

Food /
Herbs
Therapy
in Ancient
Chinese
Culture

Two basic understandings:

1. Medicine and food are from the same origin 药食同源

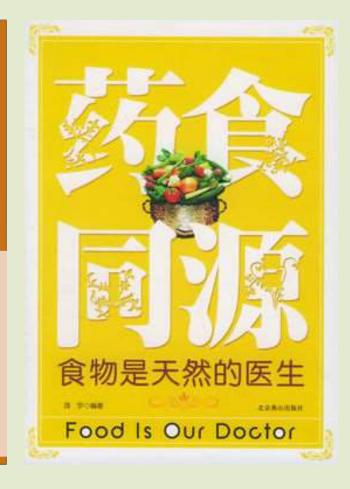
2. Living in harmony with nature

Medicine and food are from the same origin

Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor:

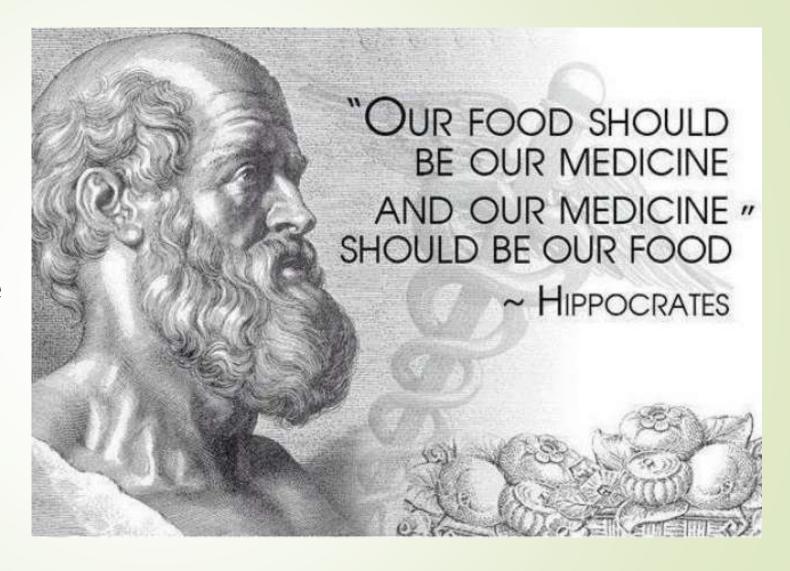
"For hungry person, what you eat is food; for sick person, what you eat is medicine."

"空腹食之为食物, 患者食之为药物。"



Hippocrates, (460 BC-375 BC),

- Ancient Greek physician
 who lived during Greece's
 Classical period
- Traditionally regarded as the father of medicine.
- Hippocrates is credited with being the first person to believe that diseases were caused naturally, not because of superstition and gods.



Taoist School of Thought

According to Taoism, man having evolved from Nature, should continuously seek to understand, learn and live in harmony with the principles and laws of Nature. Should we continue to fight with each other and exploit Nature, it is only a matter of time that the Earth will no longer be home to man.



Chinese Food Therapy 食疗

Chinese food and herbs therapy dates back to 4000 years and is based on the idea that the healing properties of foods can correct imbalance/disharmonies within the body and promote health.

Food Properties:

- Nature (hot/cold/warm);
- Taste (sweet, sour, bitter, salty, spicy);
- Drying or lubricating and the energetic action as a result of specific food consumption.

Chinese Food Therapy

- In traditional Chinese knowledge of health, food is viewed as medicine and is used to nourish and harmonize the body, mind, and spirit.
- ► All foods have a distinct energy and characteristic properties that either help to balance our bodies and make us healthy, or that create imbalances which ultimately result in sickness.
- Understanding food energetics system: how to enjoy food; how to heal your body through what you eat.

Food Therapy

- As food is also medicine, many herbal formulas contain food elements.
- E.g. spring allergies can be treated with beet top tea;
- headaches may be alleviated by drinking chrysanthemum tea and eating ginger, garlic and black mushrooms.



Food and our Body

- In the West, foods are described in terms of how much protein, fat, calories, vitamins, minerals, etc. it contains, to determine whether it is beneficial and nutritious.
- However, the breakdown of food into scientific facts leaves out the person that all the information is intended for in the first place.
- Knowing the caloric intake of a meal is good information to have but is rather limited when dealing with individual bodies who have unique constitutions and who should be treated with a more personalized method.



