



Daniel I Newman, M.D., N.D., M.S.O.M.

8301 NE Hazel Dell Ave.
P.O.B. 6575
Vancouver, WA 98665

TEL 360-696-3800
FAX 360-696-0906
www.rising-health.com

The Outer Path: A Grocery Store Safari

I. Introduction

Understanding what to eat from a theoretical standpoint is the first step in moving towards a healthful diet, but translating that into a kitchen stocked with wholesome food requires one more step: a successful grocery store excursion.

If you are familiar with my philosophy of nutrition, you already know that you are going to more easily find a broader selection of nourishing food at a COOP or other specialty whole foods grocery store than a standard supermarket. Nevertheless, even in better stores, there are still discriminating food selections to be made. In addition, there may be occasions where due to travel, convenience, or other considerations, shopping in a conventional supermarket becomes necessary.

It is therefore useful to have a strategy for shopping: where in the grocery store one is likely to find the items one is looking for; which items are likely to be acceptable for purchase; and what to look for in reading labels. What follows is a basic blueprint of how to have a favorable market experience.

II. Anatomy of a Grocery Store

Like other buildings, supermarket design is guided partly by efficiency. Since it is least expensive to put plumbing and electrical in the walls of a building (as opposed to the floor), most of the refrigerated sections of a supermarket are along the periphery. Hence, in nearly all stores the majority of the food you will be shopping for (fresh vegetables, fruit, meat, and dairy) will be located along the back and sides of the store. So when in doubt, walk the outskirts of the store (the “outer path”).

III. Label Reading 101

Arguably, the single most important rule of grocery shopping is this: **always carefully read the label of every item you put in your grocery cart!** Even if it is a product that you are familiar with, manufacturers will periodically

change ingredients. Also, you would be surprised what is contained in articles that you might think to be self-evident, such as meat or dairy products. Even produce has a label containing a PLU code that you should check: a 4 digit code means that the product is conventionally grown; a 5 digit code beginning with the number 9 means the product is organically grown; a 5 digit code beginning with the number 8 means that the produce is bio-engineered.

For food that is not labeled, such as the meat at the counter or in the deli, ask the sales staff relevant questions: how was it raised? were antibiotics or hormones used in the feed? is it wild or farmed? etc.

When reading a label, a good rule of thumb is that the length of the ingredient list is inversely proportional to the wholesomeness of the product. In other words, a label with a long list of ingredients is almost certain to be an undesirable product.

Further, if you don't know what an ingredient is, you are better off not buying the product. It is true that some chemical sounding food additives are relatively benign, but most are not. Artificial colors, flavors, and sweeteners are almost all toxic, and should be avoided. Most food additives are designed to change the taste, color, or texture of the product to make it more palatable. Good food is constitutively attractive and good tasting; it doesn't need "doctoring" to make it acceptable.

Remember, when shopping for food, simplicity is best!