

## VĀTA BALANCING DIET

The food we eat is that unique aspect of our life which we have almost total control over. Because we are what we eat, according to Ayurveda, it can be a very powerful tool for balancing and for promoting and maintaining health. One ancient authority says that food is our medicine--a good regimen of diet is worth a hundred drugs but no amount of drugs can overcome a poor regimen of diet. Generally, one should eat warm, freshly cooked foods. We can use the tastes in food as a guide to what qualities those foods have. For example, foods which have sweet, sour, and salty tastes have those qualities (especially heavy and oily) necessary to balance vāta qualities of light, dry, cold, rough, etc. We will give below examples of foods with these tastes common in this culture. This information has been provided by Dr. Lad, in his book: *Ayurvedic Cooking for Self Healing*. This book is a good resource of knowledge and menus. Please note that agreement about the qualities of foods is not universal. Another important point is that a list of balancing foods is not a blanket proscription to totally avoid the foods with tastes of bitter, pungent, and astringent. Rather, do eat foods having these other qualities to help promote balance in the emotions and in the physiology but eat them less often and in smaller quantities. The foods to favor will provide a theme of influence but in a gentle and sustained way. Please refer to our article "Incompatible Food Combinations" for important information about what foods are toxic when eaten in the same meal. Also, refer to the article "How to Eat" for more important points about eating. Finally, refer to our article "Cooking—Some Āyurvedic Strategies" for thoughts about how to address family meal planning with different body types and imbalances.

### FAVOR THESE FOODS (eat less of those items in *italics*)

- Beverages: almond milk, aloe vera juice, apple cider, apricot, berry—not cranberry, carrot, cherry, grain beverages, grape, lemonade, mango, miso broth, orange, papaya, peach, pineapple, rice milk, sour juices, vegetable bouillon
- Herbal teas: ajvain, bancha, *catnip*, chamomile, *chicory*, *chrysanthemum*, clove, comfrey, elder flower, eucalyptus, fennel, fenugreek, ginger--fresh, Hawthorne, juniper berry, *kukicha*, lavender, lemon grass, licorice, marshmallow, oat straw, orange peel, pennyroyal, peppermint, *raspberry*, rosehips, saffron, sage, sarsaparilla, sassafras, spearmint, *strawberry*, *wintergreen*
- Condiments: *black pepper*, chutney—mango, *chili peppers*, *coriander leaves*, dulse, gomasio, kijiki, kelp, ketchup, lemon, lime, lime pickle, mango pickle, mayonnaise, mustard, pickles, scallions, seaweed, *sprouts*, vinegar
- Dairy: butter, ghee, whole milk—cow and goat (avoid homogenized if possible), lassi, cheese—cow and goat, panir, cottage cheese, sour cream, yogurt
- Food Supplements: aloe vera juice, bee pollen, amino acids, calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, since, royal jelly, spirulina, blue-green algae, vitamins A, B, B12, C, D, E, EFA's (essential fatty acids) found in cold process oils from cod liver, evening primrose, black currant seed, flax seed, borage; note that omega 3 and 6 are probably best taken in the ratio of 1:1 to 1:2.5, which implies that while one supplements flax oil, for example, one continues to eat ghee also.
- Fruits: (ripe and sweet) apples—cooked, applesauce, avocado, banana, berries, cherries, coconut, dates, figs, grapefruit, grapes, kiwi, lemon, lime, mango, melons, oranges, papaya, peaches, pineapple, plums, prunes—soaked, pomegranate, raisins—soaked, rhubarb, strawberries, tamarind
- Grains: whole; amaranth, durham flour, oats—cooked, quinoa, seitan (wheat meat), sprouted wheat bread (Essene)wheat, white rice (basmati is best) (if digestion is weak carbohydrates and proteins e.g., rice and dal, may be eaten at separate meals in the same day
- Legumes: *lentils—red*, mung beans, mung dal, tur dal, urad dal

- Meats: (NOTE: As recent research points to animal meat, fat, and cholesterol as promoters of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity my recommendations not longer include these as safe suggestions; also Āyurveda makes no recommendations for these foods as habitual diet), beef, buffalo, chicken, duck, eggs, fish, turkey, sea food
- Nuts: almonds (without skins are best), black walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, charole, coconut, filberts, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, walnuts
- Oils: ghee, olive oil, sesame (for external use), sunflower oil, and others generally ok; use coconut and avocado oils externally only
- Seeds: chia, flax, halva, pumpkin, sesame, sunflower, tahini
- Spices: ajvain, allspice, almond extract, anise, asafoetida—hing, basil, bay leaf, black pepper, cardamom, cayenne, cinnamon, clove, coriander, cumin, dill, fennel, fenugreek, garlic, ginger (especially fresh), marjoram, mint, mustard seeds, nutmeg, orange peel, oregano, paprika, parsley, peppermint, pippali, poppy seed, rosemary, saffron, , salt (saindhava), savory, spearmint, star anise, tarragon, thyme, turmeric, vanilla, wintergreen
- Sweeteners: barley malt, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, jaggary, molasses, rice syrup, raw sugar or sucanat, rock crystal sugar, turbinado
- Vegetables: asparagus, beets, *cabbage*--cooked, carrots, *cauliflower*, cilantro, cucumber, *daikon radish*, fennel (anise), garlic, green beans, green chilies, *Jerusalem artichoke*, *leafy greens*, leeks, *lettuce*, mustard greens, okra, olives—black, onions—cooked, *parsley*, parsnip, peas—cooked, sweet potato, pumpkin, radish—cooked, rutabaga, *spaghetti squash*, *spinach*, summer squash, taro root, *turnip greens*, water cress, zucchini

### SOMETHING TO CONSIDER

Āyurveda suggests modest fasting to help maintain digestive capacity and to help burn off and release toxicity. This can be accomplished by a juice fast of fruit or vegetables taken for each meal one day per week. Review the entries above for guidance of appropriate items. Also, consider juice of romaine, celery, and carrot or pomegranate juice. Remember, breakfast is optional according to Āyurveda.

### SOME THINGS TO AVOID

- Frozen, canned, fried foods, leftovers
- All ice cold food and drink
- Milk (also yogurt) with fruits, vegetables, fish (is toxic)
- Honey cooked in anything (is toxic)
- Fruits and vegetables in the same meal
- Mushrooms, peanuts, tomatoes, garlic, eggplant (affect meditation and transcending)
- Sweet, flour desserts after a meal (before is best)
- Alcohol, caffeine--in coffee, tea, chocolate, other beverages (affect meditation and transcending)
- All refined grains and sugar and foods containing them
- All food cooked in used fats/oils
- Because of significant contraindicating research ALL soy products no longer carry a recommendation.
- Refined foods—especially grains and sugar—made into flour and pastes; e.g. pasta, bread, etc.
- Artificial foods and colorings and GMO food products or meat fed GMO feeds
- Fluoridated water for any purpose and exclusive use of RO / distilled water in cooking / drinking

Eat a variety of foods having all 6 tastes and change the variety of foods you eat