

Library Lines 2.0

By Anne Debraggio,
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Hello fellow readers! This week's column is from Kirkland Town Library staff member Amy James. Bon appetit!

Food makes me happy. I'll admit it. Not just because eating it is fun but because, as it turns out, there's plenty of science to back up this food-happiness connection, or at least enough science to make me feel justified in believing.

Post-holiday, while scraping the chocolate plaque from my weakened arteries, I occasionally just need some inspiration to help me get back to basics and see eating as the opportunity that it is.

I'm attracted by the cheerful dark chocolate-dipped strawberry on the cover of Dr. Drew Ramsey's "The Happiness Diet." What it says to me is, "You can eat this and still feel good about yourself."

And it's more than true; his claim is not only that eating nourishing foods (chocolate included) can improve physical health but that it can also balance mood and sharpen the mind. Whether you're swayed by this idea or not, you can still get a lot out of the meal-planning tips, recipes, and overall excellent discussion of the science behind the relationship between well-being and what Dr. Ramsey

says is "at the end of your fork."

If you're moved less by the pursuit of happiness and more by botany-like lessons on vegetables, grains, and herbs of all kinds - where do they come from? Why and how do we eat them? - you'll want to sign out a copy of "Vegetable Literacy" by Deborah Madison.

This book will make you want to dash out into the nearest field, gather up every green, orange, purple, what-color-have you product of nature, throw it all onto a platter and invite the neighbors over for an al fresco meal and a twilight walk. Okay, don't do that now; do it in summer.

In the meantime, check out the photograph of the blazing orange Winter Squash Soup with Chili and Mint, whip up a batch, and eat it in front of the fire with a book ...maybe this book.

What Terry Walters' "Clean Food" lacks in the photography department it more than makes up for in its large quantity of delicious and good for you recipes. The introductory sections are a primer on healthy eating, covering everything from tools of the trade to stocking a pantry to how we can eat for balance and well-being.

Organized by season, her recipes include some winter favorites: Sweet and Savory Root Vegetable Stew, Simply Delicious Spaghetti Squash,

and others focusing on what's available to us while the snow mounts.

But let's for a moment look ahead. Summer is coming and with it, Green Beans and Sweet Corn with Summer Vinaigrette, White Bean Salad with Roasted Tomatoes and Arugula, the fruits of a more carefree season.

Finally, years ago, a friend gave me a copy of Gwyneth Paltrow's "My Father's Daughter," a collection of recipes from time spent in the kitchen with her dad. Say what you will about Gwyneth, but apparently she can cook (or her chef can).

The recipes are for the most part nutritious; many are offered with accompanying healthier versions and none too complex for a family meal. In fact, many of her recipes are geared toward appealing to both adults and small fry.

Try her Ten Hour Chicken, Hot Nicoise Salad, or White Bean Soup (Two Ways). And I swear by the healthy oatmeal raisin cookies, fudgy brownies, and granola made with healing Indian spices.

Plus, if you don't want to contribute your hard-earned cash to the Gwyneth industrial beauty complex, you can just take one of her cookbooks out of the Mid York system. It's free, and you don't have to feel like a groupie. Yet one more way to be happier.