



WESTCHESTER  
**WOMEN**  
MAGAZINE

BEAUTY

THE IMPORTANCE  
OF A  
HEALTHY GUT

FOOD

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**WESTCHESTER CRAFT CRAWL**

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FALL 2022

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# Fall Wellness Checklist:

## Key To-Dos to Boost Immunity



BY DR. MICHAEL FINKELSTEIN

**A**s we approach fall, it's a good idea to find ways to boost your immunity and get your health back on track. There are several easy ways of achieving this, beginning with making sure you're current with vaccinations.

A recent survey by the National Poll on Healthy Aging found that about 30% of people aged 50 and older with a scheduled procedure, primary care or dental visit in 2021 postponed that procedure due to COVID, and that many have yet to reschedule or return to their practitioner's office – especially unvaccinated people. The poll found that while 81% of vaccinated and boosted older adults had rescheduled their COVID-delayed test, procedure or operation, just 44% of unvaccinated older adults had done so.

Staying up to date with vaccinations is crucial – not just for COVID, but also for the flu and shingles, as well as a Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) booster. You probably had the Tdap as a child, but the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that adults get a booster every 10 years.

Now is the ideal time to schedule your annual well visit, even if you aren't feeling sick. Anyone with a persistent cough, pain or other abnormal symptom should see their provider as soon as possible. I recently had a patient come in for an exam who said he had recurring indigestion, but only while walking; he was surprised to learn that that is a possible symptom of heart disease.

### OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

For those who have visited their provider recently – and even for those who haven't (yet) – there are plenty of other proactive measures you can take to boost your immunity. Some are obvious, some not so much:

- Washing your hands
- Eating a well-balanced, nutritious diet
- Not smoking
- Getting plenty of sleep
- Getting regular exercise
- Enjoying the outdoors; sunshine is a good source of vitamin D
- Vitamin C: Helps heal wounds and repair and maintain healthy bones, teeth, skin and cartilage; since it is not naturally produced by the body, you can boost your intake of vitamin C by eating most fruits and vegetables
- Zinc: Can help control infections by slowing down the immune response, thus preventing runaway inflammation
- Garlic: Has antibiotic properties that are effective in fighting a varied range of bacteria, fungi and viruses
- Calcium: In some cases can drive the body's reaction to invading organisms, and decrease that reaction down as the infection wanes.
- Red rice yeast: Long a popular medicinal product in China, certain strains of red rice yeast can significantly lower levels of total cholesterol and specifically LDL, or "bad" cholesterol. However, research indicates that red rice yeast may actually be harmful, depending on how it is prepared.

Obviously, consulting your healthcare provider before starting any of the supplements is highly advised; they may come up with additional ideas



depending on your individual condition. Your physician can work with you one-on-one for a personalized plan to ensure optimal health.

*Dr. Michael Finkelstein, board-certified in Internal Medicine and Wound Care, sees patients at the Scarsdale Medical Group office in Harrison. For an appointment, call 914-723-8100.*

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# FALL EVENTS

## #VAXTOSCHOOL LOCATIONS AND DATES

**Bowen Memorial Baptist Church**  
14 North Columbus Ave, Mount Vernon  
Open: Sept. 7, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Vaccine Type: Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna  
Ages: 6 months+

**Larchmont/Mamaroneck Hunger Task Force**  
955 Mamaroneck Avenue, Larchmont  
Open: Sept. 13, 3 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.  
Vaccine Type: Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna  
Ages: 6 months+

**Bowen Memorial Baptist Church**  
14 North Columbus Ave, Mount Vernon

Open: Sept. 14, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Vaccine Type: Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna  
Ages: 6 months+

## GARAGE SALE

**Saxon Woods Park**  
1800 Mamaroneck Avenue, White Plains  
Saturday, September 24 from 9 to 3pm  
Rain date: September 25  
Admission and parking are free.  
For more information and to register, visit website or call (914) 995-4480.  
<https://parks.westchestergov.com/saxon-woods-garage-sale>

