

Where Health and Happiness Become a Way of Life:

The Casa de Luz Village Blueprint for
Regenerative Living and Enduring Joy

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Chapter 1: The Casa de Luz Revolution: A Vision for 2034

Imagine the year 2034: a decade into a revolution that began with just a few brave neighborhoods across the United States embracing a new way of living and eating, inspired by the Casa de Luz Village model. Ten Casa de Luz Villages became the tipping point that sparked a wellness revolution, sweeping across the country and transforming communities, minds, and bodies.

By 2034, what started as a humble initiative to bring whole, unprocessed, plant-based nutrition to communal tables has blossomed into a widespread movement, challenging the status quo of America's costly and broken healthcare system. With each new Casa de Luz, the impact grows exponentially. The idea is simple yet profound: food is medicine. It's a concept as old as Hippocrates, but one that has been overshadowed by the industrialization of food and the commodification of healthcare. Now, with hundreds of Casa de Luz Villages thriving in communities across the nation, people are finally heeding this ancient wisdom.

With the adoption of the Casa de Luz Village model, we are witnessing a shift from the "sick care" system—a system burdened by the high costs of treating preventable diseases—to one where wellness is cultivated from the ground up. The investment required to establish and maintain a Casa de Luz Village is minuscule compared to the enormous expenses of managing chronic illnesses. The Casa de Luz model demonstrates that we can create healthier communities by simply reconnecting people with their food, with each other, and with the earth.

Imagine a landscape where neighborhood dining tables are set with meals made from pristine, chemical-free plants grown just steps away in community gardens. This movement toward natural, unchemicalized foods has set off a ripple effect: farmers, local governments, and businesses are responding to the increasing demand for pure, whole plants. The more people eat this way, the more they want to eat this way—and they want to ensure future generations have access to these foods too.

Plants, in their purest form, hold a wealth of goodness—not only for the body and soul but also for the way humanity thinks. They embody vitality, resilience, and harmony with the earth, and consuming them can cultivate these same qualities within us. As Casa de Luz Villages proliferate, we are seeing a cultural swing away from the industrialized food system that has caused so much harm, pain, and suffering to humans, animals, and our fragile planet.

What is the use of having the exciting products that industry produces if we are too sick or dead to enjoy them? As more people awaken to this reality, there is a collective demand for change. The Casa de Luz revolution is not just about food; it's about fostering a new way of living where communities prioritize wellness, sustainability, and connection over convenience, consumption, and profit.

By 2034, this revolution has also sparked a transformation in urban design and planning. “New” urbanism—once focused on walkability and mixed-use development—has evolved to integrate wellness as a central tenet. Neighborhoods are designed not just for living and working but for thriving. Imagine a world where every city block has a community garden, where residents can find their sanity and purpose while watching their food grow. Schools, workplaces, and public spaces are aligned with these principles, creating environments that nurture mind, body, and spirit.

The Casa de Luz revolution has fostered a growing respect for pristine plants and the soil from which they grow. It has inspired people to see food not merely as fuel but as a sacred connection to the earth. And this respect is spreading like wildfire. In these neighborhoods, people are healthier, more vibrant, and more connected to one another and to the world around them. The revolutionary idea that “we are what we eat” is finally taking root, reshaping our culture, our communities, and our consciousness.

As this book is being printed in 2024, we stand at a crossroads. We must ask ourselves: What kind of world will our children inherit in 2034? Will it be one where they are bound by the chains of chronic illness, loneliness, and environmental degradation? Or will it be a world where they are free to live in harmony with nature, with vibrant health, strong communities, and a deep respect for all life?

The choice is ours to make today. By embracing the Casa de Luz Village model and planting the seeds of this wellness revolution, we can leave our children a legacy of health, hope, and harmony. Let us not wait for another decade to act. The future of wellness, the future of our children, and the future of our planet depend on the decisions we make right now.

Chapter 2: Plants, Though They Have no Tongue, Will Speak with Most Miraculous Organ

Throughout each day, all living organisms interact with the world by taking in and putting out, engaging in a constant exchange with their environment. This process is a dance of survival and adaptation, a complex dialogue between the internal and external worlds. Humans, too, are constantly in this exchange, taking in the world through our eyes, ears, nose, skin, and—perhaps most consequentially—through our mouths. What we choose to consume is not just a matter of taste; it is a profound decision that affects our health, our consciousness, and even our connection to the world around us.

Consider this: Do you eat for pleasure or for nutrition? Do you live to eat, or do you eat to live? Can you combine both enjoyment and a dedication to good health? I assert that when we choose to eat for health, the “deliciousness” follows naturally. This process is similar to a couch potato who initially suffers through a new exercise regimen but eventually comes to relish the endorphins and vitality it produces. “Delicious” is, after all, a subjective experience. Humans can develop a taste for what would seem unappealing to others—oysters, whiskey, tobacco, hot peppers, fish roe, or even “aged beef,” which is, in essence, decomposing flesh. Snails are romanticized as “escargot,” and wine is anthropomorphized, idolized, and revered to the point that a single bottle can command astronomical prices. Humans have a remarkable ability to create stories around what we ingest, stories that not only make these substances palatable but also elevate them to the status of luxury, even when they are, quite obviously, unhealthy for our bodies and future well-being.

Cultural celebrations and gatherings often revolve around sugary, highly processed foods. Yet, there is a new narrative emerging, one that celebrates with foods that promote health, vitality, and longevity. At **Casa de Luz**, we have been living this narrative since 1984, creating a space where people can experience the transformation that comes from choosing to honor their bodies with whole, natural plant foods.

Understanding the Roots of Self-Destructive Choices

To understand why humans often make choices that undermine their well-being, we must consider the tension between short-term gratification and long-term health. In the early history of humanity, we ate whatever we could find; survival was the priority. This instinctual drive persisted until the advent of farming, a profound inflection point for our species. Farming allowed humans to control what to plant and eat, leading to a deep collaboration with nature that birthed the 20-plus vegetables we commonly consume today—plants that do not grow naturally in the wild.

This shift marked a significant moment in human evolution, as it allowed us to go beyond mere survival and start making conscious choices about what to cultivate and consume. However, the industrialization of food has since pulled us away from these roots. It has driven us to prioritize convenience, profit, and mass production over health, leading to a disconnect from the very essence of what nourishes us.

If everything physical in the world can be reduced to vibrational strings, as some theories in physics suggest, then what is the vibrational magic in the plant-human interaction that can lead to health or illness? Science has made great strides in explaining nutrients and their components, but this reductionist approach often misses the gestalt—the wholeness and magic of the entire experience. Just as quantum physics has shown us that the more we try to pinpoint the components, the more we lose sight of the whole, so too does our understanding of nutrition falter when we break it down too finely.

It is no coincidence that the words “holy” and “wholly” share a similar sound and resonance. Do they not merge to signify the same profound truth? To eat “wholly” is to eat “holy,” to consume in a way that honors the sacredness and completeness of what we are taking in. What we introduce into our bodies should be both “holy” and “wholly” to transform us into functional, contributing members of the earth’s biological community.

