



Evolving Vitality

**A Masterclass Series for
Lifelong Health and
Resilience**

Part 1 – Longevity on a Plate

**"The Essential
Guide to Nutrition
for Thriving
Healthspan and
Vitality"**

Who is this course for?



The Longevity on a Plate Masterclass from Keep Evolving is **designed for health seekers** who are eager to improve their well-being through informed, sustainable nutrition practices.

It's perfect for those who are self-educated, motivated to invest time in learning more about health and diet, and looking for a comprehensive, evidence-based approach beyond the noise of popular media.

The course is also ideal for South Africans on a budget, offering valuable insights into maximising health and lifespan without breaking the bank. With a strong hunger for knowledge, participants will explore how to make the most of their years, understanding that what you put into your body directly impacts what you get out in terms of longevity and vitality.

Meet Course Facilitator Prof. Celene Bernstein



Introducing Prof. Celene Bernstein: Nutrition Expert and Facilitator of Keep Evolving's Longevity on a Plate Masterclass

Prof. Celene Bernstein is a passionate and accomplished health professional whose journey into the field of nutrition and wellness began over 50 years ago. Initially inspired by a personal experience with a naturopath, Celene discovered the transformative power of food as medicine. This pivotal moment led her to pursue studies in health and nutrition, eventually earning an honorary professorship from the Life Science Institute.

Before venturing into the health profession, Celene earned a degree in Remedial Teaching and worked with children facing learning and behavioural challenges. This experience highlighted the connection between diet, behaviour, and learning, prompting her to focus on improving children's health and eating habits. Her work with parents resulted in remarkable outcomes, including the reduction of medication use in several children. Celene's journey led her to study health and nutritional science, culminating in the publication of her book *Health Seekers* in 1997, aimed at providing actionable health guidance to a wide audience.

Celene's approach to nutrition is based on the belief that there is no one-size-fits-all diet. She emphasises the importance of personalising nutrition to meet individual needs and biological responses. Her plant-based diet, free from animal protein, dairy, and gluten, has not only improved her health but also transformed the lives of her clients. Through her work as a health coach and mentor, Celene continues to inspire and guide others, sharing her wealth of knowledge in *Keep Evolving's Longevity Masterclass*.



Module 1

Food for the Ages “Eat to Thrive”



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1. Overview



Longevity and healthspan are not merely about living longer but thriving during those years. This module explores how nutrition plays a pivotal role in cellular health, disease prevention, and extending the quality of life.

Key Learning Points:

- Longevity vs Healthspan: Why the quality of life matters as much as its length.
- Nutrition as Medicine: Evidence linking diets to reduced disease risks.
- Blue Zones: Key dietary traits of long-lived populations.

2. What is Longevity?

Chronological age vs biological age: You may be 50 but biologically 40 based on lifestyle.

Healthspan: Living disease-free, with energy and vitality, for as long as possible.

The Science of Ageing: Longevity refers to the length of an individual's life, while healthspan pertains to the years lived in good health and free from chronic disease. Both are deeply influenced by lifestyle choices, particularly diet. Nutrition plays a pivotal role in delaying the onset of age-related illnesses, maintaining physical and cognitive function, and improving overall quality of life

Ageing is a Blessing: Ageing is an inevitable part of life, but it offers an opportunity to cherish and nurture the body. Regardless of how well you've treated your health in the past, embracing ageing positively and making thoughtful lifestyle changes can profoundly enhance your quality of life. Scientific research affirms that it's never too late to adopt new habits for better health. By focusing on essential aspects such as physical activity, stress management, sleep, and nutrition, you can significantly influence both the length and quality of your life.

3. Nutrition's Role in Ageing Gracefully

- **Chronic diseases** such as diabetes, heart disease, and neurodegeneration are directly linked to poor dietary habits.
- **Diet** influences inflammation, cellular repair, and mitochondrial health.
- **Nutrients** fuel cellular processes and repair mechanisms essential for long-term health. Poor dietary choices accelerate ageing by increasing oxidative stress and inflammation, contributing to conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and neurodegeneration. If there's one cornerstone for ageing gracefully, it lies in nutrition. The food you consume - and when and how you eat it - plays a critical role in determining the vitality and longevity of your life.

Beyond the general advice to include whole foods and vegetables in your diet, fine-tuning specific dietary habits can yield tangible health benefits in the short and long term.

Key Strategies for Healthy Ageing

1. Consume Less for Longevity

Reducing your daily calorie intake - known as caloric restriction - has been linked to a longer lifespan. While the term "restriction" might sound daunting, it doesn't have to be unpleasant. Focus on nutrient-rich foods like organic vegetables, seeds, legumes, nuts, and ethically sourced lean proteins. If calorie counting isn't appealing, adopting the Japanese practice of "*Hara Hachi Bu*," - eating until you're 80% full - can be a more intuitive approach to achieving similar results.

