

# Healing Foods Reference Guide

Lean Proteins · Leafy Greens · Complex Carbs with Fiber · Healthy Fats · Global Healing Foods

Every food here was selected for one reason: it heals. Not just feeds — heals. These are foods that lower LDL, raise HDL, support kidney filtration, stabilize blood glucose, reduce inflammation, feed the gut microbiome, and build the cellular machinery that keeps every organ running. Global traditions are marked by region — Western nutrition discovered most of these mechanisms recently. Traditional medicine knew them for centuries. Eat widely. Rotate constantly. The broader the variety, the broader the protection.

## ■ TRADITIONAL MEDICINE TRADITIONS KEY

### West African

Sub-Saharan Africa — Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia, Mali, and surrounding regions. 5,000+ years of food-as-medicine practice.

### SE Asian

Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam. Dense tropical pharmacopoeia. Most diverse herbal tradition by species count.

### Ayurvedic

Traditional Indian Medicine — 3,000+ year system. Tridosha framework. Food + herb + timing + constitution-based medicine.

### TCM

Traditional Chinese Medicine — 2,500+ years. Five-element theory. Organ clock. Qi, Yin/Yang, and seasonal food protocols.

### Mediterranean

Greece, Italy, North Africa, Lebanon, Turkey. Oleocanthal, hibiscus, artichoke, and polyphenol-dense food tradition.

### Caribbean

Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Haiti, Puerto Rico. African + Indigenous + European synthesis. Strong herbal bush medicine tradition.

### Amazon

Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador. Most biodiverse plant medicine on earth. Chanca piedra, cat's claw, sacha inchi, camu camu.

### Middle Eastern

Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Yemen, Morocco. Islamic medicine (Tibb). Black seed, pomegranate, sumac, hibiscus, dates.

### Okinawan

Blue Zone tradition of Okinawa, Japan. Bitter melon, turmeric, goya, seaweed, and hara hachi bu (80% full eating rule).

## ■ LEAN PROTEINS

### Build and repair without the inflammatory load

<b>Egg Whites</b>	17g protein/100g · Zero saturated fat · Low phosphorus — kidney safe · Highest bioavailability of any food protein (BV = 100)
<b>Wild Salmon</b>	25g protein/100g · EPA + DHA omega-3s lower triglycerides + raise HDL · Anti-inflammatory · Highest food source of vitamin D3
<b>Sardines</b>	25g protein/100g · Highest omega-3 of any small fish · Vitamin D + B12 + bone-building calcium · Ultra-low on the food chain — lowest mercury
<b>Turkey Breast</b>	29g protein/100g · Lowest saturated fat of all poultry · Tryptophan precursor to serotonin · B vitamins for liver methylation cycle
<b>Chicken Breast</b>	31g protein/100g · Complete lean protein · Niacin + B6 for liver enzyme function · Most versatile protein for any preparation method
<b>Tempeh</b>	19g protein/100g · Fermented soy — higher bioavailability than tofu · Live probiotics + fiber · Phytoestrogens for hormonal balance
<b>Lentils</b>	18g protein/cup cooked · 16g fiber per cup · Iron + folate · Soluble fiber lowers LDL · Glycemic index 29 — lowest legume
<b>Black Beans</b>	15g protein/cup · Resistant starch feeds gut microbiome · Molybdenum for liver detox enzymes · Folate for methylation · GI 30
<b>Edamame</b>	17g protein/cup · Complete amino acid profile · Isoflavones raise HDL · Vitamin K + magnesium · Low potassium — kidney-friendly
<b>Hemp Seeds</b>	31g protein/100g · Complete amino acid profile · 3:1 omega-6:omega-3 ratio · GLA reduces inflammation · Zinc + magnesium + iron
<b>Mung Beans</b> Ayurvedic	Tri-doshic protein — balances all three Ayurvedic constitutions · Easy digestion (lowest flatulence of all legumes) · Mung sprouts = highest enzyme activity · Phytosterols lower LDL · Used across India, SE Asia, and East Africa for centuries
<b>Amaranth</b> West African	9g protein/cup cooked · Complete protein — rare for a grain · Squalene content rivals shark liver oil · Lysine-rich (most grains are deficient) · Historically cultivated across West Africa and Mesoamerica · Tocotrienol vitamin E protects arterial walls
<b>Teff</b> West African	10g protein/cup cooked · Staple grain of Ethiopia for 5,000 years · Highest calcium of any grain · Resistant starch + iron · Feeds Lactobacillus specifically · Naturally gluten-free · Slow glucose release — GI 55
<b>Silken Tofu</b> TCM	Yin-cooling protein in TCM framework · Isoflavones genistein + daidzein studied for cholesterol reduction + bone density · Magnesium + manganese · Low phosphorus — kidney-appropriate · Estrogen-modulating, not estrogen-mimicking — clinically distinct
<b>Sea Vegetables (Nori/Dulse)</b> SE Asian	6g protein/10g dry · Iodine for thyroid T3/T4 synthesis · Fucoidan — sulfated polysaccharide studied for anti-tumor + anticoagulant activity · B12 precursors · Spirulina relative — fastest hemoglobin builder studied