The Intimacy of Nourishment

Consider the act of coitus: a brief interaction between male and female that results in the creation of another human being. This act is the essence of our species’ continuation. Yet, equally intimate is the act of eating, something we do several times a day, every day. It is in this repeated, daily ritual that the true magic happens. Unlike a car that runs on gasoline, which serves merely as a fuel source, what plants do for our bodies goes beyond scientific

explanation. Plants nourish not just the body but the mind and spirit, engaging in a complex and profound interaction that supports life at its most fundamental level.

Now consider the act of consuming animal parts—creatures so similar to humans that an alien might struggle to differentiate between who dominates whom. What is the vibrational quality of consuming the flesh of a being that had to be killed, no matter how humanely it was treated before death? And what of the consumption of their eggs and milk, substances designed to nourish their young, not ours? The vibrational frequency of such consumption is dense and heavy, rooted in death and domination rather than life and growth. There is a growing awakening to this perspective—a realization that for humans to evolve into a non-warring, more harmonious species, we may need to first stop the killing.

The Power of Plants to Heal and Transform

Plants, though they have no tongue, speak to us through their miraculous presence. They do not need words to communicate; they speak through their essence, their energy, and their effect on our bodies and minds. When we consume plants in their whole, natural form, we are not just taking in nutrients; we are taking in life force, the distilled energy of the sun, soil, and water, all harmonized into a form that our bodies recognize and thrive upon. This is the vibrational magic that science cannot fully capture, the wholeness that defies the sum of its parts.

In a world where we have normalized unhealthy eating and celebrated destructive habits, there is an emerging story—one that celebrates nourishment that truly feeds us, body and soul. At **Casa de Luz**, we have seen this story come to life. We have witnessed how plants, prepared with intention and consumed with awareness, can transform lives, heal diseases, and bring clarity to the mind.

As we move forward, it is time to listen to what plants are telling us. To honor their silent wisdom and recognize that what we eat is not just a choice of flavor or convenience but a sacred act that shapes our bodies, minds, and futures. In choosing to eat plants “wholly” and “holy,” we align ourselves with the deeper rhythms of life, paving the way for a healthier, more harmonious existence on this planet.

Chapter 3: Dogma - Halts Growth and Evolution

I find myself conflicted about writing what seems to be shaping into a book. George Ohsawa, considered the founder of Macrobiotics, was adamantly against dogma. He would often begin his lectures with the admonition “Non Credo,” or “don’t believe what I am saying.” Ohsawa was focused on sharing ideas for consideration rather than presenting rigid rules. Writing, however, tends to embed a sense of permanence and dogma. I remember vividly, as a teenager, transitioning from blindly trusting the written word to realizing that what is written is no more sacred than spoken words, which can be as fleeting as leaves in the wind. Words are symbols conveying ideas filtered through each listener’s accumulated life experiences. Yet, despite their transient nature, words can stir the heart, ignite the mind, and inspire action or lead to despair.

Many great ideas and people who spark movements are subject to the principle of Yin/Yang, which states that everything taken to its extreme will generate its opposite. This principle is visually represented in the yin/yang symbol, where two dots of opposing colors lie within each other, signifying that within every extreme lies the seed of its reversal.

Dogma often arises when movements and philosophies become rigid. For example:

1. **Socrates:** The ancient Greek philosopher never wrote down his teachings. Instead, his student Plato recorded dialogues that presented Socrates’ ideas through conversations and debates. Socrates emphasized questioning and critical thinking as a path to uncover truth. Ironically, his method of dialectic inquiry later became formalized into rigid doctrines that could stifle the very critical thinking he championed.
2. **Laozi (Lao Tzu):** Traditionally considered the author of the “Tao Te Ching,” some scholars suggest that Laozi may not have written the text himself. It is possible that his followers compiled his teachings into what became a foundational text of Taoism. Over centuries, Taoism’s fluid and adaptable philosophy was sometimes turned into rigid dogma by those who sought to codify its teachings.
3. **Siddhartha Gautama (The Buddha):** The Buddha did not write down his teachings. Instead, his discourses were passed down orally and were only written down centuries after his death. The scriptures that eventually emerged, such as the Pali Canon, were reflections of his followers’ interpretations, which led to the formation of varying schools of thought, each with its own dogmatic tendencies.

4. **Confucius:** While Confucius is credited with authoring some texts, such as the “Analects,” it is generally believed that his disciples compiled these writings after his death, based on his teachings and conversations. Over time, Confucianism became institutionalized, often used to support rigid social hierarchies and to enforce a strict moral code.

5. **George Ohsawa:** Ohsawa is another example of a visionary thinker whose followers systematized his ideas. Although he did write some works, Ohsawa emphasized that his teachings were guidelines, not rigid rules. However, as his ideas were adopted and popularized by his student, Michio Kushi, and others, they often became prescriptive, moving away from Ohsawa’s original intent of flexibility and experimentation.

The spirit of **Casa de Luz** is rooted in a never-ending quest for improvement, with a focus on remaining open to new ideas and perspectives. However, we must recognize that our prevailing educational system has a tendency to create dogmatic thinking, reinforcing conformity rather than encouraging true intellectual growth.

The Educational System as a Tool of Dogma: The Prussian Model

John Taylor Gatto, a prominent critic of the modern education system, argued that the prevalent educational model was influenced by the Prussian system developed in the early 19th century under leaders like Otto von Bismarck. According to Gatto, this model was designed to create obedient factory workers, soldiers, clerks, and bureaucrats—people who would conform to authority and fit neatly into a highly regimented society.

Gatto’s key points on the Prussian model of education include:

1. **Origins in Prussia:** The Prussian education system, established in the early 1800s, was one of the first state-run, compulsory education systems. It emphasized uniformity, discipline, and obedience—traits considered essential for maintaining a strong, centralized state.

2. **Purpose of the System:** The system’s primary goal was to produce compliant citizens who could serve the state. This was achieved by discouraging critical thinking, creativity, and individual autonomy—qualities that could challenge the status quo.

3. **Classroom Structure and Control:** The Prussian model emphasized control and order. Students were required to sit in rows, ask permission to speak, and follow rigid

schedules dictated by bells. This structure mirrors the discipline needed in military drills and factory work, conditioning students to follow instructions without question.

4. **Standardized Learning:** The model promoted a one-size-fits-all approach, where subjects like mathematics, writing, and reading were taught in a standardized way. Divergent thinking and creativity were discouraged in favor of rote memorization and adherence to “right answers.”

5. **Impact on Critical Thinking:** This approach stifled intellectual curiosity and self-directed learning, training students to depend on authority figures (teachers) for answers rather than encouraging them to think independently or critically.

6. **Factory Model of Education:** Gatto famously likened schools to factories—processing children in batches (grades), emphasizing punctuality, obedience, and routine. The bell system, reminiscent of factory shift changes, reinforced this factory-like regimentation.