2. Limit Carbs, Embrace Healthy Fats

Low-carbohydrate or ketogenic diets - emphasising healthy fats and minimising sugars - offer more than weight loss. By reducing carbohydrate intake, you suppress the mTOR (mechanistic Target of Rapamycin) pathway, which is associated with ageing and disease. Incorporate non-starchy vegetables, greens, and whole foods, while avoiding overly processed low-carb substitutes, to enhance longevity and energy.



3. Reconsider Meal Timing

Intermittent fasting, a modern iteration of fasting traditions, involves strategically spacing your meals. Eating later in the morning and finishing dinner early allows your body time to repair and reset during extended periods of low food intake. This practice enhances cellular repair mechanisms, stabilises blood sugar, and can lower the risk of age-related diseases.

4. Moderate Animal Protein Intake

Animal proteins, particularly red meats, are rich in branched-chain amino acids that activate mTOR, potentially speeding up ageing. Prioritising anti proteins such as lentils, nuts, and seeds supports cellular renewal and energy production. While you don't need to eliminate meat, reducing its frequency to a few times a week and treating it as a complement rather than the centrepiece of your meals can help balance protein needs for healthy ageing.



4. Learning from Blue Zones

- **What Are Blue Zones?** Okinawa (Japan) and Sardinia (Italy).
- **Common traits:** Plant-heavy diets, moderate protein intake, and minimal processed foods.

Common Dietary Traits in Blue Zones: A Healthy Path to Longevity

Key Insights from Blue Zone Studies

Research into Blue Zones - regions known for exceptional longevity - highlights the importance of a predominantly plant-based, nutrient-rich diet combined with an active lifestyle. Residents of these regions are among the healthiest and longest-living populations, benefiting from habits such as maintaining strong social networks, getting adequate sleep, and engaging in daily, low-intensity physical activities like walking and gardening.

Plant-Centric Nutrition

The dietary habits of Blue Zone populations focus primarily on plant-based foods, with approximately 95% of their meals comprising vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. These communities consume minimal quantities of meat, dairy, added sugars, and processed foods.

Instead, they favour seasonal produce, whole grains, and legumes, preserving excess harvest through drying or pickling to sustain their diet year-round.

Optimal Foods for Longevity

- **Leafy Greens and Seasonal Vegetables:** Staples like spinach, kale, and chard dominate meals.
- **Legumes as a Protein Source:** Daily consumption of beans – lentils, chickpeas, or soy – is a cornerstone.
- **Olive Oil and Healthy Fats:** Preferred over animal-based fats, olive oil enhances heart health by improving cholesterol levels.

Moderation with Animal Products

Meat and Fish Consumption

While meat is occasionally included in meals, it is consumed sparingly – averaging two ounces (60 grams) or less, five times a month. Fish intake is similarly limited to three-ounce (90 grams) servings, typically from small, sustainably caught species like sardines or cod.

Dairy and Eggs

Dairy, where present, primarily includes fermented products like yoghurt or cheese made from goat or sheep milk, which may be easier to digest.

Eggs from chickens that don't receive hormones or antibiotics are consumed minimally, often as side dishes or part of plant-based meals.

Limiting Sugar and Processed Foods

Sugar intake is consciously limited, with Blue Zone residents consuming significantly less added sugar than typical diets in other regions, focusing instead on natural sweetness from fruits and honey.

Incorporating Nuts and Whole Foods

Nuts are a daily snack, with an emphasis on variety – almonds, walnuts, and Brazil nuts provide essential nutrients and healthy fats. Bread in these regions is primarily whole grain or sourdough, promoting better digestion and a lower glycaemic index. Most commercially available breads start with bleached white flour, which metabolises quickly into sugar and spikes insulin levels.

Beverages for Well-Being

Residents predominantly drink water, tea, and modest amounts of red wine, eschewing sugary beverages and soft drinks. Herbal teas, like those from rosemary and sage, provide additional anti-inflammatory benefits, while coffee is enjoyed for its protective effects against neurodegenerative diseases.



5. The Blue Zones Lifestyle

A Holistic Approach to Health and Longevity: The Role of Physical Activity and Social Networks

The Blue Zone approach is a holistic blend of simple, nutrient-rich foods, regular physical activity, and strong community ties, creating a blueprint for health and longevity. Adopting elements of this lifestyle can contribute significantly to improving quality and length of life.



Summary

Diet is a potent tool for optimising the ageing process. Adjustments like eating smaller portions, choosing whole foods, the right fats, timing your meals strategically, and favouring plant-based proteins can help you age with vitality. By adopting these habits and embracing a balanced lifestyle, you can make the most of the years ahead.



6. Takeaway

Healthy ageing begins with a proactive approach to nutrition. Small changes, like reducing processed foods and increasing plant-based meals, can yield lifelong benefits.

