

JUICING

How I Learned to Lighten Up by Squeezing A Few Vegetables
By Scott Ohlgren



Writing an article about the health benefits of juicing to a largely Macrobiotic audience has quite a different focus (and boiling point) than the same topic written to the general health conscious public. The reason for this is because of the often strongly held beliefs that the early, most well-known Macrobiotic books and teachers taught us.

Granted, the argument of what Macrobiotics is, and what it is not, will be a discussion that will go on long after we are all pushing up daisies. But when I graduated from the Kushi Institute in 1985, one of the beliefs that we took from the Beckett, MA classroom read something like this: *"Be careful of raw food. Juicing can make you too cold, too mentally spacey, and isn't good for cancer and other illnesses. Besides, it's yin, and you know how bad yin can be."*

Based on blind faith, I did believe that for the first few years after graduating. Then, as it happens, something called "personal experience" made me confront that belief. This came about from the same two things that come into play whenever one of my cherished certainties starts getting in the way of reality. The first was meeting people who did not hold this belief and who were doing quite well (in some ways, better than me). The second was my own experience of juicing and how great it made me feel.

Quick Squeeze History

Squeezing the liquid from plants is as old as agriculture itself, but it wasn't until the first quarter of the 20th century that juicing started to become popular as a tool for improving health. This came about largely because of two converging forces: the growing popularity of the Naturopathic and Natural Hygiene movements (both which were seeing results with fresh vegetable juicing), and a couple of timely technologies: refrigeration and juice extractors.

The first home juice extractor was not invented until the 1930s. It was called the Norwalk Juicer, by nutritionist Dr. Norman Walker. Walker was a fascinating thinker and health practitioner, on the same par as many of my own early health teachers. His exact age isn't known, but he was purportedly over 110 years old when he finally died in 1984. His juicer worked by grating produce, placing the resulting mash in a bag, and then squeezing the bag under a hydraulic press. It was big and clunky, but it made great juice, and much of Walker's first books were filled with testimonies that rivaled Macrobiotic stories.

The next big innovation came in 1955 with the Champion juicer. The Champion was the first to pioneer the idea of forcing the pulp through a screen during the grating process. This shrunk the juicer down to kitchen counter size. From that point on, the juicer extraction business exploded. Manufacturers started coming up with hundreds of models, trying different modes of extraction, and becoming smaller and easier to use over time. With ease and availability, tens of thousands of consumers purchased juicers and started adding to the pile of empirical evidence that showed the healing properties of juicing.

Empiricism

A side note here: the concept of "empirical evidence" is an important one to any of us involved in the natural healing model. Empiricism loosely means "evidence derived from personal experience." Why important? In a culture that generally only teaches, acknowledges and validates the "scientific method" of evidence, where the only truth accepted is that concluded through laboratories, double blind studies and lots of small rodents, empirical evidence allows each of us to be our own human laboratory, our own walking Petri dish. As the Internet becomes more and more the giant Alexandria's Library that it is, I believe that each of our empirical "hey, this is what is happening to me when I do XYZ" science projects are going to play a larger and larger role in how we determine what works and what doesn't. This sharing of experiences will not only help others in their search for healing, it will also be a powerful method for getting rid of dogmatic beliefs.

Advantages of Juicing

Juicing's biggest health benefit can be summarized in one phrase: **cellular cleansing**. Bar none, cellular cleansing is the single biggest reason for why I have stayed drug free, pain free, and symptom free for the past 29 years.

What type of cleansing have I done? Every kind that has ever been thought up. Imagine us all being kids again and we have spent the day out in a big huge pile of beautiful dirt, digging holes, making castles, playing with toys, living large. We come back inside and it's time to clean up. How? Every which way; we clean our hair, our nails, our skin, our feet, our backs, our ears... wherever the dirt and gunk of the day got into. Same goes for cleansing our insides, and juicing cleanses the cells faster than any other food that I've found.

Cleansing is not "new, and improved." We are all cleansing right now, and have been since the moment of conception. Every cell is constantly peeing and pooping. Every time we breathe out, we've cleansed our body of the metabolic waste known as carbon dioxide. Every time we have a bowel movement, our body is eliminating old cellular material (interesting: up to 40% of every bowel movement is dead cells). Cleansing occurs because our body's cells are constantly dying and being replaced with new cells. Our spleen and liver and stomach cells do it, our intestinal walls do it, even our bones and muscle cells do this regeneration circle of life. All vegetable juicing does is improve this spring-cleaning regeneration process.

