

What is Culinary Medicine?

Nutrition specialist, chef, author, and practicing physician John La Puma lives and works on an organic farm in California. He makes his garbanzo guacamole recipe on the TEDMED stage while sharing his philosophy that the food we eat is as important as the pills we take, a key component of preventive health and our well being. On the TEDMED Blog, John elaborates on culinary medicine and what role patients may have taking charge of their health and even educating their physicians about how to consider nutrition as part of the treatment plan.



“Food is the most important healthcare intervention we have against chronic disease.”
John La Puma, TEDMED 2014. Photo: Jerod Harris for TEDMED.

Why does this talk matter now?

Patients who ask their doctors, “What should I eat for my condition?” really want answers. Meanwhile, clinicians are clamoring for more and better information and training on nutrition. Culinary medicine is a new evidence-based field in medicine that

blends the art of food and cooking with the science of medicine to yield high-quality meals and beverages which aim to improve the patient's condition. It is already being taught in both undergraduate and postgraduate medical education.

What impact do you hope the talk will have?

I hope that the talk will help accelerate the cultural shift in healthcare towards wellness and well-being as primary goals in medicine. People need to know that some physicians care deeply about helping them become well with what they eat.

What is the legacy you want to leave?

Our mission is to inspire health-conscious consumers to look, feel and actually be measurably healthier by what they eat. The opportunity to use culinary medicine to prevent and treat disease is substantial, and culinary medicine should be considered as part of both the medical history and treatment plan in medicine.

How would medicine change if your ideas become reality?

All clinicians should be able to write culinary medicine prescriptions and know how food, like medicine, works in the body. I'd like to see condition-specific food and lifestyle measures become something that clinicians can offer, effectively, before prescription medication for most chronic conditions.

What is your core belief about culinary medicine?

Everyone has a right to clean, healthful, delicious, real food that both satisfies their appetite and makes or keeps them well...before it may be too late to offer more than comfort food.

Please share anything else you wish you could have included in your talk.

70% of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, memory loss, premature wrinkling and impotence are preventable. 80% of cancers and much of asthma and lung disease are preventable, and from environmental causes, like toxin exposure or diet.* Knowing more about what's in your food and how it got there can help you take your own health into your

own hands, save you money and provide joy and energy for those you love. With culinary medicine, health-conscious people can live life to its youngest.

Ask your doctor, “What do I eat for my condition?” If he or she doesn’t know, do your own research- here’s [my list of resources](#).

Now it’s time to try John’s *Luscious & Rich Garbanzo Guacamole* recipe!

1 ripe medium avocado, preferably Haas

1 medium clove of garlic, peeled, diced and creamed with lime zest

1 medium serrano chile pepper, stemmed and diced, but not seeded

1/4 teaspoon minced lime zest, preferably organic

2 tablespoons fresh lime juice (about 1 medium lime)

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil, COOC preferred

1/2 cup cooked chickpeas, rinsed and drained

1/2 teaspoon yellow curry powder, such as Madras curry

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

5 sturdy springs cilantro or Italian flat leaf parsley (optional)

Cut the avocado in half long-wise around the pit and separate the halves. Remove the pit.

Use a spoon to scoop around the flesh and remove it in one piece.

Place upside down on a cutting board, dice into large chunks. Scoop up and place in a large stainless steel bowl.

Add the garlic, chile, zest, juice and oil, and mix by hand with a fork or a tablespoon.

Smash the chickpeas with the flat side of a chef's knife, to break the skin. Sprinkle the curry and black pepper on the garbanzos, add to the bowl, mix again, and top with herb garnish if desired.

Serve with corn tortillas or toasted chips, sliced jicama triangles and sliced cucumber circles. Enjoy!

Nutritional Data Per Serving (3 servings):193 calories, 17 g carbs, 14 g fat, 3 g protein, 125 mg sodium, 7 gram fiber.

Adapted from La Puma J. "ChefMD's Big Book of Culinary Medicine", Crown, 2008.

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*See John's [TEDMED bio page](#) for references and resources that support these claims.