#### DR. VERA'S NOTE:

Prioritize quality protein in the Peak Zone (6am–12pm) when insulin sensitivity is highest and amino acid uptake is most efficient. Pair with leafy greens and fat at every meal.

## ■ LEAFY GREENS

### The most nutrient-dense food category on earth — raw when possible

<b>Spinach</b>	Spans 13 organ systems · Iron + folate + lutein + zeaxanthin + nitrates + vitamin K · Eat raw with lemon — vitamin C increases iron absorption 300%
<b>Kale</b>	King of LDL reduction via bile acid binding · Highest lutein + zeaxanthin of any vegetable · Sulforaphane precursor · Cook for thyroid patients
<b>Collard Greens</b>	Second only to kale for LDL-lowering bile acid binding · Calcium without oxalate load · Staple of West African and American Southern healing traditions
<b>Arugula</b>	Erucin → nitric oxide → arterial dilation · Natural diuretic · Glucosinolates for liver Phase II · Peppery bitterness = liver tonic signal
<b>Swiss Chard</b>	Syringic acid mimics insulin independently · Highest magnesium of any leafy green · Betalains for liver detox · 7 colors = 7 distinct phytonutrients
<b>Watercress</b>	PEITC activates Nrf2 — the master antioxidant switch · Highest antioxidant density of all vegetables · Iodine for thyroid · Traditional kidney stone remedy
<b>Beet Greens</b>	More potent than beet root for liver betaine methylation · Lutein + zeaxanthin + iron + vitamin C in the same leaf — self-paired for maximum absorption
<b>Dandelion Greens</b>	Most powerful natural liver bitter tonic · Stimulates bile production and release · Gentle potassium-sparing diuretic · Prebiotic inulin for Bifidobacterium
<b>Bok Choy</b>	Very low potassium + phosphorus — kidney safe · Glucosinolates for Phase II liver detox · Calcium + vitamin C · TCM anti-inflammatory food
<b>Microgreens</b>	Up to 40x higher nutrient density than mature leaves · Broccoli microgreens = highest sulforaphane of any food · 7–14 days after sprouting = peak potency
<b>Moringa Leaves</b> West African	Called the "Miracle Tree" across West Africa, India, and SE Asia · 25x more iron than spinach per gram · 7x more vitamin C than orange · All essential amino acids present · Isothiocyanates for blood glucose stabilization · Anti-inflammatory glucosinolates · Studied in over 1,300 clinical papers
<b>Bitter Melon Leaves</b> SE Asian	Leaves + fruit both hypoglycemic · Charantin and polypeptide-p mimic insulin directly · Used daily in Philippines, India, Caribbean, and West Africa for diabetes management long before pharmaceutical intervention · Blood glucose lowering confirmed in multiple RCTs
<b>Shiso (Perilla)</b> TCM / Korean	Rosmarinic acid — most potent natural COX-2 inhibitor studied · Luteolin crosses blood-brain barrier for neuroinflammation · Used in Japanese and Korean food-medicine tradition for 2,000 years · Anti-allergic: blocks mast cell degranulation naturally
<b>Taro Leaves</b> Caribbean / Indian Ocean	Calcium oxalate must be cooked — always cook thoroughly · After cooking: high protein for a leaf + beta-carotene + iron · Staple healing green across Pacific Islands, Caribbean, and West Africa · Fiber for gut + potassium for blood pressure
<b>Fenugreek Leaves (Methi)</b> Ayurvedic	Trigonelline alkaloid lowers post-meal glucose · 4-hydroxyisoleucine directly stimulates insulin secretion from pancreatic beta cells · Galactomannan fiber slows gastric emptying · Used in Ayurveda for 3,000 years for liver + pancreas + lactation support

