

What Has Dr. Shook Been Reading?

The Okinawa Diet Plan.

By Bradley J. Wilcox, MD, D. Craig Wilcox, PhD and Makoto Suzuki MD
Clarkson Potter Publishers (2004)

Okinawa is a collection of 161 beautiful lush green islands located between the main islands of Japan and Taiwan and is home to the longest lived population in the world. It is a land where Great Grandpa is practicing martial arts, Great Granny is still performing traditional dances. The Okinawan Elders and Centenarians (people over 100 years old) live long, energetic lives. The incidence of heart disease, diabetes, obesity and cancer, is minimal. They appear younger than their years and seem to have somehow slowed the aging process.

Aside from the whole lush green tropical paradise thing that they have going for them, what is the difference between my grandma, may she rest in peace, and an Okinawan Elder? The Okinawan Elder's have a diet that consists mostly of vegetables, soy based protein, a little fish, maybe some meat on festive occasions and tea. Their diet is high in fiber, rich in nutrients and low in calorie. Unlike my grandma, whose diet consisted mostly of barbecued beef and Frito casserole, who suffered from obesity, heart disease and stroke, the Okinawan Elders are healthy, lean and active.

The Okinawa Diet Plan, like any good diet book, discusses carbohydrates (good and bad), protein (animal and vegetable) and fats of various saturations. There is even a recipe section to assist western taste buds adapt to a more Okinawan way of eating.

The Okinawa Diet Plan places a great emphasis on consuming soy based protein; I have read in several respected professional journals that soy can interfere with the absorption of synthetic thyroid, a common medication. The good doctors Wilcox, Wilcox and Suzuki made no mention of this. Perhaps I am misinformed, perhaps they left something out. This only goes to show that no one source of information is all knowing and infallible.

With regards to the thyroid, I'm not saying that soy foods should be avoided but it is important to remember that if you are under a doctor's care for a medical condition, you need to consult with your medical doctor before making dramatic changes to your diet.

Aside from that I loved the book, research backed dietary advice, wonderful stories of healthy and vivacious Okinawan Elders and scrumptious recipes.

Given the rising cost of health care and the possibly precarious future of social security and Medicare, given that I prefer a life filled with vibrant life force energy rather than a life of self inflicted disease, I think I'll go for the tofu and veggie pita sandwich and skip the cheeseburger and fries.

Dr. Laura Shook is a chiropractor with an office located near downtown Wichita KS; she can be reached by phone at (316) 267-6522 or by E-mail to gooddrLaura@sbcglobal.net