7. **Societal Implications:** Gatto suggested that this education model was not simply a byproduct of industrialization but a deliberate tool for social control. By producing citizens who were docile and compliant, the state could maintain order more easily and limit dissent.

Gatto’s critique implies that the current education system was not designed to nurture true intellectual growth but rather to create obedient citizens who conform to standardized molds. He advocated for a more liberating form of education that emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and self-direction—qualities essential for genuine evolution and growth.

The Way Forward: Embracing Coherence Without Dogma

As we expand **Casa de Luz Villages** throughout the land, our goal is to foster coherence without falling into the trap of dogma. These villages aim to bring neighborhoods together to establish wellness community centers where original thought is not just welcomed but actively nurtured. We embrace the wisdom of the past while remaining open to new ideas and practices that encourage the evolution of humanity and the planet.

The time has come to cultivate environments where growth is not hindered by rigid doctrines but is instead guided by a spirit of inquiry and openness. By questioning norms and remaining vigilant against the onset of dogma, we can create spaces that truly allow for the flourishing of the human spirit and the ongoing quest for improvement.

Chapter 4: Your Money or Your Life

One of Jack Benny's most endearing movie clips is when he is held up by a robber who demands, "Your money or your life." Benny hesitates, causing the impatient robber to repeat the demand with growing frustration, "Your money or your life!" Benny famously replies, "I'm thinking it over." This comedic moment strikes a deeper chord when we consider how often we find ourselves facing a similar choice in our own lives—though our decisions might not be as blatantly stated or immediately life-threatening.

In Matthew 16:26, the Bible poses a poignant question: "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" In modern terms, we might ask: What is the point of accumulating wealth, success, or fleeting pleasures if it comes at the cost of our health and well-being?

Ask yourself: What is life without health? This question is worth considering with every bite we take, every move we make, because, like the song says, our bodies are always watching what we do. We are either moving toward better health or drifting into sickness. Ann Wigmore, a renowned holistic health practitioner and raw food advocate, once said, "The food you eat can be either the safest and most powerful form of medicine, or the slowest form of poison."

Yet, despite this knowledge, many people choose to live as long as they can, often until their bodies finally break down from a lifetime of cumulative bad habits. But there is a better goal than merely living longer; it is to not outlive your good health. This means striving to maintain vitality and clarity throughout life, rather than merely prolonging existence. And yet, almost everyone I know—including myself—sometimes behaves poorly and consumes what we know is not beneficial.

Why Do We Choose Destructive Short-Term Gratification?

Why do we engage in behaviors that we know are destructive in the long term for a momentary sense of satisfaction? This question is central to understanding human behavior. Here are some reasons why we fall into these patterns and how we can begin to change them:

1. **The Power of Immediate Rewards:** Human beings are hardwired to seek immediate gratification. Our evolutionary ancestors lived in a world where resources were scarce, and the future was uncertain. Immediate rewards, such as the taste of calorie-rich foods, meant survival. However, in the modern world, this wiring often backfires. The allure of a sugary treat or a salty snack provides a quick dopamine hit, reinforcing the behavior despite its long-term consequences.

2. **Social Conditioning and Norms:** Much of our destructive behavior around food and health is socially conditioned. We celebrate with sugary, highly processed foods, and we bond over drinks that dull our senses rather than nourish our bodies. Society often equates indulgence with pleasure and healthful choices with deprivation, creating a skewed perception of what it means to live well. To change, we must begin to reshape these social norms, celebrating occasions with foods that truly support our well-being.

3. **Emotional Eating and Coping Mechanisms:** Food is often used as an emotional crutch. Stress, boredom, anxiety, and even happiness can trigger a desire to eat—not because we are hungry, but because we seek comfort or distraction. This coping mechanism becomes a habit, and before long, we are trapped in a cycle where food is a source of emotional escape rather than nourishment. To break this cycle, we must learn to identify our triggers and develop healthier coping strategies, such as mindfulness, exercise, or creative pursuits.

4. **Lack of Awareness and Mindfulness:** Many destructive choices are made mindlessly. We eat in front of the TV, snack while scrolling through our phones, or overeat during social gatherings without even realizing it. To change these habits, we must cultivate mindfulness—being fully present with our food, savoring each bite, and recognizing how it makes us feel. This awareness can transform eating from a passive act into an active, life-affirming choice.

5. **Misinformation and Marketing:** The food industry spends billions marketing processed, unhealthy foods as convenient, tasty, and even healthful. Labels like “low-fat,” “low-carb,” or “sugar-free” often mask the truth about highly processed ingredients that harm our health. To combat this, we need education and vigilance—learning to read labels, understand ingredients, and make choices that align with our values and well-being.

6. **Addiction to Stimulation and Hyper-Palatable Foods:** Many processed foods are designed to be hyper-palatable, engineered to be more stimulating to the brain than natural foods. They create a cycle of addiction where the body craves more of what harms it.

Breaking free requires detoxing from these hyper-stimulating foods and retraining our taste buds to appreciate the natural flavors of whole, unprocessed foods.

How Do We Change This Behavior?

1. **Shift Your Mindset from Restriction to Abundance:** One of the most effective ways to change behavior is to shift from a mindset of restriction (“I can’t eat that”) to one of abundance (“I choose to nourish my body with this”). When we focus on what we gain—energy, vitality, clarity—rather than what we lose, making healthier choices becomes more appealing.
2. **Create a Supportive Environment:** Surround yourself with people and environments that encourage healthy living. This could be as simple as joining a community garden, participating in a local wellness group, or creating a circle of friends who prioritize well-being. Environment is a powerful influencer of behavior; change your environment, and your habits will follow.
3. **Set Clear Intentions and Goals:** Define what health means to you and set clear, achievable goals. Whether it’s eating more whole plants, reducing processed foods, or committing to daily movement, clarity is key. Write down your intentions and revisit them often to stay motivated and aligned with your vision of well-being.
4. **Embrace Education and Continuous Learning:** Knowledge is power. Educate yourself about nutrition, mindfulness, and the impact of food on your body and mind. Books, documentaries, and workshops can offer new perspectives and reinforce your commitment to health. The more you understand the why behind your choices, the more empowered you become to make the right ones.
5. **Practice Self-Compassion and Forgiveness:** Changing long-held habits is challenging, and setbacks are part of the journey. Rather than berating yourself for a “bad” choice, practice self-compassion. Acknowledge the misstep, learn from it, and recommit to your path. Health is not a destination but a continuous journey.

Investing in Life Over Money

The choice is clear: your money or your life. The wisdom of both Jack Benny’s humor and Matthew 16:26 reminds us that material wealth is meaningless without well-being. We must ask ourselves daily: Are we investing in our health, or are we trading it away for fleeting pleasures? Real wealth is measured not by what we accumulate but by how well we live.

