

A HUNGER FOR HEALTH

BY KRISTEN ANDRESEN
OF THE NEWS STAFF

A QUEST FOR
BALANCE
LEADS ONE
HOULTON
NATIVE TO
COLLABORATE
ON AN
AYURVEDIC
COOKBOOK

At 23, Daniel Rhoda was burned out. Literally. Between his high school athletics, his rigorous studies at Bowdoin and his hard-driving career as a Wall Street investment banker, the Houlton native had extinguished the fire inside him. It just took him a while — and a severe illness — to figure it out.

"Toward the end of the first year in New York, my joint pain became pretty serious," Rhoda, who is now 28, recalled during a visit to Bangor. "I knew something was awry."

After eight MRIs, several surgeries and endless prescriptions, his doctors were still no closer to finding the cause of his pain. The synovial fluid that lubricated his joints had dried out. His pain mimicked that of an osteoarthritis patient and the inflammation was similar to rheumatoid arthritis.

"It was a dire situation," Rhoda said. "I was already interested in healing and alternative medicine, and I wasn't about to accept this."

So he threw himself into research and became fascinated with Ayurveda, an ancient practice that stresses the interconnectedness of food, body type, psychology, environment and spirituality as the basis for holistic healing. His quest for knowledge led him to Hawaii, where he met his doctor and mentor, Thomas Yarema.

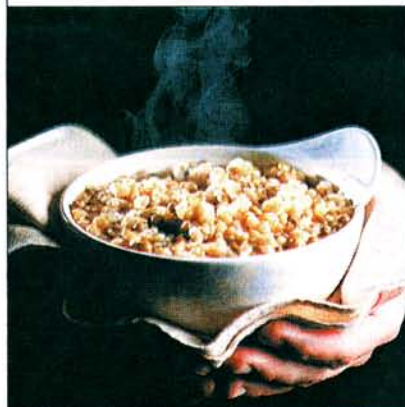
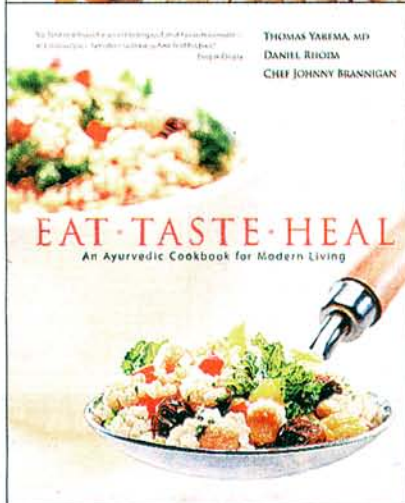
"We worked together as doctor and patient for several months," said Rhoda, who now makes his home on Kauai. "It turned out to be

See *Ayurvedic*, Page C3



Rhoda

Grilled Eggplant Parcels (from top left), Pasta with Stir-Fried Vegetables and Cilantro Pesto, the cover of "Eat-Taste-Heal," Barley Kitchari, Satay-Marinated Tofu and Summer Squash Wraps. Below, Poached Pears with Sweet orange and Date Glaze.



Ayurvedic

Continued from Page C1

an epicenter of holistic medicine and healing."

Last year, the two teamed up to publish "Eat-Taste-Heal: An Ayurvedic Cookbook for Modern Living" along with Chef Johnny Brannigan. It pairs a primer on Ayurveda with mouth-watering recipes.

Though it makes its mass-market debut today, the book has already garnered a ringing endorsement from alternative healing guru Deepak Chopra, who writes, "Eat-Taste-Heal makes the ancient healing wisdom of Ayurveda accessible — and deliciously so — to modern cooks everywhere. Read this book."

That ancient wisdom is based on the principle that the five elements of nature — space, air, fire, water and earth — are reflected in human nature. Those elements define the differences and similarities among people, and are broken down into three doshas, or constitutional types, called Vata, Pitta and Kapha.

Vata types reflect the elements of space and air. They're generally slender and sensitive; they have dry skin, dislike cold climates and are prone to insomnia. Pitta types reflect the elements of fire and water. They tend to have a medium build, fine hair and a strong metabolism that's aggravated by spicy foods. They're confident, articulate and sharp. Kapha types reflect the elements of water and earth. They tend to be heavier-set, with a moderate appetite. They're known for compassion, patience and a gentle nature.

Rhoda is a Pitta-Vata, which explains his drive and his subsequent burnout. When he met Yarema, the doctor diagnosed his pulse (in Ayurveda, pulse diagnosis is its own science) and prescribed a mixture of foods that would balance his doshas.

"Whatever the therapy was, it wasn't extreme — basic nutrition, high-quality produce, tailored to my own constitutional type," he said. "Looking at the element of balance, I was completely out of whack."

His treatment has slowly, steadily produced results. Rhoda saw the improvement in his health as an opportunity for personal growth, and he began to study with Yarema, one of the country's leading practitioners of Ayurvedic medicine. Ayurvedic doctors earn an MD before postdoctorate studies in alternative medicine. Rhoda hopes to pursue a doctorate in psychology, as well.

For now he's busy running Five Elements Press, which he founded to publish "Eat-Taste-Heal." The book initially started as a recipe pamphlet that would

Braised Chicken with Cilantro Reduction Sauce

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
2 tablespoons ghee (clarified butter) or sunflower oil salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 cup organic chicken stock or vegetable stock
1 bunch cilantro, about 2 cups
2 cups filtered water
1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
1 teaspoon ground fennel seed
¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
½ teaspoon herb salt (recipe follows)
½ teaspoon maple syrup
10 mint leaves, chopped
1 to 2 tablespoons chickpea flour

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a baking dish with half of the ghee or oil. Put the chicken breasts in the baking dish, coat them with the ghee in the dish and season with salt and pepper. Pour in the stock. Put the dish in the oven and bake until the chick-

en is cooked through, about 25 minutes.