## DATE NIGHT AT THE MET

Fridays and Saturdays from 5 to 9pm  
Every Friday and Saturday night, it's Date Night at The Met! Bring a friend or special someone (or yourself!) for an evening of live music, drinks, and 5,000 years of art. Experience live music across the Museum, and enjoy drink specials and an assortment of light fare in the American Wing Café, Petrie Court Café, or Cantor Roof Garden Bar and a small bites menu in the Balcony Lounge (open to Met Members at the Evening Hours level and above; reservations recommended). All events are free with Museum admission, which is always pay-what-you-wish for New York State residents and NY, NJ, and CT students with valid ID. Pay-what-you-wish tickets can only be reserved in person; allow extra time for lines. For additional information, visit <https://www.metmuseum.org/events/programs/met-live-arts/date-night>



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## 12TH ANNUAL 9/11: SERVE + REMEMBER DAY OF SERVICE

Saturday, September 10 and  
Sunday, September 11

Through Volunteer New York! and Westchester County Government, with support from major sponsor Robison Oil. For complete details, visit [volunteernewyork.org/service](http://volunteernewyork.org/service) or call 948-4452. Online registration is open for individuals, groups, schools, and families at [serveandremember.org](http://serveandremember.org) to sign up for one of over 25 family-friendly #911Day volunteer opportunities.

## 2022 NEW ROCHELLE STREET FAIR

September 18 from 11am to 5pm  
Surrounding City Hall on North Avenue  
For additional information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/NewRochelleStreetFair>

## ARTSFEST 2022

October 20 through 23 in New Rochelle and Pelham  
Kick Off: Thursday, October 20th: Copland House Concert featuring world premiere  
Bridge Records Showcase Friday, October 21st at the Ossie Davis Theater, New Rochelle Public Library  
To find out more, visit <https://newrochellearts.org/calendar/>

## JOY OF ART EXHIBIT

Larchmont Public Library, Oresman Gallery  
121 Larchmont Avenue  
Through September 30, reception on Sept. 10 from 2 to 4pm  
The Joy of Art is a celebration of all the happiness and delight that art brings into our lives. Featuring artists, Linea App and Elaine Drohan, the exhibit spotlights life's many pleasures, from majestic nature to evocative depictions of the human form. For additional information, visit [www.LarchmontLibrary.org](http://www.LarchmontLibrary.org)

## THE FAMILY PORTRAIT

Clay Art Center  
40 Beech Street, Port Chester  
Through October 15, Opening reception on Sept. 15, 6 to 8pm  
The Clay Art Center presents a juried exhibition that explores the family unit in contemporary culture and society. Participating artists: Jocelyn Armstrong, Teela Banker, Yoko Sekino-Bové, Jamie Charles, Mya Cluff, Jane Neuss Cohen, Jill Cohen-Nuñez, Emily Downes, Sean Lutz, Marga McBride, Mac McCusker, Richard Nickel, Teddy Osei, Kristyn Rohrer, Shirah Rubin, Elisa Soliven, Kourtney Stone, Sara Torgison, Blake Williams. For complete details, visit [www.clayartcenter.org](http://www.clayartcenter.org)

## SATURDAY BAKING PROGRAM

Culinary Tech Center  
303 Quarropas Street, White Plains  
6 week course practicing the creative expression that characterizes baking and pastry arts. Enjoy making cookies, brownies, quick breads, scones, pies, tarts and more. Perfect for a mother/daughter team or husband and wife too! Visit [www.CulinaryTechCenter.edu](http://www.CulinaryTechCenter.edu) or call 914-315-0740 to learn more.