At Casa de Luz, this philosophy has been embodied since 1984. Here, we experience a transformation—not just in what we eat, but in how we live and connect. We see the power of plants to heal, nourish, and sustain us, and we learn that true wealth lies in our health, our community, and our choices.

The invitation is open: choose life, choose health, and choose to invest in a future where well-being is the ultimate measure of success.

This enhanced chapter emphasizes the deep relationship between choices, health, and true wealth, while also providing practical ways to shift away from destructive behaviors toward a more fulfilling and health-conscious life.

Chapter 5: The Power of Simplicity—Casa de Luz as a Global Shift for Humanity

Casa de Luz is built on the profound understanding that the simplest solutions often have the most far-reaching impact. In a world of complexity, where problems of health, community, and environmental degradation seem insurmountable, Casa de Luz offers a model that is deceptively simple, yet incredibly powerful.

Simplicity as a Path to Transformation

At its core, Casa de Luz is based on whole plant nutrition and communal dining—two ideas that, while seemingly modest, hold the key to solving some of humanity's most pressing issues. The idea that food can be medicine is not new, but Casa de Luz takes this further by integrating the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of well-being into a daily practice of mindful eating. There is no excess here, no unnecessary frills—just simple, clean food served in a way that fosters human connection and health.

This simplicity is its strength. It does not require vast resources or complex systems to implement. In fact, the model is designed to be as low-cost as possible, ensuring that any community, no matter how small or under-resourced, can adopt it. And therein lies the magic—because the model is inexpensive, it is replicable. It is accessible. It is a solution that anyone, anywhere, can embrace.

The Ripple Effect of Whole Plant Living

The impact of Casa de Luz goes beyond physical health. By reconnecting people with the Earth through plant-based nutrition, it fosters a deeper awareness of our role in the ecosystem. This is a model that addresses not only the body but also the soul, the community, and the environment. Each meal served at Casa de Luz represents a vote for a healthier planet—a vote for sustainable agriculture, less deforestation, and reduced carbon emissions.

In this way, Casa de Luz becomes a movement—a movement that has the potential to shift humanity itself. Through simple, whole plant meals, communities begin to rethink their relationship with food, with each other, and with the Earth. They begin to understand that by changing the way they eat, they can change the world.

Inexpensive and Scalable for Maximum Impact

The true brilliance of Casa de Luz lies in its scalability. It doesn't require massive investments, high-tech solutions, or specialized knowledge. Anyone can start a Casa de Luz in their community with minimal resources. The model is flexible, adaptable to any neighborhood or city, and can scale from a small gathering of people in someone's home to a large wellness village serving thousands.

This is what makes Casa de Luz perhaps the most powerful model for shifting humanity—it is accessible to all. In a time when the world is grappling with inequality, environmental collapse, and health crises, Casa de Luz offers a path forward that is both inclusive and sustainable. It offers the possibility of a profound shift in the way we live, eat, and connect.

The Future—A Global Shift in Consciousness

Imagine a world where every neighborhood has a Casa de Luz, where families gather daily to share whole plant meals, where communities are connected not only to each other but to the Earth. This is not a utopian dream; it is an achievable reality. The simplicity and low cost of the Casa de Luz model make it possible for this vision to spread across the globe, transforming not just individuals, but entire societies.

Casa de Luz offers the blueprint for a new way of living—a way that is healthier, more connected, and in harmony with the natural world. And because it is so simple and inexpensive, it has the power to reach every corner of the planet, creating a ripple effect that could shift humanity itself.

This chapter emphasizes the simplicity, scalability, and profound impact of Casa de Luz as a global solution for health, community, and environmental issues. Let me know if you'd like to refine this further or add any additional details!

Chapter 6: Arrogance or Genius

Can something simple and humble be powerful and transformative? In a world fascinated by technological marvels, billionaire visionaries, and the relentless pace of industrial progress, it's easy to overlook the potential for profound change in the simplest of ideas. Yet, after 40 years—beginning in 1984, when I discovered Macrobiotics at the East West Center in Austin, Texas—I've become convinced that one of the most revolutionary solutions for our time lies not in grandiosity but in simplicity. This small wellness community center sparked the idea that opening Casa de Luz centers in every neighborhood could be the most powerful and cost-effective transformation for the betterment of humanity and the planet.

But how can something so modest compare to the seismic transformations brought forth by the likes of Steve Jobs or Elon Musk? How can a neighborhood wellness center, focused on whole plant-based meals and community connection, stack up against space rockets or smartphones? The answer lies in understanding what truly drives humanity today: **industry**. Industry, in its many forms—technology, agriculture, healthcare—has shaped the world as we know it, for better and for worse. It has powered innovation, created unprecedented convenience, and facilitated connections across the globe. But it has also driven the rise of the medical-industrial complex, a system that profits from treating the symptoms of lifestyle diseases rather than addressing their root causes. Industry has created a chasm between humans and nature, disconnecting us from the very foundation of life: the microbiome, the soil, the plants that sustain us.

Industry promises us the stars, yet in doing so, it often neglects the soil beneath our feet. Elon Musk, for example, is preparing to make humans an interplanetary species, envisioning colonies on Mars. But what's striking is that if we can create Earth-like environments in large, enclosed domes on Mars—if we can mimic nature in its most sterile, industrialized form—then why can't we simply nurture Earth's natural environment, here and now? Why is it that in our quest to conquer other planets, we forget to care for our own?

The rising tide of catastrophic diseases—heart disease, cancer, diabetes—will eventually hit a tipping point. There will come a moment when humanity collectively realizes that its very survival is in jeopardy. It may seem distant now, but as these diseases become ever more prevalent, and

as the cost of treatment spirals out of control, there will be a reckoning. People will come to understand that the industrial model of food production, health care, and even lifestyle itself is leading us toward extinction. And in that moment, a process of reversal will begin, a movement back toward simplicity, toward a way of life that honors the body, the planet, and the interconnected web of life.

This shift has already begun. There is growing evidence that a small percentage of the population is waking up to this realization. They are swinging back from the extremes of industrialization and embracing simplicity, community, and connection. **Casa de Luz Village** is one such place—a living example of this return to a more natural, harmonious way of living. And now, let's set the visual compass. Imagine a neighborhood where Casa de Luz is at the heart of daily life. Picture people walking from their homes, crossing tree-lined streets, making their way to the dining room—no need for cars, no rush to get there. The Casa de Luz dining room is always close enough to be a part of life, and the experience of walking there, feeling the earth beneath your feet, becomes part of the ritual.

At the center of the dining room stands a round table. Why a round table? Because it is a symbol of equality, of shared purpose, of the idea that no one sits at the head, and everyone is connected. In this circle, people of all ages come together for one of the most sacred acts: sharing a meal. But not just any meal—this meal is the product of pristine plants, carefully grown in harmony with the soil, unfettered by industrial processing. These plants are carriers of life, vessels of the microbiome's intelligence, and the chemical alchemy that happens inside the body when we consume them is nothing short of magical.

