

GARUDA HELLAS



YOGIC COOKING

Nutritious Vegetarian Food



YOGIC COOKING

The yogic diet is primarily a vegetarian one that also includes some dairy products, in particular milk, yogurt and cheese. It consists of plant-based foods that are wholesome and fresh, without preservatives and chemical additives.

What are the benefits of such a diet? What do we gain when we include, for example, the combination of “Sabji, rice and dhal” in our daily eating habits?

Dhal is legumes (usually split peas, red lentils or mung beans) cooked in combination with certain condiments, which help to accelerate the digestive process.

Sabji is vegetables, also cooked with the same combination of condiments. Seasonal vegetables are used as they are fresh, more readily available and better value for money.

Meat-eaters object to an exclusively plant-based diet, claiming that we cannot derive the proteins we need from just eating fruit and vegetables.

Our body needs amino acids to synthesize the protein. Most of the total amino acids the human body needs, 22 altogether, can be synthesized through the breaking down of food. There are, however, eight amino acids that the body is not able to synthesize and these have to be digested from certain foods that already contain them intact. People who eat meat, fish, eggs and animal products (milk, yogurt, etc.) are not deficient in these eight particular amino acids. People who follow a yogic diet, on the other hand, need to consume a combination of legumes, cereals and vegetables, prepared with certain condiments,

on a daily basis in order to take in this chain of eight essential amino acids.

Since ancient times yoga practitioners have found that a diet consisting of fresh and cooked vegetables, combined with cereals and legumes and prepared using special condiments, is the ideal. Spices are not merely for seasoning and adding flavour – they contain elements that are identical to the enzymes of the body and therefore help digestion. Some examples of these are: coriander, anise, cumin, mustard seeds, turmeric, black pepper and cardamom.

An excellent example of a meal at the ashram is the combination of rice (grain) and dhal (pulse soup). By eating rice and dhal daily, we receive all of the eight essential amino acids.

Our body also needs vitamins and minerals. These we derive mainly from vegetables (cooked as sabji). It is important to consume a variety of vegetables so our body gets everything it wants and needs to maintain itself. When we decide to follow a vegetarian diet, we need to ensure that we get the necessary vitamin B12 and iron that our body requires.

Another significant benefit of a yogic diet is that the food is digested easily. This is important because it means that we do not spend all our energy digesting; instead we are free to use our energy to create, to produce, and to live life to the full.

“It is better to cook your food in the pot rather than in the stomach. The combination of temperature with the spices makes the food more digestible, so less energy is consumed during digestion.”

SWAMI SATYANANDA

YOGA AND VEGETARIANISM

The general impression is that vegetarianism is an integral part of yoga. However, yoga does not impose dietary restrictions on anybody; it simply proposes a nutritious, toxin-free diet. Yoga aims to cultivate physical, mental and emotional balance in individuals, so that they can experience the higher states of their being. This can be achieved with a balanced vegetarian diet that includes all the essential minerals and vitamins.

Diet is adjusted according to the season, our state of health and our activities. What and how much we eat depends on whether we sit for long hours in meditation or do dynamic asanas or a lot of karma yoga, or whether we are in full health or have a common cold, and so on and so forth.

In every part of the world, everyone adapts their diet according to the prevailing climatic and geographical conditions. That is why the diet of those living in cold climates, such as Scandinavia and Alaska, contains more animal foods, while nearer the equator, where the climate is much warmer, lighter diets that are rich in vegetables and fruits are consumed.

Archimedes and Pythagoras, along with other ancient Greeks, believed that vegetarianism brought peace and harmony to both the body and the mind, whereas meat-eating fuelled inner tension, producing disharmony and fervent obsession.

“Through much trial and error yogis came to the conclusion that some foods are unsuitable for the human body. If you analyze the secretions of the digestive tract, the gums, the teeth and the secretions of the salivary glands, if you examine the strength of the mucous membranes along the length of the small and large intestine and make a comparison with other carnivores and animals that feed on raw nuts and seeds, you will see that there is a difference. The length of our intestines is evidence that the human body should consume cooked, vegetarian food. A natural, macrobiotic diet is ideal.”

SWAMI SATYANANDA

“It is not necessary to abandon meat-eating in order to do yoga. If you practise regularly, you will see that after a while meat will abandon you. I recommend a diet for your better health and to speed up your evolution. You will see and feel the change at a physical level and you will also observe a mental alertness, a brightness and sensitivity. But it is not enough to stop eating meat. If you eat nutritious food and you use the increased energy for slander, cheating or lies, then it is wasted. It is better if a person has unhealthy eating habits but uses their energy for a good cause. Take care of your diet, control your speech, observe your thoughts.”

SWAMI SAYANANDA

TYPES OF VEGETARIANS

We come across vegetarians with different habits:

- Vegans: do not consume any animals or animal-derived products (milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs).
- Lacto vegetarians: as well as fruits and vegetables, they also consume dairy products but not eggs, or cheeses which contain animal rennet.
- Vegetarians: also consume dairy products and eggs.

When someone decides to become a vegetarian, they are likely to be confronted with different views and maybe even objections from friends and relatives. At first, they may not know how to substitute animal with vegetable protein. But then, any fresh start in life is a period of discovering and creating new habits.

This cookbook is a perfect companion to help you to get acquainted with yogic recipes and to learn to cook them as they are prepared in an ashram, where people live a traditional yogic lifestyle.

Hari Om
The best way to learn yogic
cooking is to come and
spend some time
in the
ashram.
We look forward to having
you
with
us.

Sivananda:

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF COOKING

A good diet is important for the health of the body, as well as of the mind. Food influences the state of our mind not only through its chemical effect, but also through its vibrations. The state of the mind at the time of preparation and consumption also affects both the vibrations of the food and the biochemical composition of our digestive system.

When we have energy we feel better and our thoughts are positive. On the other hand, when our energy is low, we feel down and we see the things around us in a negative light. That is why in yoga there is an emphasis on the vital energy, or prana, that we receive from the food we eat and the environment around us.

We can further activate our food by preparing it with our hands. It also helps to have positive thoughts, sing or listen to mantras (beneficial sound vibrations), enjoy and take pleasure in the process, think kind and caring thoughts of the people who will receive the food, so that the meal becomes an offering and an act of love.

Another important factor in the preparation of our food is cleanliness. The kitchen needs to be clean and tidy before, during and after the cooking of each meal. In this way, we show our respect to both the space in which we do our cooking and the utensils we use.

We need to be relaxed during meals, otherwise the enzymes necessary for digestion are not released, which means that many of the nutrients are not absorbed. These days, the necessity to regularly refuel our stomachs may feel like a chore, and every now and then we may complain about this bodily need. Nevertheless, at mealtimes we

should make a conscious effort to be relaxed, focus on the present and, above all, feel grateful for the food we have in front of us.

Finally, yoga proposes the ideal position for digesting our food when we finish our meal. Vajrasana (thunderbolt or zen pose) is particularly beneficial for improving the function of the digestive system in a natural way.

Vajrasana



Kneel on the floor. Bring the big toes together and separate the heels. Lower the buttocks onto the inside surface of the feet with the heels touching the sides of the hips. Place the hands on the knees, palms down. The back and head should be straight but not tense. Avoid excessive backward arching of the spine. Close your eyes, relax the arms and the whole body. Breathe normally and fix the attention on the flow of air passing in and out of the nostrils. (Taken from *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* by Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India.)