

Praise for *The Joy of Plenty*

*“I’ve been concerned about pesticides in the food I buy for a while now but didn’t know what to do about it. Now with *The Joy of Plenty* I have a clear plan to improve my diet without breaking the bank.”*

—Michelle Ripple

“This book jump-started my kitchen organization. Storing items from my Master Ingredient List in airtight mason jars has made an amazing difference. It’s a pleasure to see all my ingredients lined up in uniform containers. My pantry doesn’t stress me out anymore.”

—Clara Caldwell

*“The suggestions and tips recommended in *The Joy of Plenty* have positively changed my approach to food’s production, storage, preparation, and consumption. The full spectrum of eating food has been elevated as a part of my life. Better for me, better for my community, better for our planet.”*

—Mike Rodgers

*“*The Joy of Plenty* helps to keep people, the community, and the planet healthy. It suggests simple and affordable solutions available to everyone with an open mind and inspires a new way of seeing the world of food.”*

—Galina Lobanova

“This book made me recommit to eating more organic food as part of my desire to take care of the environment.”

—Kathy Luiten-Goodwin

*“Inspiring and timely, *The Joy of Plenty* showed me I don’t have to be a prisoner of prepackaged convenience foods any longer. Beautiful and plentiful food is available for my family by tapping into the simple method of food pooling and storage presented by Ms. Montclair. I couldn’t be more optimistic about the future of good quality food for everyone!”*

—Karen Karlsen

The Joy of Plenty

How to multiply your food dollars
and eat like a king or queen

Isabel Montclair

with Charlotte Lehan

POLLINATOR PRESS

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*In memory of
Elmer, Steve, Lolita, and Clarin*

*Thank you, superstars, for your
ongoing help on this journey*



Happiness becomes joy when shared.

MARIO BISIO



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A Note to Readers

With The Plenty Method, you can upgrade your diet to include the best food available on our planet: food that is grown with agricultural practices that are in harmony with the earth, using the fewest artificial inputs. The word most of us use to describe this kind of food is “organic.”

Surveys show that the vast majority of people would like to include more organic foods in their diets. And the organic foods market is the fastest growing sector of agriculture, showing double-digit growth since 2005.¹ Unfortunately, organic food sold in stores is financially out of reach for many people. That’s why I’ve created The Plenty Method, a step-by-step guide to maximizing your food dollars so you can eat well, like royalty.

As you will see, when more and more of us buy organic food, the impact on pollinator and planetary health is far-reaching. Our collective buying choices wield enormous power. We can change the world, one buying decision at a time. If everyone who reads this increases his or her organic food purchases by only 10 percent, we will become a formidable market force and our agricultural system will transform.

I place a high value on truth, accuracy, and sincerity. I have included primary source documents where appropriate. I am not responsible for any inadvertent errors, inaccuracies in the information, or misinterpretation of any of the information presented in this book.

Some jurisdictions may restrict opening of containers of food and then dividing the portions and the cost. Therefore, I prefer to use the word *share*

¹ “Organic Market Overview,” US Department of Agriculture, April 4, 2017
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/natural-resources-environment/organic-agriculture/organic-market-overview.aspx>

rather than *buy, sell, or trade*. Please thoroughly educate yourselves about safe food handling practices and understand the risks of foodborne illness from the careless handling of food.

I accept no responsibility for sickness or loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from any action because of the material in this publication.

Preface

I present many ideas in this book, and you may feel overwhelmed at first. If you do, please sidestep being overwhelmed by using only the ideas here that suit you. This is not an all-or-nothing approach to food. The intent of this book is to provide food for thought, to start a conversation, and to inspire you to take some of the basic steps outlined here.

Or, as Saint Francis of Assisi said, “Start by doing what is necessary, then do what is possible and suddenly, you are doing the impossible.”

The Joy of Plenty’s vision is to restore radiant health to people, pollinators, and our planet by reducing overuse of agricultural pesticides.

Our mission is to build a face-to-face social network that strengthens the connection we have with each other and our planet through food that is clean, nutritious, and delicious.

The path is to make organic food affordable for everyone, one pantry at a time.

Together we can make this happen!

—Isabel Montclair

Setting the Scene

Health is the new wealth.

QUINCY JONES III

The idea of royalty often conjures up images of luxury and decadent excess. You might picture, for example, a feast in a castle featuring pheasant under glass, chocolates flown in from Belgium, maybe an 1858 cognac in its original bottle, all served by a butler in formal attire. But that's not what I'm referring to here.

