

# KEITH SQUIRES





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DRU PUBLICATIONS

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or the past 30 years I have been involved in overseeing and creating the culinary delights at the Dru Yoga and Wellbeing centres in the UK and abroad. I realised years ago how vital a part food plays in the experience people have—for some folks it even seems to be the main thing!

Many people ask me how we prepare the food. 'What are the secrets behind your cooking, Keith?' My personal secret is that the way you cook the food, as well as the ingredients and the method, makes a huge difference to how it turns out.

So here are some of my recipes and the knowledge applied. I hope they will help you love cooking more with each day. Our main residential centre is in Snowdonia National Park in North Wales, set in a glacial valley dominated by the ancient Cambrian Mountains. Clear mountain streams run off the hills into the valley, rivers and waterfalls below.

Each week people from all over the world pass through our doors to enjoy our retreats and courses and to participate in our volunteer programmes. The delicious wholesome food combines with the inspiring location, relaxations and therapies to give an experience that fully satisfies the senses.

Guests often want to take our chefs home with them so they can continue to have Dru food at home. Obviously we can't let you do that but this book is the next best thing—your guide to creating a Dru kitchen in your own home.







Dru Yoga is part of the Ayurvedic system of health. I've therefore included an introduction to Ayurveda, with tips and recipes, to help you understand about your own body's constitution. Ayurveda recommends a mainly vegetarian diet. To help with that, there's a chapter on the different aspects of healthy vegetarian eating.

In this book the most important message is all in the title, 'Cooking with Love'. Here I reveal everything you need to know about how to add that extra something to make your food unique and special. You'll also learn fascinating facts about the nutrition, history, mythology and legends of my favourite ingredients.

My childhood headmaster used to say, 'I've taught them everything I know and still they know nothing.' I'm sure that won't be the case after you've read this book. There's something here for everyone, even if I say it myself!



Me aged 9 watering my vegetable garden discovered cooking at the age of 9, making cakes and bread at home from my mother's recipe books. Luckily Mum was very encouraging and Dad good naturedly ate everything I proffered.

Once I got going I soon needed a new outlet—my father's appetite couldn't keep up! So I began to take my culinary creations to school. My friends loved them and I found a new popularity. It's when I first discovered that sharing food creates friendship and brings people together.

It was a small village school, with twenty boys in our class. The headmaster, Mr Woodruff, was a stern but fatherly man. He loved my cakes and even remarked privately that they were better than his wife's baking. Soon my friends started baking too, and it actually became a bit competitive—we vied with each other to see who could make the best bread and lightest cakes. Instead of running around like normal boys, we spent the break times eating and sharing our baked goodies and eagerly presenting them to the headmaster. As a result we all started to put on weight, and our class can clearly be identified on the old school photos as being slightly more rotund and contented looking than the older and younger boys.

Our interest in food then went beyond cooking to gardening and growing herbs. Our headmaster allowed us to cultivate parts of the school grounds and we each developed our own vegetable patch. We set up a shed complete with a gas stove to make tea. Men love their sheds, but we started early; we were like old men in the bodies of ten year old boys. We spent our spare time discussing seeds and gardening tools, followed by a daily inspection of each other's gardens. Our delighted headmaster held us up as splendid examples of how young men should be. Needless to say, we basked in the glory and pretended to look down on the rest of the boys who spent their time in more childish pursuits such as running around.

Mr Woodruff was so pleased with our class that he took us on a fantastic summer trip to Switzerland by Lake Lugano. We couldn't go by jet plane back then, so it was a classic boys' adventure—by land and sea. We took the ferry from Dover to Calais, followed by a 24-hour train journey through France to the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland.

My classmates who caught the cooking bug from me! We loved the continental food, boat trips, taking the cable car to the top of the mountain and walking down again through cool green forests. Mr Woodruff was a true British gentleman, complete with an air of confident superiority (especially in France, we noticed). He could speak French and Italian, and made sure that 'his boys' got the best of everything.

I nearly pushed my luck.

Mr Woodruff was a chain smoker and one day, as he was lighting a cigarette, I said, 'You shouldn't smoke, Sir.' Sudden silence (like in a spaghetti western when the outlaw walks into a bar and the piano stops playing). Everyone froze. In those days you never, ever corrected a teacher.

'And why not, young Squires?' Mr Woodruff asked quietly. 'Because my Grandad died a few months ago from smoking,' I replied in sweaty earnest. He smiled suddenly, much to everyone's astonishment and my relief. From then on, every time he lit a cigarette I would always say to him, 'You shouldn't smoke, Sir.' He would nod sagely but carry on anyway. I was the only boy afforded this special privilege. Anyone else who tried it got a clip round the ear. And so began my career in health advice. A couple of years later I joined the Boy Scouts and was instantly dwarfed by 15 year olds twice my size. With no proper scoutmaster the big boys ran it their way—gangland style. I found a survival strategy. As luck would have it my Dad owned a large builders merchants and every day he'd come home and empty out his pockets on the kitchen counter. This just happened to be at my eye level and I soon found I could harvest off a few coins without being noticed. I used this money to buy bags of chips for the bullies during the break. I suddenly became really popular, discovering that free food was the best way to distract the bullies! I found I loved taking the orders, running up to the chip shop and rushing back to dish them out. It started getting really expensive though. Luckily, I was soon old enough to start working for pocket money in my Dad's shop—so I then had a legitimate source of income.

After school I moved to Bangor to study at the university—it was there that I met the Dru team. I used to help out at their fruit and vegetable shop (now a health store called Dimensions). Late one morning I felt really hungry. It didn't seem right to go upstairs to make food just for myself, so I cooked enough food for everyone. That decision changed my life. The next day everyone asked me to be the resident chef. I'd created a new role for myself! It was mostly trial and error to begin with. The shop always had a box of random vegetables that needed to be used up, so it was my job to make use of these. I had no idea about vegetarian cooking (apart from baking) and this cookery book wasn't available then. However, it was fun being creative and making up my own recipes from what was on offer. It's handy having your own health store...