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# Evolution of the WESTCHESTER CRAFT CRAWL

BY LAUREN HURWITZ

Ever since high school, Ossining resident Leigh Taylor Mickelson knew the world of art was calling her name. Still, it wasn't until she attended the School for American Crafts at Rochester Institute of Technology that she discovered her love of ceramics. Just a few years ago, the clay artist was sitting at Sing Sing Kill Brewery with her friends and fellow artists, Loren Maron and Alex Fitzgerald, when she came up with the idea for the Westchester Craft Crawl. Within 20 minutes, the trio had determined the official name of the show, set up a plan, picked a date and turned their crazy idea into a viable business model.

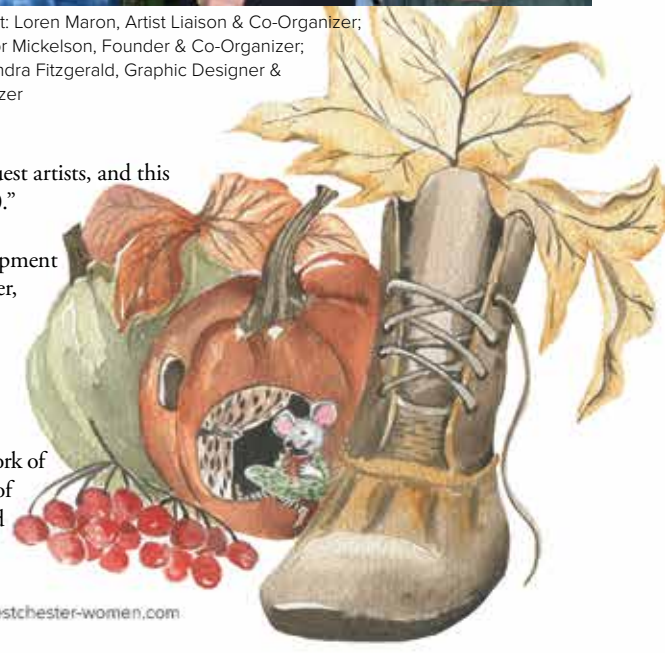
Mickelson says, "The Crawl kind of came out of the pandemic. I left my job of 22 years in non-profit arts administration in early 2019 and became a consultant which enabled me to really kick up my studio practice a notch. I started making outdoor sculptures, and I thought a craft show or fair might be the best vehicle to sell this work." Before the pandemic, Mickelson had applied to showcase at the Crafts at Lyndhurst in Tarrytown and was accepted. Unfortunately, it was later cancelled due to the pandemic. She had already created all of the work for the show and knew she needed to share her pieces in some way. As a next step, she connected with Maron and Fitzgerald to suggest the idea of an open studio tour, hence the Westchester Craft Crawl.

"Each of us would open our studios and invite guest artists, and this is what led to the first iteration in the fall of 2020."

While Mickelson runs the business development for the show that features clay, wood, fiber, metal, jewelry, glass and mixed media, Maron serves as Artist Liaison and has traveled to shows across the nation showcasing her work while simultaneously developing an eye for talent. She reached out to her vast network of artists to gauge interest in being part of the outdoor studio tour. "Artists planned to bring their booths to our yards for the



Left to right: Loren Maron, Artist Liaison & Co-Organizer; Leigh Taylor Mickelson, Founder & Co-Organizer; and Alexandra Fitzgerald, Graphic Designer & Co-Organizer





Crawl. We also found a few other locations where we could do this in neighboring towns. Our first show had over 30 artists participating in Ossining, Tarrytown and Croton on Hudson. Everyone spread out so the tents could be socially distanced and at the time, we required everyone to wear a mask,” according to Maron. All of the artists jumped on board as they were eager to “be back at it again,” according to Mickelson, especially since the fall shows were proactively cancelled once the pandemic struck. The trio threw their first craft fair together in six weeks with some word of mouth and social media promotions alongside some online community newspaper advertising.

