

You are what you digest and assimilate! Pay attention to what you eat, how you combine different food groups, how you cook and how attentively you eat.

यज्ञं शिष्टा शिनः षन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वे किल बिशैहि । भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पाप ये पचन्त्यात्मा कारणात् ॥ - BG 3.13	The spiritually-minded, who eat food that is first offered in sacrifice, are released from all kinds of sin. Others, who cook food for their own enjoyment, verily eat only sin. (Keep the first handful aside for the birds and ants).
यत् करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् । यत् तपस्यसि कौन्तेय, तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥ - BG 9.27	Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform – do that, O son of Kuntī, as an offering to Me.
अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः । प्राणापान समायुक्त, पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम् ॥ - BG 15.14	I am the fire of digestion in the bodies of all living entities, and I join with the air of life, outgoing and incoming, to digest the four kinds of foodstuff.
हरिं दाता हरिं भोक्ता हरिं अन्नं प्रजापाते । हरिः सर्व शरीरस्थो भोक्ते भुज्यते हरीः ॥	Lord Hari is the Giver. Lord Hari is the enjoyer. Hari is the food and the Creator. He, while residing in all beings, is the one who feeds himself as well as the body.
ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविः ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् । ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥	The act of offering is God, the oblation is God. By God it is offered into the fire of God. God is that which is to be attained by him who performs action pertaining to God.
अन्नपूर्णे सदापूर्णे शङ्करप्राणवल्लभे । ज्ञानवैराग्यसिद्ध्यर्थं भिक्षां देहि च पार्वति ॥	Mother Annapoorna, you who is always full (with the gift of food and blessings), you who is the beloved of Shankara, O Parvati, please grant me the alms of your grace, to awaken in me, spiritual knowledge and dispassion towards worldly desires.
Annadhata sukhi bhava! 🙏 May those (farmers, cooks and others in the food supply chain) who are providing me with this food be happy. ☺	

Cook food as a prasadam after taking a bath in a clean kitchen, pray for good health, bhakti and courage for all those who consume your food and serve the food with a smile.

What are the characteristics of good food: Fresh ingredients, cooked properly, items combined wisely for optimum absorption of nutrients, eaten in the right quantity, made in a clean kitchen with love <3 and consumed when it is fresh and hot. Eat in the right order, the right way. Observe/recall how your grandmother eats/ate!

- Easily digestible: Light on the stomach does not make you hungry or sleepy for the next 3-4 hours.
- Keep you satiated: Gives the satisfaction of a good meal, does not make you crave for sweets afterwards and leaves you feeling fresh and sharp.
- Nutrients readily available: Cook based on time of the day, season and health needs. Cooking ingredients and practices must facilitate ready absorption of nutrients by the body. Watch out for food combinations that don't go well together, for example, milk and salt. Take honest feedback from your body.

Flavors to balance: sweet, salty, bitter(bitter melon, fenugreek seeds, green leafy veggies, citrus peels), sour(acidic food- lemon, lime, orange, sour milk, tamarind(imli), gooseberry, tomatoes, hibiscus leaves, dried mango powder), pungent (ginger, garlic, onion, asafetida, cloves, cayenne, cinnamon, cardamom, cumin, thyme,

sage, turmeric, wasabi, horseradish, mustard seeds, radish, black/ green peppercorns), astringent (Flavor of dryness that is generally produced by tannis in the bark, leaves and outer rinds of fruits and trees. It causes mucus membranes in the mouth to contract and result in an immediate dry, chalky sensation in the mouth. Apple, pomegranate(fresh or dried), pear, quinoa, legumes, tofu, sprouts, beans, bay leaf, coriander, dill, fennel, nutmeg, oregano, parsley, poppy seeds, rosemary, saffron, turmeric, vanilla)

Textures to balance: smooth, crunchy, grainy, bite- sized finger food. To cook evenly, cut evenly sized veggies, cook the one that takes longest to cook first. Types of cuts: Brunoise dice(very fine dice, upma), julienne(very thin strips, for hakka and pasta), small/large dice(for kari), battonet(large cuboid, as in sambar).

Tastes to balance: Heavy, light, dry, oily/watery, hot and cold

DOs: Include semisolid foods and probiotic elements (pickle, yogurt, fermented batters, fermented sauces) in each meal, get some direct sunlight, morning-exercise, drink warm water first thing in the morning, eat fresh food, eat facing east direction, eat fruits alone or with just milk (only non-acidic, very ripe fruits are allowed to be eaten with milk. This means no apples, oranges, etc.) + no food/ beverages for 30 minutes before and after having fruits, chew every bite!

DON'Ts: Don't use microwave for cooking/reheating, don't make food in bulk and store, don't eat random combination of foods (watch out for growling/ gassy stomach, irritation in the throat, and uneasiness after the meal), don't watch TV while eating, don't talk while eating and don't eat standing, don't mix sour yogurt with fruits.