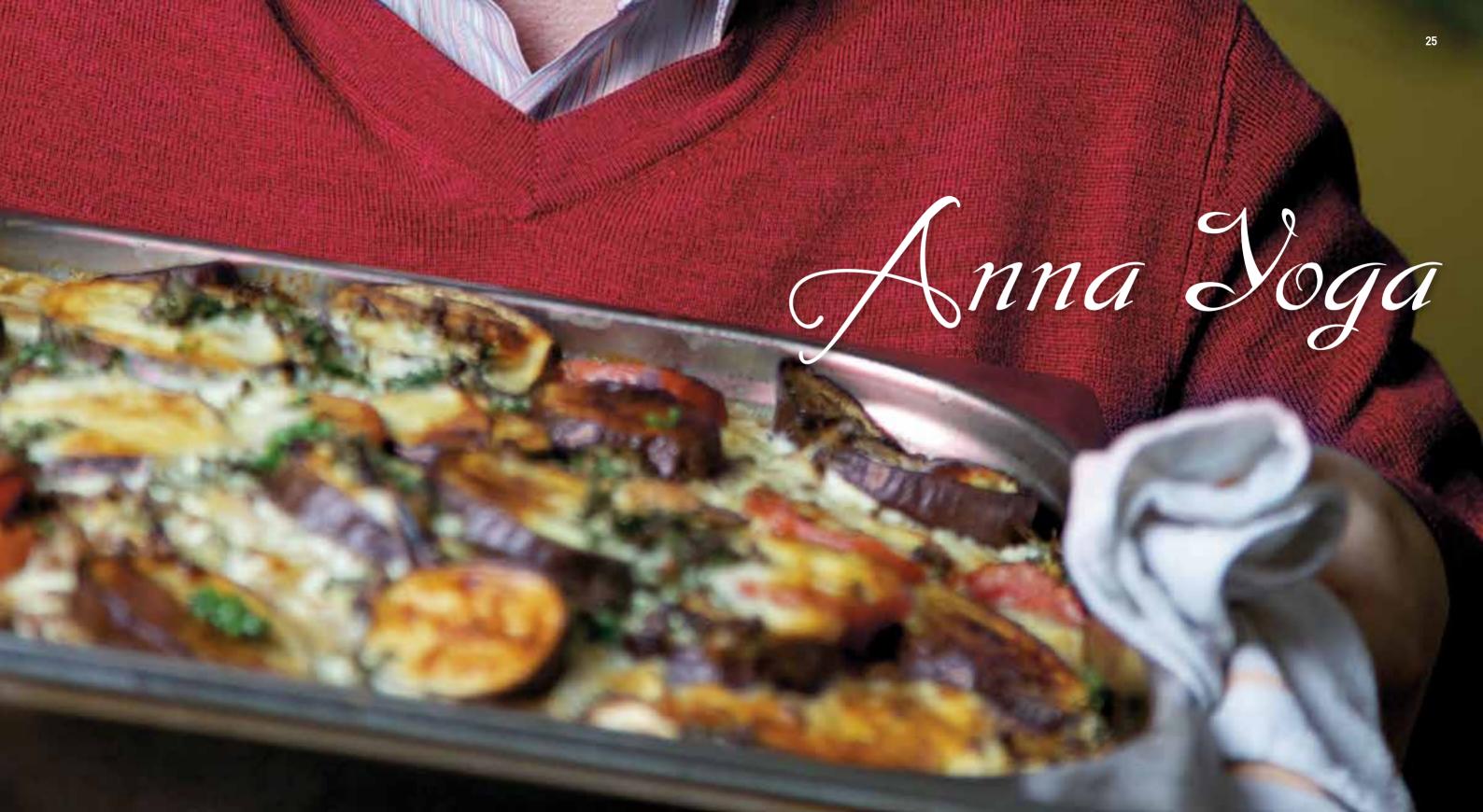
During the 1980s, interest in Dru Yoga grew quickly and so did the numbers of people visiting. I started off cooking for four or five people. This seemed to double every few months. It wasn't long before we started running yoga conferences. Starting with a hundred delegates that, too, doubled each year. Before I knew it we were providing vegetarian food for thousands of people!

For the next ten years we ran courses mostly from large houses, always amazed at how many meals we could cook from a single cooker in a domestic kitchen.

In 1997 we established our very own Dru Training Centre in North Wales, complete with commercial cookers and that blessed creation—a pass-through dishwasher.



That blessed creation: a pass-through dishwasher



here's a whole branch of yoga called Anna Yoga, which literally means the 'yoga of food'. It's nothing to do with a person called Annie—'anna' is the Sanskrit word for food.

Anna Yoga, like Ayurveda, is about what and how you eat, but it places a greater emphasis on how food is first prepared and served.



Anna Yoga isn't named after a yoga teacher called Annie

# **PREPARING THE FOOD**

Mental and emotional energy is expansive and affects not just yourself but other people as well. That's why some people have a 'wet blanket' effect when they walk into a room, while others can light up the same room with joy and enthusiasm. This same expansive energy is said to permeate the food we cook—meaning the ingredients can be tainted by misery or improved by joy and love.

Before I start cooking, I always try to create a good intention. I take a few moments to focus on my breathing and think about the people I'm cooking for. I ask myself to add love and light to the food. Then I light a candle and play some uplifting music.

When I was young and had a childhood illness, my grandmother used to give me either evaporated milk mixed with sugar and warm water, or some alcoholic 'concoction'. I now realise this may not have been the best medicine in terms of natural healing, but it was prepared with so much love and good intention that it seemed to work anyway.



# **SERVING THE FOOD**

Another important but much underestimated Anna Yoga principle is how the food is served. Creating a nice environment and serving the food well goes a long way in determining how the food tastes and how well it is digested. A very special connection can be made between the person giving and the person receiving the food.

# JALARAM—THE FEEDING SAINT

I often travelled to India organising the food for the Dru retreats we ran in Gujarat state. When I was in my twenties I first heard the story of Jalaram Bapa, a 19th century saint from a town called Virpur. He was famous for feeding the poor and healing the sick. What I found most fascinating was that he wasn't a phenomenon from the distant past. Jalaram passed in 1885, so at the time it was only 100 years since he'd been alive. I even met people whose grandparents remembered him.

Jalaram's career started by his giving food away from his father's shop free of charge. Of course this eventually got him into trouble. He later established his own place, giving away free meals, relying on donations of food and money. It was a struggle at first; his wife even had to sell her wedding jewellery to make ends meet, something you only ever did as a very last resort.

Jalaram's was no ordinary soup kitchen; he and his wife knew the power of love. All the meals were made with spiritual devotion. Once a man in the village had a very serious stomach complaint. He didn't know how to cure himself and had tried everything. Then he had an idea, and made a mental promise to himself that he would donate a certain amount of rice to Jalaram if he got better. He didn't mention this to Jalaram or anyone else. To his amazement he did find relief and soon returned to health. With this and similar incidents Jalaram quickly became famous. Suddenly, if anyone was sick it became a tradition to go to see him in Virpur, donate some food and ask Jalaram for help.

Jalaram was like a kindly father figure. He was called Jalaram Bapa ('bapa' means father), a bit like a Father Christmas who is generous with food rather than presents. Jalaram was a celebrity in his own lifetime but never wanted to be treated as such. When asked for advice, he always said to feed everyone with love and see God in other people. Jalaram has been my inspiration for the last 30 years, and I try to infuse love into my cooking in the same way.

> Jalaram always served his favourite dish: curried potato with kitcheri and kadhi (a special sauce made from yoghurt). Eat it with love and think of the miracles that happen every day.

# JALARAM TEMPLE **& GISIH** મંદિર



Jalaram's Kitcheri

This is like the kitcheri that Jalaram made. It's a very simple, economical but nutritious dish. Every day this dish is served to hundreds of people who visit Jalaram's temple in his home town of Virpur in Gujarat.

# Serves 2

75 g basmati rice 50 g split mung beans 400 ml water 1/4 tsp salt pinch of black pepper <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> tsp ground turmeric <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp cumin seeds 1 tbsp chopped fresh coriander 2 tsp ghee 1/2 tsp grated fresh ginger 1/2 lemon juiced 30 minutes. then mix into the kitcheri. well-mixed. Serve with Kadhi Sauce.

Wash the rice and mung beans thoroughly several times. In a medium pan, mix the rice, mung beans, black pepper, turmeric, ginger and water. Bring to the boil then turn the heat down to low, cover the pot and let the kitcheri cook for

Stir occasionally to make sure the mixture is not sticking at the bottom. Add a little more water if it dries out. It should have a porridge-like consistency when cooked.

Melt the ghee in a pan until it becomes clear. Add the cumin seeds and stir until the aroma is released (about 1 minute)

Add the salt, lemon juice and coriander. Stir gently until

Kadhi Sauce

This yoghurt sauce, popular in Gujarat, is traditionally served with Jalaram's kitcheri. Yoghurt is fermented, which makes it sour but also easier to digest than normal milk—hence its popularity in Ayurvedic cooking.

\_ Gujarati Alu Sak

This recipe is thickened with gram (chick pea) flour which is gluten-free and high in protein.

# Serves 2-4

500 g potatoes

100 ml water

2 tsp gram flour

1 tbsp butter ghee

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp cumin seeds

1/2 tsp fennel seeds

1 bay leaf

2 cloves

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> tsp black onion seeds

1 cm stick cinnamon

pinch of asafoetida

1/4 tsp chilli powder

salt to taste

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> tsp ground turmeric 1/2 tsp ground coriander

1 tbsp chopped fresh coriander

100 ml live yoghurt

peeled, cubed & steamed

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> tsp black mustard seeds

cinnamon stick. Bring to the boil.

