

Consideration of a Sattvic Diet to Nourish your Spirit

By Carolyn Reynolds

As is well known, Yoga means yoke or union of the mind, body and spirit. But what is the goal of this yoking process? You might say so that all of your parts are in balance and harmony. But why is that important? You are optimized when you are in balance. But that is merely a byproduct of the authentic goal of Yoga. The authentic goal is self-realization. It is direct experience of the oneness of All That Is. Self-realization is the knowing, without a doubt, that you and all other creatures, sentient or not, are manifestations of our source that is known by many, many names in our diverse cultures.

In order to attain the goal of Yoga many practices are beneficial, including daily hatha, breath awareness, contemplation, and meditation. Unfortunately, we run around in our culture with much too much to do and to choose from. The practices sometimes are neglected. However, there is one that you do unfailingly every day: eat. Eating can be a most rewarding yogic practice and all it takes is awareness. Foods are energy. Their energy becomes our energy. Our choices of which foods to consume have a tremendous impact on our bodily health as well as our emotional health. We live in such abundance that we are replete with choices. We can choose fresh natural food that supports life or junk food that depletes life.

With this knowledge, the following guidelines for diet are offered for your consideration. Foods are grouped into the following categories:

Rajasic (hyperactive, scattered):

- Heavily spiced and salted items (our fast foods and snacks)
- Refined sugar (in just about every packaged food)
- Soft drinks
- Chocolate

"The foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry, and burning, are liked by the rajasic and are productive of pain, grief, and disease." Bhagavad Gita, 17-9

Tamasic (inertia, laziness):

- Meat
- Fish
- Eggs
- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Fermented foods
- Barbequed foods
- Burned foods

- Fried foods
- Stale products
- Foods containing preservatives.
- Mushrooms because they grow in darkness

"That food which is stale, tasteless, putrid, rotten, and impure refuse, is the food liked by the tamasic." Bhagavad Gita, 17-10

Sattvic (purity):

- Fresh and dried fruit
- Berries
- Fruit juices (pure)
- Raw or lightly cooked vegetables
- Salads
- Grains
- Legumes
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Whole and sprouted grain breads
- Honey
- Fresh herbs
- Herbal teas
- Dairy products such as milk and butter

"The foods which increase life, purity, strength, health, joy, and cheerfulness, which are savory and oleaginous [containing natural oils], substantial and agreeable, are dear to the sattvic people." Bhagavad Gita, 17-8

The sattvic diet is easily digested and supplies maximum energy, increasing vitality, strength and endurance. Yogis believe that food preferences reflect people's level of mental purity and they alter as they develop spiritually. As one progresses along the spiritual path, there becomes a disinterest in heavy meat dishes and an enjoyment of fresh, organic fruits and vegetables. To keep in mind when enjoying any food:

- Eat slowly, chewing the food until it is liquid.
- Avoid snacking.
- Fill the stomach ½ full with food, ¼ with liquid, and leave the rest empty.
- Include some raw food in each meal.
- Maintain a peaceful attitude during the meal.
- Maintain focus on the meal. When the attention is on the busy mind; it is difficult to even remember the meal afterward.
- Be thankful for the abundance.

These guidelines are very useful when you get out of whack due to life's circumstances. For example, if you find yourself lethargic, add some spicy condiments to your meal but

a majority of foods from the sattvic group. And if you are stressed out, instead of Xanax, focus on the sattvic foods with some herbal tea and honey. Balance it out so that you are optimized to continue onto your goal of the Yogic experience.