Balance fat, salt, spices and heat!

- Fat: stays in your mouth long after you have a bite
 - Pick the right fat: Butter, ghee, olive oil, sesame /ground nut /coconut /mustard oil, cheese, and make sure that they are fresh and cold pressed. Oils expire in 3-6 months. Use not more than 4 tsp of oil/person/day.
 - Don't let heat destroy the fat, aka don't smoke them. Heat the pan first and then add the oil and seasoning. Don't burn the seasoning. Everything has to be fragrant.
- Salt (soy sauce, miso, non-iodized salt): Salt at the right point. For cooking veggies in salted water for a short time, add more salt. You can rub salt in the paneer a few hours before frying it!
- Spices: Add the right quantity, bloom them (don't burn) in warm fat for the right amount of time(tadka). Acid like lemons, limes, tangerines, honey, vinegar, cheese, sour cream, banana(!),chocolate(!) should be added at the end while tamarind, beaten curd, tomatoes while cooking. Add fresh fragrant spices at the end for extra flavor.
- Heat: Pick high heat (for developing umami) or low heat (for juiciness). While roasting in the oven, do one/similar veggie at a time to ensure even roasting. To brown at the bottom, like while making upma, use more oil at the later stages, and keep the lid partially covered.

Protein sources: peanut, legumes, peas, amaranth, buckwheat, beans like chole, rajma , etc., milk, dahi, paneer, ragi, soya chunks, soaked nuts, broccoli, spinach, potatoes and sweet potatoes. (Legumes tend to be very dry. Always use appropriate amount of oil, either roast it or add in tadka, along with hing and jeera.)

Vitamins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A – sweet potato, carrot, greens(kale, spinach, mustard,turnip.), squash, lettuce, melon, red pepper, mango, milk, cheese,dahlia • B1 – oats, baker’s yeast (active yeast), nutritional yeast (nonactive yeast), coriander, pine nuts, hibiscus tea, watermelon, whole grains, acorn squash, soymilk, soybeans, rice bran, wheat germ, sunflower seeds, macadamia nuts, tahini, sesame seeds, green peas, most beans, asparagus • B2 – whole grains, almonds, sesame seeds, spinach, beet greens, quinoa, buckwheat, prunes • B3 – baker’s yeast (active yeast), nutritional yeast (non-active yeast), coffee, chili powder, peanuts, rice bran, barley, potatoes, tomatoes, millet, chia, whole grains, wild rice, buckwheat, green peas, avocados, sunflower seeds, tahini • B5 – baker’s yeast, nutritional yeast , paprika, sunflower seeds, whole grains, broccoli, avocados, tomatoes, soy milk, rice bran, sweet potatoes • B6 – bananas, watermelon, peanut butter, almonds, sweet potatoes, green peas, avocados, hemp seeds, chia seeds, beans, rice bran, chickpeas, prunes, wheat germ, sunflower seeds, pineapple, plantains, water chestnuts, all squash and pumpkin, Brussels sprouts, green beans, pistachios, figs, nutritional yeast, baker’s yeast , garlic, sage, peppers, kale, collards • B7 – almonds, chia, peanuts, sweet potatoes, peanut butter, peanuts, onions, oats, tomatoes, carrots, walnuts • B9 – spinach, beans, lentils, asparagus, lettuce, tomatoes, broccoli, avocados, mangoes, oranges, most whole grains, nutritional yeast , baker’s yeast , basil, soy products, peanuts, artichokes, cantaloupe, walnuts, flax, sesame, cauliflower, tahini, sunflower seeds, peas, okra, celery, hazelnuts, mint, leeks, chestnuts • B12 – fortified cereal, fortified tofu, bran and cheese, fermented foods • B complex- jowar, hand pound rice • C – cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, green leaves(spinach, kale) and green peppers, apple cider vinegar, citrus fruits, tomatoes, strawberries, guava, berries, currants, fruit juice, potatoes and nuts • D – 30 minutes in the sun; required for calcium absorption. • E – vegetable oil, nuts, seeds , green leafy vegetables • K - green leafy vegetables (collards, green leaf lettuce, mustard greens, parsley, spinach and turnip greens), broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and cabbage
Minerals (Major)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calcium: yogurt, cheese, milk, leafy green vegetables, ragi, jowar, kodo millet, • Chloride: salt • Phosphorous: sunflower/ chia/ sesame seeds, bajra, cheese(parmesan) (<u>excess phosphorous hampers magnesium absorption</u>) • Sulphur: Cruciferous Vegetables, nuts, legumes, onion, garlic • Magnesium: Spinach, broccoli, legumes, seeds, whole-wheat bread , bajra • Potassium: milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, dates