When I say “eat like a king or queen,” I'm talking about having access to the best food on the planet, even if it's just a commonly available staple ingredient such as lentils, peanuts, or rice. The “best food on the planet” is grown or raised in harmony with the earth. Many words describe the farming practices used to grow these whole foods such as organic, transitional, sustainable, biodynamic, agroecological, permaculture, regenerative and conservation agriculture. Regardless of the word you use, it all comes down to this: these practices maintain the integrity of the entire food chain: microbes, plants, insects, fish, birds, animals, people, and so on – as well as the water, air, and soil on which we all depend.

In the past, eating a diet of whole foods would promote radiant health. But now, with agricultural pesticide residues penetrating our food supply, this is proving to be an increasingly difficult – and expensive – endeavor. It is imperative to consider both the safety and the quality of the food we eat. For example, a chicken raised in a pasture that eats slugs, bugs, and grass and gets plenty of sunshine provides higher quality nourishment than one that is raised in confinement and fed genetically modified food stuffed full of pesticide residues. Most egg-producing chickens live in cages where there isn't even enough room to flap their wings. Anyone who's spent time

with chickens and seen that their basic nature is to be in constant motion would understand how cruel this is.

Or, take a peach. Where I live, it's not uncommon for them to receive ten or more applications of various pesticides during the growing season. I am not exaggerating here. If it's true that you are what you eat, then let's expand that statement to "you are what your food eats." This includes the pesticides that are sprayed on your food, penetrating all parts of the plant. Who wants to eat that kind of food? Many of us eat it by default, thinking no other option exists because food grown or raised in harmony with the earth is just too expensive.

But what if I told you it's possible to eat the best food on the planet affordably? Presented in this book is *The Plenty Method*, a step-by-step guide to upgrading your pantry to a nutritional powerhouse of whole foods on your current budget. This new approach to food buying, storage, and preparation will help you enjoy the best food on the planet by maximizing your food dollars.

Basic whole-food staple ingredients can be transformed into a feast suitable for a king or queen when dressed up in party clothes. Start by choosing the highest quality food available and then add in a few "flavor bursts" – concentrated flavorings that kick up the eating experience a notch. For example, I can take locally grown lentils, sprout them, and make a delicious yet simple soup by adding a touch of pomegranate syrup, tamarind paste, and a splash of apple cider vinegar. Served with a condiment (my favorite nowadays is red onion marmalade), topped with breadcrumbs or crunchy noodles, and sprinkled with whatever leafy green I have on hand like parsley or chives, this simple food becomes an elegant meal fit for a king or queen.

If you start with the best ingredients on the planet, food doesn't need much "do" to prepare. Less fuss and fewer ingredients mean that each food is given the space it needs to express its own wonderful uniqueness.

I love the notion of becoming sovereign over the food we eat, and by "sovereign" I mean: self-governing, gentle, and worldly. Sovereign people are not highborn but see the larger world and the currents of change within it. They understand their place in this world, are concerned with the footprint they leave on the earth, and operate with integrity and dignity. Further, they recognize and deeply respect the interconnection of all life. Sovereign people educate themselves and take charge of their food and their health. They are independent authors of their own lives.

Would you like to invite a king or queen for dinner but don't know any royalty? Maybe you do! Because when you use The Plenty Method, you can become sovereign over your food and your health. So, invite *yourself* to dinner and be the king or queen you were meant to be.



The Plenty Method *n.* **1.** A way to increase the value of your food dollars so you can upgrade to a diet of food raised and grown in harmony with the earth—nutritious, vibrant, and delicious whole foods. **2.** A stepwise approach that teaches you how to purchase food wholesale and in bulk. **3.** A practice that contributes to the health of our planet. **4.** A way to experience happiness and good fortune by connecting friends, our food, and the earth. **5.** The thread of connection that creates “The Hive”—a network of The Plenty Method food buyers and wholesale and local farm-direct food suppliers. **6.** A way to strengthen local food economies to build resilience. **7.** A guide that shows you how to eat like you are in a five-star, farm-to-table restaurant — every single day.

The First Act

Action expresses priorities.

MAHATMA GANDHI

Imagine a world where everyone could buy organic food (food grown or raised in harmony with the earth) for about the same cost as conventional food. A diet of uncontaminated, vibrant food shouldn't be only for royalty and the wealthy, but that is how it is for many people now. Take my friend, William.

