



# give & take

Winter 2009

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## Nutrition Q&A: Dr. Dean Ornish

**D**ean Ornish, M.D., is the founder, president, and director of the non-profit Preventive Medicine Research Institute in Sausalito, California, and Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. He is the author of six best-selling books, including Dr. Dean Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease and Eat More, Weigh Less.

Dr. Ornish has been a member of the San Francisco Food Bank's Board of Directors since 2006. He shared his perspective on childhood nutrition issues with us in a recent interview.

### **SFFB: What motivated you to get involved with the Food Bank?**

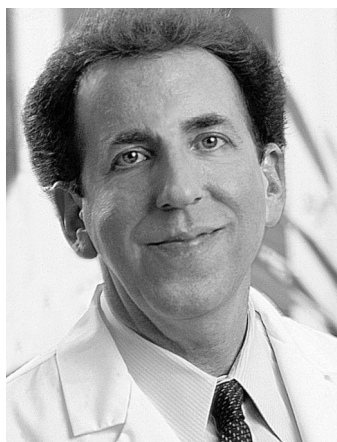
**Ornish:** In the Bay Area, one of the most prosperous places in the world, one in four children goes to bed hungry every night. As a father of an eight-year-old boy, I can't imagine anything more stressful and humiliating for a parent than not being able to provide something as basic as food for one's kids.

To me there is nothing more direct, in terms of service, than providing food to the hungry. I consider it a privilege to be able to work with an organization like the Food Bank that is providing this kind of empowering service to people who most need it.

### **SFFB: Can you talk a bit about the effects on children of going hungry?**

**Ornish:** It's been well documented that under-nutrition and poor nutrition affect every organ system in our body and increases the likelihood of getting sick from both infectious diseases as well as chronic diseases.

For a child who can't get enough to eat, it creates a hunger of the spirit as well as of the body. It gives a child the view



that the world is not a safe place; it's a place of scarcity, not abundance; it's a place where there's indifference rather than love.

So in addition to the direct tangible nutritional value that the Food Bank provides, I think it also feeds the spirit as well by changing that world view at a very core level.

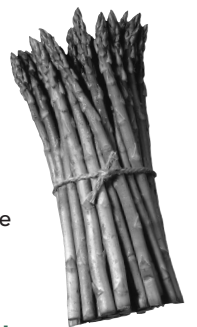
### **SFFB: What is your sense of how things are going in terms of nutrition, especially for children, in this country?**

**Ornish:** High blood pressure, high cholesterol, even fatty livers, diabetes, what used to be called adult onset diabetes—we're seeing more and more of these diseases in kids. These are illnesses that have tragic long-term complications. And it's completely preventable. It's not that our genes have changed in the last

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## EAT YOUR VEGETABLES!

**We all heard it as kids—** and most parents find themselves repeating it to their own kids. People across the income spectrum can take a few simple steps to introduce good eating habits.



### **STEP 1: PROVIDE CHILDREN WITH A VARIETY OF HEALTHY OPTIONS.**

**Here's how:** Kids (and adults, too!) should get five servings of fruits or vegetables per day. One tactic is to give your children three different types of vegetables at a meal and allow them to reject one. That way, youngsters have some choice and control over what they eat.

**Here's what we're doing:** The Food Bank works hard to provide lots of healthy choices at all of our grocery pantries, including the 56 Healthy Children Pantries located at schools. Each pantry receives at least five to seven produce items every week, including one fruit.

### **STEP 2: MAKE SURE THE HEALTHY STUFF ACTUALLY GETS EATEN.**

**Here's how:** Scientists say kids may need to taste new foods a minimum of four times before truly knowing

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FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

# I WANT TO FEED A LOT MORE PEOPLE

**Rich Faafiu** works in the San Francisco Food Bank warehouse, building pallets of food for delivery to over 600 agencies throughout the city. For Rich, it's more than just a job—he knows first-hand what it's like to be hungry. Here, he shares his experiences.

My mom was a single parent—raised me by herself. She had two jobs and still we were living in public housing. It was a struggle. I took care of my younger brothers and sisters while my mom was working. I was nine or ten—cooking, cleaning and helping feed them.

Back in the day, I still remember eating like that big old block of cheese, the powdered milk, the Farina—all that stuff we used to get from aid because my mom was struggling between her jobs and paying the rent. People think it's just starting right now, where people are broke and need help. But that stuff's been going on since I was little.

We had to scrape things together. We were making a pot of rice and just pouring a can of milk in there with a little bit of sugar and we were eating that for a dinner. Or taking powdered

eggs and mixing them with some government cheese and that would be our breakfast. You try to piece little things together like that because you don't have everything you need to make one complete meal—so you just make little bits and pieces of meals, and hope you'll be full from that.

You always wanted to make sure your younger siblings ate before you

right kind of clothes to go to school and not having much food caused some of us not to go. I went, though, because I knew they were giving out breakfast and lunch. So, if I didn't eat the day before, I'd go to school early, eat breakfast, then make sure I got my lunch. Sometimes I'd save my lunch and bring it home to make sure somebody else was eating at home.



