

Introduction



In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says, *Annath Bhavanthi Bhuthani*—“all living creatures originate from food.” Since all living creatures originate from food, it is the very “stuff” of our bodies. The mind—the controlling agent of life—is strongly affected by the condition of the body. For these reasons, the spiritual seeker cannot afford to ignore the effects of food on his or her state of consciousness.

As Lord Krishna rightly pointed out, a pure or sattvic diet of bland, nutritious vegetarian food not only ensures good health and longevity, but also bestows a calm and peaceful mind. The present-day world is gradually coming to realize the truth of the Lord’s words pronounced nearly three thousand years ago. More and more people are coming to see that a natural vegetarian diet is conducive to a long life, and that it is better to take food “as your medicine,” as Hippocrates said, than to eat in an unnatural manner and then resort to drugs to cure the resulting condition.

What Are Natural Foods?

In the Bhagavad Gita, it is said that “from the supreme being was born the extremely subtle element known as *akasa* (ether). From this came *vayu* (air), and from air came *tejas* (light) and *agni* (fire). From fire came *ap* (water). From water came *prithvi* or earth, which yielded plants. In turn, from plants, food and from food the bodies of all creatures.

Plants, it must be noted, are the effects of the interaction of the element earth with the other four elements of creation. So the virtues belonging to all five of the elements reside in food that is wholesome. Such food is considered positive, or sattvic. A live organism like the human body can only be nourished by food that is full of the qualities of life and light, not with dead carcasses. Natural hygiene prescribes fresh fruits, vegetables, and grains that have been directly exposed to the five natural energy systems or elements. They should be eaten in

pure, unadulterated form—untreated and without preservatives whenever possible. When not possible, the foods should be cooked conservatively.

Food is one of the five sources of healthful living; it is also the means of curing disease. Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, says “Let food be your medicine and medicine your food.” The Bhagavad Gita classifies three types of food.

Types of Food

Sattvic foods are bland, sweet, and agreeable. They promote long life, clear thinking, and spiritual evolution.

Rajasic foods are hot, burning, pungent, sour, acrid, rough, and strong. They promote disease and aggravate the passions of the mind as well.

Tamasic foods are stale, cold, impure, and rotten. They dull both body and mind, and promote disease and laziness.

As a general rule, all fruits and most vegetables and cereals are *sattvic*. All meat products are ruled out of this category. We need not digress into the superiority of vegetarianism over non-vegetarianism in this book, since most people who are already practicing yoga will be familiar with it.

It is not advisable to reform one’s food habits all of a sudden; a gradual shift toward the ideal is preferred for those who are intent on keeping their health and prolonging their life.

Rice. Refined white rice is one of the greatest tragedies of our modern diet. For the recipes in this book, unpolished long-grain Basmati rice should be used, unless otherwise stated.

Dal. Dals are a good source of vegetable protein and are a must in an Indian vegetarian diet. Examples of dals include moong beans, lentils, chickpeas, pinto beans. They are more nutritive with skins.

Flour. Wholewheat flour is preferable to white flour nutritionally. For the bread recipes given in this book, it is best to use high gluten wholewheat bread flour.

For chapatis, a finely powdered wholewheat flour known as *atta* is ideal and can be found in Indian grocery stores. If this is not available, use half wholewheat flour and half unbleached white flour. This would yield nutritive chapatis, but they would not be as soft as Indian chapatis made with *atta*.

Fruits. Known as God's gift to mankind, fruits come in their own special wrappers, which make them easy to eat and handle. A proper study of man's digestive system and alimentary canal shows that nature meant man to be a fruitarian. Fruits form an important portion of any positive diet.

Vegetables. In the vegetable kingdom, leafy, green vegetables should be given pride of place, since they have imbibed the maximum qualities of sunlight, air, and ether. Tubers and root vegetables come in the second category. All vegetables, of course, should be eaten as fresh as possible, in the minimum amount of time after removal from their energy systems. It is best to choose vegetables that are organically grown, that is, grown without the aid of artificial manures and chemical fertilizers. Vegetables should be washed before peeling and cutting. They should not be washed after that. Since most of the vitamins lie just below the skin, we should eat fruits and vegetables with the skins, providing we are sure that they have not been waxed

or sprayed with insecticides. The peels of organic vegetables can be saved and used to make vegetable stock for soups.