FOOD AND OUR BODY-YIN & YANG

	Symptoms	Food to Help	Food to Avoid
Yang	Typical symptoms of hot or excessive yang could include red complexion, sweats, nervousness, aggression, dry mouth, thirst, dark urine and constipation.	Yin foods like starfruits, apples, cucumber, beet, watermelon, barley, eggplant, radishes that help to cool these symptoms.	Avoid hot, spicy and yang foods, which raise metabolism.
Yin	Symptoms of the cold or excessive yin type include paleness, coldness, low energy, fatigue, loose stools, excessive sleep, feeble weak voice, lack of appetite, clear urine and edema.	Diet should incorporate garlic, ginger, green onions, black beans, sesame seeds, mutton, coconut, coriander and cinnamon	Avoiding too many cold yin foods and drinks as they lower metabolism.

LIST OF FOODS WITH DIFFERENT PROPERTIES

Hot/warm foods	Mutton, beef, chicken, pigeon, carp, cuttle fish, peanut, sesame, soybean, rice, wheat, date, longan, lychee, onion garlic, chives, sweet potato, ginger, chilli, pepper.
Cold/cool foods	Duck, honey, seaweed, mung bean, bitter gourd, lettuce, bamboo shoots, black fungus, banana, persimmon, pear, bean curd.
Neutral foods	Pork, pork liver, chicken egg, jelly-fish skin, white fungus, water chestnut, red bean, pea, radish, lotus seed, lotus root, Chinese yam, spinach, carrot, tomato, Chinese cabbage.

Healthy Eating: Follow the Course of Nature

- The color of the food also plays a role in Chinese nutrition:
 - White (Metal) foods like radish, pears, white mushrooms, white fish and white rice are considered to nourish the lungs and large intestine.
 - Black, Dark (Water) foods like eggplant, black beans, black mushrooms, and blueberries nourish the kidneys and bladder;
 - ➤ Green (Wood) foods like leafy vegetables, cucumbers, green peppers and peas nourish the liver and gallbladder.
 - ➤ Red (Fire) foods like beets, tomatoes, red meat and kidney beans nourish the heart and small intestine.
 - Yellow or Orange (Earth) foods such as squash, pumpkin, yams, lemons and bananas, nourish the spleen and stomach.



Food, Taste & Five Elements Foods are classified by five tastes:

Sweet, sour, bitter, salty, and spicy.

Each type of taste acts on a different organ system:

Sweet foods (Earth)

- affect the stomach and spleenSpicy foods (Metal)
- affect the large intestine and lungs
 Salty foods (Water)
- affect the bladder and kidney
 Sour foods (Wood)
- affect the gall bladder and liver
 Bitter foods (Fire)
 - affect the small intestine and heart

Food Taste and Respective Effects

Taste	Organs	Effects	Food Samples
Sweet	Stomach Spleen	Slow down acute reactions and neutralize toxic effects of other foods, lubricate and nourish the body.	Honey, potato, pumpkin, rice, soybean, corn, chestnut, dates, peanut
Sour	Liver Gall Bladder	Helps to arrest abnormal discharge of fluids and other substances from the body, such as diarrhea, emission and heavy sweating.	Lemon, pineapple, orange, plums, mango, grapes, vinegar.
Bitter	Heart Small Intestine	Clear heat, dry dampness, stimulate appetite, and promote lowering effects like urination and bowel movements.	Bitter gourd, mugwort, gingko, lotus leaf, asparagus, gentian
Salty	Kidney Bladder	Dissipate accumulations, soften hardness, nourish flood and lubricate intestines to induce bowel movements.	Barley, seaweed, clams, oyster, crabs, sea cucumber, ham, cuttlefish
Spicy	Lung Large Intestine	Promote distributions and circulations, and stimulate appetite.	Fresh ginger, onion, garlic, chili pepper, cinnamon, mustard

Healthy Eating: Follow the Course of Nature



Eat Seasonally: Our bodies are rhythmic and in touch with the natural cycles.



Eg., during winter our bodies are more inactive and focused on staying warm. Seasonal vegetables like root vegetables are warming and help to insulate our bodies from the cold.



During summer our bodies are more active and must focus on staying cool from the heat. Most seasonal vegetables and fruit available during summer are cooling and easily digested which allows our bodies to shed the pounds it put on during the colder seasons.



Nature provides foods that correspond to the seasons and best support our bodies during particular times of the year.