As we eat, we become intertwined with the plants—beings that have absorbed the vibrational messaging from the soil, the air, and the sun. Every bite we take is a reconnection with Mother Nature herself, a reminder that we are part of this larger web of life. Industrialized foods distort this message, muting the voice of the earth and replacing it with something artificial, something incomplete. But here, at Casa de Luz, we experience the unfiltered truth of nature through our meals. The message is clear, direct, and nourishing to the body and the spirit.

Humans are a gregarious species, relying on community to survive and thrive. This gathering around the table at Casa de Luz goes beyond just eating—it's an act of bonding, of reawakening our primal need for connection. We are not just feeding our bodies, we are feeding our souls

and strengthening the threads of community. This is where humanity can thrive, where the simplicity of sharing a meal becomes a profound act of restoration.

This is not just a fleeting social moment. Casa de Luz centers create a **transgenerational quality**—a space where the young and the old, the experienced and the curious, come together to pass on wisdom, share stories, and build a shared future. In these gatherings, we plant the seeds for the next evolution of our species—what I call the birth of the new **Homo Communitus**. This is the human who thrives not by individual achievement alone, but through connection to others, to the earth, and to the plants that sustain life. It is a human who understands that real progress is not measured in technological feats or industrial might but in the health and harmony of the community.

Archimedes once said, “Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.” In the modern era, many would argue that the lever has been technology—rocket ships, smartphones, artificial intelligence. But as for me, I don’t seek to move the world to other planets. I want to stay here, on Earth, and nurture the soil that has given us life. A sense of place is essential for good health, and this sense of rootedness, of belonging to a particular spot on the planet, is something we risk losing in the pursuit of technological progress.

To think seven generations into the future is not just a romantic ideal—it is a practical, conscientious way of living. It’s about recognizing that the decisions we make today, in how we live, how we eat, and how we connect with the earth, will shape the world that our descendants inherit. We can choose to invest our resources in creating Earth-like environments on distant planets, or we can choose to reclaim and restore the natural Earth that gave birth to our species.

Casa de Luz is a step in that direction—a small, humble, yet powerful lever placed firmly on the fulcrum of nature itself. It may not come with the glamour of a rocket ship or the genius of a smartphone, but it is rooted in the genius of life itself. And that, perhaps, is the most transformative power of all.

This version builds on the original metaphor of connection and community, adding a richer visual experience of what Casa de Luz can provide. It emphasizes the sacredness of communal dining

and the role of pristine plants in restoring health, while reinforcing the idea of creating a new human experience through these centers. Let me know if you'd like to expand any further!

Chapter 7: History of Casa de Luz

The History of Macrobiotics and Casa de Luz

The story of Macrobiotics traces back to ancient philosophies and practices that revered balance and harmony between humans and nature. The term “Macrobiotic” itself comes from the Greek words *macro*, meaning large or long, and *bios*, meaning life. It was first coined by the German physician Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland in the 18th century in his book *The Art of Prolonging Human Life*, where he described how lifestyle choices, especially diet, could impact one’s longevity and vitality.

However, it was in Japan during the early 20th century that Macrobiotics became more than just a concept and evolved into a structured dietary and philosophical practice. This transformation was led by a visionary named George Ohsawa (born Yukikazu Sakurazawa), who is often credited with formalizing Macrobiotics as we know it today.

George Ohsawa: A Revolutionary Vision

Ohsawa was born in 1893 in Japan, a country deeply influenced by traditional Eastern philosophies, including Taoism, Confucianism, and Zen Buddhism. These teachings emphasized the interconnectedness of all things, the importance of balance, and the principle of *yin* and *yang*—the dual forces that create and maintain harmony in the universe. These ancient principles would later form the core of the Macrobiotic diet.

In his youth, Ohsawa faced a personal health crisis, suffering from tuberculosis, a disease that was considered fatal at the time. Conventional medicine had little to offer, so Ohsawa sought alternative treatments, ultimately healing himself through dietary practices inspired by the *Sagen Ishizuka* school of Japanese medicine, which emphasized whole grains and plant-based foods.

His recovery became the foundation for his life’s mission to promote Macrobiotics, a diet that, in his view, could lead to not only individual health but also societal well-being and peace.

Ohsawa believed that food was much more than sustenance—it was a profound connection to nature and a powerful tool for healing. His teachings were based on the idea that by eating natural, whole, and plant-based foods, especially whole grains like brown rice, one could restore their body to balance and, in turn, transform their life.

The Spread of Macrobiotics: Ohsawa, Kushi, and the Aiharas

In the 1950s, Ohsawa began traveling to the West, particularly Europe and the United States, where he found an audience eager for alternatives to the industrialized food systems and modern medical practices of the time. His lectures, books, and passionate advocacy of Macrobiotics began to inspire many, particularly during the rise of the countercultural movements in the 1960s and 1970s.

Among his many students, Michio Kushi became one of the most influential proponents of Macrobiotics, particularly in the United States. Kushi, who had studied under Ohsawa, immigrated to the U.S. in the 1940s and began teaching Macrobiotics, eventually founding the Kushi Institute in Massachusetts, which became a center for Macrobiotic education and research. Under Kushi's leadership, Macrobiotics grew into a global movement, attracting followers who were searching for not only a way to heal their bodies but also a lifestyle aligned with environmental sustainability and spiritual awareness.

Alongside Kushi's work, Herman and Cornelia Aihara played a vital role in cultivating the Macrobiotic community in the United States. Though not as prolific in writing or establishing centers as Kushi, the Aiharas profoundly impacted the movement. They founded the *Vega Study Center* in Oroville, California, where they taught and practiced Macrobiotics for many years. The Aiharas were known for their hands-on, nurturing approach, focusing on cultivating personal relationships and guiding individuals on their healing journeys.

Perhaps one of their most enduring contributions was the founding of the *French Meadows Macrobiotic Summer Camp* in the Lake Tahoe Mountains. This camp became a sacred gathering space for Macrobiotic practitioners from around the world, offering an immersive experience in nature where people could connect with the Earth, practice Macrobiotics, and learn from one another. I personally attended many of these camps and experienced the profound sense of community and harmony fostered in that environment. These camps continue to be a source of inspiration for Casa de Luz, and I envision creating similar retreats and camps for our growing community.

The Birth of Casa de Luz: A Journey of Resilience and Vision

The seeds of Casa de Luz were planted long before its doors opened in 1991. In 1984, I co-founded *The East West Center of Austin*, a wellness center grounded in the teachings of Macrobiotics and Eastern philosophy. The center was a place for individuals to explore holistic health, plant-based living, and community building. However, tragedy struck in 1987 when the East West Center burned to the ground.

Undeterred, I joined forces with Maryann Rose Justman to keep the spirit of community alive. Together, we hosted gatherings in her home in the Clarksville neighborhood of Austin, where we served daily meals to an average of 25 people. Maryann and I were the entire staff, but we were driven by the desire to build something meaningful—a place where people could not only eat healthy, nourishing meals but also connect on a deeper level.