# Serves 2

250 ml water 1 tbsp gram flour 75 ml live yoghurt 1 tsp ghee ¼ tsp black mustard seeds <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> tsp grated fresh ginger pinch of chilli powder pinch of asafoetida <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> tsp ground turmeric 1/2 tsp jaggery <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> lemon juiced 1/2 tsp salt Whisk the gram flour, yoghurt and 50 ml of the water till smooth. Boil the remaining water, and slowly whisk into the yoghurt mix. Heat the ghee in a pan, add the mustard seeds and cover. Cook until they splutter. When most have crackled, remove from the heat. Add the fresh ginger and powdered spices. Mix well. Allow to cool a little then stir in the yoghurt mix. Gently reheat and stir as you bring the mixture to the boil. Reduce the heat, and then stir in the lemon, salt and jaggery. Simmer for a few minutes and keep stirring. Serve warm with Kitcheri.

- Combine the yoghurt, water and gram flour in a bowl and beat well to remove any lumps.
- Heat the ghee in a pan and add the mustard seeds and cover. When they crackle and pop, remove from the heat and let the pan cool slightly.
- Add the rest of the seeds, bay leaf, cloves and
- Replace on the heat and stir gently for a few seconds.
- Remove from the heat again and mix in the powdered
- spices. Replace on the heat, stir for a few seconds.
- Add the yoghurt mix while stirring continuously.
- Stir in the steamed potatoes and salt.
- Garnish with fresh coriander.



rana is the Sanskrit word for the vital energy that is present in all living things, including food. Not normally considered when discussing nutrition, it is in fact an essential component of what we eat—the food's own living energy. The most prana can be found in fresh, living food. It is said to be related closely to the sun's energy from which it came, through the process of photosynthesis.

Anna Yoga describes three types of food. Sattvic food is pure, healthy and full of nutrients and vitality. *Rajasic* food is overly spiced, salted or too oily. It stimulates the senses, but ultimately causes ill health. And finally there is tamasic food which is dead, low in nutrients and devoid of prana.

The prana levels in food are also influenced by the cook. In Ayurveda they even recommend having a healthy person prepare your food.

An excellent way to increase the prana in your body is through the practice of pranayama, which is a series of yogic breathing techniques. My favourite is nadi shodhana or 'alternate nostril breath'. It balances the left and right sides of the brain and is really calming and relaxing. (If you have high blood pressure, check with a yoga teacher before performing any pranayama.)



# **ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATH**

- > Place your thumb against the right nostril to close it as you Breathe out through your left nostril.
- > through the left nostril.
- > Release the pressure of your thumb against your right nostril nostril to close it. Breathe out through the right nostril.

Continue to follow the four stages in the cycle, opening and closing your nostrils as described. Breathe gently and naturally without strain. You may find that you can only perform a few consecutive rounds to begin with. Practise the technique regularly until you can maintain an even, steady alternate nostril breath for up to five minutes.

> Close your left nostril by pressing with your little finger just below the bony ridge of your nose. Breathe in through your right nostril.

release the pressure of your little finger against your left nostril.

Keeping your thumb and little finger where they are, breathe in

while at the same time pressing your little finger against your left

Fresh foods have the most prana, particularly if they are raw. Ideally every main meal should have a raw or lightly cooked component. Bean sprouts as a food are particularly high in prana as they are still growing. They are easy to grow at home and make a great snack or sprinkle. They are also easily digested and high in protein.

However, the best way to get a good hit of prana through your diet is to juice vegetables. Drinking vegetable juice can give you the energy and vitality from an entire bunch of carrots, a whole beetroot and half a head of celery in a single, easy to drink glassful. Try a fresh vegetable juice for yourself and you can really feel its power being absorbed.

A quick word about microwaves. A microwave can be convenient to reheat or defrost something quickly. But be aware that the rays disrupt the prana in the food and destroy its vitality. So use it sparingly, if at all. My advice is to get a vegetable juicer and use it as often as you can





t the Dru centres, all the food is vegetarian to help complement a healthy lifestyle. You don't necessarily need to be a strict vegetarian to be healthy though. Even a predominantly plant-based diet is a much healthier lifestyle choice than eating largely animal products every day.

In the USA, a congregation called 'Seventh Day Adventists' has many people who choose to be vegetarian. Other than their diet, their environment and lifestyle are similar to those of the non-vegetarians in the same congregation. Both groups were the basis of a scientific study. (Orlich, Fraser & Gray, 2014)

Overall, the study concluded that:

- > the vegetarians and vegans were found to be less likely to suffer from heart disease and cancer
- vegetarians had less > gastro-intestinal cancer (i.e. colon cancer, pancreatic cancer, liver cancer, stomach cancer), especially among lacto-ovo-vegetarians
- vegan women experienced fewer > female-specific cancers.



If being vegetarian was a new drug, everyone would want it

# **VEGETARIAN PROTEIN SOURCES**

# **PULSES**

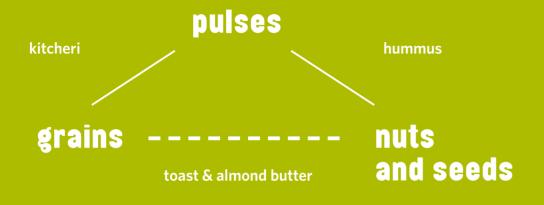
A meat-free meal basically requires replacing meat with vegetable protein. The best plant-based protein sources are pulses (beans and lentils), although many people tend to be a bit wary of them, thinking you have to be up all night soaking them. Yes, some beans do need soaking but you don't have to stand there watching them! In the Dru kitchen, we use mainly split pulses such as split lentils and split peas because they cook more quickly, or small pulses such as mung or adzuki beans.

Some people also worry that pulses are indigestible and cause bloating. This can be a problem, but the secret is to really cook them well so that the indigestible elements break down properly. These are mainly carbohydrates or starch, which are chains of sugar molecules. Cooking breaks them into shorter chains, making them more digestible and slightly sweeter to the taste. They are broken down further in your mouth where the digestive enzyme amylase continues the process. Another good reason not to eat too fast!

I have included some Ayurvedic recipes which use herbs and spices to help make pulses more digestible.









# **CREATING COMPLETE PROTEINS**

The next thing to remember, when eating more vegetarian food, is that pulses in themselves are not a complete protein. In fact, some of the amino acids (the component parts of protein) can be in short supply. This is also the case for most proteins found in grains, nuts and seeds. Mother Nature has made it easy though; you can simply combine them. When combined, grains, seeds, nuts and pulses form complete proteins, and provide the right balance of amino acids for our needs.

The best combination of grains and pulses is normally in a 2:1 ratio, which is in fact the basic diet of a lot of cultures: for example 'rice and lentils' in India, 'corn and beans' in the Americas, 'pitta bread and hummus' in the Middle East and our very own British 'baked beans on toast'.

The good news is you don't need a degree in nutrition to eat a healthy vegetarian diet. This combination of grains and pulses provides a really good balance of protein and carbohydrate.

Using nuts and seeds as a vegetable protein source has the added benefit of providing omega-3 essential fatty acids, which can be deficient in a lot of Western diets. Again, nuts and seeds make a complete protein when mixed with pulses and/or grains. Using all three together is a sort of 'belt and braces' approach.

# Keith's protein mantra: eat whole grains with half the amount of pulses and a sprinkling of nuts and seeds

Dairy products in moderation are a good source of protein. Ayurvedic recipes often include yoghurt, ghee, and one of our favourite ingredients, paneer.

A cow's diet greatly affects the nutrient content of her milk so whenever possible get your milk, cream, butter and cheeses from free-range, grass-fed cows.

The oil in green grass contains 50% omega-3 essential fatty acids and cows normally eat a lot of grass. They filter out the omega-3 and transfer it to their milk. Nowadays, to increase production, cattle are often kept indoors and fed corn and soya, both lacking in omega-3.





Another great source of protein is eggs, best when they are organic and from free-range, grass-fed chickens

# **KEFIR**

Kefir made from milk is another excellent source of protein. It is made like yoghurt, by fermenting milk with probiotic bacteria. But unlike yoghurt the beneficial bacteria in kefir will actually colonise your gut with healthy gut flora (microbes living in your intestine), whereas yoghurt will only help sustain what is already there.