Maron says a key component of being accepted into the Westchester Craft Crawl is that each artist is designing and fabricating crafts themselves, starting from raw materials, making things by hand. “We want to have a professional look and have the public recognize that our Crawl is an opportunity for the community to come free of charge to see quality art in a different way,” says Maron. She appreciates that visitors can come to the show and see the fruits of the artists’ labor. “I love it when the shoppers come and they ooh and ahh at everyone’s work and say they’ve never

*continued on page 16*



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# At Home with Hurwitz



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT COUNTERTOP FOR YOU

stain and is scratch resistant.” Today, he’s starting to see some customers breakaway ever so slightly from this trend by dipping their toes into “something more colorful like quartzite which is growing in popularity for accents. Maybe quartz on the perimeter but the island might be a bold quartzite with a lot of movement and color like blue or black or green. Or maybe a full backsplash in a quartzite. I’m even seeing blacker veins with bolder movement and more waterfall edges coming down the edge (of the island). Soon we’ll be getting into porcelain slabs which is a great product with a realistic marble look for countertops with 10x5 foot slabs.”

If you’re on a budget, granite is likely your best option at \$60-\$70 per square foot. If you’re looking to stay most on trend with quartz, there is good news in stores as this material has a very large range from \$85-\$110 per square foot with the more expensive options often having extremely realistic looking veining. Quartzite is even more expensive at \$100-\$120 per square foot and can be pricier for the rarest of slabs. When it comes to the cost, nothing holds a candle to marble which, if selecting real white Calacatta Gold marble, can average about \$300 per square foot.

When visiting a stone store, make sure to bring along a sample of your cabinet and a backsplash tile (if applicable) that you’re thinking of using to place along potential stone samples. Take it a step further and bring your favorite stone samples home for a few days to see how it all comes together in the natural light of the space where it will be installed. But don’t stop there! Gasch says one of the biggest mistakes made, is that customers, “choose from a sample, but don’t take the time to go to the slab yard or a shop to look at the slab and make sure it’s to their liking.” Another mistake is not being on-site at your home when the fabricators come to template the space where the countertop will be placed. Gasch says it’s imperative to have someone at your home who is familiar with the project to answer questions and have a conversation about the templating as well as being home when the cut slabs are delivered for installation, to ensure the finished product is one you will love for a long time.

*Photo courtesy of Terra Tile & Marble  
Resource: <https://www.terratileandmarble.com>*



BY LAUREN HURWITZ

With the most important room in most homes being the kitchen, it’s critical this space is aesthetically pleasing when considering renovations. Dave Gasch, Owner of Terra Tile and Marble in Briarcliff Manor, knows a key component in creating a beautiful kitchen is selecting the right countertop. But where to begin?

The first step is to determine the look you desire and how you want the countertops to perform in terms of durability. Marble is unquestionably stunning and the look can’t be completely duplicated. However, it might not be the best option in a space that will be used regularly by children or lots of mess. Marble can be repolished but it can be a challenge to maintain. For the past five years, Gasch says quartz has been the name of the game. “Quartz is by far the most popular product that we have. We’re selling quartz to natural stone 10X.” Customers prefer quartz because, “it achieves that white marble look but it has great durability where it doesn’t

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# chef's corner <sup>ny</sup>

BY LILIAN PEÑA

## COOK. BAKE. CREATE. GATHER CULINARY

*with Melanie Underwood*

In the world of cooking, I know I make a mean salmon dish and a tasty omelette. But I knew there was more out there to learn. After hunting around Google and Instagram, I came across Gather Culinary and chef Melanie Underwood and discovered she teaches classes. On a recent Sunday morning, Melanie graciously invited me into her home and beautiful kitchen where my journey into learning how to create some amazing dishes began.