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sodium: salt, soy sauce, vegetables(<u>excess sodium decreases calcium absorption</u>)
Minerals (Trace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chromium: nuts, cheese • Copper: nuts, seeds, whole-grain products, beans, prunes, dates, jowar, foxtail millet, • Fluoride: teas • Iodine: milk, potato, pink salt, bajra • Iron: fruits, green vegetables, fortified bread,ragi, foxtail millet,bajra (<u>Calcium inhibits iron absorption, so does oats. Palak paneer may not be a wise combination! </u>) • Manganese: nuts, legumes, whole grains, tea (<u>Too much manganese can lead to iron deficiency</u>) • Selenium: walnuts • Zinc: legumes, whole grains, barley

Indian super foods: All seasonal fruits and veggies+ Amla, cow’s ghee, coconut, cashews, peanuts, hand-pound rice, local banana, aliv(garden cress seeds), jack fruit, sugar, local honey, sattu(pottu kadalai), ginger, black pepper, cardamom, ajwain, jeera, turmeric, cloves.

Most important: Don’t fall for health fads created by food industry. Everything you read on the internet need not be true. What kept your grandmother healthy can keep you healthy as well! Good digestion, a fresh mind and a pain free body are the final indicators of good health. Also, western science has just started exploring vegetarian food and they have no clue about our complex and diverse food traditions that have survived the test of time. So it is time to trust your local wisdom!

Notes from Dr. SadhanaShree

What is not food? Food is not something that just fills your stomach, satiates a craving, is a mix of various ingredients and just tastes good.

What IS food? Food must promote health and longevity. It must also give immunity, intelligence, creativity, satiety, endurance, nourishment, lustre, enthusiasm and strength.

It must be easily digested by the system and waste easily thrown out on time. Food not digested on time will ferment and pollute the body.

Food must nourish the bodily tissues and replenish the system with essential nutrients.

Give your body the required food to rejuvenate, repair and replenish all the tissues by using the right balance of grains, lentils, vegetables, good fats, good spices, dairy and all 6 tastes (sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent and astringent).

How to go about it? Choose seasonal ingredients, in their right compatible combinations, with healthy processing required for making food easy to assimilate, adding essential fats, avoiding refrigerating and reheating.

What to process, how to process and how much to process. Grains and lentils must be soaked. Lesser the time it takes to cook, easier it is to digest.

Aged rice is easy to digest; must at least be aged for a year.

Always churn the curd and dilute it with water before consuming.

Dals are very drying in nature. Always add ghee, jeera and hing. Veggies cooked in water(discard the water) and season with spices and good fat.

Eat it warm and fresh, add good fats, right proportion of solid and liquid content, eating only what is familiar to the system, consume when calm.

Do and Don'ts

- 1) Don't cook in excess and store it in the refrigerator. Make as much as you need every meal. Eat fresh meals made in a clean kitchen and serve it within 2-3 hours of cooking, in a calm environment without TV. If you pack your food to-go, eat with a glass of warm water. Sadhguru says eat 24 mouthfuls and chew each mouthful 24 times!
- 2) Make sure that your family is hungry enough, but not too hungry. Semi-solid foods keep the stomach fuller for longer. Serve rice with ghee and cooked plain dal with salt as the first course of a meal. It helps ease bowel movement. Compulsorily have probiotic elements such as buttermilk, pickles that don't need refrigeration, papads and chutneys.
- 3) Don't have milk or fruits after a meal or with a meal. Eat fruits before sunset and in between meals. Eat local, seasonal fruits and veggies!
- 4) Soak the dals, rice for atleast 2 hours before cooking. Soak dried beans for > 8 hours and rinse twice before cooking to prevent bloating. Chappati dough has to rest for 2 hours before cooking. Drink warm water with the meals and sit in vajrasana for better digestion.
- 5) Never eat thick curd. Always churn it well and dilute it with atleast 25% water by volume before consumption.
- 6) Never mix fresh food with cooked food. Milk, fruits and salads should not be added to cooked food. The body finds it hard to digest such complexes. The same goes for milk and acidic fruits.
- 7) If you want to increase your fiber content, always boil veggies and add good fats in the form of tadka and consume. Don't eat raw sprouts and raw veggies. They are hard to digest.
- 8) Don't eat too much nuts. It can cause constipation. Also, the right way to have nuts is to soak them overnight and have it first thing in the morning.
- 9) Nightshades such as potatoes, chilies, eggplant, and tomatoes are not supposed to be combined with cucumbers, while lemon does not go well with either.
- 10) Eat two hours before sleep or if you have a heavy dinner, eat three hours before sleep.

- 11) Digestive fire is highest when the sun is at the highest point. So never have heavy food after sunset.
- 12) Don't keep snacking because once the first morsel reaches the stomach, insulin is released. After that, pancreas takes command to release insulin only after 2-3 hours. If you eat anything in between, it cannot be digested and so it ends up rotting! Also, once you start eating, try to finish within 15-20 minutes. Don't take breaks inbetween.
- 13) Too much sugar can keep you perpetually hungry. Fill your plate with more nourishing food.