Meanwhile, the East West Center's Board of Directors, with funds raised by Warren and Helen Skarron, opened a small Macrobiotic house in the Hyde Park neighborhood. This house served a handful of people, but Maryann and I envisioned something greater. We wanted to create a vibrant, community-driven wellness center—a place where the principles of Macrobiotics could be lived and shared by all.

That dream became *Casa de Luz*.

The Challenges and Grace Behind the Creation of Casa de Luz

My personal journey toward creating Casa de Luz was one of immense challenge and resilience. I had moved to Austin in 1981 to practice entrepreneurship and had found great success—up until 1985 when the national economy collapsed. I lost everything, including my house. Fortune, however, had me hold onto one asset—a hotel I had built, *Habitat Suites*. Despite its market value being lower than the bank loan, my banker friend, Nancy Clarkson, devised a unique solution called a “Cash Flow Mortgage.” This allowed me to live in the hotel with my three young children and only pay the bank if there was any excess cash flow. Living at the hotel provided stability, but I was still deep in debt. Twice, my bank account was garnished by creditors. Eventually, I took on the role of general manager at Habitat Suites, managing the hotel myself. Instead of taking a salary for my own benefit, I donated my earnings to Casa de Luz. I lived a cashless life for many years, able to reside at the hotel without cost and eat at Casa de Luz by dedicating my work to our community center.

This period, though financially challenging, was filled with grace. By 2000, I filed for bankruptcy, but the experience profoundly shaped my understanding of life's purpose and my dedication to building communities like Casa de Luz. Today, I recognize how the struggles of that time allowed me to focus on what truly matters—community, connection, and service.

Casa de Luz Today: A Beacon of Transformation

From its humble beginnings, Casa de Luz has grown into something much more than a restaurant or community center—it has become a beacon for human transformation. The meals served here are an invitation to reconnect with the Earth through whole, plant-based foods. Every meal is a celebration of life and a chance to nurture not only the body but the spirit. As Casa de Luz flourishes, my mission remains clear. I aim to help others create their own philanthropic wellness centers, guided by the principles of Macrobiotics, community dining, and holistic health. What began as a small effort in Clarksville has blossomed into a movement that is spreading across cities and towns, transforming lives one meal, one conversation, and one connection at a time.

Chapter 8: The Currency of Intention

“Money is the root of all evil,” they say, parroting a worn-out phrase like a spell cast too casually. But this isn’t what was written. The original warning is sharper, more instructive: *“The love of money is the root of all evil.”* A subtle but crucial difference. The distortion lies not in the object, but in our relationship to it.

When I pointed this out to a friend, he nodded with the casual certitude of someone who’d been to that edge. “Money is energy,” he offered. I paused, then clarified: “No. Money *represents* energy. It is not energy itself. It’s a symbol, a token — nothing more than a tool wrapped in abstraction.”

Just as a map is not the territory it depicts, money is not the value it represents. It is not community. It is not health. It is not the taste of a shared meal, nor the warmth of a home built by many hands. It is simply a menu — a placeholder pointing toward something more nourishing.

In the building of Casa de Luz — a wellness village grounded in service, creativity, and interdependence — money functions like any other tool: like a spatula in a shared kitchen or the shovel that opens up the earth to plant a tree. Useful. Necessary. But only meaningful when put to work.

This is where the vision sharpens.

Casa de Luz is not founded on capital. It is founded on intention. Money plays a part, yes — but the part of servant, not master. When used rightly, it oils the hinges of the project. It pays for lumber, for plumbing, for open-air pavilions where wisdom circles meet. It legalizes our presence with the government — forming a non-profit corporation, a co-operative, or any other structure required to give this living idea a lawful skeleton. These designations are necessary in a world that demands boxes, signatures, and filings. So we comply — not out of blind obedience, but as a strategic act.

Like a river requires banks to flow effectively, Casa de Luz uses the framework of organizational law to channel its deeper mission.

This mission is not charity. It is not martyrdom. It is Enlightened Self-Interest.

Enlightened Self-Interest (ESI) is a compass for the soul. It is the realization that when we act in ways that uplift ourselves *with awareness*, it turns out to be good for others too. Not out of guilt. Not out of obligation. But because it is the most efficient, life-affirming way to live. When I plant a fruit tree, I eat from it — and so do my neighbors. When I build a clean water system, I drink from it — and so do the children of the village. That is ESI: a feedback loop of shared thriving.

And this is the foundation of Casa de Luz.

We are not building a commune. We are cultivating a **commons** — a place where each person's pursuit of well-being naturally spills into the wellness of others. Where the currency is trust, the economy is reciprocity, and money is a necessary—but never dominant—part of the equation.

We will use the monetary system as it exists, but we will not worship it. We will step into legal structures — perhaps a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in the United States, or its international equivalents — not to be legitimized, but to *interface* with the current paradigm while building a better one. This will allow us to fundraise, to receive grants, to engage with public institutions, and most importantly, to protect the integrity of the vision.

But the real wealth? That's in the soil, in the shared skills, in the stories told around the fire. In the hard-earned harmony of people living well — not for the illusion of personal gain, but for the radiant clarity of *collective flourishing*.

Casa de Luz is not a retreat from the world. It is an offering to it.

And money? It will play its part, like every other tool in our hands — humble, helpful, and never confused for the light it was meant to help us build.

Chapter 9: The Strength of We: Casa de Luz and the Medicine of Community

There is a wisdom older than any book, deeper than any science, and more faithful than memory: we survive through each other.

We are not lone wolves, not truly. Though the modern age sells the myth of radical individualism—of self-sufficiency as the highest virtue—biology tells another story. Anthropology, epigenetics, neurology, and our very breath remind us: we were designed to belong.

From the moment a human being enters the world, skin seeks skin. Heartbeats sync. Eyes search for mirrors. Our nervous systems regulate in the presence of safety, in the presence of *another*. Isolation may bring brief clarity, yes. But prolonged disconnection breeds dis-ease. Literally. Our immune systems weaken. Cortisol levels rise. Inflammation takes root. And yet, the antidote has always been at hand—*togetherness*.

A Return to the Village

Casa de Luz is not just a space; it is a return to the ancient rhythm of the village. It is a reimagined hearth—lit not with fire, but with nourishment, intention, and the radical act of presence.

In a world fraying at the edges—climate unraveling, systems collapsing, alienation mounting—we do not need more isolated strength. We need **collective resilience**. Casa de Luz is built on this understanding. It offers more than meals or programs. It cultivates a culture where people remember that joy multiplies when shared, that wellness is not just personal—it is contagious.

At Casa de Luz, the host is not a waiter. They are a weaver. They are the bridge between souls and stories, a guide inviting each person back into sacred interdependence. Guests are not customers; they are kin in the making. Every bite is imbued with the intention of healing. Every gathering is a ceremony of remembering: you are not alone.