Ten years ago William was eating like most of my friends and neighbors. He tried to make healthy choices by purchasing organic foods when they weren't too expensive. But going to the grocery store several times a week was becoming a dizzying chore of overwhelming choices, and high quality food was often financially out of reach. His cupboards were messy with half-open, half-eaten food, his freezer full of numerous unidentifiable frozen objects, which I nicknamed UFOs. He was throwing away too much food – mysterious leftovers rotting at the back of the refrigerator, wilted lettuce, stale crackers, and jars with expiration or sell-by dates that had snuck up on him. The thought of sorting through all that clutter to plan and cook a meal at the end of a long day was so unappetizing that picking up some takeout, ordering a pizza, or making a pit-stop at the grocery store to get ready-made, processed, food-like items seemed like an easy alternative.

Now William visits the grocery store no more than once or twice a month. He's multiplied the value of his food dollars by learning how to source directly from wholesalers, local farms, and food artisans, so he can afford

the most delicious, highest quality food available on the planet. His beautifully organized pantry is packed full of nutrient-dense, whole superfoods. And, since wholesalers, farms, and food artisans often sell foods that aren't available in retail outlets, a brand new world opened up to him. There is a sense of discovery and adventure in this.

Food isn't a drudgery anymore and has become a truly joyful part of William's life. Imagine these benefits for yourself.

When you do The Plenty Method, the whole subject of food becomes so much easier because great food stands alone and doesn't need much "do" to prepare. Your pantry is like a good friend. It helps you whip up simple, wonderful meals or snacks on a moment's notice, so you don't need to pick up takeout or dash into a store on the way home. An organized, plentifully stocked pantry makes answering the question "what's for dinner" or "what should I eat" less of a problem. Cooking can become more fun and less complicated because a well-stocked pantry encourages you to abandon recipes and rules. Unexpected guests or sudden weather emergencies won't be an inconvenience anymore because you have extra food to tide you over. You have very little food or packaging waste, and your cupboards stay clean and organized. You cut loose from the buy it-use it-toss it-run out cycle that the stress of on-demand food purchasing creates.

THE JOY OF PLENTY'S MISSION

The biggest surprise, however, will be when you discover that eating clean nutrient-dense whole foods leads to a heightened state of awareness. Food goes from being just something to eat to a joyful act of self-love because you experience more of the heavenly sensations that living in a warm, soft animal body offers. Once you've tried The Plenty Method, "regular" food pales in comparison, you can definitely tell the difference. This is something that must be experienced firsthand to fully understand. It's like

trying to explain to someone how an apple tastes. And the health benefits – these can be summarized in four words: radiant aliveness and physical peace.

You can experience this transformation with The Plenty Method. It will mean more joy, less stress and better health for you, your children, our pollinators, and our planet.

The standard industry perception is that the most flavorful foods are out of reach for the average person, reserved for an upper-crust gourmet elite. But good food should be for everyone. Most people can tell the difference between a real deal Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese made in Parma, Italy and a generic version with a similar name (parmesan) made from chemical and drug infused milk in a big factory. *The Joy of Plenty's* mission is to help people access this exceptional food without paying a fortune for it.

WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

Many of us know about the increasing adulteration and contamination of our food chain. But how many people can afford to eat a diet consisting solely of nutrient-dense, organic food when good food is so expensive? Add to that the difficulty of making choices when highly processed, poor-quality, chemical laden food and cheap carbohydrates are everywhere.

Because high quality food is financially out of reach for most people now, many of us buy food on demand and don't have plentifully stocked pantries. This leaves us dependent on time-consuming, constant trips to the grocery store as we go up and down the aisles, lost, wandering, and hungry while trying to figure out "what's for dinner." And we think this is convenient (I can't wait to show you another way). We hope that the small supply of food we keep at home will tide us over in the event of an unforeseen situation, whether that is unexpected houseguests, a power outage, a natural disaster, or political problems.

ON THE ROAD TO DIETARY FREEDOM

It need not be this way, in fact, it doesn't have to be.