#### DR. VERA'S NOTE:

Eat leafy greens first at every meal — fiber-first eating buffers the glucose response of everything consumed after. The more bitter, the more liver-active.

## ■ COMPLEX CARBS WITH FIBER

Slow fuel that feeds the gut, stabilizes glucose, and lowers LDL

<b>Oats (Rolled)</b>	4g beta-glucan/serving · Clinically proven to lower LDL 5–10% · Slows glucose absorption · Prebiotic for gut microbiome · GI 55
<b>Lentils</b>	16g fiber/cup cooked · Resistant starch · Soluble fiber coats gut lining · GI 29 — lowest of all legumes · Folate for methylation
<b>Sweet Potato</b>	4g fiber/medium · Beta-carotene → vitamin A · Chlorogenic acid lowers post-meal glucose · Potassium for blood pressure · GI 63 with skin
<b>Quinoa</b>	Complete protein + complex carb · 5g fiber/cup · All 9 essential amino acids · Magnesium + zinc · GI 53 · Gluten-free
<b>Barley</b>	6g beta-glucan/serving — highest of any grain · Tocotrienols lower LDL independently · Slowest glucose release of all grains · GI 28
<b>Chickpeas</b>	12g fiber/cup · Butyrate precursor feeds gut lining cells · Chromium for insulin sensitivity · Zinc + manganese · GI 28 — very low
<b>Buckwheat</b>	Rutin strengthens capillary walls · D-chiro-inositol improves insulin signaling · Quercetin for inflammation · GI 49 · Gluten-free despite the name
<b>Black Rice (Forbidden Rice)</b> TCM	Called Emperor's Rice — forbidden to commoners in ancient China for its life-extending properties · More anthocyanin per gram than blueberries · Anthocyanins cross blood-brain barrier (same BDNF mechanism as blueberries) · GI 42–45 — lower than brown rice · Lutein + zeaxanthin for eyes · Vitamin E tocotrienols protect arteries · Resistant starch when cooled
<b>Teff</b> West African	10g protein/cup · Highest calcium of any grain · Resistant starch + iron · Feeds Lactobacillus · Ethiopian staple for 5,000 years · GI 55 · Gluten-free
<b>Plantain (Green)</b> Caribbean	High resistant starch when green/unripe — powerful gut microbiome food · Vitamins A + C + B6 · Magnesium · GI 40 (green) vs 70 (ripe) — always choose green or semi-ripe
<b>Cassava (Prepared)</b> West African / Caribbean	Must be properly prepared — soaking + fermentation removes cyanogenic glycosides · After preparation: resistant starch that feeds Bifidobacterium + Lactobacillus specifically · Staple carbohydrate across sub-Saharan Africa for gut health · Fermented form (gari) = probiotic + prebiotic combined
<b>Millet</b> West African / Ayurvedic	Alkaline-forming — one of few grains that reduces acid load · Serotonin precursor tryptophan · Magnesium + iron + B vitamins · Easy digestion — recommended in Ayurveda for Pitta (inflammatory) constitutions · GI 54 · Naturally gluten-free · Staple grain across Sahel Africa and India
<b>Lotus Seeds</b> TCM	Astringent-sweet energy in TCM — tonifies kidney Qi and Heart Qi simultaneously · Kaempferol for arterial protection · Resistant starch + protein · Used in Chinese medicine for insomnia, palpitations, and spleen qi deficiency · High magnesium + phosphorus — moderate for kidney patients
<b>Sorghum</b> West African	Ancient African grain — 5,000 years of cultivation · Highest antioxidant of all grains (tannins + 3-deoxyanthocyanins) · Slower glucose release than most grains · GI 62 · Gluten-free · Resistant starch that survives cooking · Studied for cholesterol reduction in African populations
<b>Purple Yam (Ube)</b> SE Asian	Anthocyanins + vitamin C + fiber · Antioxidant capacity rival to purple sweet potato · Manganese + potassium · GI 51 · Used across the Philippines and Southeast Asia for blood pressure + anti-inflammatory protocols · Resistant starch + prebiotic fiber