All forms of cooking reduce the food value of a vegetable, so the cooking time should be kept to a minimum. A small amount of water should be used for cooking, and this water should not be thrown away after cooking but rather used later for gravy or in soups. Ideally vegetables should be allowed to cook in their own juices, as in the case of wok cooking.

Nuts and Dried Fruits. Nuts and dried fruits form an essential part of the healthy diet, but they should not be eaten in large quantities. Considered as “condensed” food, they should be eaten sparingly. Nuts should be eaten unroasted and with their skins, except in the case of almonds. Soaking raw almonds in water overnight allows the skin to peel off easily. Tender coconut water is an excellent tonic and the milk is preferable to animal milk. The coconut is different from other nuts and contains high-quality protein. The flesh of a coconut can be used in a variety of ways, and adds both taste and nourishment to every dish. Many of the recipes in this book contain coconut in one form or another.

Milk. Milk is intended by nature for babies, but most adults all over the world consider it a necessary food item. If it is to be taken, raw milk from either a cow or a goat is preferred. If raw milk is not available, pasturized or homogenized milk can be used for the recipes in this book. In general, however, one can exist quite well taking vegetable and nut milks instead of animal milk.

Oil and Butter. Today’s commercial methods of refining oils destroy many of the nutritional elements found in them. The best oils are cold pressed and unrefined, such as sunflower, sesame, and olive. The

color of these oils may be darker than refined oils. Too much oil is bad for the health and so it should be used sparingly. Homemade butter is much better as a spread than margarine or ghee since it contains more water than fat. Most Indian cooking is done with unsalted ghee since cooking with butter can harm the digestive system over time. Nut butters are a good substitute for butter as a spread.

Salt. All earthly salts, if taken habitually in the slightest excess, will destroy one's health in course of time. Table salt is a highly processed food and should not be taken at all. Sea salt or rock salt (*saindav nimak*) is an alternative.

Vinegar. Natural (fruit) vinegars are generally used in Indian cooking.

Sugar. Anything sweet is assumed to be sattvic by most people, but this is far from being true. Refined sugar, whether brown or white, is a most unhealthy food and should be given up all together. It is best to use jaggery (unrefined cane sugar), which is available in most Indian grocery stores.

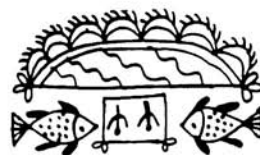
Honey is also called for in some recipes. It is an extremely nutritive sweetening agent with many medicinal properties, but certain qualities must be noted when using it. According to Ayurveda, the ancient Indian art of medicine, honey is a very heat-producing food. Therefore its use during hot weather should be strictly limited. Honey, when cooked, releases certain toxins that are harmful to the system. It should be added to dishes only after they have been removed from the stove and cooled a little. It can be used in winter with great benefit, since it maintains body heat. It should always be eaten with something else, never alone.

Water. One of the basic five elements of nature, water is essential for life. This does not mean, however, that we should drink gallons of water each day, as some people seem to think. Actually, if we follow a sattvic diet, most of the body's requirements for water will be met from the foods we eat. Water used for cooking and drinking should be as pure as possible. The best is rain water, but unfortunately in some places even this natural source is denied us due to atmospheric pollution. Water from springs and clean rivers, as well as water that has been exposed to sunlight, is very beneficial. Water should be drunk only when one feels thirsty. It should not be drunk before or during a meal; if necessary, a little may be taken at the end of the meal. It should be drunk very slowly, not gulped down.

Spices and Herbs. Since the taste buds play an important role in digestion, many people find it desirable to add a few spices and herbs to their meals, which enhance the taste and nutritional value of the food. Fresh green coriander (cilantro), mint, parsley, celery—and any other fresh green herb—are good for the health and can be added to any recipe. They come under the category of positive foods. Freshly grated coconut with a little lemon juice may also be added to most dishes to increase both taste and food value.

