

Resource Reviews

Mother Food: Food and herbs that promote milk production and a mother's health By Hilary Jacobson
Reviewed by Joan-e rapine

Mother food may very well be my new favorite postpartum book. Its outer-cover title only partly describes its true scope, since it is about much more than milk production and mothers' health. "Mother Food: A Breastfeeding Diet Guide with lactogenic foods and herbs. Build Milk Supply, Boost Immunity, Lift Depression, Detox, Lose Weight, Optimize a Baby's IQ, and Reduce Colic and Allergies" (Inner cover), gives a better idea of the magnitude of this book.

Ms. Jacobson opens with an overview of the book, touching upon nearly the entire list of topics in the first chapter, followed by a discussion of a lactogenic diet in chapter two. One cannot help but wonder at this point, what else does this book contain, as it has already satisfied the expectations generated from the title.

The chapters that follow dive deep into each subject in amazing detail, starting with a chapter on nutrition and the affects of maternal diet and practices on breastmilk. Jacobson offers an excellent discussion on fats, especially on Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs). She also discusses oils, trans-fats, and fats as galactagogues. In this same chapter she discusses medications, birth control, caffeine, tobacco and alcohol as they relate to breastfeeding. Acknowledging the negative affects these all have on breastmilk and breastfeeding, Jacobson takes a realistic approach, making mothers feel empowered to make changes, rather than feel guilt and shame. She uses this same realistic approach later on in the book when she discusses cravings and addictions, making the mom feel positive about making change by setting obtainable goals. She suggests focusing on the goal (positive) rather than on the existing problem (negative). Throughout the book Jacobson shows respect to all women, making no judgments about their habits, allowing them to be who they are. This attitude puts the reader at ease and open to suggestions rather than feeling defensive about one's choices and lifestyle.

Part Three, Recipes, opens with the statement, "Mothers are smart about getting lactogenic foods and spices into their favorite dishes. For instance they: ..." (p.190) and follows with examples of what they do. This shifts the power of knowledge from the author to the readers (most likely mothers). This chapter is filled with recipes for a variety of dishes, including beverages, breakfast, snacks, main meals, and even sweets, using lactogenic ingredients.

To add to the thoroughness of this book, Jacobson presents a historical look at milk supply difficulties, exploring traditional modalities such as ayurveda and Chinese medicine. She then brings it back to today's issues, acknowledging them as new, requiring new solutions.

Digestion and allergies, postpartum and postpartum depression, lactogenic and anti-lactogenic foods, and supplements are also discussed in great detail.

She concludes the book with two resource chapters, one on specific health problems and recommendations for "time-honored home treatments" (p.247), using herbs and other supplements, and the other on lactogenic herbs, listing their general and specific use.

The only piece in the book that did not sit well with me was the author's discussion of breastfeeding preparation. She prepares mothers for a painful experience ("Prepare to Prevent Pain", p. 15), using words such as "excruciating" and "extreme, painful engorgement" (p. 15). While I appreciate Jacobson's desire to paint a realistic picture, I feel that there are enough myths and fears surrounding breastfeeding and having an expert use such language, simply validates them to the reader.

On the whole, this book is an asset to anyone's library. Its vast range of topics makes it a great resource book and a must-have for anyone working with families, especially during their childbearing years.

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