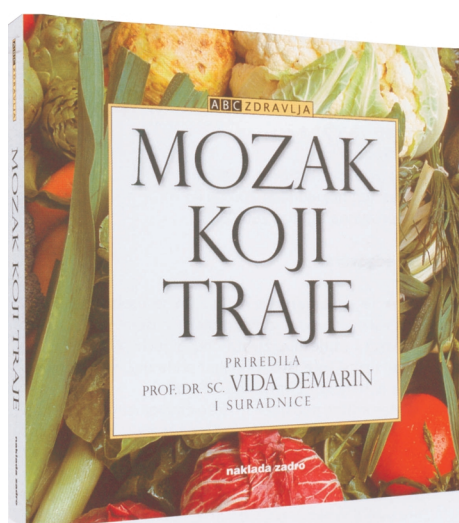


## BOOK REVIEW



**MOZAK KOJI TRAJE (THE BRAIN THAT KEEPS ON), by Vida Demarin et al., Naklada Zadro, Zagreb, 2005, 252 pages. ISBN 953-182-054-6, UDC 616.1-084**

The book entitled *The Brain That Keeps On* (*Mozak koji traje*) by Professor Vida Demarin and coworkers, Assist. Professor Vesna Šerić, Miljenka Jelena Kesić, M.D., Marijana Lisak, M.D., Marina Roje-Bedeković, M.D., and Iris Zavoreo, M.D., has recently been published by Naklada Zadro from Zagreb, bringing answers to some of the most common questions we daily pose to ourselves and to our physicians. The questions refer to the understanding of different dietary patterns, different culinary techniques, nutritive properties of foods and food additives, all of which taken together can help the brain keep healthy.

The brain and the heart like the same, i.e. healthy food, regular physical activity, and optimistic life attitude. Risk factors that lead to changes in blood vessels supplying the brain and the heart can be roughly divided into modifiable and unmodifiable ones. The former group includes age, sex and race, whereas the latter includes elevated blood pressure, diabetes mellitus, increased levels of blood lipids (cho-

lesterol and triglycerides) and cardiac diseases, of which uncontrolled atrial fibrillation is most detrimental. Some risk factors can be attributed to life habits, e.g., cigarette smoking, excessive alcohol intake, stress, inadequate physical activity, and inappropriate dietary habits. The authors point to the comforting fact that many of these factors can yet be influenced upon, and suggest how to take the responsibility in preventing the development of vascular changes, thus also the hazardous cascade of events in which we ourselves suffer heaviest losses. In fact, the book basically deals with the elimination or reduction of modifiable risk factors. The first part of the book brings a survey of the risk factors and offers a check-list for patients, so that readers can identify their own, individual risk level. Appropriate dietary habits, regular physical activity and emotional stability are the most important factors of this process. While reading the book, the reader will every now and then encounter these three pillars of healthy life. The authors' intention is to offer us a new view of health and to stimulate us to change our lifestyle. Current dietary regimens are described and commented upon, the nutritive content of foods, their medicinal and adverse effects are explained, and substitute foods to avoid unwanted consequences of a wrong choice are recommended. This basically professional part of the book is conveniently presented to be fully comprehensible to laymen, which is additionally supported by a dietary glossary at the end of the book as well as by the simple and convenient presentation of the material. Following comprehensive presentation of the composition and action of particular food ingredients, the authors give general guidelines on how to fight vascular diseases with diet and food additives.