Gut flora are very important. The right ones help create a healthy environment in your digestive tract. But the wrong gut flora hinder digestion. Undigested food creates toxins, no matter how healthily you eat.

Good gut flora are a bit like Boy Scouts or Girl Guides on 'Bob-a-Job Week'. Keen and helpful, they will tidy up your digestive tract and help repair it, always putting your needs before theirs. The bad bugs are more like unwelcome house guests who eat up all your nice food, create a mess and never clear up. Worst of all, they're hard to get rid of!

Eating kefir is like sending bus-loads of eager Scouts and Guides into your digestive system. Their energetic cleaning, with mops and brooms, will disturb the lethargy of the unwelcome bacteria, who will soon decide to leave.

> Eating kefir is like sending bus-loads of eager Boy Scouts and Girl Guides into your digestive system to clean it up.

You can make your own kefir from a starter which is normally a walnutsized lump of white grains. These are not grains in the conventional sense, but small cultures of yeasts and lactic acid bacteria. It's possible to make subsequent batches of kefir from the first one, but in practice you may need a new starter culture each time. Luckily, you can now buy great ready-made kefir from many health shops.

People who can't digest milk or are lactose intolerant can sometimes eat kefir, as the lactose is converted to lactic acid by the cultures. Kefir can also be made from goats' milk or non-dairy milks such as soya, hemp, almond or coconut. In fact, kefir is so versatile it can even be made from sweetened water.

Kefir is derived from the Turkish word 'keyif' meaning 'feeling good', and is thought to have originated in present-day Georgia. This is an area linking Russia, Turkey and Iran. It has been used in these countries for hundreds of years as a popular health drink, and all kinds of health benefits are attributed to kefir.



# CARBOHYDRATES

In the Ayurvedic traditions there are said to be six different tastes: sweet, salty, sour, astringent, bitter and pungent. Carbohydrates form the basis of the sweet taste, which is considered to be the most important. Sweet is present in most of our food and is the first taste we experience in our mother's milk. Sweet is also the first taste that nature produces in photosynthesis in the form of glucose.

There are three main types of carbohydrates in our food: **sugars**, **oligosaccharides** and **polysaccharides**.

The sugars come in either single molecules (monosaccharide) or in pairs (disaccharide). Both types are soluble in water, form crystals when dehydrated and taste sweet.

Monosaccharides are the basic building blocks of all other carbohydrates. The most common are glucose (produced by all plants), fructose (found in fruit and honey) and galactose (found in milk). The main disaccharide pairs are sucrose (glucose + fructose), lactose found in milk (glucose + galactose) and maltose (two glucose sugars joined together).

Longer chains of three to nine sugars are called oligosaccharides from the Greek 'oligos', meaning a few. Oligosaccharides are found naturally in some vegetables and are used as a food sweetener. One example is maltodextrin which is used to make beer, and is a high-energy food for athletes. It can have up to 20 glucose molecules in a chain. In general, the shorter the chain the sweeter the taste. If a carbohydrate has more than nine sugars it is called a polysaccharide. The most important of these is starch which is common in many foods. Plants store glucose in this way by creating these long chains. They can be made up of hundreds or even thousands of sugars.

Starchy foods like grains, pulses and some vegetables get sweeter as we chew or cook them. The amylase in our saliva starts breaking the starch into shorter chains, releasing sugars as we chew. That's why it's so important to chew food well—digestion starts in the mouth. Brown rice is said to change flavour ten times as it gets progressively sweeter if you chew it for long enough.

The longer starch chains are digested more slowly; it's a bit like unravelling a piece of string. It also depends on how much the starch is encased in the structure of food. Wholegrains digest slowly as they are coated with a husk and are very fibrous. Grinding and refining grains into flour breaks down their structure and means sugar is released more quickly. This is quantified as the food's 'GI index' which indicates how quickly different foods release sugar into our bloodstream. This index is calculated as a percentage; the higher the GI, the more quickly the sugar is released from the food.

The other consideration in sugar metabolism is related to the nutrient content of the food. With refined products like sugar or white flour, our body does not have all the cofactors it needs to use the sugar properly (such as minerals and vitamins). The only option is to turn the sugar into fat, not because we have eaten too much food, but because this is the only way our body can process it. That's why 'junk foods' are so fattening, and can make you overweight but still malnourished. 59



Nature hasn't made any mistakes—natural grains come packaged with all the nutrients and enzymes you need so you can digest them. It's like a toolkit that helps you to dismantle each grain properly.

Digesting carbohydrates is a bit like going through immigration control at an airport. If there's a plane full of unrefined complex carbohydrates they arrive at passport control in an orderly manner and with all the right documents. That means the officials can deal with them easily and accurately, and they flow efficiently through the system.

In contrast, when a plane full of sugar or refined carbohydrates arrives there is no control. These foods don't have the right documents (or nutrients) to be processed properly. Everyone is trying to rush through at the same time, and the system is overloaded. Many of them can't be dealt with straight away so they are sent to a holding area—which in the body means they are converted into fat. It's total chaos, and the whole system is stressed.

The carbohydrates which are found in whole grains, fruit and vegetables are locked into the structure of the food. It takes time for them to be digested. And just like well-organised immigration, they release sugar into your system slowly and safely.

# **ANTIOXIDANTS**

A popular debate these days is to compare the energy efficiency of photosynthesis in plants with that of solar panels. Some claim that solar panels are now more efficient than nature at turning sunlight into energy. But I think plants win hands down. First of all there's the beauty of their design; compare an exquisite sun-dappled forest with a solar panel. Next, plants are self-repairing and self-replicating. And thirdly, plants store energy in complex ways: as sugars, starches and cellulose, as well as in structured fibres like wood.

Photosynthesis is an extremely complex and powerful chemical reaction. In fact, it's so powerful that plants need to create a safety net in the form of antioxidants to mop up excess energy which could otherwise damage the plant cells. Antioxidants act a bit like the cooling rods in a nuclear reactor.

In our metabolism the digestion of food is as energetic as photosynthesis in plants. Oxygen is used to turn sugars back into energy and carbon dioxide. So we need our own army of antioxidants to control this process. Unfortunately, and unlike most other animals, we humans can't produce vitamin C which is an important antioxidant. So we have colour vision instead. The bright colours in fruits and vegetables indicate the presence of antioxidants, so it's no coincidence that we are one of the few mammals that can see colour—which enables us to find colourful, antioxidant-rich foods.

Our modern lifestyle with its stress and exposure to chemical pollutants produces a lot of toxic particles (free radicals) in our bodies and they can only be eliminated by antioxidants. So it's more important than ever to eat fresh fruit and vegetables every day.





There is a beautiful symbiosis between plants and humans. Plants exhale oxygen, which we inhale. We exhale carbon dioxide, which the plants breathe back in again. To fully experience this wonder of nature, try my short meditation.



# **BREATH OF LIFE MEDITATION**

## PART 1 EASY

Stand in a leafy forest or near some trees. As you breathe in, smell the cool sweetness of the air and feel your feet on the earth. Sense a connection with the trees and inhale the energy-enriched air from their leaves. Allow that to fill your lungs and feel gratitude towards the plants around you.

Exhale the carbon-rich air from your lungs while at the same time adding your love and energy to it. Imagine the trees around you breathing it in and then exhaling their oxygen-rich air back to you.

## PART 2 ADVANCED

Imagine the space in your lungs as an upside-down tree: the trachea as the trunk, the bronchi as the branches, and alveoli as the leaves and buds. Trees are living matter surrounded by space, while your lungs are space surrounded by living matter. Just like male and female, they are beautifully opposite and wholly compatible.

The in-breath is like a breeze flowing through you, gently filling the alveoli with fresh, cool air. On the out-breath be aware of the warm carbon-rich air leaving you, and imagine it moving up through a tall tree towering above you. It wafts through the leaves and now the tree breathes. Then visualise the cool, moist, oxygen-rich air circulating back towards you. Inhaling, feel the fresh air flowing through you again. Repeat the cycle two or three times.