Community as Immunity

Studies have long shown that people embedded in strong social networks live longer, recover faster, and suffer less from depression and disease. But the Casa de Luz community goes beyond social ties—it fosters **ecological kinship**. It is a place where humans gather not just for each other, but for the planet itself.

In the face of climate chaos, individual survivalism is a dead-end street. The only way forward is *together*. Resilience, in its truest form, is shared. When we live in communion with each other, when we model regenerative living and collective care, we strengthen not just ourselves but the entire web of life.

We are nature defending itself, not from the wild, but from the systems that forgot we are wild, too.

The Joy of Shared Goodness

There is a joy that solitude cannot reach: the moment when your nourishment becomes someone else's smile. The moment when your healing inspires another's hope. The joy of shared goodness is not a luxury. It is **the blueprint of well-being**. We are designed to glow brighter in the presence of others.

To gather around food, to grow plants together, to honor each season's shift, to care for children communally, to hold space for grief, to laugh without reason, to make decisions by listening rather than power—these are not new ideas. They are ancient instincts. Casa de Luz does not invent them. It remembers them.

And in remembering, it offers us a future not built on extraction or isolation, but on reciprocity and reverence.

Strength Through Belonging

Strength is not the absence of vulnerability. It is the abundance of connection.

A wellness community like Casa de Luz is not a utopia. It is something rarer: a **practice**. A living, breathing, evolving organism where people commit to showing up—for themselves, for each other, for the Earth. In this commitment lies the key to enduring not only the changes of our biosphere but to shaping them.

When humans are strong in community, *all life strengthens*. The forest thrives when its trees are connected underground. So do we.

To build a home where everyone belongs, where health is shared, where freedom is cultivated like a garden—that is not just a dream. It is the most powerful medicine we have.

And now is the time to take it.

Chapter 10: The Power of Environment and the Implementation of Truth

Good intentions, while noble, can be dangerous when not coupled with accurate information. And even the most golden of truths, if left unpracticed, gathers dust on the shelves of potential. Knowledge without implementation is like a seed never sown—full of promise, yet ultimately fruitless. The true alchemy lies in living what we know.

Casa de Luz is more than a place—it is a living, breathing social and health experiment. And it is proving its worth every day. Before 1984, I was a man with deep intention to be well, but I lacked the compass. I was immersed in the glossy world of industry and commerce—a world eager to package health into pills, fortified powders, and clever branding. The narrative was that wellness could be purchased, swallowed, and sealed with a label that read “all-natural.”

But in 1984, I discovered Macrobiotics, and the veil lifted. It wasn’t a product I needed—it was a philosophy. A return to alignment. In 2025, more people are coming back to what grows from the soil rather than what’s synthesized in labs. At *Casa de Luz*, we made that commitment long ago: to serve only plants in their purest form—as they emerge from the earth, unchanged by the hands of industry.

Our community is made of adherents—people who don’t just know the right things, but live them. And every day, they report back to me stories not of belief, but of transformation. Energy reclaimed. Illness reversed. Spirit renewed.

What makes *Casa de Luz* powerful is that it makes doing the right thing the *easy* thing. Oscar Wilde once quipped, “*I can resist anything except temptation.*” But what happens when the environment removes the temptations altogether? When the defaults are nourishing, and the culture makes alignment effortless?

Years ago, I spent ten days at the Maharishi International University in Fairfield, Iowa. Meditating there felt as natural as breathing. Why? Because at 8 A.M. and again at 5 P.M., everyone—without exception—was meditating. There was no debate. No resistance. Just flow.

We are social creatures. Our behaviors—what we eat, how we live—bend to the norms of our tribe. At *Casa de Luz*, we have simply built a tribe where health is the norm, and conscious living is the rhythm. It's not discipline; it's design.

Chapter 11: The Pattern that Dances

An Invitation to Read Differently

**“Don’t get lost in your pain,
know that one day your pain will become your cure.” — Rumi**

Books, by their very nature, are acts of fixing thoughts in place. They carry the authority of the printed word, which gives them weight—but also makes them brittle. What you hold in your hands is a collection of reflections shaped by a specific moment, seen through the eyes of one life. The danger lies in mistaking these reflections for ultimate truths.

So this chapter is not a declaration. It is a request: **Don’t believe me. Engage with me.**

The Stochastic Life

Life—yours and mine—is not a straight line. It is not a machine. It is not even a puzzle to be solved. It is, in large part, a *stochastic process*—a dance of probabilities, unfolding in ways that can never be fully predicted. From the swirl of galaxies to the blooming of a flower, randomness plays a role in creation. And yet, we still recognize **pattern**. Snowflakes form spontaneously, each unique, and yet they all obey the same physical principles.

“When you realize where you come from, you naturally become tolerant, disinterested, amused, kindhearted as a grandmother, dignified as a king.” — Lao Tzu

Stochasticity—the presence of randomness within structure—may be the closest thing we have to describing how the universe works. It is both the wild card and the wisdom behind every unfolding form.

Living with the Unpredictable

We often long for control, for clarity, for permanence. But what if peace comes not from mastering the randomness, but from trusting it? What if meaning is not something we impose on life, but something we uncover within the dance of chaos and order?

Our lives are shaped by random meetings, unplanned moments, and unforeseen consequences. And within that randomness, certain deeper patterns emerge—patterns of love, growth, loss, renewal. Not because they were guaranteed, but because they were **possible**.

“It is very easy to answer many of these fundamental biological questions; you just look at the thing!” — Richard Feynman

The elegance of randomness, he might say, is not in controlling it, but in *observing* it deeply.

Possibility is the sacred gift of a stochastic universe.

Reading as Conversation

This book, like a life, is not a deterministic path from A to Z. It is more like walking through a forest. You may be drawn to certain clearings. You may find yourself returning to a sentence, as one returns to a familiar tree. You may disagree with much of what is said here. That, too, is part of the conversation.

So read this not as scripture, but as **invitation**. Read it as you would listen to a friend under a night sky—questioning, laughing, wondering. Let the words awaken your own memories, your own intuitions, your own questions.

“Prediction is very difficult—especially if it’s about the future.” — Niels Bohr

In other words, embrace the uncertainty. It’s not a flaw. It’s a feature of reality.

In Praise of the Unfinished

We do not need to resolve every paradox. The most beautiful things in life—love, faith, creativity, healing—are all stochastic in nature. They happen not because we planned them perfectly, but because we were **present enough** to allow them to arise.

So may this book be *unfinished* in the best sense: a spark for your own unfolding thoughts, a node in the vast web of meaning-making that defines what it means to be human.

In a universe of random particles and underlying patterns,

we are both accidents and poems.

Chapter 12: A Sanctuary of Possibility

Every moment someone steps into Casa de Luz, they are stepping into possibility—into the gentle invitation to slow down, to soften, to reconnect. That possibility doesn't arrive with trumpets. It lives in the candlelight. It lives in the quiet shuffle of bare feet across clean floors. It hums in the sacred hush that allows the soul to breathe again.