We started preparing Melanie's "One Bowl Brownies" with zucchini. That's right . . . zucchini! I told Melanie I wasn't a huge fan of zucchini but it might be a whole other story when you're talking about brownies. Melanie told me about her new book, "Rule Breaking Baking – Baking without Recipes," and said that the brownie recipe calling for about 1 to 1-1/2 cups of shredded zucchini was a perfect example of breaking the rules. She said you can decide how much or how little of the zucchini you'd like to add. Of course, Melanie said that incorporating veggies in baking is a great way to disguise them for kids. She has a great Pavlova recipe in which she added beets. While I was mixing the brownies, we laughed at the fact of combining baking and fitness in one opportunity. Melanie said her students look past the zucchini and still want to lick the bowl. After sprinkling yummy chocolate chips on top, it was off to the oven to bake. Melanie stated that while at the Plaza Hotel, she told everyone to use each of the racks in the oven so they would learn which rack worked best for a certain dish. Good tip.

We moved on to roasting butternut squash and cauliflower for the next

two recipes, "Lentils with Butternut Squash and Arugula," and "Roasted Cauliflower with Chickpeas and Arugula". If you are able to compost, it's a great way to handle your unused veggie parts. Melanie keeps a compost bowl on the side to collect all the leftovers.

I asked her how the kids in her classes respond to cauliflower. She said that once roasted, cauliflower becomes a bit sweeter which kids and adults enjoy. "I like to expose young people to things they are not usually exposed to. It often opens their eyes. When they are having it prepared and it's crispy, they say it's delicious."

Melanie also loves the fact that her students (young and older) get into



Fresh and tasty ingredients.

their cooking using their hands. Getting a feel for the food they are preparing is a very sensory experience. Another great tip Melanie offered while we were chopping Shitake mushrooms, was to practice your chopping technique on onions and carrots, to learn how to maintain consistency in size so everything cooks evenly. While the lentils simmered away, Melanie sauteed the mushrooms until they were super crispy and actually tasted like bacon!

As Melanie prepared the chickpeas for roasting, she spoke about her experience growing up on a farm in Virginia and what led her on her culinary journey. "I think just growing up on a farm and cooking everything and picking your own vegetables was so important. We rarely had rice or pasta because we grew our own potatoes and sweet potatoes." She went on to say that everything was there. They had a

huge garden and her granddad was always around – they were very close and connected. It made her feel super connected to people. That's why her company is called Gather Culinary, because for Melanie it's all about gathering together around great food.

Melanie originally wanted to be a lawyer. But once entering college, she realized it wasn't what she wanted to do. Her mother asked, "What is it that you love?"

She replied, "I love to bake and I love to cook." Her mom told her to pursue that because it could be her career for the rest of her life. Melanie said that it was probably one of the best pieces of advice in her life.

Melanie began working in hotels as a pastry chef. However, making a real impact was important to her. So, she needed to move on from



Lentils with Butternut Squash and Arugula

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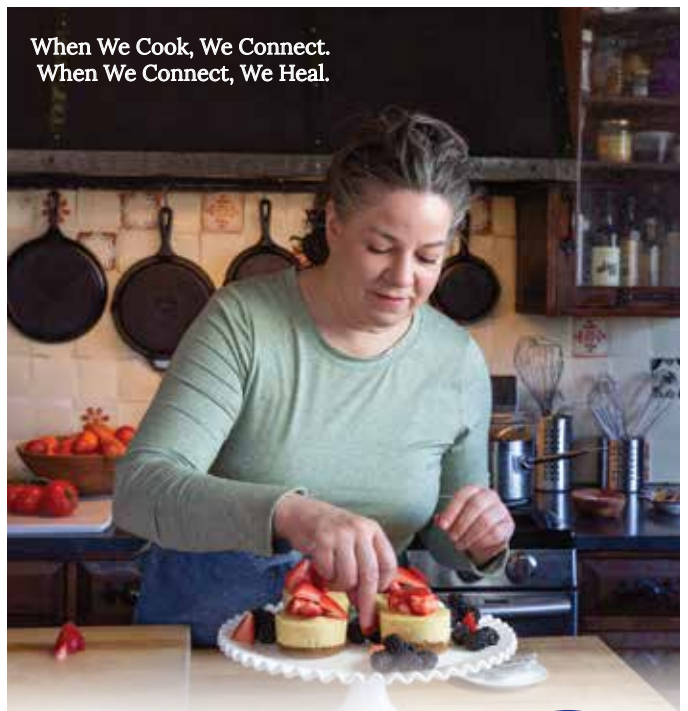
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the Four Seasons Hotel. After some needed surgery, Melanie worked at the Institute of Culinary Education through a friend. The owner approached her and suggested that she teach. While a little skeptical about the idea, Melanie conducted a few classes and quickly realized that it was, "amazing and opened up a whole new world."