Juicing works so well at cleansing because of a few reasons:

1. There is hardly any digestive work needed to process raw, enzymatically active liquid. Vegetable juice gets into the system quickly.
2. Squeezed vegetable juice is very nutrient-dense. This concentration acts to supercharge the system in the same way that herbal tinctures work. One of the \$10 words we are going to hear more about over the next few years is "phytonutrients," or plant chemicals. They are proving-as those who have switched to whole foods always have known-to be the key behind keeping our bodies free of cancer, digestive problems, and other degenerative illnesses.
3. The most important, and most overlooked, reason: juicing cleans the liver. I believe that the next big advance in understanding health will be in acknowledging the importance of self-detoxifying and de-sludging our liver. Sure, if you look into any human biology book, it already tells us that there are now over 700 known functions of the liver. But what we don't realize is how that functionality is dependent on how unclogged it is.

Liver cleansing is actually easy, because the number one job of the liver is to ...cleanse the blood! In other words, every drop of your nine pints of blood runs constantly through the liver, removing toxins and metabolic waste every second of every day of your life. Since crushed vegetable juice goes quickly into the blood stream, it goes quickly into the liver as well.

I cannot say this enough: a cleansed liver is a felt sensation. Improving its function seems to affect everything, from mental clarity and focus, to emotions, to sleep, to how stress is handled, our digestion, our skin, even how we perceive and deal with-at least in my experience-relationships (!)

Sometimes I think the word "juicing" is the wrong word. We should just call it "Liver Desludging and Overall Life Enhancement Liquid." Liver detoxification is so important, and nothing comes close to it like the juice of raw vegetables.

How to Start

Beg, Borrow, or Buy a Juicer

If you're new to juicing, borrow one from a friend. Once you feel the benefits, buy your own. There are three distinct and valid ways to do that:

1. Buy a used one on eBay. Use the two ideas below to guide you.
2. Buy a starter juicer. These will run from \$50-150, and will last a year or two before burning out. This can be a quite suitable way to test out juicing in your own body.
3. Buy a juicer that will outlive you. These will start around \$200 (for the Champion) and can go up to the \$390-\$600 range (for the twin-helical gear models). There are juicers priced beyond this, but for home juicing, they are unnecessary.

What Kind of Juicer

Having experimented with a dozen models over the years, I think the finest juicers on the market right now are the twin-helical gear units. There are about six models to choose from, available in both 110 and 220v, and competitively priced throughout the Internet. Regardless of the hype you

will read, they are ALL good, and ALL made by two extremely reputable manufacturers in Korea. And they will all last for ten years or longer. There are many reasons why they are so good, but I'll quickly mention two: 1. they juice leafy greens and wheatgrass (no more need for two separate juicers!); and 2. they spin at very low speeds (below 200 rpm), thus avoiding oxidation of the juice.

What to Juice

Every plant on earth has distinct properties and effects on our body, and since life is an experiment, you can juice anything you want. To start out, though, here are some suggested vegetables that work well on a regular basis:

The "baseline" vegetables: carrots, parsnips, cabbage, beets, celery, cucumbers, broccoli, burdock root...

The bitter greens: kale, collards, parsley, wheatgrass, lettuces, dandelion, watercress...

The "high note" vegetables: onions, ginger, radish, chives

The "high note" fruits: apples, lemons, limes, oranges, cranberries, grapes

Recipes: Bah Humbug

Juicing with recipes is not necessary. To begin, try this:

Start with equal parts of carrots, cucumber and celery

Add a piece of ginger and handful of parsley.

Add 10% from the bitter green list.

Add a piece of apple or citrus

General Juicing Tips

Start a simple experiment of 1 to 2 cups of juice every day for 28 days. Juice lasts in a refrigerated tightly closed glass jar for at least 2-3 days, so you can juice every other day. In general, make your juice taste good. That said, I divide vegetable juices into two categories: Delicious juice. This is the kind that you drink and immediately think "ahhh!" You could drink a quart a day, even your UPS driver would like it, and it's generally enjoyed any time.

