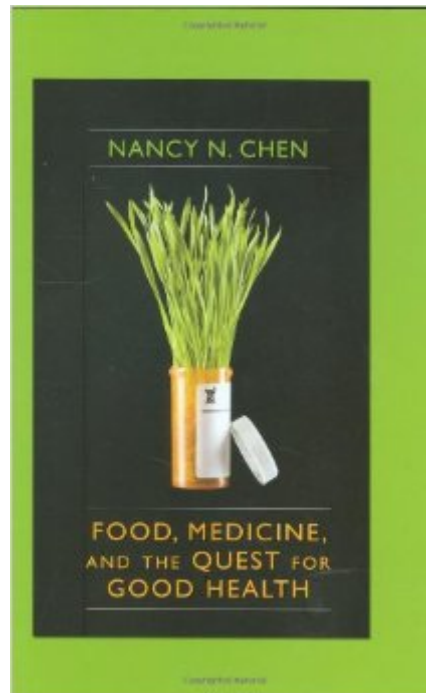


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# Food, Medicine, And The Quest For Good Health: Nutrition, Medicine, And Culture



## Synopsis

What we eat, how we eat, where we eat, and when we eat are deeply embedded cultural practices. Eating is also related to how we medicate. The multimillion-dollar diet industry offers advice on how to eat for a better body and longer life, and avoiding harmful foods (or choosing healthy ones) is considered separate from consuming medicine—another multimillion-dollar industry. In contrast, most traditional medical systems view food as inseparable from medicine and regard medicinal foods as the front line of healing. Drawing on medical texts and food therapy practices from around the world and throughout history, Nancy N. Chen locates old and new crossovers between food and medicine in different social and cultural contexts. The consumption of spices, sugar, and salt was once linked to specific healing properties, and trade in these commodities transformed not just the political economy of Europe, Asia, and the New World but local tastes and food practices as well. Today's technologies are rapidly changing traditional attitudes toward food, enabling the cultivation of new admixtures, such as nutraceuticals and genetically modified food, that link food to medicine in novel ways. Chen considers these developments against the evolving food regimes of the diet industry in order to build a framework for understanding diet as individual practice, social prescription, and political formation.

## Book Information

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We are what we eat. Both literally on a personal level and figuratively when you consider society as a whole. Food is a fuel and the body (or machine) can operate only as effectively or as well as the

fuel that it receives. Of course, the body can be quite tolerant, quite forgiving, up to a point...Here in this relatively compact hardback book, the author considers our cultural practices and how food and medication are interlinked. This is not your typical food-themed book yet it gives an interesting overview to how things are often pulled several ways without, necessarily, any true clarity. The diet industry is worth billions worldwide and through its practitioners it seeks to say how to eat for a better body and longer life, whilst avoiding what it claims are foods that are harmful. The pharmaceutical industry is even larger and it seeks to keep you healthy and living a long life through, as necessary, its products. One cross-over is the traditional or natural medicine field where natural ingredients are viewed as a means of sustenance and of giving healthy nutrition. Not everybody is in agreement or singing from the same hymn sheet. Many cross-overs are not necessarily planned or coordinated yet, somehow, they just get there. Many traditional Chinese recipes utilise a watery rice porridge meal for those convalescing from ailments such as fevers and the flu. Yet the World Health Organisation's oral rehydration therapy for diarrhoea and starvation is essentially... watery rice porridge. To the scandal, no doubt 'Big Pharma' would love to package this up with a modern sounding name and a high price tag to match as it is medicine, isn't it. What is the truth? Probably somewhere in-between. Pulling together research both old and new the author considers the various crossovers between food and medicine in different social and cultural contexts. Many foodstuffs became popular by virtue of their stated healthy, healing properties, such as spices, salt and sugar and yet many of the self-same items are being viewed as 'dangerous' items for modern-day living, something that should be cut out or severely restricted. Yet has society created the problems? Is the proverbial messenger being shot here? The pharmaceutical industry comes under fire by society through its ever-increasing use of molecular engineering and genetic modification of foodstuffs. Is all progress good? If it is good, how is it good and for whom is it good? These are questions that will not necessarily be answered conclusively for a long time and, of course, viewpoints vary dependent on who you ask. This book does not specifically set out to criticise a particular viewpoint or opinion. The reader is more than capable of making their own mind up about that after all. Yet it does encourage a lot of thoughts that might help focus or strengthen your particular mindset. An interesting, thought-provoking read for sure that got the old 'grey cells' thinking!

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