# FATS & OILS

# THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Knowing which fats and oils to eat (and which to avoid) has become ever more confusing with so many different opinions having been expressed over the last few decades.

I remember being told to eat margarine instead of butter. Then to avoid all saturated fats and to use refined, polyunsaturated fats instead. But now we're told that butter is better than margarine after all!

It might help to think of fats as The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. Like the film of the same name, the Good are not always well-behaved. The Bad can sometimes be good, but the Ugly can be relied on to be truly wicked!

# **IN A NUTSHELL**

In a nutshell means literally that. Natural fats and oils should be stored away from heat, light and air to prevent them from deteriorating. Nature inherently provides a perfect storage system for these fats and oils: within the nuts and seeds themselves. When undisturbed, they will stay fresh for a long time.

# Oxidation changes Good oils to Bad

Although it's healthy to eat plenty of nuts and seeds, they can be tough and need a lot of chewing. Soaking overnight helps to soften them, and it also activates their enzymes and makes them more alive and digestible. Every evening I soak some whole almonds so that by the morning they are plump, juicy and easy to peel. It's a good idea to remove almond skins as they contain indigestible tannins that protect the nut (part of the storage system). My soaked almonds are then easy to chop and are delicious in my breakfast.

Another way to make fresh nuts and seeds easier to eat is to grind them in a food processor, or crush them in a pestle and mortar. Once ground, you should eat the nuts/seeds straight away because the oils oxidise fairly quickly once they become exposed to light and air. Oxidation changes Good oils to Bad.

Eating fresh nuts and seeds is an excellent way to get our essential fatty acids, but we still need other types of fats and oils for cooking, salad dressings and for topical applications.



# THE GOOD OILS

The only Good oils are those that are termed 'virgin' or 'extra virgin' or 'unrefined cold pressed'. When fresh, these contain essential fatty acids, nutrients and antioxidants.

Unsaturated oils, however, are still unstable and will oxidise guickly when exposed to the atmosphere—even if they are cold-pressed and virgin. To stay fresh, they need to be stored in a cool, dark place such as the fridge. Don't cook with unsaturated oils because heat damages them and creates free radicals. These are very bad news—they cause massive damage to our cells and tissues. Use unsaturated oils raw instead, as dressings on salads, or poured as a sauce on hot food. When served on a plate, the food will not be hot enough to damage the oil—which will instead help to moisten the food and lubricate the meal.

Extra virgin olive oil is monounsaturated. It's a bit more heat stable than polyunsaturated oils, which means it's good for light cooking. Try to avoid letting olive oil get too hot in the pan as this damages the fatty acids. It's best to put any vegetables in first, then add the oil. The moisture in the vegetables helps control the temperature in the pan.

Saturated fats are better for serious cooking where you need more heat—for example cooking whole spices. The best cooking oil is coconut oil: virgin, cold-pressed and stored in a glass container. Coconut oil has shorter fatty acid chains, making it easier to digest. Butter ghee is the

other fat you can use for cooking. Ghee is highly prized in Ayurveda, not just for cooking, but also as a solvent for medicinal preparations.

# **ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS**

We humans can create fatty acids out of the sugars and oils that we eat. But there are two fatty acids that we can't make ourselves. These are the omega-6 and omega-3 essential fatty acids. They are called 'essential' because it's essential that we include them in our diet. It's not just about getting enough of each though-they need to be eaten in the correct ratio, which is approximately 5:1 (so for every 5 grams of pure omega-6 you need to consume 1 gram of pure omega-3).

Omega-6 and omega-3 are very similar, so they compete for the same enzymes and metabolic pathways. When it comes to metabolising fats, the body works on a 'first come, first served' basis. So if you eat too much omega-6, it will prevent you from absorbing enough omega-3, and vice versa.

Unfortunately, Western diets often have over 15 times more omega-6 fatty acids than omega-3. This excess of omega-6 creates a deficit in the amount of omega-3 that we can absorb, and exacerbates the problem. So although omega-6 is a good fat, having too much changes it from good to bad.

# WHEN GOOD OILS BECOME BAD

Imagine people queuing up to enter a popular nightclub.

As we need a 5:1 omega balance ratio, let's say that five omega-6s represent one boy, and one omega-3 represents one girl.

Of course it's best when there are equal numbers of boys and girls. Then they can be let in as they arrive. But if there are more boys in the queue than girls, there's a gender imbalance that could lead to trouble later on. And the security guards would need to allow more girls in to restore the balance.

For us, too much omega-6 is linked to chronic conditions like arthritis and other forms of inflammation. The only way we can restore the balance is by letting more omega-3 girls into our nightclub.

# **THE UGLY**

In our metabolic nightclub, we can see the problem that arises if we have too many good guys (omega-6 fats). They're sure to misbehave if there aren't enough omega-3 fats around to keep them happy.

But there are other fats that are much, much worse.

Fats that go looking for trouble!

These are the 'gangland' type of fatty acids that roar up on their motorcycles, gate-crashing our nightclub and starting to pick fights with the other visitors. They're the troublesome refined, polyunsaturated fats that have had all their natural goodness taken away.

If we use these polyunsaturated fats for cooking, they become unstable and oxidise into highly energetic free radicals. In the nightclub, the free radicals are so agitated that they start breaking chairs and smashing glasses just for fun!

# THE TRULY UGLY...

Worse still are the refined oils that have been hydrogenated. These are the sneakiest by far, because they enter by stealth. They hide in deliciouslooking pastries, cakes, cookies and chocolate. These hydrogenated fats are so clever that the foods baked using them turn out even better than when their healthy, natural saturated fatty brethren are used. In fact, they are so tempting that we welcome them in huge crowds. They come in many of the convenience foods we love to eat: cereals at breakfast, snack bars during a break, bread at lunchtime and pies in the evening.

Even our bodies are tricked—they simply don't recognise these unnatural, synthetic fats. These hydrogenated fats have different molecular structures from those of natural fats, but our bodies have not adapted to spotting the difference.

Imagine both hydrogenated and natural fats wearing trenchcoats in differing shades of beige: light beige and dark beige. The security guards in our metabolic nightclub wear sunglasses, even though it's night-time, so they have trouble telling the different fats apart.

Hydrogenated fats are like sleeper agents. They seem harmless, melding themselves into the very fabric of our being, just waiting to carry out an atrocious act. Somehow our bodies have been totally fooled by these smooth and charming ingredients, unaware of the hidden dangers. Once admitted, these synthetic fats create havoc in our cells.



Fats are used to build important cell structures like cell walls and membranes. In a way it is similar to the dry stone walls we have here in Wales. A good builder, with the right type of stones, can create a strong wall without needing cement—a wall that can withstand the gales and storms we get here. He will cast aside any ill-fitting or bad stones.

If you only ever provide the builder with rough misshapen rocks, the quality and strength of the wall will be poor. In the same way, our bodies need good fats as building blocks. Poor building materials lead to weaker tissues and faulty metabolism.

## **AVOID THE UGLY FATS**

Sensible adults tend to stay away from the rough part of town on a Saturday night (especially if the local football team has just lost). In the same way, it's best to avoid refined oils and hydrogenated fats if you can. Use virgin, cold-pressed oils for dressings and saturated oils like butter, ghee or virgin coconut oil for cooking.

## **GETTING ENOUGH OF THE GOOD**

The omega-6 essential fatty acids are guite common in the foods we normally eat, so getting enough of them is not normally an issue. The problem is that modern diets are lacking in essential omega-3 oils.

A great solution is to use linseed oil. This is particularly high in omega-3, and helps restore the healthy balance between omega-6 and omega-3. Other good sources are hemp, chia and pumpkin oils. They do get damaged by heat, light and air though, so don't use them for cooking. Make sure they are totally fresh, unrefined and supplied in a dark bottle. Store them in the fridge or in a cool place away from light. Consume them daily so that you don't keep them for too long, and try to use them up within a few weeks. At home I use Udo's Oil, which is produced in an air-free environment, packaged in a dark bottle and kept refrigerated until it is sold.