### DR. VERA'S NOTE:

Always eat complex carbs with protein, fat, and greens — never alone. Morning window only for high-glycemic options. Cool cooked starches overnight to increase resistant starch 2–4x.

## HEALTHY FATS

### Fat-soluble vitamins, hormone building blocks, and the key to nutrient absorption

<b>Extra Virgin Olive Oil</b>	Oleocanthal inhibits COX-1 and COX-2 — same mechanism as ibuprofen · Polyphenols raise HDL · Reduces LDL oxidation · Daily use reduces CVD risk 30%
<b>Avocado</b>	Oleic acid + 7 types of phytosterols · Glutathione precursor · Boosts absorption of fat-soluble nutrients from same meal up to 400% · CoQ10 precursors
<b>Wild Salmon</b>	EPA + DHA resolve inflammatory cascades · Raises HDL · Lowers triglycerides · Feeds myelin sheath · Best food source of vitamin D3
<b>Walnuts</b>	ALA omega-3 · Polyphenols raise HDL 2.5mmol/L · Melatonin — highest of any nut · L-arginine for nitric oxide synthesis · Ellagic acid for gut microbiome
<b>Flaxseed (Ground)</b>	Highest plant omega-3 (ALA) · SDG lignans lower LDL 10% · Mucilage coats gut lining · Must be ground — whole seeds pass undigested
<b>Chia Seeds</b>	11g omega-3/2 tbsp · Forms gel — slows gastric emptying + glucose absorption · 10g fiber/2 tbsp · Complete protein · Strontium for bone density
<b>Pumpkin Seeds</b>	Highest zinc of any seed · Cucurbitacins for prostate health · Magnesium + iron · Delta-7-sterol lowers DHT · Cucurbit tradition used globally for centuries
<b>Almonds</b>	Monounsaturated fat + vitamin E + magnesium · Lowers LDL 4.4mmol/L · Prebiotic fiber for Bifidobacterium · Reduces post-meal glucose spike when eaten first
<b>Tahini</b>	Sesamin + sesamolin inhibit LDL oxidation · Calcium + zinc + copper · Methionine for liver methylation · Paste form = better absorption than whole seeds
<b>Ghee</b> Ayurvedic	Clarified butter used as a fat carrier for fat-soluble herbs in Ayurveda for 3,000 years · Butyric acid — primary fuel for colon cells + gut lining repair · Conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) studied for fat metabolism · Removes casein + lactose — tolerated by dairy-sensitive patients · Medium-chain fatty acids for brain fuel · Churna (herb + ghee) preparation increases bioavailability of fat-soluble compounds 5–10x
<b>Black Seed Oil (Nigella)</b> Middle Eastern / Ayurvedic	Thymoquinone — most studied compound in black seed · Activates PPAR-gamma (same pathway as diabetes medications) · Lowers fasting glucose + HbA1c in multiple RCTs · Anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antifungal · Used in Islamic medicine: "a remedy for everything except death" · Studied in over 400 peer-reviewed papers · 0.5–1 tsp daily — do not heat
<b>Red Palm Oil (Unrefined)</b> West African	Unrefined only — refining destroys all therapeutic value · Highest tocotrienol vitamin E of any fat (protects arteries + brain) · Alpha + beta carotene in a fat carrier — highest absorption of any carotene source · Lycopene · CoQ10 · Used across West and Central Africa as a food + medicine for millennia · Completely different nutritional profile from palm kernel oil or refined palm
<b>Sacha Inchi Oil</b> Amazon	Called the "Inca peanut" · 48% ALA omega-3 — highest of any seed oil · Complete protein + fat in one seed · Vitamin E tocopherols · Studied in Peru for cardiovascular and inflammatory disease since 1980s · 3:1 omega-3:omega-6 ratio — rare in plant oils
<b>Perilla Oil</b> Korean / TCM	Highest ALA omega-3 of any cooking oil — 60% ALA · Rosmarinic acid for COX-2 inhibition · Traditional Korean oil used for brain, lung, and inflammatory conditions · Luteolin content crosses blood-brain barrier · Do not heat above 350°F — highly sensitive to oxidation
<b>Moringa Seed Oil (Ben Oil)</b> West African	Used in West Africa and Middle East for thousands of years · Oleic acid profile similar to olive oil · Behenic acid — rare saturated fat with anti-inflammatory properties · Highest antioxidant stability of any plant oil · Vitamin E + phytosterols · Used as a carrier oil for herbal preparations due to zero rancidity — the most shelf-stable plant fat known

