INTRODUCTION

Mike Milken
Founder and Chairman, CaP CURE

Just the thought of a double cheeseburger with special sauce and fried onion rings at Bob’s Big Boy started my mouth watering. Bob’s was a Los Angeles landmark during my youth and I was one of its most loyal customers. This shouldn’t surprise readers of the first Taste for Living Cookbook (CaP CURE, 1998) who may recall my description of a life happily spent devouring high-fat food, my abrupt conversion to healthy (but boring!) fare after a diagnosis of advanced prostate cancer, and the revelation that it was safe to return to many of my old favorite foods thanks to the work of prominent nutrition researchers and chef Beth Ginsberg.

This second book — a global tour of recipes for fighting cancer and heart disease — adheres to the principles of the first volume. First and foremost, the food must taste great. The ingredients must be readily available, low in fat and easy to prepare. Foods associated with a lower incidence of cancer, like soy protein, are incorporated wherever possible.

But there are some differences. In addition to recipes, we’ve organized the book so you can easily create menus for everything from casual lunches to elegant buffets. We’ve given recognition to the fact that many of the same ingredients that fight cancer are also part of a heart-healthy diet. And, of course, we’ve expanded our scope to the entire world.

The inspiration for The Taste for Living World Cookbook came from three sources. The overwhelmingly positive responses to the first cookbook told me that we had identified an appealing concept: don’t change the foods you love; just change the ingredients. Letter after letter told how this simple concept had changed not just habits, but lives. For example, Mrs. Toby Loewy from Rockville, Maryland, wrote:

“I’ve tried a lot of the recipes and my husband loves them. Not only am I able to help him lose weight, but I’m protecting him from prostate problems. He’s happy and proud of my cooking, your recipes, and his increasing slimness. You are probably saving lives in more ways than one. Thank you for publishing your book!”

Deborah Roach, from San Francisco, California, sent an e-mail to say: “The recipes are delicious and reproducible in the everyday kitchen. Looking forward to volume two.”

The Dreiwitz family, from Hackensack, New Jersey, wrote:

“The recipes are fantastic. Does Beth Ginsberg have any other healthy recipes to share with the public?”

She certainly does, and they’re in this book!

A second inspiration was the memory of happy family excursions with my wife, Lori, and our three children. All five of us grew up in Los Angeles, a true microcosm of the world. Visits to southern California restaurants featuring the foods of Asia, Latin America, Europe, Africa and the Middle East are as “authentic” an experience as you’ll find in the U.S.

Even in less-cosmopolitan areas than Los Angeles, however, America’s changing ethnic mixture has produced an explosion of interest in the cuisines of different nations. Smaller cities that considered it exotic to have a single Chinese restaurant a generation ago now boast eateries from every continent. Supermarkets that used to relegate “foreign” foods to a tiny specialty section now overflow with everything from chipotle salsa to kimchee to garam masala. And everywhere, cooking lessons are the hottest ticket on
the adult-education roster.

Also, like an increasing number of Americans, my family and I have had the good fortune to visit other countries. Despite our varied interests — one of our children loves ancient architecture, another is the family photographer, a third visits the ballet whenever possible, Lori heads for the oldest bookstore and I seek out interesting gardens — we’ve all shared a passion for sampling the local cuisine. In some cases, such as the wonderful scones we enjoyed in England’s Lake Country, a version appears in this cookbook. But not always. We left out a dish we encountered near the Great Wall of China — grilled scorpion!

The third inspiration for this book came from the lunches and dinners Beth prepared when I entertained business guests. While she frequently served recipes from The Taste for Living, volume one, she would sometimes surprise us with a more exotic international meal. After enjoying several of these new dishes, I suggested that she pull them together into what has become The Taste for Living World Cookbook.

These recipes may help prevent cancer, limit heart disease and promote general health, which many of us need to take seriously. But cooking can be fun and healthy eating should be an enhancement of life, not a deprivation. The fact that following our guidelines may help you feel better is a bonus. These foods are intended to contribute to the taste for living — and the zest for life.

I have to laugh when I think about my old eating habits. I wasn’t exactly what you would call discriminating. As a student at the University of California at Berkeley, I used to pass a doughnut shop on my way to classes. The hot doughnuts — freshly pulled from their bath of frying grease — were irresistible, especially with glazed frosting. I’d often order a baker’s dozen, finishing off all 13 before dinner. (Look for a better doughnut idea on page 118.)

Even though I wasn’t discriminating in my eating habits, I’ve always been a hopeless romantic; I decided to propose to Lori on Valentine’s Day, 1968. After buying a ring, I couldn’t afford to take her anyplace fancy. My plan was to pop the question at Giovanni’s Italian restaurant, a beloved campus hangout. In fact, I had only enough change to buy us a medium pizza. Normally, given my voracious appetite, this would serve as a mere appetizer. As luck would have it, though, the customer at the next table had ordered an extra-large pizza with everything, and left half
uneaten when he paid his bill. As soon as he departed, I leaned over, trying my best to appear casual, and consumed the rest of his pizza before any waiters could snatch it away. Fortunately, Lori overlooked this temporary grazing at the next table and said yes to my proposal! We were married that summer and moved on to graduate school in Philadelphia, where I developed a taste for Philly cheese steaks. (A far healthier version of this regional treat is found on page 112. And pizza lovers, see page 114.)

Soon after I finished business school, President Nixon declared war on cancer. The goal was to produce a cure within the decade, just as President Kennedy’s earlier plan to put a man on the moon had been achieved in less than 10 years. We all thought it would work. After all, in our parents’ generation, President Roosevelt’s war on polio had produced the Salk vaccine. I knew something about polio because my father had contracted it as a child and I was among the first of the baby boomers to receive the new vaccine. What a simple concept: get a shot and wipe out a disease. Surely we could do the same with cancer.

That naïve assumption made it an even greater shock when my father was told he had malignant melanoma in 1976. At the peak of my business career, having achieved all of my career goals by age 30, I was devastated and frustrated at my inability to help. I took my father to every leading cancer center in the country and consulted with the best doctors, all to no avail. He never recovered. The one positive result from this odyssey was that it showed how the cancer research process works and how young scientists are tempted to abandon research for more lucrative clinical practices. And so, in the late 1970s, I began a program of research grants that helped keep bright young scientists in the laboratory. A few years later, my brother and I formalized our philanthropic efforts by establishing the Milken Family Foundation.

It has been gratifying to see researchers we supported go on to achieve great success and recognition. For example, Dennis J. Slamon, M.D., Ph.D., an eminent oncologist at UCLA, was the driving force behind the development of Herceptin, one of the only effective treatments for a particular type of breast cancer. Others, like Bert Vogelstein, M.D., Professor of Oncology and Cancer Biology at Johns Hopkins University, and Owen Witte, M.D., Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at UCLA and a member of the National Academy of Sciences, are cited often by their peers, not only for their leading-edge research contributions, but also for mentoring other physician scientists.

After nearly two decades of involvement in support of cancer research, I thought I knew quite a bit about cancer and the probability of becoming one of its victims. Still, it was a shock when I received my diagnosis in 1993. My first thought was, “Will I live to see my grandchildren?” The blunt prognosis was, “Probably not. You have 12 to 18 months to live.” Six years later, I don’t know for sure which treatments helped; but I know that my altered diet certainly didn’t hurt. And now, thanks to the nutritional research of CaP CURE–supported scientists and Beth Ginsberg’s recipes, eating is a joy, rather than “bad-tasting medicine.”

The new diet was easy for me because I was especially