Healthy Eating: Follow the Course of Nature

- In accordance to the laws of Chinese nutrition, a healthy person should follow the seasonal guidelines to prevent illness or to harmonize the body.
- Nature has the perfect plan in providing the appropriate foods for the season. We are influenced directly and indirectly by changes in weather and need to make corresponding nutritional responses.
- In Spring and Summer nourish Yang, with onions, leeks, leafy greens, sprouts, yams, dates, cilantro, melons and mushrooms.
- Nourish Yin in Winter with nuts, asparagus, root vegetables, grains, meats, vinegar and wine. Eat locally, as these foods are adapted to the same environment as the one in which you live.

Pursuing the Elixir of Life

Chinese Medicine for Health



Hong Hai Karen Wee



Food as Medicine

- Medicated food, commonly known as yaoshan (药膳), has herbs added to enhance its nutritional and health value, cooked in such a way as to be delicious and appetizing in its own right. It is consistent with the fundamental principle that herbs and food come from the same source.
- TCM diet must take into account the particular syndromes that might be present at the time of enjoying medicated food, teas, and porridges. Many of the ingredients found in our daily meals are used as herbs by TCM physicians for therapeutic formulations.

Hong Hai: *Pursuing the Elixir of Life: Chinese Medicine for Health* Ch.11: Medicated Foods and Teas—Healthy Recipes

Clearing Heat and Dampness: Job's Tears and Green Bean Soup (苡仁绿豆汤)

- Ingredients: Job's Tears (yiyiren 薏苡仁, Chinese pearl barley) 100 g, green beans (绿豆) 50 g, dried tangerine peel (chenpi 陈皮) 5–10 g
- Preparation Method:
 - 7. Soak Job's Tears and green beans in water for at least an hour.
 - 2. After soaking, put them and dried tangerine peel in a pot and add water (about 1500 ml).
 - 3. Cook until Job's Tears and green beans turn soft. If preferred, you may add some rock sugar for a sweeter taste. Serve warm.

- ☐ This soup is suitable for those who have a heat-dampness body constitution (湿热体质). It helps to expel toxins, clear summer-heat and resolve dampness.
- The dosage of Job's Tears (monarch) is the highest as its action of clearing heat-dampness is the strongest. Dried tangerine peel is used sparingly because of its bitter taste; it acts as an adjuvant role by promoting the flow of qi which is often impeded by dampness. The addition of dried tangerine peel also helps to protect the spleen and stomach from the cool nature of Job's Tears and green beans, which enhances the action in clearing summer-heat.
- A person who has a weak spleen and stomach should avoid drinking this soup. For those who prefer the dish to be more filling, we can add more Job's tears or green beans to make it more like porridge.

Illness and Herbal Treatment

Four considerations in establishing Chinese medicine formulae.

• Imperial herb 君 Key herb

• Assistant herb 佐 To decrease the side effect of herb

• Servant herb 使 To help the formulation



Prescription memorandum of Dong Jin Chinese Physician

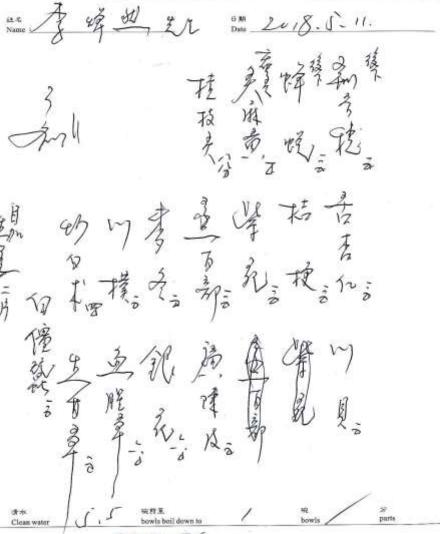
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Complexion Enhancing Tea (贵妃养颜茶)

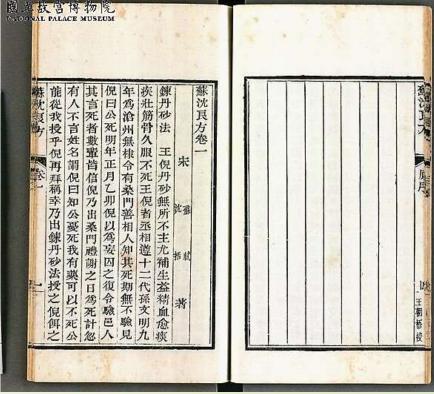


- Ingredients: Rose flowers 4g, jasmine flower 2g, red dates 3-4 pieces.
- Preparation Method: Steep the herbs in hot water.
- Benefits: A popular tea among the ladies, this fragrant flora tea helps to enhance one's complexion by promoting better *qi* and blood flow. With good flows in the body, there is sufficient blood to nourish and moisten the skin, bringing a healthy pink glow to the skin.