The freshest source of oil though, and also the cheapest by far, is straight from the seed. Linseeds are 50% oil, but they have a tough shell and are totally indigestible when eaten whole. The best thing to do is grind them and then eat them straight away. Make sure you are getting plenty of fluids as linseeds absorb a lot of water.



# MAKING THE GOOD EVEN BETTER

Once we've sorted out our metabolic nightclub by keeping out the ugly fats, and we have the right balance of omega-3 and omega-6, the romance and magic can really start. With the right numbers of boys and girls and no troublemakers, we can create the conditions we need for a wonderful transformation.

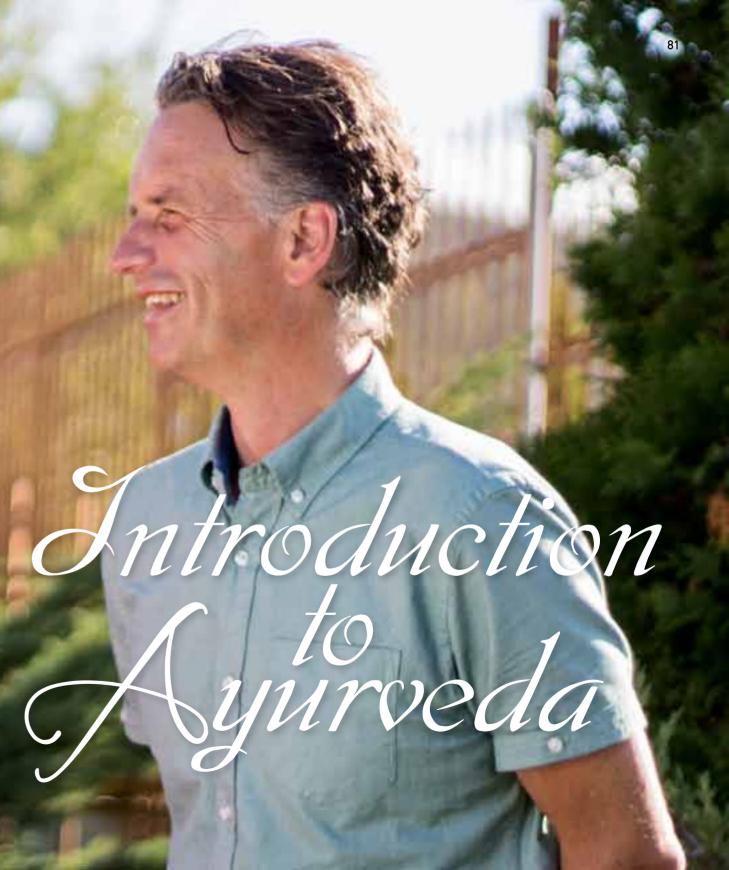
Given the right conditions, a healthy person converts about 20% of the omega-3 oils they consume into another fatty acid called eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). This is a very useful fat in the body, and produces a prostaglandin (PGE3) that reduces inflammation and blood clotting.

But it doesn't stop there. The love continues in a wonderful alchemy to produce docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Our brain and eyes need DHA like good muscles need protein.

It's always best to fall in love naturally—but there's no harm in helping things along. Getting enough omega-3 fats in your food starts the process, but it's a good idea to supplement your diet with EPA and DHA. They are found in marine algae or fish that eat them. Or, of course, in fish that eat the fish that eat the algae. Famously, fish oil has been the main supplement for EPA and DHA, but now you can cut out the middle man (or middle fish)! Vegan supplements which contain the oils extracted directly from the algae are now available. If you want to know more, Udo Erasmus has written a fantastic book called Fats that Heal and Fats that Kill.

# It's always best to fall in love naturally, but there's no harm in helping things along.

Fellow Ayurveda course tutors Mansukh and Shona



yurveda is an ancient medical system used alongside yoga to create health and wellbeing, so naturally I use a lot of Ayurvedic principles in my cooking. Some of these principles are quite simple, and just plain old common sense.

For years, whenever I visited India I would see an Ayurvedic doctor called Dr Gupta. He told me most of the western people who come to him want complicated herbal remedies, diet lists or in-depth therapies when most of the health problems he encounters are caused by people simply staying up too late, eating at the wrong time or eating in a hurry. 'I make my living from Westerners who skip lunch!' he joked. With Ayurveda, you can benefit a lot by just getting the basics right first.



# Here are my main Ayurvedic principles

## **1 COOK WITH LOVE**

It's important how the food is cooked and served. When I first started cooking, I quickly realised that my emotional state determined how the food turned out. If I was agitated no-one liked my cooking—but when I was happy everybody loved it! Having the right intention really makes a big difference. Spending a few minutes relaxing, or focusing on your breathing, really helps to put you in the right mood to create a wonderful meal.

# **2 EAT AT A REGULAR TIME**

Have three main meals a day—breakfast, lunch and supper. Eat at regular times and without snacking (too much). It is better if the evening meal is the lightest meal and eaten before 7.30pm. Traditionally in Ayurveda it's important to eat lunch around midday, when the sun's fire energy, and therefore our digestive fire, is strongest. However, if you don't have time for a large lunch, try eating a bigger breakfast. The rule of thumb is to eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince (or the other way round) and supper like a pauper.

I meet a lot of people who skip breakfast, but fuel up on coffee and eat a rushed lunch. They then fill up with unhealthy snacks and have a large meal quite late in the evening. Even if the food is of good quality, this lifestyle sows the seeds of ill health. The great thing about Ayurveda is that it is as much about prevention as cure. For your long-term health, when you eat is just as important as *what* you eat.

# **3 EAT SLOWLY**

Savour your food—eat slowly and with awareness. It can be a real meditation to enjoy all the flavours. By eating more slowly and with awareness, I find I eat less. Somehow a lot of us have a habit of eating too fast and then end up eating too much. This is because the 'full' reflex seems to take a while to kick in. It's easy to eat too much before your body is ready to tell you to stop. I savour every mouthful and deliberately eat a bit less than I think I want to.

## **4 BE RELAXED AS YOU EAT**

You should try to relax as you eat. If you are stressed, you just can't digest or absorb the food properly. Stress means adrenaline, which keeps your body at a sustained level of 'fight or flight'. This is bad news as it pulls the blood supply away from your digestive system. In the short term it can lead to poor absorption and indigestion, and in the long term to more serious digestive problems. Eat quietly, or enjoy a pleasant conversation. The worst thing you can do is to have a big argument as you eat-this just seems to turn the food into poison. No matter if the food is the healthiest possible, it'll still give you indigestion. Best to reschedule an argument to an hour or so after the meal, to give your food time to be digested properly. Better still, find a way to resolve your conflict without resorting to an argument!



# **5 EAT ADEQUATELY**

Just as important is how much you eat. In traditional Ayurveda, they say you should fill your stomach with one third food, one third liquid and leave one third empty for air. In practice, try not to overeat and stop just before you feel full. Your stomach is a bit like your washing machine; if you cram it too full it can't work properly.

# **6 EAT ACCORDING TO YOUR CONSTITUTION**

In Ayurveda there are three doshas: vata, pitta and kapha. Each person's constitution is said to be made up of a specific combination of these three doshas—making us all unique.

In brief, a creative person is said to have a lot of vata in their constitution and needs to eat nourishing and warm food regularly. A dynamic person is said to have a lot of pitta and needs a lot of fresh and healthy food. And a sturdy person is said to have a lot of kapha in their constitution and should avoid eating too much heavy food.

Funnily enough, we all seem to be drawn to do the exact opposite of what is good for us. Luckily a little knowledge of Ayurveda will develop a selfawareness that can help you choose the food that is right for you.



# THE THREE DOSHAS

The idea of constitution types is not necessarily exclusive to Ayurveda. Indeed, traditional Chinese medicine has a similar system based on five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Until the 1800s, Western medicine was founded on the four humours, which originated in Greek and Roman philosophy.