An important moment for Melanie was right after 9/11. She had to

teach a week-long class the next day and her students thanked her at the end for allowing them to have a moment to not think about what had just happened. She learned that everyone is coming in with their own issues or things they are dealing with, but with cooking, sometimes it's not just about cooking, it's about taking a respite from the rest of their lives. "It's super therapeutic."

*continued on page 18*



Roasted Cauliflower with Chickpeas and Arugula

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seen anything like this before. It's a wonderful affirmation when people put their hard-earned money down on the table to buy something you've made or organized. The entire experience is very rewarding and fulfilling," says Maron. The only downside Maron says is that she has no time to walk around and see the work of fellow artists on

the day of the show, but other than that, she has no complaints!

And what would a show be without any attendees? A vital part of the Crawl's success includes getting the word out to Westchester County residents that this incredible experience is taking place locally on Oct 22-23! On the side of being Art Director for Casamigos, Fitzgerald serves as Co-Organizer and Graphic Designer for WCC for which she develops all of the visuals including social media, postcards, photography and editing, logo creation and brand guidelines for the festival to attain the look and feel the dream team desires. "Those first two shows were so incredibly rewarding to not only be able to show my pottery again but to really branch out and meet and help these real professional artists from all over the region, and giving them a safe venue to sell again. Every time you get to talk to another artisan, you're really expanding your own horizons and it gets your brain fueled again for your own portfolio." Still, not everything is so simple according to Fitzgerald. "Just getting it all done is the most



challenging. I work full time and I'm trying to maintain my own pottery studio while planning a wedding. There's lots of things to do and our goal is to always deliver to the best of our ability for our artists. In pursuit of that, it can feel really difficult to find the time to get it all done and get it all done well. We are all artists too and our team puts ourselves in their shoes and we want everyone to put their best foot forward."

The Crawl is a growing event that's a joy for all Westchester residents and beyond to experience. "I think really hammering home for visitors is that you can choose your own adventure tour. All the stops are really close together, within a 15 minute drive max, so you can take your car and explore each stop. Just being open to the travel aspect and fully enjoying the fact that you're out in Westchester for the day and you have a structured opportunity to visit parts of the county you haven't been to before is really exciting, says Fitzgerald. The plan is to keep growing and Mickelson says the surveys they send out to attendees each year, help them shape the Crawl and make it stronger. "We feel like we have a good model and if it continues to remain viable while the other (local) shows are going on, we will continue. We're attracting an audience of craft lovers and shoppers and as long as the artists are happy, I'm happy, and that's what I am mostly focused on."

Shoppers can check out the Fall 2022 Westchester Craft Crawl at four stops in Northern Westchester with about 50 participating artists along with food and beverage vendors; Sing Sing Kill Brewery, 1857 Spirits/ Barber's Farm Distillery and For the Love of Toffee from October 22-23, 2022. Visit their website at [www.westchestercraftcrawl.com](http://www.westchestercraftcrawl.com) and follow the show on Instagram @westchestercraftcrawl to learn more details and exact locations.



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# The Importance of a Healthy Gut

By Colette Brown  
LICENSED AESTHETICIAN

**D**id you know that 95% of all autoimmune disease comes from the gut? You may be surprised to learn that medical doctors receive less than 1% of their total training in medical school learning about nutrition and the impact of food on the gut. Understanding this connection opens you up to limitless possibilities in healing, wellbeing, and the proverbial fountain of youth.

