but had what was called back then a nervous breakdown and was taken to a private nursing home/sanitarium where she stayed for almost a year and a half, and we did not see her during all that time.

Life took a very different direction from then on, and after spending some time with our aunt, we all then went to live with our maternal grandmother, whom we endearingly called MM—short for mummy’s mummy.

Our new home was a forty-room, stone dower house situated on the outskirts of a historic town on the edge of the North Yorkshire moors. The original house was a farmhouse built in 1113 but renovated several times, once after a big fire. At one time, it became a hospice ran by monks and was dedicated to Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of children, and is still called that today. It is surrounded

CHRISTINA CAMPION

by seven acres of semiformal gardens (that had all been planted from seeds and cuttings by my grandfather, GP), fields, woodlands, and a farm complete with a working dairy, cows, sheep, pigs, hens, and various crops and totaled over two hundred acres. At the time of our arrival, the whole estate was cared for by many full-time and some other part-time staff, who lived on or near the estate and included a cook, housekeeper, cleaning maid, chauffeur, head gardener, and tenant farmer and his family, although there had been triple the staff before the Second World War.

My grandfather had died earlier that year, and his empty dressing room was fitted with three more beds and all four of us children moved in. My brother was in a cot until old enough to graduate to a bed. My grandmother made us all take turns in a different bed once a week when the sheets were changed. Two of the beds had horsehair mattresses, and the other two were modern foam/sprung ones, so naturally, we had very different sleeping experiences as the rotation moved us onto the next bed.

About the Author



Christina was born and educated in North Yorkshire, England. She met and married an American who was living in London, and they moved to the United States with their baby daughter in 1979.

It is probably not an accident that Christina has been so interested in food and health for much of her sixty-four years on the planet.

Born not wanting to eat, health-compromised, and struggling in her body for most of her childhood, then flirting with death both consciously and unconsciously, Christina was eventually and most fortunately guided to a whole new way of living and eating that has gifted her ever since with an abundance of great good health, humility, and gratitude for all.

She has had a very diversified career as a chef with a great variety of styles, transitioning from cordon bleu to macrobiotics. Christina also enjoys designing clothing, is a gifted seamstress, and has assisted in a few different national and international aid programs.

Christina now resides in the lower Catskill Mountains in Upstate New York in a beautiful recycled wood cabin that she built with the help of some very generous friends involved in the community barter system that she set up in 1996. She has a strong connection to and love of nature and all that is natural and strives to tread gently on the earth.