Tequila juice. This is the kind of medicinal juice that you sip and immediately make a face. This is the intensely green drink, the kind that immediately opens up every duct in your gall bladder and liver. I call it this name because it's best done in small 1 to 4 ounce amounts, shot back like you would tequila, and works best if you finish with a grimace, a grin, and a loud "Yeah!"

Try a little of both kinds each week.

I'm generally not a big fan of using my juicer to make and consume 100% fruit juices. I love fruit, I find it one of best quick energy sources and can be very healing in their own way, but I would rather just eat an apple or orange.

That said, don't be afraid to add some citrus, rind and all. Or half an apple, a few grapes, or a handful of cranberries. Before I ever started juicing, I would have presumed that vegetable juice would not digest well with fruit juice. What I found was what many of the juicing authors and experimenters were saying: a bit of lemon and lime actually do quite well when combined with most vegetables. I've also found this true with apples and cranberries.

To avoid clogging the screens and having to clean them mid-juicing, alternate your soft and hard produce. This will help clear out the screens. Done right, I can juice a full quart without having to stop and clean the screen.

I don't think it is necessary to get too specific about which juice works best for each condition and symptom. I would just start juicing. Still, it's interesting to note that every vegetable has its own particular healing properties.

Cucumber juice is thought to clean your kidneys, lower high blood pressure and improve skin problems (I've found this skin part to be especially true).

Cabbage juice is one of the most healing nutrients for stomach repair. Contains sulfur and selenium, both which are good for joint stiffness. While cooked cabbage can give me gas (ask my wife), I digest raw cabbage with no problem.

Beets are famous for their ability to cleanse the blood and strengthen the gall bladder and liver. Beet juice is very concentrated, so a little goes a long way; try 20% of the total amount.

Broccoli: Even the staid National Cancer Institute is excited about this plant, saying that it's showing anti-cancer properties. A strong taste, so I only add about 10%.

Apples: I think tart apples are one of the most underrated healing foods we have. Apples contain malic acid, which is capable of softening gallstones and other hardening the body. In August, when organic, wild apples are falling off the trees around our Colorado county, I take that as a hint to clean out my liver. My wife and I will drive around and get a bushel of these amazing little apples and juice them up (it's one of the few times I drink 100% fruit juice). There are few things in life that make people roll their eyes up in ecstasy, and this apple juice we make is one of them. If there is a heaven, they serve it there.

Celery: long considered a nerve tonic. Parsley: amazing plant, very high in chlorophyll.

Cranberries: Contains quercetin and tannins, flavonoids that are getting a lot of attention for their anti-bacterial, inflammatory and tumor properties. Seems to help cleanse the kidneys, because it helps lower uric acid levels (often associated with gout, kidney gravel, and joint pain). One of the few frozen foods I'll let into my juice, mainly because you can now get raw, organic cranberries in the freezer section.

Collards and Kale: more calcium than milk, and in an extremely bio-available form.

If you do use fruit in your juice, especially apple, don't eat anything solid for 60-90 minutes afterwards, to prevent indigestion. Let the juice do its work by itself, so that it is the only thing in your digestive tract.

A pinch of Celtic gray sea salt can perk up many juices.

I never put garlic in my juice. I eat raw garlic all the time (there is no stronger anti fungal/bacterial/viral food out there) and it's one of life's true superfoods, but I refuse to make my juices taste that bad.

I use ginger all the time, especially in combination with apple. Wheatgrass is an alkalizing miracle unto itself; belongs to the "tequila juice" category. I always drink it separate from my other juice, and I always mix in a half lemon. A little onion (like 1%) goes a long way.

Beliefs That Get in the Way of Juicing

"Vegetable juice contains too much sugar"

I've seen people eat flour-based "health" desserts on a regular basis and then say they don't juice because "juice has too much sugar." I'd suggest exactly the opposite: one evening, instead of eating flour products (yes, including macrobiotic noodles...) try juicing before your dinner.

I pray for the day when our children's largest health problem is too much sweetness from fresh vegetable juice. I can't wait to hear those complaints: "Did you hear what they're now serving in the vending machines at my kid's grade school? Fresh carrot and celery juice! That's way too much sugar for my kid! Yeah, I want them to go back to the Snicker's bars."

If vegetable juice is too sweet for you, cut it in half with water.

