

## Methods of Preparation

Boiling: Cools

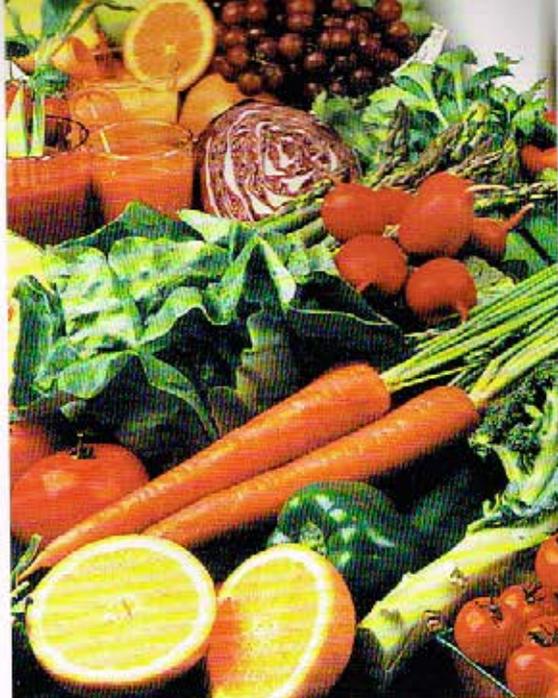
Toasting: Warms

Steaming: Cools

Frying: Heats

Roasting: Warms

Grilling: Heats



by Heather Bruce

Basically, we all eat to feel better. Hunger hurts. We learn as children that eating also helps other hurts. Comfort through eating can come as boredom relief, warmth or as a sugar rush.

In these days of delicious, though nutritionally suspect foods, it is possible to go overboard in an attempt to become more healthy. To forget that we are eating to nourish ourselves. The question then becomes whose version of healthy eating is right?

Naturopaths may suggest many versions, and acupuncturists and chinese herbalists may confuse you with a totally different framework. Both may also be at odds with an orthodox dietician's ideas.

We all have different body types and blood groups. We all live at different paces and have different constitutional structures. Is there really one right way?

The broad issue of timing of meals and the different organ's strengths was discussed in a previous issue. To develop these ideas further, the change in seasons also call for changes in both the temperature and vibration of the foods that we eat.

Those trying to lose weight quickly see that calorie counting and exercise can partially work. The central issue is really what is the body doing with food?

The different body requirements over the seasons is often so obvious as to be assumed, and yet is ignored. Using the acupuncture framework the body can be seen to be part of the physical world. We, in consciousness, are bound to our physical form. Regardless of what our head says we

ought to be eating, our bodies may have an inherent wisdom, and steer us towards what they need.

To look at the seasons, and the effects these changes have on the natural world, we can explore and change our own lives.

Spring is the time of rebirth, of new beginnings and of change. It is the time for cleansing, and of shedding the excesses of the more dormant winter time.

Summer is the time for light, easy and often raw food. It is a time when juices and fasts are most tolerated by the body, as the warmer external climate helps to counter balance the inherent coldness of the raw foods and fluids.

As the weather cools a well body changes with it. We naturally gravitate to the more warming, stodgy foods. We need the comfort and warmth they provide. As spring looms we naturally change our diet towards light and more raw foods. Salad is more naturally appealing in the warm weather.

A well body easily loses the few extra pounds that have crept on during the winter. This is the time for bodily spring cleaning and liver cleansing diets, to assist in this process.

As the weather cools, the body's yang, or metabolic energy, has to crank itself up. It has to heat the food, it has to protect us against cold drafts and winds, and against the physical bacteria and viruses that are more prevalent in winter.

One way of both assisting the body to fight off these seasonal ills, and to

return to health and hence good functioning, is to change our approach to eating as the weather cools.

In acupuncture, we speak of yin and yang energy, or qi. The yang energy loosely translates to the energy of metabolism. It transforms digests, transmutes, transports, circulates, affords protection and maintains body temperature. To expect the body to keep us warm in the cold weather, and to digest the foods that kept us functioning during summer, is sometimes more than our bodies can take.

In acupuncture terms, the spleen yang energy is the major digestive and assimilative force. This energy in health, if working well, completely digests food with no residue. If the system is over-taxed either through stress or illness, incomplete digestion can lead to the build up of toxins, waste products and mucus, and fat, fluit and cellulite.

Foods such as dairy

# Seasonal Adjustments

and gluten products whilst considered highly nutritious are for some very difficult to digest, especially in combination with other food groups.

This often shows up in children, whose constant runny noses, ear infections, continual coughs and general unwellness do not respond to antibiotics.

Often the cold drinks, dairy products and fruit eaten are the very factors that may be inhibiting the healing. The cold energy and temperature can over tax the digestive system.

Similarly, the summer diet, in winter, may create an unacceptable drain on the yang qi as it must also keep the body warm and protect against the cooler weather and the current bugs in circulation.

When in the mucus stage of cold or chest infection, it is most unwise to

overtax the digestive energy further by eating or drinking cold temperature or vibration foods and fluids.

This may also explain why weight loss is so elusive for many people. The spleen energy, even when given the "right" foods, is unable to process the extra that sits about as fat as the yang energy necessary for the task has to heat and digest the incoming cold food.

The inherent energy of a food may be altered by the method of food preparation. Watery methods are more cooling than those using direct heat or fat. Cooking by any method heats, or partially digests the food making it easier for us to process.

Generally cold foods are more watery, and may be often only eaten cold or raw. Yoghurt, melons and cucumbers being examples of this. Many styles of cooking incorporate the hot

and cold principles — a curry with yoghurt and cucumber on the side is an example, of the balance that is often found in traditional dishes.

### How to break the cycle?

Eating according to the time of day may be all that is needed. The digestive energy is strongest in the sunlight hours. Eating less and uncomplicated meals in the evening, eating warm foods in the winter and cooler ones in the summer, may be more important that what it is that you are actually eating.

If you must stay on the diet that worked for you in the summer, at least change the timing around. Cold and raw foods are easier to eat at lunch time than at breakfast. Perhaps the vegetables and fruit can be taken out of the fridge for several hours before you juice them. Ginger and other warming herbs may raise the vibration.

These basic concepts of following the normal flow in our bodies can then be integrated into the diet you may feel you wish to follow. Remember that your body has to process the food. Nutrition is not an issue of what the food chart says, or what the therapist thinks is ideal, but what your body is actually capable of doing with it. ■

COLD	COOL	MILD	WARM	HOT
Marrow	Tomatoes	Dates	Coffee	Onions
Melon	Crab	Coconut	Pumpkin	Lamb
Apple	China Tea	White Cabbage	Leek	Almonds
Pears	Eggplant	Plums	Green Cabbage	Matured cheeses
Bananas	Lemon	Mushrooms	Chicken	Pepper
Barley	Spinach	Brown rice	Beef	Garlic
Pork	Milk	Potatoes	Grapes	Ginger
Mussels	Fresh Bread	Strawberries	Radish	Brown lentils
Grapefruit	Cottage Cheese	Broad Beans	Orange	Carrots
Cress	Lettuce	Wheat	Red Beans	Mustards
Salt	Lambs Liver	Corn	Figs	Brussel Sprouts
Celery	Eggplant	Eggs	Mint Tea	
Yoghurt	Green Beans	Peas		
Cucumber		Hard cheeses		

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