Second to fresh green herbs come ginger, cumin, and green chilies. Other herbs—such as coriander seeds, cloves, cardamom, cinnamon, black pepper, mustard, asafoetida, aniseed, dill, caraway seeds—may be used in limited quantities. Baking soda, preservatives, and synthetic colors and flavors should be completely avoided.

Stimulants. Coffee, tea, and soda pop should also be completely avoided. They are stimulants, like alcohol and tobacco, and injure the



system in course of time. We have given recipes for delicious juices and herb teas in this book, which can serve as excellent substitutes.

Yogurt, Buttermilk, Cottage Cheese. These are healthy foods, especially if they are made at home (see instructions that follow).

Cooking Methods & Utensils

Methods. Cooking destroys much of the food value of vegetables. For this reason, we advise having at least one raw salad daily and using conservative cooking methods.

Baking in a closed oven with the lid on is the best method of conserving food value.

Steaming in a closed vessel using a little water is also good.

Woking in a Chinese or Indian wok with no water and a tight-fitting lid—allowing the vegetables to cook in their own juices—is another fine method. A little oil can be put at the bottom of the wok.

Boiling with a little water in a minimum amount of time—as with a pressure cooker—is also a good method.

Frying in deep oil or ghee results in an almost complete loss of vitamins; this method should be used very sparingly. Certain rules should be followed while frying. For example, the oil should not smoke. Also, once used, oil should not be kept and reused. It is best to add salt at the end of cooking, so that the vegetables will absorb a minimum amount. Reheating of foods should be avoided.

Sauté refers to stir frying in a little oil.

Utensils. Enamelware is one of the best kind of cooking utensil. Stainless steel may also be used. Clay pots and stoneware vessels are becoming increasingly popular and are actually the best. Aluminum should be avoided.

The pressure cooker is an invaluable asset for fast and conservative cooking. Many of the recipes given in this book make use of the pressure cooker, since it saves time and nutrients. Make sure yours is made of stainless steel, not aluminum. A pressure cooker insures that the juices are retained within the pan, which makes the food both nutritive as well as tasty. When using a pressure cooker, a few instructions need to be followed. After placing the vegetable, rice, or dal and water in the cooker, be sure that the lid is properly sealed to ensure that heat will be at its maximum. Cook at high pressure and then low pressure for a few minutes. Since pressure cookers can vary, follow the operating instructions that came with your cooker.

A *blender* is a must for those who want to have plenty of fresh juices and nut milk; it is also useful for making many of the other recipes that follow.

An *electric grinder* is also very helpful and is called for in several recipes.

A *Chinese or Indian wok* is also a great asset in the kitchen.

When to Eat. Now that we have covered what to eat, the next question is, when to eat? To eat when you are hungry and not before is a safe rule. Constant munching between meals is one of the worst crimes we make against nature. We should not eat when we are emotionally upset, as an upset mind will produce an upset stomach. A calm and quiet environment, both internally and externally, is a prerequisite for good digestion. We should not eat when we are not well, or when we are running a temperature.

Good Eating Habits

How to Eat. Eat very slowly. Solids should be drunk and liquids eaten! This sounds like a riddle, but what it means is that all solids

should be masticated well, until they become semi-fluid, and then swallowed. To obtain the full nutritional value, liquids should be sipped and not gulped down.

How Much to Eat. One important thing to remember is that even sattvic foods become tamasic if taken in excess. Moderation in eating, as in everything else, is what Lord Krishna advocates in the Bhagavad Gita. “Yoga is not for him who eats too much or for him who eats too little!” (Chapter 6, verse 16). According to the *Manu Shastra*, or code of conduct as laid down by the ancient law-giver Manu, at the end of a meal half of the stomach should be filled with food, a quarter with air, and a quarter with water.

How Many Times to Eat. Many people seem to think that four meals—breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner—are compulsory for health. We recommend one main meal and one subsidiary one. The main meal can be taken either at lunch or dinner time, depending on your work and what is convenient with your lifestyle. Breakfast is an unnecessary evil. A glass of fruit juice can substitute well for breakfast. At tea time, a little herbal tea may be taken.