"Juicing isn't suggested for cancer"

Only someone who doesn't read from a very wide swath of data could possibly have come up with this. Successful cancer cures-current and going back to early 20th century naturopathic treatments-involve raw vegetable liquid. Juicing has saved lives.

"Juicing isn't natural"

(Also known as the "if god had intended us to eat this way, he'd have given us juicers" belief). Is wearing shoes natural? How about pressure-cooking? How about moving over the ground at 70 mph while hanging onto a steering wheel?

"Juicing is too concentrated"

(This also lies in the "if god had intended..." category) Ever use herbal formulas? Those are concentrated herbs. Salt is concentrated minerals. Your body can handle a bit of concentration.

"Juicing is too cooling"

Then put on a sweater and exercise until you sweat! This often-spouted belief just drives me crazy, and I have never, ever heard it said by an athlete; it only comes from people who do not exercise.

Is your body really that precious and delicate? Are you sure? Can we not torque and play with our core energetics more than we think? I have had a sauna in my backyard for years, where I regularly sit, like my extraordinarily healthy ancestors did, for one to two hours in temperatures that hover around 180°F/82°C. Every 30 minutes, I (and my guests) run outside to the 3' by 5' cold plunge pool where, -during the Colorado winter- we have to chip away or slide out the 4-inch slab of ice before plunging into the water for a count to 15 (that's right, 15 seconds; one of the house rules). We do this weekly, often more. Along with raw garlic and miso soup, I don't have a method of kicking out viruses, bacteria, or sore throats better than these amazing sauna rounds. Think about this: sauna rounds purposely get me really hot and then get me really cold. And I have not had a cold or flu in years.

"Juicing is too yin, and makes you spaced out"

Compared to what... coffee? Macrobiotic Brick Desserts™?
Give me a break. This cold/yin thing has gone too far.

Blaming juicing on the initial spacey feeling that is sometimes felt is like blaming miso soup on a skin discharge. It isn't the juice, folks. It's the metabolic waste that gets released into the bloodstream and brain when you start detoxifying.

I, too, have met very spacey people who tell me that they're "into juicing" and are juicing all the time. If you'll dig a bit deeper, you'll find out that they are also doing a lot of pot and other drugs, or have done their fare share of them in their past. Drugs, along with other everyday toxins, can be stored in our fat and liver cells. Juicing cleanses the liver, releasing these temporarily into the body.

"Juicing makes you acidic"

Absolutely nonsense. If you don't think it's alkalizing, try this: do two shots of wheatgrass every day for two weeks. Just two, 1-ounce shots of liquid wheatgrass a day. Then test your urine with one of those pH strips. Unless you've been doing too many of those brick desserts, you will see a rise in overall pH. Juicing can reduce body acidity.

Conclusion

Squeezing vegetables isn't the Be All, End All to staying healthy. And it's certainly not the main ingredient of my diet. But it has helped me stay flexible and symptom-free for the past two decades. Like many of the great ideas and concepts that we learned from Macrobiotics, juicing is one more brilliant tool that we can use to stay healthy.

My advice: lighten up. Try a 28-day program, where you eat what you normally eat, but you also add a cup or two of freshly prepared vegetable juice each day. Don't be alarmed if you go through a bit of detoxification in the first couple weeks. That's normal, and temporary, and the blessing of the plant kingdom.

And remember the concept of empiricism: we are all our own walking Petri dish, and others need to hear of your experiences. And I would love to hear your results. Please post them, or ask me any questions, on my online forum, at www.HowHealthWorks.com.

Scott Ohlgren studied whole food nutrition at the 9-month Kushi Institute Graduate Program. He became a certified Rolfing Practitioner in 1988. He has sold over 90,000 tapes, videos and books on the diet/disease, diet/health connection. He is currently board-certified as a Holistic Health Practitioner by the American Association of Drugless Practitioners. Each month, his online 28-day Cleansing Program at www.HowHealthWorks.com takes hundreds of participants through the same process that he learned 25 years ago. His latest book, Cellular Cleansing Made Easy, is available at Amazon.com. Scott paraglides, skis, and has been a scuba diver since 1980. He and his wife Gael live in Boulder, Colorado with cat Lila, and an outside sauna and cold plunge. His next big acquisition will be a goat and a few chickens, to mess with the cat's mind.