All of these systems recognise that people are unique and have individual needs based on the balance of elements within them.





# **VATA DOSHA**

The vata dosha is composed of air and space. We already recognise this and may think of a person as being 'airy', 'full of air' or things may be 'up in the air'.

People who have an air constitution are actually very creative, with a lot of space in their minds. They might be artistic or good musicians. They are intelligent and love learning new things. When balanced, vata types are enthusiastic, good talkers and happy.

Physically, they tend to be slim, whether tall or short. Often vata types have dark hair which tends to be curly. Air is a dry constitution, so their skin and hair may be drier than usual.

Of all the constitutions, vata types have the most variable digestion and really need to eat regularly with easy-to-digest food. The paradox is that they are the most likely to be distracted, skip a meal, or even forget to eat!

This is where an awareness of the doshas becomes useful. In Ayurveda they say 'like attracts like'. So a person whose system is unbalanced will tend to do more of the things that make it worse, and less of what would be of benefit. For example, an overly stressed person sometimes doesn't feel like resting or eating. The main indication of vata imbalance is worry or fear. Abdominal bloating is another sign that their digestion is stressed and not working properly. Unbalanced vata types will also start talking very fast and jump from one subject to another.

Modern TV programmes tend to be very vata, with presenters moving quickly and enthusiastically from one topic to the next. Journalism or the performing arts suit people with a vata constitution.

Vata types have high energy, but this tends to be in short bursts. They can burn out quickly, particularly if their food intake is irregular, or if they don't get enough sleep. They are the most prone to insomnia, waking in the early hours, still tired but unable to get back to sleep.

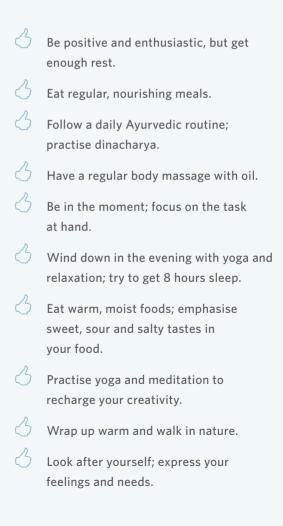
Vata types have high energy, but this tends to be in short bursts and they can burn out quickly.

#### How to unbalance vata

- Worry, be anxious about the future, think about what could go wrong.
- Regularly skip meals, go on a fast or eat lots of raw foods in winter.
- Avoid routine, change your work and eating patterns every day.
- Eat in a hurry or on the move, snack on cold dry foods.
- Rush around, running from place to place.
- Take long-distance journeys, especially by airplane.
- Work late on computers and other electronic devices; stay up past midnight.
- Over-indulge in alcohol and refined or sugary foods.
- Take on a very stressful job, or night-shift work.



### How to **balance** vata





# **PITTA DOSHA**

The pitta dosha is composed of 90% fire and 10% water, so it's easier to think of it as a fire constitution. If you think of someone or something as 'fiery', or you say 'there was a lot of fire in that meeting', you could be talking about the pitta dosha at work.

Physically, pitta types can look the part with fair, red or ginger hair and a ruddy complexion. They have a medium, strong, athletic build and tend to be fit and active. They are often good at sport and enjoy competition.

People with a lot of fire are intelligent, with a sharp and discriminating mind. They are often good managers and organisers. They are perceptive, can judge people's strengths, give them appropriate tasks and motivate others. They are also very determined, and they will make sure things happen and are done properly.

They tend to be good at communicating and they make excellent public speakers. In contrast to vata types, who communicate fast, pitta types will tend to be clearer and more precise in their communication.

When pitta types get stressed they tend to overheat, feeling physically hot and bothered. Whereas the negative side of vata is worry, that of pitta is impatience and anger. They are often successful and can be very generous. Pitta types are naturally witty, thanks to their powers of good observation; however, unbalanced wit can sometimes turn to sarcasm. In contrast to vata types—who like starting things but can get distracted and leave projects unfinished—pitta types can be very focused and driven and like to see things through to the end. Whereas the strength of vata is creativity and innovation, that of pitta is getting things done.

Pitta types have a strong digestion and good appetite. They are the one dosha type that naturally feels hungry near mealtimes. It is important that they eat regular, good quality meals so that the digestive energy is utilised. Unfortunately though, they can be so focused on tasks that they ignore the urge to eat—at which point they can become very irritable, even bad-tempered. If you are a pitta type it is important to recognise this and maintain a healthy eating pattern.

Like attracts like, so pitta types may be drawn to eat very rich or spicy food and too much meat. They may also drink too much coffee and/or alcohol. Their strong digestion can deal with it, but long term it will have a negative effect on their health, which may then fail in middle age.

The pitta dosha is the only one that is hot. Vata and kapha types both feel the cold. When indoors, vatas and kaphas will be turning the heating thermostat up, whereas the pittas will be opening all the windows!

Generally, pitta types are good organisers. They are perceptive, good at judging people's strengths, motivating them and giving them appropriate tasks.



### How to unbalance pitta

- Fuel your activity with plenty of alcohol and coffee.
- Eat lots of rich and spicy food.
- Engage with frustrating and inefficient activities or people.
- Wear tight, warm clothing even on a hot day.
- Drive around fast in a powerful sports car.
- Exercise when you are too hot or hungry.
- Get angry with people; tell them what you really think.
- Be tough on yourself; compete with everyone.
- Work late at night; sleep less than six hours a night.
- Wear bright red or yellow clothing.

#### How to **balance** pitta





# **KAPHA DOSHA**

Kapha is an equal mix of earth and water elements, but we think of it as earth. We already recognise this type of person in phrases such as 'salt of the earth', 'down to earth' and 'grounded'.

Kapha constitution types are different from vata and pitta in that they don't get stressed easily and are generally content and easy-going. Like pitta types, they are strong but generally with a heavier build and more stamina and endurance. As in the tortoise (kapha) and hare (vata) story, slow and steady wins the race.

Kapha types are naturally hydrated and do not need to drink as much as the fire and air types. Their skin is cool, soft and moist and they are generally the most attractive of all the dosha types. Kaphas like peace and quiet, so they are the least talkative of the three, tending to talk more softly and slowly than the others. They are good listeners, which they may need to be as they are often surrounded by vata and pitta dominated personalities! Kapha types have natural empathy and compassion and are the most loving, loyal and understanding of all the constitutions.

Kapha types work hard, but in a different way to the other two. Vatas and pittas are more self-motivated than kaphas, who love routine and are good at tackling large amounts of work at a steady pace. Vatas need excitement, pittas need to be challenged, but kaphas like stability. In any given task, vatas are good with creative ideas, pittas are good at making them practical and kaphas are good at getting on with doing it. Kapha people have a strong but slow digestion. They tend to eat bigger meals and then not feel hungry for a long time. They don't need to feel hunger to eat though; they often eat simply because it's dinner time! A kapha person would never forget to eat or want to miss a meal.

The main challenge for kapha constitution is putting on weight, which is difficult to lose. It is like 'a moment on the lips and a lifetime on the hips'. In contrast, pittas can lose weight easily, and vatas can have trouble keeping up their weight.

An indication of an unbalanced kapha constitution can be a lack of motivation, which can lead to depression. In general, pittas and vatas need to relax more, eat well and nurture themselves to stay balanced, whereas kaphas may need the opposite—possibly to eat less (or lighter foods), be more active or take on something more challenging.

Kapha types have natural empathy and compassion and are the most loving, loyal and understanding of all constitutions.



### How to **unbalance** kapha

- Eat too much heavy food followed by a nice long nap.
- Eat lots of bread, cakes and other comfort foods.
- Lie in late; sleep for more than eight hours.
- Stay indoors and be a couch potato; watch videos back-to-back.
- Follow exactly the same routine every day.
- Procrastinate; assume someone else will do it.
- Never exercise; catch a lift or driveeven for short distances.
- Suppress or deny your feelings.
- Don't speak up; let others take you for granted.