As soon as the chicken goes in the oven, put the cilantro and 1 cup water in a blender or food processor fitted with the stainless steel blade. Blend or process until smoothly pureed.

Heat the remaining ghee or oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the ginger and saute 2 minutes. Add the fennel and saute 1 minute more. Stir in the turmeric, herb salt, syrup, mint, cilantro puree and remaining water. Simmer until reduced by half, about 20 minutes. Whisk in the chickpea flour and continue cooking, stirring continuously, until the sauce thickens, 2 to 3 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve, arrange the chicken breasts on a platter or individual plates and pour the sauce over them.

Note: This recipe is recommended for Pitta and Vata types. Kapha types should substitute basil for the cilantro.

Herb Salt

7 tablespoons sea salt
1 teaspoon each dried basil, thyme, marjoram, mint, rosemary and sage
3 whole dried bay leaves

Grind all ingredients to a fine powder, using an electric grinder, such as a coffee grinder.

should be tasty and tantalizing. It should make you salivate. Food should look good and taste good."

It should also include the six tastes. Most people are familiar with sweet, sour, salty and bitter. The other two, pungent and astringent, are a little more unusual. Pungent tastes are hot, and they're found in such vegetables as chili peppers and garlic, and spices such as black pepper and ginger. Astringent tastes can be found in cranberries, broccoli, coffee, teas and herbs such as turmeric. By nature, including each of these tastes leads to a balanced diet.

"Putting a little sweet taste in your diet serves a purpose, as does a little bit of spice," Rhoda said. "Bitter greens are detoxifying, full of nutrients and minerals."

The combinations of food in Ayurvedic cooking ensure that the body doesn't feel cheated of any one taste, which often leads to cravings — and the eventual failure — of traditional restrictive diets. Though it's not a weight-loss program, Ayurveda is a healthful way of eating. "Eat-Taste-Heal" recommends a balanced approach that complements one's consti-

Angel Hair Pasta with Tomato Caramelized Sauce

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons chopped leek
1 clove garlic, crushed (optional)
1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme leaves
2 pounds plum or Roma tomatoes, peeled and seeded
½ cup fresh basil leaves, julienned
3 teaspoons tomato puree salt
Freshly ground black pepper
8 ounces dry angel-hair pasta
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons lemon juice
½ cup chopped fresh herbs, such as parsley, marjoram or sage
4 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese

In a large saute pan, heat 3 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add the leek and garlic. Saute, stirring frequently until tender, 3 to 4 minutes, then stir in the thyme and saute just until fragrant, about 30 seconds more.

Stir in the tomatoes, basil and tomato puree. Reduce the heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally, until it reaches a thick sauce consistency, about 40 minutes, stirring in a little water or olive oil if it becomes too dry or sticks to the pan. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Bring a large pot of salted, filtered water to a rapid boil. Add the pasta and cook until al dente, tender but still chewy, following the manufacturer's suggested cooking time, about 5 minutes. Drain the pasta, transfer it still dripping to a bowl, and cover to keep warm.

In the pasta cooking pot over low heat, warm remaining olive oil and stir in lemon juice and fresh herbs. Return the drained pasta to the pot and toss to coat evenly with olive oil and herbs.

Mound the pasta on warmed serving plates or shallow pasta bowls. Ladle a small serving of tomato sauce on top and sprinkle with Parmesan.

Note: To quickly peel tomatoes, place them in boiling water for 1 minute. Remove and submerge them immediately in cold water. Peel off the skins using your hands.

This recipe is designed for Vata types. Pitta types can substitute bell peppers for the tomatoes, roasting them well in the oven and pureeing them in a food processor or blender along with the rest of the sauce ingredients. Omit the leek and substitute fennel for the thyme and soy cheese for Parmesan. Kapha types can substitute corn or rice noodles for the pasta and goat cheese for the Parmesan.

Chocolate Coconut No-Bake Cookies

1 cup organic semisweet or bittersweet chocolate chips
2 tablespoons almond butter
1 tablespoon maple syrup
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ cup seedless raisins
2 tablespoons chopped pecans
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
2 tablespoons toasted coconut

Melt the chocolate in the top of a double boiler over gently simmering water. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the chips until they have melted.

Stir in the almond butter, maple syrup and vanilla extract.

Sprinkle the raisins, pecans, cinnamon and cardamom over the chocolate mixture and stir well.

Line a tray with waxed paper. With a tablespoon, drop the chocolate mixture onto the tray to form individual bite-size portions about ¼ inch thick.

Immediately sprinkle the drops with toasted coconut. Refrigerate until cool and firm, about 30 minutes. Transfer to an airtight container and serve at cool room temperature until time to serve.

Note: This recipe is recommended for Vata types, only in moderation for Pitta types, and not recommended at all for Kapha types.

tutional type, or dosha.

"One-off fad diets don't put an emphasis on lifestyle or the quality of foods we're putting into our diet," Rhoda said. "We're all different. We all have these unique requirements. No kind of 'one pill for all' or 'one food for all' approach is going to work."

The tailored approach is working for Rhoda. On a recent visit to Maine, he looked vibrant and healthy — without a trace of the pain and stress that plagued him in his early 20s. He was relaxed in gray corduroys and a green fleece, and his enthusiasm made it clear that he believes in

the principles of "Eat-Taste-Heal."

Perhaps more important, though, was the fire in his blue-gray eyes.

"I tell people it's a work in progress, to go from a debilitating state, it's slow and steady," he said, gesturing with his hands. "It takes an incredible commitment to the process of healing. When we talk about diet and nutrition, yes, it's what we put in our mouths, but it's also everything around us."

For more information, log on to www.eattasteheal.com.