In the second part of the book, the authors go shopping together with the readers. Having introduced and taught us on the fundamentals of appropriate dietary habits, and before starting preparing meals, the authors give us instructions on how and where to choose dietary products. Some foods you can buy in your nearest store, some in healthy food store, and some at green market. Some foods can be bought in advance, whereas others need to be bought on the same day you are going to use them. The book also gives advice on

what you can keep in your refrigerator and pantry. The method of food preparation greatly influences the nutritive quality of food. In some culinary procedures, foods are additionally loaded with fat and salt, and their composition, glycemia index, and other properties are modified. Not infrequently foods are added too much salt, or are boiled, baked or fried in excessive fat (own or added), and all these for too long a time. Correct culinary techniques are therefore presented, explaining how to prepare food best, thereby preserving its nutritive ingredients while intensifying taste in a natural way. The second part of the book will also teach you how to preserve dietary vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, while preparing less fatty, less caloric food containing less harmful substances produced by inappropriate culinary procedures such as baking at high temperature in the presence of fat, exposure to flame, smoke, etc. Seasonings and spices are added to improve organoleptic properties of the foods, meals and ready-to-serve products. Most seasonings and spices have medicinal properties. The authors introduce the reader into the various kinds of spices and their properties, and teach us how to make the meals attractive by taste and appearance by proper choice of spices, at the same time making good use of their medicinal properties.

In the first two chapters of the book, the authors tried to bring home to the readers the concepts of modern medicine on the factors that pose a risk for the vascular system, how to preserve it, and how to alleviate symptoms when health impairment has already set in. Appropriate dietary habits are one of the major factors of good health. The third section of the book brings a selection of recipes which, the authors believe, can help and stimulate modification of dietary habits. A rich collection of recipes are classified into seven groups: cold *hors-d'oeuvres* and salads; soups; warm *hors-d'oeuvres* and vegetable side dishes; meat meals; fish and seafood meals; desserts (sweets) and drinks; and very low salt meals. Of course, the recipes have been adjusted to the needs of those who can, at a very low effort indeed, prevent many unwanted consequences of inappropriate dietary and life habits. The nutritive composition of foods and energy value of meals, provided in each recipe, will help the reader square the requirements of healthy diet with their own dietary preferences. In order to settle economic, cultural and geographical differences that are still most pronounced on choosing meat as a food, the authors have added several tables with the main characteristics of different kinds of meat, fish, shellfish and

mollusks. These tables enable the readers to adapt almost all recipes to their own taste, habits, financial resources, religious and other beliefs that influence dietary habits.

On preparing the book, the authors did not forget those that frequently take their meals in restaurants. A lunch or dinner as well as occasional snacks outside one's home can turn to a great pleasure if adopting and respecting the rules of balanced diet. The authors teach us how to choose valuable and healthy meals with low fat and low cholesterol, and how to take healthy diet at any restaurant type. Following the authors' instructions, one can square his dietary preferences and care for his health, and find low fat meals. Either having lunch with your fellow workers at a Mexican restaurant, or with somebody special to you in a romantic French restaurant, enjoying (inter)national specialities need not imply high fat content. From Chinese to Greek, from Cajun to Vietnamese, every cuisine offers delicious meals that are at the same time healthy for the brain and blood vessels. The advice found in this book will help you choose healthy food in different restaurants, even in fast-food ones, their manufacturers now offering a broader spectrum of low-calorie foods than ever before, to mention only chef salads, broiled chicken sandwiches, and low-calorie yoghurts.

The authors of the book have not failed to observe the many people who have to attend business affairs at lunch or dinner, i.e. businessmen who are with good reason worried that such a lifestyle may result in gaining weight, declining competences and threatening health. The authors state the fear is not unfounded, yet it need not be so since we can and have to learn how to keep good health at the same time meeting all our social and occupational commitments. They suggest what to do and where to start for the initial results of the change to be observable in several days, and to ensure strength we need to cope with daily challenge and stress by permanent adoption of healthier habits.

By their book *The Brain That Keeps On*, which is available in all well-supplied libraries, Professor Vida Demarin and her coworkers provide answers to the most common questions on health, how to preserve and maintain it, suggest all those interested what to read to expand their knowledge, make reading the book a real pleasure, and the last but not the least, teach the reader how to use the knowledge acquired by reading the book in his daily, now healthier life.

*Marina Roje-Bedeković*