### How to **balance** kapha

3	Add warming spices like ginger, cardamom or cinnamon to your food and drinks.
3	Eat more warm, spicy or naturally bitter foods.
3	Have plenty of freshly steamed vegetables.
3	Eat wholefoods like brown rice and pulses.
3	Get up early; have an energising morning yoga routine.
3	Get outside; do some physical activity
3	Make a change; do something differen and exciting.
3	Declutter your house; finish something you've been putting off.
3	Walk or cycle to work.
3	Speak up; share your well-considered opinions.

### PRAKRITI—BIRTH CONSTITUTION RATIO

We are actually a combination of the three doshas: vata, pitta and kapha. There is a common misconception in Ayurveda that the goal is to become balanced in all three but that's not appropriate for most people. In some people one dosha may dominate, where they exhibit clear traits from one constitution; this is called monodoshic. In others, two doshas dominate; this is called bi-doshic. If all three are about equal, this is a tri-doshic constitution.

The central concept of Ayurvedic medicine is that our constitution is set at birth, and you remain healthy when your 'birth constitution ratio' (also called prakriti) remains unchanged. Just like our astrological chart, we are all born with a specific constitution ratio. Stress and poor lifestyle can distort our prakriti—and it's this imbalance which can lead to disease. The aim is to keep your prakriti stable throughout life. Prakriti is said to be our optimum setting and when we feel the most 'comfortable in our own skin'.

The actual aim, therefore, is to become a first-rate version of yourself, rather than a second-rate version of someone else. Ayurveda self-knowledge gives you the tools to do this.

#### **KNOW THYSELF**

Written in ancient Greek on the Apollo temple in Delphi, the dictum 'know thyself' is also crucial in Ayurvedic healing. An Ayurvedic doctor can check your prakriti from your pulse, or through vedic astrology. Alternatively you can estimate it with questionnaires and checklists.

When you are healthy and well-balanced, you are naturally attracted to the right foods and activities suited to your body type. However, when you are out of balance you will be attracted to the wrong foods and activites which make you worse.

A perfect 'Catch 22' situation!

To halt this downward spiral, an awareness of Ayurveda can help you see what is happening and take the correct actions to return yourself to a position of balance.

### **BALANCING THE DOSHAS**

Vata is a cold constitution so it's important to keep warm and comfortable. Adequate rest and food are essential. Therapies such as Epsom salts baths and massages with warm oils, as well as regular yoga and walks in nature, are very beneficial.

Pitta is a hot constitution so needs to keep cool. These types have a stronger digestion but need to avoid too much rich, spicy food, or excessive coffee and alcohol.

Both vata and pitta types really benefit from 'bringing in the earth element' with regular food and rest and nurturing activities that reduce stress.

Kapha types are just the opposite. They don't tend to get stressed in the same way; they are far too 'laid back'. When kaphas are balanced they are pleasant, reliable and hard-working. When unbalanced, they can put on weight, become lazy and depressed. For them, more of the air and fire elements need to be brought in. Probably a bit less sleep and food will help. This doesn't condemn kaphas to a perpetual boot camp type regime—we are just talking about bringing ourselves back into balance.

Normally kapha types can enjoy their favourite foods, rest and a great sleep. Vatas can enjoy being enthusiastic and moving around. Pittas can enjoy driving their powerful cars and being dynamic.

Warm and nourishing, this stew is suitable for all doshas, particularly for vata in the cooler months.

# Serves 4

1 tbsp butter or coconut oil 1 red onion finely chopped 1 tsp grated fresh ginger 2 garlic cloves crushed 1 tsp of ground paprika 100 g butternut squash peeled & diced 1 medium carrot diced 50 g red split lentils 350 ml water 1 tsp bouillon stock powder salt & pepper to taste



Sauté the onion, ginger and garlic in the butter/ coconut oil until tender. Keep the pan covered and the flame very low so the onions caramelise without burning.

Add the paprika, replace the lid and cook for another minute.

Stir in the carrot and squash, cook on a low heat for 2-3 minutes.

Add the lentils, water and stock powder and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for 40 minutes.

adding more water if it dries out too much.

Add pepper and salt to taste.

The main aim of Ayurveda is to restore and maintain harmony in individuals so they can enjoy and offer their positive qualities to the world. Unfortunately modern life encourages us to rush around, travel and eat at irregular times, all of which upset the delicate balance within us. The good news is that yoga is the best way to balance all the constitution types. In fact it was designed to do just that! A good yoga session will have an activation and relaxation, a variety of postures and forward stretches balanced by backward bends. Yoga creates activity, but also inner stillness.

I've noticed that people who regularly practise yoga naturally start doing the right activities. They eat the correct foods to balance their constitution types, without knowing anything about Ayurveda! The truth is that we all have an inner wisdom that intuitively knows what we need. This gets overridden by stress and cravings. Yoga and a few Ayurvedic principles help you attune to your real needs.





# DISCOVER YOURSELF

The following questionnaire will give you a quick guide to estimating your dosha balance. For more accuracy, pulse or facial diagnosis is required.

- > Give yourself a score from 1 to 3 where 1 = not at all and 3 = definitely.
- > Each page represents a different dosha type.
- you a score out of 60 for that dosha.
- > If your score is around 30, the dosha is average

> Add up your scores on each page. This will give

strength, above 40 it is strong and below 25 weak.



l dislike routine, and enjoy being spontaneous.
I can skip meals or forget to eat.
My digestion is irregular, with gas or bloating.
My feet and hands tend to feel cold.
My skin tends to be thin and dry with prominent veins.
l am very creative, with a good imagination.
l like travelling, art, music, dancing and going out.
I spend money quickly and impulsively.
 My joints are thin, protruding, with a

My joints are thin, protruding, with a tendency to dryness and cracking.



1 = no	t at all ·····► 3 = definitely		1 = not	at all> 3 = definitely
	I am intelligent with a discriminating and precise mind.	I am task-orientated and tend to be competitive.		I tend to learn things slowly but surely.
	I have a good memory and can recall things clearly and accurately.	I have a good appetite and can eat a large meal if I want to.		Once I have learnt something, I tend to remember it for a long time.
	My hair is fine and straight, with a tendency to early thinning or greying.	I have a tendency to get acid indigestion or heartburn.		My hair tends to be abundant, thick and wavy.
	l am purposeful and take pride in my work.	During activity I get hot, thirsty and perspire easily.		l am easy-going and happy to support others.
	I like to finish a task, and do not like to stop once I have started.	My skin is warm and reddish and prone to sunburn.		I prefer to work at a steady and comfortable pace.
	I have a medium build and moderately good physique.	I am technically-minded and can find solutions to problems.		I have a heavy build and can easily put on weight, which is difficult to lose again.
	I am concise and clear in my communication.	I like sports, keeping fit, debates or politics.		l am a good listener, and sensitive to others.
	I am dynamic, strong-willed and can be forceful in nature.	I like to look good and spend money on luxuries.		I tend to be forgiving and kind-natured.
	Under stress I can become impatient or angry.			I deal with stress by withdrawing or walking away.
	l sleep well and feel rested with 6-7 hours of sleep.	Pitta Score		I sleep deeply and need at least 8 hours a night.
	My joints are moderately strong, loose and flexible.			I like warm weather or to wrap up by the fire.
	l usually feel warm, but sometimes hot and bothered. I prefer cooler weather.			I like routine and I don't like change.

I have a tendency to overeat and may feel heavy or tired after a meal.
l am prone to get nasal congestion and blocked up with excess mucus.
My hands are cool and normally moist.
My skin is cool but thick and smooth.
I am methodical, steady and business minded.
I like gardening, staying at home or cooking.
I like to save money and make things last.
My joints are strong, large and well formed.

Kapha Score

......



From the primordial soup\* that sustained the first life on our planet, to the cream of tomato today, soups nourish and satisfy like no other meal.

\*recipe not supplied















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Four Thieves Vinegar

# FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

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