Rich Faafiu, above, readies plums for distribution.

did. After the kids ate, whatever's left, the rest of us would eat. The thinking was, "I might not eat today, but I'll eat tomorrow because I want to make sure they'll eat." Or if we didn't have much for the next day, then we'd let the kids eat and just save the rest so they'd have something the next day.

I was getting hand-me-down clothes. Some clothes, my cousin would wear one day and I would wear the next day, because we couldn't get the laundry washed and we didn't have enough clothes. Not having the

So when I first saw all this food in the warehouse, it was amazing. It was amazing that there was all this food here to provide for people. That was beautiful. Now today, every time I walk in here, my whole focus is to want to help somebody—because I've been hungry myself. I'm here to make a difference in somebody's life. I'm all about, "Let's feed somebody, let's make sure these pantries are getting enough food." I get more enjoyment out of that than I get out of my paycheck. ♡

## Upcoming Events and Food Drives

### Good Neighbors Lenten Food Drive

February 25 – April 11

While many make the choice to adopt Lent as a time of fasting and abstinence, some of our neighbors do not have that choice. Hold a food drive at your congregation to help the hungry in San Francisco.

### Join the Full Plate program!

Congregations, community groups and small businesses can sign up to collect "most needed" food donations on an ongoing basis for the Food Bank. Join dozens of other groups making a difference today.



### REAL-LIFE ACTION HEROES

David Arquette, Matt Damon and Wyclef Jean lend a hand at a Food Bank pantry in the Mission.

## SAVE-THE-DATE

### Food from the Bar 2009: April 20 – May 15

Mark your calendar and join the legal community in the fight against hunger. For information on how you can get involved, visit [www.sffoodbank.org/foodfromthebar.html](http://www.sffoodbank.org/foodfromthebar.html).

### Letter Carriers' Food Drive: May 9

Leave non-perishable foods by your mailbox on Saturday, May 9 and stamp out hunger with the U.S. Postal Service!

# Healthy Food for Active Lives

Dear Friends,

As a parent, I know that one of the greatest gifts I can give my two children is the gift of healthy food. And I try to eat good food myself to model healthy behavior for them.

Ensuring that every member of our families, including the very oldest and youngest, has healthy food choices is a value shared by all of us, no matter how wealthy or poor we might be.

Sadly, obtaining nutritious food is difficult for most low-income people, because of the cost and often because grocery stores selling fresh foods are scarce in poor urban neighborhoods. For these reasons among others, the low-income population is disproportionately affected by diet-related illnesses, such as heart disease and juvenile diabetes.

That's why the San Francisco Food Bank has taken a leadership role in providing nutritious food to our clients—with over half of the food we distribute consisting of fresh fruits and vegetables. We deliver more fresh produce to people in poverty than any other food bank in the nation.

A senior recently told one of our pantry coordinators, "You know what, I hadn't had a piece of fresh fruit in three years. And now I come to your food pantry and I have fresh fruit every week. I feel better, I'm healthier—my doctor says I'm healthier—and I'm able to do more."

Now we want to bring the Food Bank to the next level of nutrition leadership. This past fall, we completed a 5-year-strategic plan that will take us to 2013. One of the top initiatives of this plan is an even stronger focus on nutrition.



Our key tactics include:

- Increasing our distribution of nutrient-rich perishables
- When we can't get them donated, purchasing specific staples and protein items to support a balanced diet
- Implementing a tool to measure the nutritional value of our inventory
- Providing nutrition information to our agencies and our clients

Of course, our primary mission remains to end hunger in San Francisco. As we work toward that goal, we'll be doing our best to offer our clients the healthy food choices they need to live active, productive lives.

Sincerely,

Paul Ash, Executive Director

## A MAVERICK APPROACH TO FIGHTING HUNGER

On December 18, San Franciscans dined out so that others could eat, too. Fourteen of the city's top dining spots participated in Dine Out Against Hunger, donating a portion of their evening's proceeds to the Food Bank.

It couldn't have happened without initiative from Scott Youkilis. Scott is the Executive Chef and Owner of Maverick



American Eatery and Wine Bar in San Francisco's Mission district. He rounded up his fellow chefs

to fight hunger the way they know best—by feeding people. Here, he recounts what motivated him to lend a hand:

I've worked in restaurants all my life, and there's just something special about the whole experience. As a chef, you prep all day. You put in all these hours from the morning through the afternoon so that people can come in and spend their hard-earned money on something you've created. And then they're out there, eating, loving it and having a great time. At Maverick, we've got an open kitchen and you can see what

food, that just really moved me. Because for me, food is all about the experience.



I mean, we don't need to eat foie gras. We don't need to eat caviar and fine champagne to have that enjoyment that food brings. It all comes down to that gathering of your friends and family and enjoying a meal together at the table. Food brings people together.