Su Shi 苏轼 Su Shen Liangfang 苏沈良方 -- Masters Su & Shen's Good Prescriptions/Recipes

For medicine that is both cheap and useful, there is nothing like burweed 仓耳. Some medicine, though cheap, are not produced in some areas. But burweed is everywhere; anywhere there is soil it is produced. Its flowers, leaves, roots, and fruit are edible. You eat it like a vegetable, and it controls illness without poisoning. Fresh or prepared in pellet or powder, any form is fine. Taken for a long time, it causes the bones and marrow to be well filled out, the skin like jade. A medicine for longevity."





Oldenlandia: Cooling, diuretic herb

- Oldenlandia 白花蛇舌草 (White-patterned snake's tongue grass), thin leaves with the shape of a snake's tongue.
- The species is cheap and one of the most commonly used herbs in TCM for treating cancer.
- With cooling nature, use as cooling tea to clear heaty symptoms such as sore throats, headaches, pimples and dry stools.
- Also used to lower the amount of toxins accumulated in the body that give rise to phlegm, affecting the flow of Qi and flood in the body, resulting in ailments.



Oldenlandia 白花蛇舌草

Zhou Shouzhong 周守中: Monthly Handbook for Health Preservation 《养生月览》

- Southern Song Dynasty, a TCM physician Zhou Shouzhong produced a two-volume TCM classic entitled "Yangsheng Yuelan" or "Monthly Handbook for Health Preservation".
- Dividing his book into 12 monthly sections, he used each section to talk about health care matters unique to that particular month, and came up with a total of 497 healthcare tips.
- According to the book, Spring is the season when the liver is most active. The moving direction of the liver's Qi is ascending, and it is also extensive and relaxed. Healthcare methods for this period should be to promote diffusion and outthrust with dissipating acridity, so that one's liver feels comfortable.
- During the Spring season, one should drink wine and onions, in order to promote blood flow in the five internal organs.

Monthly Handbook for Health Preservation 《养生月览》

- One important aspect of health care is to plan one's daily diet according to the prevailing season and to choose the right foods that are in harmony with one's organs, in order to enhance one's health.
- During the different seasons of the year, especially when the *qi* within one's body is still inadequate, one should choose foods that match the particular season, so as to enhance the *qi* within one's internal organs.



Monthly Handbook for Health Preservation 《养生月览》

- In the first month of the Chinese calendar, one may prepare a dish containing five types of hot chilli, and consume it in order to dissipate the wind within the five internal organs.
- In Spring, one should also drink soup cooked with the Wuxiang five spices and take a bath in a tub of water filled with dutchmanspipe root, or one may also boil angelica, peach skin together with dutchmanspipe root and take a bath in it on the first day of Spring itself, and express oneself through spices.
- During the third month of Spring, when the yang is strong and the yin is weak, do try to avoid sweating in order to conserve qi within your organs. When the qi inside the liver is weak, the heart should be kept active and steps should be taken to nourish the liver and the kidney.

Summary & Conclusion:

- Although the precepts of Chinese food therapy are neither systematic nor identical in all times and places, some basic concepts can be isolated. One central tenet is that "medicine and food share a common origin", and that food materials can therefore be used to prevent or treat medical disorders.
- In more systematic understandings, each medicine or food item has one of five flavors: sour, sweet, bitter, spicy and salty. Besides describing the taste of food, each of these "flavors" purportedly has specific effects on particular viscera.
- Chinese understandings of the therapeutic effects of food were influential in East Asia. Cited in Japanese works as early as the 10th century, Chinese medical works also shaped Korean literature on food well into the Joseon period (1392–1897): Han Medicine 汉医、汉方

Questions for Thought

- 1. How ancient Chinese view food and medicine?
- 2. Chinese understanding of medicine?
- 3. Meaning of living in harmony with nature?
- 4. Examples of food as medicine?
- 5. How Yin-Yang, Five-Elements are related to food therapy in TCM?
- 6. Food nature and our physical constitutes?

