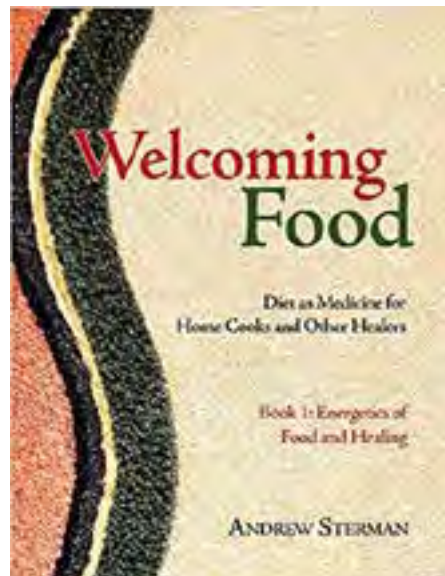




Andrew Stermann | Ann Cecil-Stermann Welcoming Food



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Furthermore, the term *spleen* includes the way parts of blood are made from nutrients, and the way all these factors are directed and held where they need to be. Even for those who have had their spleen organ removed, these functions continue. This idea of collective functioning holds true for all the different organs, each with their specific details. The physical organs are certainly important, but so are the complex and subtle energetic functions that have long been associated with them. Since modern education emphasizes separation of functions, we have to remind ourselves very often of the classical use of organ names meaning *collective function*.

A full understanding of how foods work within us must integrate both views: the mechanical understanding of nutrition as well as the way the specific qualities of foods support or hinder the energetics of our living bodies.

Now we are ready to look at the functions of the small intestine in a new way.

A Note for Clinicians

The small intestine is where many of the functions associated with stomach and pancreas-spleen actually take place. This is a very important point in the context of Chinese medicine, where the focus of digestion is often on the pancreas-spleen, stomach, or liver energetics. Foods must be selected that support those functions within the context of the small intestine. In other words, if the small intestine is weakened (from inappropriate diet, medications, or damage from pesticide residue), efforts to restore the functions of stomach, pancreas-spleen, kidney yang, or large intestine will have a hard time being truly effective. Focus on small intestine health as well as other priorities.

To begin, the small intestine likes many of the same foods that support the stomach and pancreas-spleen:

- » Gentle, soothing foods
- » Foods that aid descension (and clear food stagnation)
- » Meals that digest easily
- » Fermented foods

EIGHT

Care and Feeding of the Small Intestine

If any major organ is commonly underestimated, it is the small intestine. The liver, heart, lungs, kidneys, even the stomach—these organs enjoy superstar status. People talk often and casually of heart health, liver detox, or lung status, but nobody says, “I’m doing a new program at my gym for small intestine health—it’s going great!” or, “I’ve got takeout for dinner that’s labeled small intestine healthy!” We take the small intestine so for granted that we don’t even know how to feed it. Let’s take a closer look at the work of this unsung organ that lies at the center of digestion and assimilation.

Once the stomach has kneaded our (well-chewed) food sufficiently and senses that enough stomach acid has entered the mash to break down its proteins, the stomach permits the chyme to pass into the upper small intestine. Our food is now under the care of a complex and powerful network of neurons—the enteric brain, sometimes called the *second brain*—about equal in size to the brain of a small mammal. This gut-brain manages all the difficulties we routinely hand it with brilliance, independent of direction from the brain in the head. A separate system is in charge; in today’s jargon, the complex intelligence running digestion and assimilation would be called a *smart system*, with the intestine having *smart lining*. Although what we think and feel affects our ability to digest, and what we digest influences what we feel and the clarity of our thought, the enteric brain is beyond our conscious awareness or control. This permits us to digest while doing other things, but also means that it is too easy to ignore what’s going on after we eat. We need to learn what we can do to keep digestion healthy and how to correct what might go wrong.

This is a good time to emphasize that the organ names used in the Chinese medicine tradition mean more than just the anatomical organ. In this context, the organ names refer to a collection of specific functions that rely on or pass through the physical organ. For example, when an acupuncturist, herbalist, or dietary specialist says “spleen,” they are referring to the way our diet is separated, sorted, mobilized, and metabolized, as well as the way something almost ethereal (the *qi*) is lifted from digestion in the belly and spread upward to chest and outward to the four limbs.

The two volumes of *Welcoming Food* offer a unique entry into understanding the energetics of food. Thoughtfully drawing on the best modern research and the exquisitely detailed dietary teachings of classical Chinese medicine, *Welcoming Food* explains how foods work in common sense language and provides easy-to-follow recipes for appetizers, soups, grains, vegetables, fish, meats, breakfasts, desserts, sauces and condiments. *Welcoming Food* is for everyone, a comprehensive guide to putting food wisdom into delicious daily practice.

Andrew Sterman has a passion for putting traditional Chinese medicine principles into practice. In *Welcoming Food*, he has lovingly written a comprehensive book filled with valuable information that honors the long tradition put forth by sages of promoting health and healing disease through food first.

—Stephen Cowan MD, author of *Fire Child Water Child*

As a veteran practitioner of Chinese medicine, I have waited a very long time for a book such as this one. *Welcoming Food* is one of the only texts that targets both health professionals, patients, cooks and the general public on dietetics according to the principles of Chinese medicine. The explanations are clear and simple, the recipes creative and dynamic. I highly recommend this text to anyone who wants to improve their health and that of their patients and families, and plan to make it a staple in my office waiting room!

—Z'ev Rosenberg, L. Ac., author of *Returning to the Source* and *Ripples in the Flow*

I love these books! It's like Andrew is at my home kitchen table explaining potentially complicated things about food, making everything simple. It's fascinating. This work will be very helpful for a lot of people.

—Philip Glass, composer



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