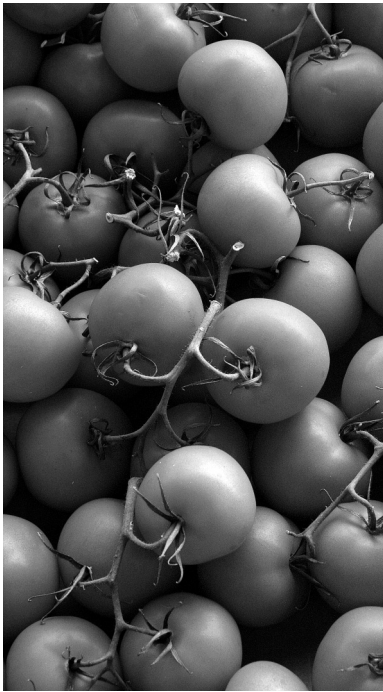
That's what got this idea into my head to get my friends together and really do something about this issue of hunger. They're all fellow restaurant owners and chefs, and we all feel like we're part of the larger community.

It just made so much sense. We know food better than anyone and it was the easiest thing for us to do! We don't think of ourselves only as people who sell food, wine and good service. We know we've got people to take care, and that's not just on the guest side. ♥



the atmosphere is out on the floor. That's the greatest feeling.

So when I heard on the radio that food banks are hurting and people are having to stand on line for



## VEGETABLES

(continued from page 1)

whether or not they like something. That may sound trying, but the payoff for persistence is a lifetime of healthy eating habits.

**Here's what we're doing:** The Food Bank is working with our pantry coordinators to provide recipes and information sheets with fresh produce items to support clients who want to eat more healthfully. In addition, we've partnered with Leah's Pantry, an organization that offers cooking and nutrition workshops to economically disadvantaged communities.

### STEP 3: HELP MAKE SURE HEALTHY OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR ALL.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization is on the legislative agenda in Washington, DC, this year. Please help us fight for this important and wide-ranging package that will likely be taken up by Congress in early 2009. You can stay up to date by receiving our advocacy alerts: [http://www.sffoodbank.org/take\\_action/sign\\_up.html](http://www.sffoodbank.org/take_action/sign_up.html)

Check out some healthy, kid-friendly recipes at [www.sffoodbank.org/recipes](http://www.sffoodbank.org/recipes) ♥

## Meal-a-Month

We are grateful to our Meal-a-Month contributors who provide us with the ongoing commitment of a monthly gift to fight hunger. The following donors joined Meal-a-Month between September 1 and December 31, 2008.

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*In the same period, these donors celebrated five or more years' participation in the Meal-a-Month program. Thank you!*

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## Q&A (continued from page 1)

twenty to thirty years, it's that our lifestyle has changed.

With the economic meltdown, the number of people requiring food is increasing, so the need is greater than ever. For those of us blessed with abundance, my wife, Anne, and I feel strongly that it's more meaningful than ever to share it with those who most need it. And our son enjoys working in the food pantries and learns at a young age how meaningful it is to serve in this way.



*The Food Bank strives to offer parents healthy choices at all its pantries.*

### SFFB: What are the biggest nutritional problems facing children today, and how have children's eating habits changed over the past few decades?

**Ornish:** The biggest problems facing children are both under-nutrition—not getting enough to eat—and over-nutrition or poor nutrition—getting too much or poor qualities of food. Diabetes in thirty year-olds has increased seventy percent in the last ten years. Fifteen percent of children are overweight or obese and thirty percent of adults are. If you want to see something really scary, go to the cdc.gov website where you'll see maps by year of obesity spreading throughout the United States like a cancer. As a result of that, this may be the first generation when our kids have a shorter lifespan than their parents, which is unacceptable and pitiful. These are human issues. These are not Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative, red state or blue state issues.

### SFFB: Can you explain why families often struggle with hunger and obesity simultaneously?

**Ornish:** Unfortunately, the cheapest foods are often the least healthful. Fat, salt and sugar are less expensive than fresh fruits and vegetables. It's actually cheaper for most families to eat at McDonald's than to go out and buy fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and soy products. We're trying to change that.

### SFFB: What's your positive vision for change? What can we do to improve the situation of poor nutrition and diet-related illnesses?

**Ornish:** Get involved in your school. See what kinds of foods they're serving there. Get involved in politics. Get involved in the farm bill and the decisions that are made about the subsidies. Let the food companies know how important it is to not advertise junk food to kids and have them make healthy choices available and to advertise and promote the health values in doing that and making it fun and exciting for kids to do that. So, there's a lot people can do. We actually may have more opportunities than we realize when we work together. The San Francisco Food Bank is a great place to begin. ♥

## Corporate Sponsors

Corporate Sponsors partner with the San Francisco Food Bank in ending hunger by making a special donation to the Food Bank's distribution programs. Additionally, corporate sponsors commit to fundraising, contributions and volunteer programs year-round. For more information on corporate sponsorships, please contact Christopher Wiley at cwiley@sffb.org.

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