

CHEF T'S PHILOSOPHY

A.k.a. Kitchen Culture at Stripe

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

As a healthy food and lifestyle person, people often ask me which diet I adhere too? Vegetarian? Vegan? Paleo? Gluten free? Dairy free? The list goes on. My answer to all these questions is none of the above. My food philosophy is real simple: Eat Real Food! I think many of the aforementioned diets can be beneficial, and I am always learning new things from proponents of each. For me, following a specific diet - particularly one that provides the opportunity to give up certain foods for a period of time - has helped me understand how these foods affect my body. Abstaining for a month or more from gluten, dairy, and refined sugar in particular helped me learn how much of each I can eat and still feel well and BALANCED.

Eating Real Food doesn't have to be restrictive or complicated. Here's a quick guide to my real food philosophy, what I like to serve Stripes, and what I don't.

1. Eat Plants, lots and lots of plants

My goal each day is to serve as many vegetables and fruits as possible. At breakfast, lunch and dinner and snacks I try to pack in as much produce as possible. The more we eat the better we feel. And I source local and organic, whenever possible. This is very important. I like to work with local farmers and use sustainable proteins as much as possible.

2. Eat together in groups whenever possible

I like to create environments where Stripes feel as if they are eating at home amongst family and friends. By eating at Stripe I can control the type and quantity of ingredients. I know what's in the food, and just as important, what's not. It doesn't have to be fancy; simple food cooked by our kitchen is better than take out every time. And by creating an environment that is welcoming and nonthreatening allows for more positive energy and breeds a stronger work connection.

3. Avoid Processed Food

This one is a huge one with me. Processed foods contain artificial ingredients, colors and preservatives, and are often devoid of nutritional value. I'll happily serve real cheese or pasta, but you'll rarely find me eating a box of processed crackers or drinking a diet soda. It's just not worth the cost in how I look and feel. I follow a simple guideline: five ingredients or fewer in my

food - rarely will you find me serving dishes that have more than five ingredients. And I never serve ingredients that I can't pronounce, such as monosodiumhyxolisade!

4. Eat Fiber, Fat and Protein

I learned that fiber, fat and protein are game changers; the fat part especially. I try and serve healthy fats everyday, including avocados, raw nuts, extra virgin oils (no butters), coconut milk, and yogurt. Simple eggs, sweet potatoes and spinach for breakfast; organic protein salads for lunch and dinner and fruit for dessert. I try not to serve desserts. There are enough Stripes who travel and bring back sweets from all over the world. And that's a tradition that I would like to have them continue. I believe that eating this way makes you feel fuller, have more energy and find it easier to maintain a healthy weight.

5. Ditch perfection, find the joy

While my food focuses on eating real food, my goal is not to be perfect. If you indulge in real bread with butter sometimes, good for you. So do I. Sometimes I serve hamburgers and fries and I love it. I think there's way too much pressure these days in the health and wellness industry to be perfect. I just want to serve healthy options and I think it's really important to find joy in eating, real food or otherwise. It's okay to eat ice cream once in awhile, just not all the time. Eat with no guilt; just use common sense.

6. A note on gluten and dairy.

My food focuses on including primarily gluten and dairy-free recipes because I believe people generally find they feel better when avoiding these. There's also a large number of Stripes who are allergic to gluten and dairy and I take this very seriously. You can have so much more without!

7. I want to know where my food came from

My vegetables come from a farm where the produce is grown organically. My fish comes from sustainable farms that are conscious of their impact on our local environment and the world. Our eggs were laid by cage free (happy) birds. I like to create a connection between the food we serve and where it comes from. Serving and eating real, natural foods are the only way that you will see a change in your mind, body and spirit long term, because they are the only foods that our bodies know how to process and use as energy.

8. Small seasonal dishes versus buffet lines

When making my menus for the day I always use what's available in that particular season i.e. beets in winter, tomatoes in summer, dark leafy greens in winter, fresh peas in spring time.

I like to think of my food as telling a story: a very short story without a lot of filler. Small plates that fit together, rather than a plethora of choices. Too many choices breeds overindulgence and lethargy, so I like to remove these temptations.

9. Sample menu from a normal Monday

A little something for everyone, served in a way that tells a story of the season.

- Grilled steak, chicken and tofu
- 3 bean minestrone soup
- Dino kale and sesame carrots
- Couscous salad with fresh basil pesto and herbs
- Avocado caesar
- Roasted seasonal vegetables
- Arugula and diced cucumber salad
- Spinach salad with caramelized onions and raw walnuts
- Fresh fruit salad

I also like to keep a sandwich bar stocked that people can avail of 24/7.