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# THE BROWSER:

Analyzing the tech biz  
By the FORTUNE technology staff

## FORTUNE

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### Is stress edible?

Could eating off-season tomatoes contribute to heart attacks? [Joon Yun](#) thinks it's possible. Yun is an MD at Stanford's Department of Radiology, a partner at Palo Alto Investors focusing on health care startups, a founder of the think tank [The Palo Alto Institute](#) and, most recently, the author of [Low-Stress Food](#).

Yun hosted a book-release party in San Francisco last week and gave a talk in which he theorized that stress is accumulated up the food chain. "Fish don't die of heart disease," he says. Instead, they die, of course, primarily in the mouths of predators. And the stress that that any individual fish feels (from living in constant fear of being eaten, from harsh living conditions, etc.) is transferred to its predator...up the line until you reach the final stop, humans.

As such, a more highly stressed fish confers greater stress to the predator than a happy fish. How do you know a happy fish when it's sitting on your plate covered in breadcrumbs? A bit of science can help. "If you look at wild salmon versus farmed salmon, the former is high in Omega 3's and low in Omega 6's, and the latter is high in Omega 6's and low in Omega 3's," Yun says, referring to the [ratio between the two types of essential fatty acids](#). A diet high in Omega 6 fatty acids is thought to increase the likelihood of all sorts of diseases and afflictions, including heart attacks and certain types of cancer. Yun concludes that the chemical makeup of each type of fish is merely a manifestation of its happiness. In other words, the farmed fish (living its life in crowded pens) is more stressed than the wild fish (swimming freely in rivers and oceans). "Eating a farmed salmon increases the risk of heart disease," he says, noting that the same benefits derived from eating wild salmon can be found in, say, grass-fed beef and eggs laid by cage-free chickens.

And it's not just protein. You know that saying, one rotten apple spoils the whole bunch? Well, Yun says it's also rooted in science. As soon as a fruit is picked, it stresses about its loss of nutrients. The further from maturity that it's picked, the greater its stress. As such, it begins emitting [ethylene](#), which he calls "the stress hormone of fruit," (a corollary to [cortisol](#), the human stress hormone). The ethylene is detected by surrounding fruit, which causes secondary stress, causing what amounts to a panic attack, a chain-reaction of ethylene production. Before long, they're all rotten.

Conversely, a fruit that is picked when fully ripe, or close to it, is essentially satiated. It has reached maturity and so is less stressed, tastes better, and is healthier for its consumer. So, the more natural the growing and distribution process, the happier the fruit, the better the taste, and, ultimately, the healthier the consumer.

It's an interesting idea — an attempt to tie together some of the en vogue culinary movements, including slow food, humane treatment of animals, organic farming, et cetera. At the very least, it'll be food for thought when, come February, you're chowing down on that industrial-farmed hamburger with a slice of Chilean tomato.

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I agree with Mike. However, I would further suggest an holistic system moreso characterizes the monetary