#### DR. VERA'S NOTE:

Always pair fat-soluble nutrients (vitamins A, D, E, K, carotenoids, curcumin) with fat. Without fat, these nutrients pass through completely unabsorbed regardless of how much you consume.

## ■ GLOBAL HEALING FOODS — NOT IN WESTERN SUPERMARKETS

### Foods used for centuries as medicine — confirmed by modern research

<b>Baobab Fruit Powder</b>	West African	6x more vitamin C than orange · Highest prebiotic fiber score of any food tested · Ferments slowly in the gut feeding Bifidobacterium for 24+ hours · Tartaric acid slows glucose absorption · Calcium + potassium · Anti-inflammatory polyphenols · The "Tree of Life" across sub-Saharan Africa — every part is medicine
<b>Chanca Piedra</b>	Amazon / Caribbean	Name means "stone breaker" — dissolves calcium oxalate and uric acid kidney stones · Phyllanthin + hypophyllanthin inhibit calcium oxalate crystal formation · Hepatoprotective: protects liver cells from toxin damage · Reduces uric acid (gout) · Traditional remedy across Amazon, India, and Caribbean · Multiple clinical studies confirm kidney stone passage
<b>Tiger Milk Mushroom (Lignosus)</b>	SE Asian	Most studied mushroom for respiratory conditions in Southeast Asian medicine · Used for asthma, bronchitis, and chronic cough for centuries in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand · Beta-glucans + polysaccharides stimulate NK cells · Expectorant + bronchodilator action confirmed in research · No Western equivalent with the same respiratory specificity
<b>Sea Buckthorn</b>	TCM / Ayurvedic	Highest vitamin C of any plant (up to 15x orange) · Omega-7 fatty acid (palmitoleic acid) — rare in plants · Repairs mucosal membranes: gut, lungs, and skin simultaneously · Used in Tibetan medicine as a primary cardiovascular herb · Carotenoids in a fatty acid carrier — highest bioavailability of any plant carotene source · Studied for liver protection and gut lining repair
<b>Morinda (Noni)</b>	SE Asian / Pacific	Proxeronine → xeronine in the gut — unique alkaloid that repairs damaged cells · Anti-inflammatory iridoids · Scopoletin for blood pressure · Used across Pacific Island, SE Asian, and Caribbean healing traditions for cancer, infection, and joint pain for 2,000 years · Damnacanthal studied for immune modulation
<b>Ashwagandha Root</b>	Ayurvedic	Most studied Ayurvedic adaptogen · Reduces serum cortisol up to 28% (KSM-66 extract, RCT confirmed) · Raises T3 + T4 thyroid hormones in hypothyroid patients · Withanolides for testosterone + DHEA support · GABA modulation for anxiety reduction · 300mg at night — acts during the cortisol floor window for maximum adrenal recovery
<b>Guduchi (Tinospora)</b>	Ayurvedic	Called "the divine nectar plant" in Sanskrit · Berberine + palmatine alkaloids — same glucose-lowering mechanism as berberine supplements · Immunomodulator: studied for both immune suppression (autoimmune) and immune activation (infection) depending on dose · Liver protective at 400mg extract · Studied extensively in Ayurvedic diabetes management
<b>Schisandra Berry</b>	TCM	The only plant with all 5 flavors in TCM — sweet, sour, bitter, salty, pungent — indicating action on all organ systems · Lignan compounds directly protect liver cells from toxin damage · Adaptogen for HPA axis · Improves liver enzyme levels (ALT + AST) in multiple clinical trials · Hepatoprotective used in Chinese hospitals alongside chemotherapy