I have spent the last ten years developing The Plenty Method so royalty and the wealthy won't be the only ones who can afford to eat well. Throughout the project's long gestation period, I joyfully lived in nine households over a period of three years, risked a prison sentence and lived on the razor's edge for two years with almost no financial resources. Even though I was stripped of all my material possessions, my vision of *radiant health for people, pollinators and our planet through affordable organic food* sustained me. My sincere desire is that you will be uplifted by the words you read here and feel encouraged by the introduction of new possibilities.

This book will show you how to affordably buy organic food so you can eat extraordinarily well and pad your pantry with a generous supply of back-up food. I still struggle to adequately describe how much my health and quality of life has improved after transitioning to a diet of mostly organic food. You can experience this transformation too when you use The Plenty Method.

IMPROVING PLANETARY HEALTH

This book will also show you how to do your part to improve planetary health. Our food system is in a severe crisis. By 2050, our population will have grown by 40 percent to around ten billion. Humanity must produce as much food in the next four decades as it has since we first began farming thousands of years ago. Climate change may make this task more difficult. The world is running out of fresh water. Aquifers that took thousands of years to fill are running dry. Glaciers that supply water to many of the world's great rivers such as the Ganges, Mekong and Yangtze are melting rapidly. One third of the food our planet produces goes to waste and much of it ends up in landfills. Our food supply is under enormous pressure.

In addition, overuse of agricultural pesticides is making people, pollinators, and our planet sick. Synthetic toxic agricultural chemicals are being found in water, soil, and human bodies all over the world. More and more pesticides are applied to crops every year to achieve diminishing returns. The residues of these pesticides are frequently being found in our food in amounts considered unsafe. Many studies have shown that a diet heavy in food produced with pesticides causes negative health benefits. For more in-depth information about this subject and links to the studies, I recommend reading my short book *Supercide Me*, available as a complimentary download at www.thejoyofplenty.org.

COLLECTIVE POWER

I can hear you saying “There’s nothing I can do about any of this, so what does it have to do with me?” A lot! Together, we can decrease pesticide use and conserve water by increasing the supply and demand for organic food which will also reduce food waste. When organic food becomes more affordable, it can compete with conventional food. Right now, only 4 percent of agriculture is in organic production. If we can increase that to 10 percent, we will create the momentum necessary to make organic food the majority of food produced.

Our individual and collective food-buying choices wield great power. Since agriculture leaves the biggest footprint of all our activities on Earth, how we grow our food greatly influences our planet’s health. If we choose to buy organic food, we reduce some of the pressures on Earth’s systems. The Plenty Method gives us a way to improve our planet’s health while enhancing our own health and quality of life.

The Plenty Method will show you how to do the following:

- Multiply your food dollars so you can buy organic food for about the same cost as conventional food purchased at grocery stores

- Access wholesale and local farm-direct food sources at lower cost than retail so you can eat like you are a farm-to-table chef
- Reduce your exposure and your children’s exposure to pesticide residues
- Improve your health by transforming your pantry into a nutritional powerhouse stocked with superfoods
- Release yourself from the chains of formula recipes and constant shopping
- Create delicious meals quickly right from your own well-stocked pantry
- Support organic farmers with your food dollars to strengthen local food economies
- Create a backup supply of food that can tide you over in the case of an unforeseen need or emergency
- Build family and neighborhood food security by building resilient communities
- Realize the power and impact of your food-buying decisions to: reduce agricultural chemical use, offset carbon emissions, conserve water, and minimize food waste²

² Organic agriculture does the following:

- Creates healthy soil: this can remove carbon emissions from the atmosphere, thus slowing global warming. This is called carbon sequestration, and organic regenerative agriculture accomplishes this (see Appendix G, “For Further Reading”).
- Protects the bees and other insects: this is important since they pollinate one-third of our food.
- Reduces agricultural water use: organic soil holds more water than conventionally farmed soils.

- Protect the health of bees and other pollinators

The Plenty Method increases your ability to buy the best food out there without paying exorbitant prices for it. The health impacts of eating better are tremendous. Transitioning from your usual way of buying food to The Plenty Method may seem like too much effort at first, but it really isn't. I've built a road map to guide you. Anyone can do this. I have done it, and I know you can do it, too. Do it for yourself, do it for your family and friends, do it for our farmers, do it for the bees, and do it for this big blue marble we call home.

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- Promotes health: long-term, low-dose consumption of toxic pesticides causes many diseases and can be as dangerous as sudden, high-dose exposures.
 - Reduces food waste: my colleagues and I have noticed that organic food lasts longer than conventionally grown food, so less gets thrown out.