

Medium/Lifestyle

Losing Weight by Eating More: Add edamame to everything!

Kaki Okumura

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I used to be very overweight, and the extra weight did terrible things to my self-confidence. Already naturally shy, this part of my life was very painful, so I did many reckless things to try and resolve it. These tactics included going days eating only salad, cutting out my favorite foods, or dependence on things like “superfoods”, in hopes that I would quickly become thin.

But the salads I ate didn't fill me, were plain to taste so they were “as healthy as possible”, and I would always feel hungry, tired, and groggy. Cutting out my favorite foods just made me feel guilty, and I would feel terrible about myself when I thought about enjoying ice cream or a cookie. “Superfoods” didn't help either because I didn't really like the taste of goji berries or bee pollen — to me, these ingredients were difficult to obtain and difficult to use. So it should be of no surprise that after each new tactic, I would just quickly return to my unhealthy food choices, and I would go years without any progress on my health goals. I almost believed it would never happen for me.

So it was surprising when the first time I made any actual progress on my goals, I was probably eating the most I had ever been. I was back in Japan during the summer, staying with my grandmother. I didn't have access to my usual “healthy” snacks or diet meals, and instead was eating whatever my grandmother served me. She loved loved loved to feed us, and would always bring home new ingredients she found at the market, cook with it, and serve it to us. Grilled kabocha and green pepper with sesame salt, Japanese yam with sesame-soy dipping sauce, steamed spinach with dried katsuho in a ponzu sauce — every night it was something new and delicious.



I would finish every meal very full and very satisfied, so it came as a big surprise to me when I found that I had dropped some weight during the summer. My clothes felt a looser, my stomach was a little less rounder. What happened? There was no counting calories, no measuring of macros. I ate what I wanted and when I wanted — what were these strange foods my grandmother was feeding me? Was she secretly sneaking superfoods into my meals? No, not exactly.

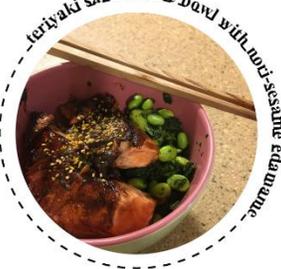
I was eating more, but I was eating whole, nutrient-dense, plant-based foods. I realized that the better way to focus on eating healthily is not being worried about what we should be cutting out of our diet, but really what we should be adding in. And not just adding in sprinkles of magic bullet superfoods, but adding in whole, nutrient dense, filling, and tasty vegetables — *and a lot of it!*

Coming home, I decided that I would continue to incorporate a lot of vegetables into my diet, and I would eat as much of it as I wanted to. I would eat it without worrying about carbs, about whether it was raw, steamed, baked or pan-fried, or if it was in a sauce or a side dish. The goal was just to eat more vegetables, until I felt full, nourished, and satisfied.

But I'm not my grandmother, and I don't know how to cook with 200 different kinds of vegetables and make them taste amazing like she can. So instead of trying to figure out how to work with so many new and different ingredients, I decided that I would focus on eating more of one kind of vegetable, one that I really enjoyed eating, and just add it to everything. I'd toss it in pasta, fried rice, salads, ramen, sandwiches, rice balls, or eat it plain. Instead of over-eating, I learned to feel satiated by relying on eating more of this vegetable. Nutrient-dense, filling, delicious, and helped me lose weight — Edamame became my superfood.

I really love edamame. I still add it to *many* of my dishes if I get the chance. It doesn't matter if it's in rice, noodles, or bread, Japanese or Western food, hot or cold. Here are a few ways I add edamame into my diet:

Edamame to Everything!



Edamame is an excellent source of soy protein, plant fiber, antioxidants, folate, and vitamin K. Its health benefits include the potential to help lower cholesterol, stabilize blood sugar, and reduce the risk of heart disease. It can help to boost your metabolism, transform your skin, and improve your mood. On more practical terms, it's also amazing because it fills me up, I feel good when I eat it, and it's delicious.

And it's not that I eat a ridiculous amount of edamame because it's an actual "superfood". You should not be surprised to also find out that edamame is not the only food to have these health benefits — if you Google other green vegetables like broccoli, spinach, peas, kale, or brussel sprouts, these vegetables will also include similar health benefits.

Re-defining “superfoods” for myself

For me, real superfoods should be 2 things:

- Healthy, whole, nutrient-dense vegetables (or fruit!)
- So delicious, it’s your favorite, and you want to add it to everything

Both points are *equally* important, that it is healthy but also delicious, because food is a source of love, culture, and community. To contribute to a healthier well-being, it must be nutritious, but also delicious so we can incorporate into our lives in such a way that it brings us joy. I’m forever grateful to have reached a point where my relationship with food now encompasses this. While eating 200 different kinds of vegetables, prepared in 1000 different ways, is not really practical for most of us, we can achieve a healthier and more balanced diet by simply adding more whole foods that we enjoy, to the meals that we already know and love.

For those who have a difficult relationship with eating healthily, instead of trying to cut down your pasta or bread intake, consider adding or doubling the amount of broccoli you put in the sauce. Or maybe you want to add some more peas. Or spinach. Or mushrooms. Or peppers. Or tomatoes. Instead of being concerned with eating less, cutting out your favorite foods, or eating the healthiest ingredients prepared in the healthiest way possible, discover what whole foods you enjoy, what ingredients taste good, and eat more of it. Eat well, feel full, and love the food you put into your body!

If you’re still convinced no such ingredient exists for you, send me an email at **kokumura@kakikata.space** and I will give you tips on how to cook vegetables so they taste so delicious you’ll want to prepare it again and again.

If this article was any use to you, please leave a comment or email me at **kokumura@kakikata.space**! I love hearing from individuals, learning from them, and the personal stories people have to share. I reply to every single email I get, and want nothing more than to support those who are looking for a bit of guidance and ways to help themselves.

With love, Kaki

Written by Kaki Okumura: Raised in Tokyo. Currently studying in the United States. I use writing to find calm in uncertainty. Founder of www.kakikata.space.