<b>Cat's Claw (Uña de Gato)</b>	Amazon	Oxindole alkaloids modulate NF-κB — primary inflammation switch · Anti-arthritis: studied for joint inflammation comparable to pharmaceutical intervention · DNA repair compounds (quinovic acid glycosides) · Anti-viral studied for Epstein-Barr and herpes viruses · Used across the Amazon as a primary anti-inflammatory and immune tonic for centuries
<b>Bitter Melon (Karela)</b>	SE Asian / West African / Caribbean	Charantin, polypeptide-p, and vicine — three distinct insulin-mimicking compounds in one food · Every traditional medicine system in the tropics independently discovered the same hypoglycemic property · Lowers fasting blood glucose in multiple RCTs · Also studied for cholesterol and kidney protection · Juice before meals is most potent preparation
<b>Galangal Root</b>	SE Asian	Related to ginger but pharmacologically distinct · Galangin + alpinetin inhibit COX-2 and 5-LOX simultaneously (same as boswellia) · Anti-fungal compounds studied for Candida resistance · Digestive bitter that stimulates stomach acid production · Used in Thai, Malaysian, and Indonesian healing traditions as a primary anti-inflammatory · Different mechanism from ginger — use both
<b>Amla (Indian Gooseberry)</b>	Ayurvedic	Highest natural vitamin C — one fruit contains the vitamin C of 20 oranges · Vitamin C is heat-stable in amla unlike in other foods · Emblicanin A and B — polyphenols studied for lowering LDL and raising HDL simultaneously · Anti-diabetic: lowers post-meal glucose in clinical studies · Liver-protective: reduces ALT + AST · Cornerstone of Chyawanprash — the most researched Ayurvedic formula in history

**Hibiscus (Sorrel)****West African /  
Caribbean /  
Mediterranean**

Anthocyanins lower systolic blood pressure as effectively as ACE inhibitors in multiple clinical trials · Quercetin + kaempferol for LDL reduction · Diuretic action that is kidney-protective (not depleting) · Organic acids for liver detox · Daily 2–3 cups: established cardiovascular protocol in Mexican, West African, and Egyptian medicine · Preparation: cold steep overnight for maximum anthocyanin extraction

**Baobab Leaf****West African**

Calcium content higher than milk per gram dry weight · Iron + vitamin C in the same leaf (self-paired for maximum absorption) · Hypoglycemic mucilage content · Dried leaf powder used across the Sahel as a daily food supplement · Anti-malarial compounds studied in Nigerian and Senegalese research institutions · Every part of the baobab tree used medicinally — leaf, fruit, bark, seed

**DR. VERA'S NOTE:**

These foods appear in no standard Western nutrition textbook. They are taught in traditional medicine systems, grandmother-to-grandchild across cultures, and increasingly confirmed in peer-reviewed research. Seek them at African markets, Asian grocery stores, Indian spice shops, and Caribbean food suppliers.

Dr. Vera Holloway, CNS + CHN · Certified Nutrition Specialist & Certified Holistic Nutritionist · Microsoft Certified Data Visualization Professional

Educational and nutritional support purposes only. Individual nutrient needs vary. Consult your physician before significant dietary changes, especially with active kidney, liver, or glucose conditions.