Casa de Luz was never meant to be a restaurant. It was born as a sanctuary—a living, breathing space where whole plants nourish the body, and presence nourishes the spirit. This place is not here to impress; it is here to restore. The sound of healing is not loud. It is the rustle of a leaf, the warmth of a glance, the calm of clean and ordered space.

We do not shout our philosophy; we live it.

In this sanctuary, the role of the host is not transactional. It is elemental. The host is the keeper of the tone. The overseer of the unseen. The guardian of the field. Every gesture, every movement, is an offering—holding a soft, stable vibration so that those who enter can feel something real. Something human. Something they didn't know they were missing until they walked through the door.

Let us not forget: people do not come here only to eat. They come to feel peace. To touch a rhythm long forgotten in the chaos of daily life. That rhythm is not accidental—it is intentional. It is cultivated. It depends on every person in the space, but the host leads the symphony.

Protect the silence. Tidy the space. Adjust the light. Whisper instead of call. Let every corner, every detail, speak of care, coherence, and reverence. Not for perfection's sake—but for love's sake. Because this is not about performance. It is about devotion.

Let us each be a candle in this house of light.

Our Integral way of being—this present, intentional, and wholehearted way of living—does not arise from rules or technique. It arises from joy. From gratitude. From alignment. It is not something we “do.” It is something we become when we return to ourselves, again and again, with kindness.

When someone walks into Casa de Luz, they aren't simply entering a dining room. They are entering an energetic field we all create—through our eyes, our gestures, our voices, our attention. This is why we rise—not out of obligation, but out of joy. Because we see them. Because we recognize that every guest has chosen this space, this community, this way of wellness. And that decision is sacred.

We greet with genuine warmth. We thank them not just with words, but with presence. With eyes that say: *Thank you for coming. Thank you for trusting.*

And here's the beautiful truth: the first person to benefit from this way of being is ourselves. When we live in gratitude, we send a powerful signal through our entire nervous system: *You are safe. You are in purpose. You are alive.*

This state is medicine. It heals us as we offer it. It fulfills us even before it reaches another. Serving with gratitude is not a burden—it is a blessing. One that returns to us, again and again, in every breath, in every greeting, in every quiet moment of connection.

This is the Casa de Luz way.

Chapter 13: The Remedy is the Return

“We do not need to be cured. We need to stop being poisoned.”

In 1998, the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to three scientists—Robert F. Furchgott, Louis J. Ignarro, and Ferid Murad—for their groundbreaking discovery that nitric oxide acts as a signaling molecule in the cardiovascular system. Their work revealed how this gas—once only known as a pollutant—serves as a vasodilator, relaxing the inner muscles of blood vessels, enhancing circulation, and regulating blood pressure. A marvel, they said. A miracle.

But as I stood one morning over a simmering pot of miso broth at Casa de Luz, I couldn't help but ask: why was this miracle even necessary?

Why had the human body—evolved over millennia in tune with nature's intelligence—become so constricted, so inflamed, so devoid of ease that it required this newly discovered gas to relax?

The answer, I believe, lies not in our physiology but in our forgetting.

The Invention of Disease

In my youth in Nuevo Laredo, I lived among the curious dualities of privilege and proximity to suffering. My family's home was large, filled with ten live-in servants, yet my most formative influence came not from wealth, but from Julieta “Tita” Sáenz, a woman of simple wisdom and deep service. She embodied a kind of ancestral knowing that had nothing to do with science and everything to do with attention—to food, to land, to others. She never framed it as “wellness.” It was just life. Whole, unbroken, and deeply connected to the Earth.

And yet, as I grew older, I watched the encroachment of industry take hold. The kitchen was no longer a sacred place but a showroom for gadgets. The food was no longer from soil but from boxes, bags, and freezer aisles. A great forgetting began. We stopped making our own remedies because we stopped making our own meals.

Illness, I've come to see, is not always a misfortune—it is often a mirror. We are not only suffering from disease; we are manufacturing it. Hypertension, diabetes, autoimmune dysfunction—these are not foreign invaders. They are responses. Adaptations to a life lived out of sync with the rhythm that once made us whole.

What the Nobel Prize in nitric oxide revealed was not a miracle. It was a bandage—a necessary one, perhaps—but a bandage nonetheless for wounds that should not have been inflicted.

The Casa Diet: A Map Back to Harmony

When I began Casa de Luz, I did not intend to create a restaurant. I intended to create an environment. A sanctuary where food was not cuisine but care. A place where each ingredient carried a purpose, and each meal was a quiet invitation to remember.

The food we serve—plant-based, organic, whole, unprocessed—is not radical. It is ancestral. It is what human bodies have always known. And in that knowing, something shifts.

I've seen it again and again. A guest arrives, tight with inflammation, anxious with caffeine, disoriented by sugar, destabilized by dairy. They eat at Casa for a week. Their eyes soften. Their sleep deepens. Their digestion finds rhythm. Their pulse slows. Their joy returns—not from a prescription, but from permission. Permission to stop hurting themselves.

At Casa, we do not sell healing. We offer people a chance to stop interfering with it.

When a guest's blood pressure lowers, when their chronic fatigue lifts, when their skin clears or their mind quiets—it is not because we gave them something new. It is because we took away what never belonged.

Nitric Oxide Without a Laboratory

What most people don't know is that nitric oxide is naturally produced when we eat dark leafy greens, chew them well, and breathe through our noses. It is a byproduct of a peaceful, intentional life. Exercise, sun exposure, rest—all amplify its presence. We don't need laboratories. We need leafy greens and less chaos.

But we are trained to trust innovation more than intuition. We celebrate the miracle of nitric oxide rather than ask why we've so thoroughly obstructed our own blood flow in the first place. In this way, our science becomes reactive, not restorative.

We treat symptoms of a life we refuse to change.

From Cures to Consciousness

Casa de Luz has become, for many, not just a place to eat but a place to remember. We grow food. We serve it communally. We ask people to eat slowly, to chew thoroughly, to taste again. Our tables are filled with people from all walks of life—artists, executives, single parents, monks, travelers, nurses—all relearning how to live well by living simply.

And this simplicity is, at its core, revolutionary. Because it confronts the lie that modern illness is inevitable. It is not. It is the result of industrial food, frenetic living, and spiritual malnutrition. We don't need more breakthroughs. We need more breakdowns—of the systems that confuse profit with nourishment, efficiency with vitality.

Conclusion: Returning to the Garden

I sometimes imagine a world in which the Nobel Prize is awarded for composting. For crop rotation. For community gardens. For mothers teaching children to cook kale and millet. These, to me, are the true breakthroughs—the ones that prevent the need for miracles in the first place. In the end, health is not something we invent. It is something we allow.

The body knows. The Earth provides. The question is whether we will remember in time. As Rumi said, “Try not to resist the changes that come your way. Instead, let life live through you.” At Casa de Luz, we let life live through the food, through the soil, through the soul of community. And in that letting, we heal—not because we discovered something new, but because we surrendered to what has always been true.