The Special Ingredient. When food is cooked with love for the Lord and served with love to His creatures, a mundane task is transformed into an evolutionary activity. Love for God overflows into love for man. There is no doubt that those who eat such food will feel the loving vibrations and benefit from them. As Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, “Whosoever offer to me with love a flower, a leaf, a fruit, or even some water, these I will readily accept, and bless the donor of the gift.” (Chapter 9, verse 26). Again He says that there is no act so menial or petty that it cannot become an offering to God.

Every act becomes charged with divinity providing it is done with love, as an offering to the divine. In the Uddhava Gita, the Lord says that all actions can be classified as sattvic, rajasic, or tamasic, but those actions that are offered to Him with love go beyond these categorizations. They are on a plane all by themselves and are known only by the *bhaktas*, or lovers of God.

Even though we may know the best type of food to eat, the right ingredients are not always available. Moreover, for those living in cities it may often be impossible to get fresh, pure, organically grown vegetables. What should one do? In these instances, we have to content ourselves with second best. However, there is a magic mantra that can transform even rajasic or tamasic food into ambrosia or *amrit*—that is the power of the Lord’s name. If the food is offered to God with love before eating, then it becomes *prasada* and it cannot harm us. All its evil properties are cleansed by this act of offering. The following mantra from the Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 4, verse 24) is one that is recited when food is offered.

*Brahmarpanam, Brahmahavi
Brahmagnau, Brahmanahutham,
Brahmeva thena ganthavyam
Brahma karma samathina. Aum tat sat.*

The process of eating is Brahman;
the offering [of food] is Brahman.
The person offering is Brahman,
and the fire is also Brahman.
Thus by seeing Brahman everywhere in action,
he [alone] reaches Brahman.

The food offered to God purifies us. For this reason most of our recipes have been named after some aspect of Lord Krishna's divine splendor. Infinite are His forms and so Infinite are His names. Each time you make a recipe, His name will come into your mind, or perhaps some yogic qualities. Thus the mind becomes transformed even while engaged in the mundane task of cooking.

Why God in a Cookbook? We believe that there is a power inside the living body that is ever-actively safeguarding our life and health. Left to itself this power can and will cure disease, providing there is no meddling into the process by man. The purpose of food is to assist man in his evolution—physically, mentally, spiritually—and to help bring about a higher state of awareness. The same divine power that exists in man also supports and pulsates throughout the entire creation. We believe in that divine power and in the unity of all life.

Preparation of Essential Ingredients

Homemade Yogurt. Yogurt is said to have remarkable rejuvenating properties and is much better for your health than milk. Homemade yogurt is the best and is so simple to make.

4 cups raw cow's milk
2 tbs. plain yogurt, or
1 tbs. yogurt culture

Heat the milk in a pan until scalded. Do not let a skin form on the top. Keep stirring until it becomes lukewarm, or about 108°F. Pour into a glass or stoneware bowl. Add the yogurt or culture to the milk and stir until the two are completely mixed (or you could place the

mixture in a blender for 1 minute). Place the bowl in a warm environment (90° to 100°F.) for 4 to 6 hours, or overnight, until it solidifies. When ready, it should fall away from the sides of the bowl, when slightly tilted. Then it should be refrigerated. This will keep for a few days. A tablespoon of yogurt from a previous batch can be used as a starter for the next batch. In cold weather, put the yogurt in a closed box with a 100 watt bulb, or in a yogurt maker.

Yogurt will only solidify if the temperature is stable. The more it is allowed to remain in the heat, the more sour it will become. For those who like their yogurt sweet, place it in the refrigerator as soon as it solidifies. If you get stuck with some sour yogurt, there is no need to throw it away; it can be used to make some of the yogurt curries or salad dressings given in this book.

Homemade Soft Cheese. Before making the cheese, make a 8" x 12" bag from a piece of cheesecloth. Fold over and stitch open end at the neck to make a space for a draw string. Put a strong plastic string through this neck.