Western medicine is absolutely necessary to help assist in surgical procedures, accidents that need immediate care, just to name a few. Looking deeper, it is a science in helping to triage symptoms with a hope of the patient getting better. When we compare it to integrative medicine, or functional medicine, we see a drastic difference in how to heal the body. Integrative medicine looks at the root cause of the problem and works with the body's own healing mechanisms to completely heal and not just treat symptoms.

We are seeing a rise in frustration from western medical doctors who do not have long term solutions for patients in their healing journey. On the flip side, patients are weary of being told their "autoimmune" or other conditions cannot be treated. We hear stories of spontaneous remission and healing from diseases that were chronic, but how are these cases being tracked and documented? Is there a common thread that weaves them together?

Here is the light. The tide is turning in our understanding of health and how we can improve it. We now know that several factors affect our well-being: nourishing foods, mindfulness / meditation, adequate sleep, stress reduction, healthy relationships, drinking water, exercise, play, and ongoing learning / stimulation of the mind.

## Gut-Brain Axis

For years I struggled with cystic acne, chronic stomach pain, brain fog and lethargy. I went to medical specialists, aestheticians, and no one had answers. I tried accutane, peels, products, diets, antibiotics, and nothing helped long term. It wasn't until I understood the gut-brain axis and its direct effect on skin.

What did I learn in the end of my suffering and beginning of total well-being? The health of our gut microbiome manifests in different ways, both on our skin and inside our bodies. Chronic conditions look like eczema, psoriasis, acne, rosacea, joint pain, bloating, fatigue, for others, the body may fight silently for years until it can no longer fight, then it "breaks." These preventable diseases include diabetes, cancer, arthritis, depression, dementia, heart disease, and the list goes on.

## Explanation of Microbiome

The microbiome are microorganisms (fungi, bacteria, protozoa and viruses), whose jobs are to aid in digestion, regulating hormones, producing vitamins and boosting our immune system.

The microbiome is an intelligent life force that works with us to maintain our bodies. While complex, there are also simple ways in which we can nourish our gut, and ultimately giving ourselves the gift of health, vitality and beautiful skin.

## Paradigm Shift

The antiquated belief that skin was a disposable tissue is debunked, and we now know that it has the ability to repair and heal. I would like to share a story that will bring to life an example of plasticity of the skin and the gut-brain axis.

There was a veteran pilot named Jack, who had flown all over and in extreme conditions. One of his assignments was to fly through a canyon, and every time he flies through he gets herpes blisters and must see the doctor to get medication to treat it. In his never-ending search for answers, he was referred to a hypnotherapist. During his session, it was revealed that one day, when Jack called in sick to work, his friend, also a pilot, filled in for Jack. During his flight, Jack's friend crashed and died. Every time Jack would fly through the canyon, he was plagued with guilt of his friend's death and then the immediate manifestation of visceral skin reactions. After this realization, Jack was able to work through these feelings with a therapist, and ultimately heal his body. Jack once again was able to fly through the canyon without further reactions.

What does this mean to you? It shows us the relationship between the gut, brain and skin. Our feelings and emotions can have an adverse effect on what happens topically and internally. These symptoms can, when caught early enough, be treated looking at the root cause of the disease.

## Skincare Tips

I became an Aesthetician out of my personal desire to find a solution to my adverse skin conditions. It led me on a path to researching products and ultimately the root cause; my gut. I learned that taking probiotics, eating fermented food and eliminating stress were all parts of the equation. What excited me the most was learning I could manipulate the microbiome of the gut, which "fixed" my skin issues. I also learned that our skin also needs probiotics to nourish the face-specific microbiome.

Columbia Skincare is revolutionary. After my personal 20-year quest to find the "perfect" skincare, I learned about the strain-specific bacteria used in the Columbia line and was amazed. I put all my products aside for 30 days and just used the Columbia Concentrate and Complex - I was amazed. When I tried using my old products, my skin didn't agree. That was all I needed to know. If you're over 35, you need to pay close attention to the medicinal and effective ingredients that your skin needs to flourish. It is also imperative to seek out certified microbiome friendly products.

Remember, we can't do it alone. Let's connect, share and help each other. Take a moment today to evaluate what is working and not working in your life - from skincare to what you eat. You hold the key to your health...and good skin!



*Colette Brown has been a licensed clinical aesthetician since 2001. She is the Director of Education at Columbia Skincare where she leads the professional products division. In her role, she oversees education and treatment protocol training and supports research and development with new product development. Brown possesses a deep passion and understanding of the healing benefits of topical probiotics and how they contribute to the overall health and wellness of the skin's microbiome. Based in Beverly Hills, Brown has a Bachelor of Art in education, is a certified holistic practitioner through the Kresser Institute, a licensed phlebotomist, and has certifications in advanced skin care procedures. Her past articles include, "Inner Glow: Bringing Energy Healing to Clients" and "Retail Religion." For more information, visit [www.columbiaskincare.com](http://www.columbiaskincare.com)*

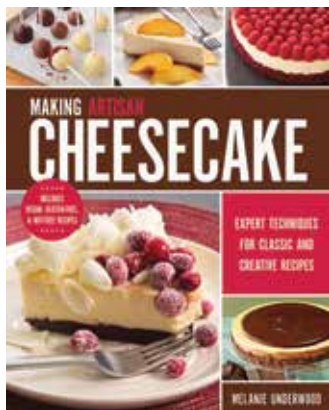
## CHEF'S CORNER

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I asked Melanie if she had any influences in the culinary world. Laughingly, she said that there weren't many and she looks more so outside of the culinary business. This was due to the fact that the culinary world is heavily impacted by men. Her style is more like a European kitchen where it is often quieter and has a more comfortable vibe. She admires Alice Waters for her philosophy about growing what you eat.

When asked about what she wants her students to take with them after completing her classes, she replied, "I want them to feel super connected to their food. I want them to also feel connected to themselves. For me, food is about sharing and being connected with others. I hope that I impart that to my students when they come into my classes. I want them to have a sense of belonging. For young people it definitely builds confidence."

When developing new recipes, Melanie tries to think of things that are unconventional and traditionally things people wouldn't put together. One aspect is teaching others the



concept from her book because she knows how to bake without following exact recipes. It is challenging in itself to teach others.

I asked Melanie what she tells parents of children that show great interest in cooking. "Don't hold them back." Parents want to protect their children in the kitchen, so it's a great idea to find alternatives to preparing some ingredients. For example, using a grater instead of a knife. Getting your child involved in every process of making a meal for the prep, cook and cleaning up, teaches them how to appreciate the meal and have more fun in the kitchen.

We went on to make an amazing yogurt sauce and vinaigrette for the two dishes. I used a microplane to grate the garlic and zest a lemon. It might not be new to some cooks out there but it was a fantastic confidence builder for my young food journey.

I asked Melanie about how our readers can learn more about her books that are out now and the new one coming. She showed me her incredible book, "Making Artisan Cheesecake," (available on Kindle). It has some mouthwatering recipes in it.

Her new book, "Rule Breaking Baking - Baking without Recipes," is currently being developed and will be published soon.

In the meantime, Melanie's Fall classes are held for 6 weeks (Mondays & Wednesdays) and another set of classes coming up are on Mondays, Wednesdays

and Saturdays.

To find out about Gather Culinary and Melanie, visit [www.melanieunderwood.com](http://www.melanieunderwood.com) and on Instagram @chefmelanieunderwood

Visit [www.westchester-women.com/chefs-corner](http://www.westchester-women.com/chefs-corner) for all the recipes in this article.

I had an amazing time in Melanie's kitchen. She certainly impacted my life and my own culinary journey. I'm sure she will for many of our readers, too.

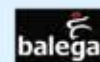


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