Make yogurt with 4 cups of whole milk, as in the previous recipe. When it has solidified, pour yogurt carefully into the bag with a clean container placed below it to catch the whey. Draw the string tightly and hang up the bag, still with the container below, for about 3 to 4 hours. Shake the bag gently now and again to allow any liquid to drain. Open the bag and add any spice you like. For example, a half teaspoon of salt with either a teaspoon of aniseed or dill, or a teaspoon of caraway or celery seeds. Shake well so that the spices are well mixed. Twist the bag tightly to seal the cheese and put the bag on a plate. Place a heavy stone or iron pan over it to act as a press. Leave it in place for an hour or two, depending on how hard you

want the cheese. The more you press it, the harder the cheese becomes. When it is ready, remove from the bag and refrigerate. This cheese can be used for sandwiches, as a filling, with salads, or sprinkled on top of tostadas, pizzas, or any dish that calls for cheese.

Since this cheese is made without rennet, it is ideal for vegetarians. The whey is very nutritious and can be used in curries and soups. It can also be given to invalids and those with upset stomachs.

Paneer. Also called Indian Cottage Cheese, paneer keeps easily for a week refrigerated. Before using in curries, it should be lightly fried.

4 cups whole milk
4 tbs. strained lemon juice
cheesecloth bag or large, clean handkerchief

Bring the milk to a boil, stirring occasionally to stop a skin from forming. Lower heat and add lemon juice. Stir gently until all the milk has separated into curds and whey. The whey should be clear; if not, add a little more lemon juice. Remove from the heat and pour into a cheesecloth bag or colander lined with a handkerchief. Place a container below to catch the whey, which will strain very quickly. Twist the cloth to seal the cheese and put it on a plate. Put a heavy stone or iron pot over it for an hour. The paneer will be quite hard. Rinse cheese in water, cut into cubes, and refrigerate. It will easily keep for a week.

Homemade Butter. In India, butter is traditionally made from yogurt, not from cream. The liquid left over after churning the butter is buttermilk. Thus, by this method, one gets both butter and buttermilk from yogurt. Make yogurt with 4 cups of whole milk, as in the

recipe given earlier. When the yogurt has solidified, pour it in a blender, add a cup of cold water, and blend at slow speed until it separates into butter and buttermilk. Large lumps of butter will start forming around the sides of the blender. Pour liquid into a bowl, remove the butter with a spoon, and place it in a bowl of water. It does not need to be salted. This homemade treat will keep refrigerated for a week and can be used in any recipes that call for butter.

Buttermilk makes an excellent health drink, either plain or flavored. It is non-fatty and low in cholesterol. Buttermilk is highly recommended, even in cases of diarrhea, dysentery, or fever.

Homemade Ghee. Ghee, or clarified butter, is often used in Indian cooking. Although it keeps much longer than butter, ghee is a very rich food and should be used sparingly. Ghee is better to cook with than butter since butter leaves a residue when heated that, in the long run, will harm the system. This toxic residue has already been removed from ghee. Butter should not be heated but rather added to the food after it has been cooked and removed from the heat.

Make butter, as specified in the previous recipe, and place the butter in a heavy saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally until the butter starts to boil. When the surface is covered with a frothy white foam, turn the heat down low.

Simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally until gelatinous solids have formed on the surface. Remove from the heat immediately. The ideal color of ghee is a clear pale gold. It becomes dark when it is cooked too long and the residue from the butter starts to burn. Remove the clear liquid with a ladle without disturbing the bottom of the pan. Pour it through a piece of cheesecloth or handkerchief

arranged over a jar. Cool this ghee to room temperature before covering. For storage, ghee does not need to be refrigerated. Seal it with a tightly closed lid and place in a cool place for a month or more. The dregs can be strained and used to sauté onions or vegetables for curries. The solid material can be thrown away, since it contains toxic matter.

How to Sprout Pulses & Cereals

Pulses is a generic term for dried seeds of beans, lentils and peas. Sprouting pulses, such as lentils, in your own kitchen is a simple process. Sprouts are a food source brimming with life and energy. They are among the richest protein foods in the vegetable kingdom. Best eaten raw in salads or any other dish, they can also be lightly steamed. A sprouter can be found in health food stores or a plain jar may be used.

Grains can be sprouted, dried and powdered, and used as flour; when this is done, the resulting flour is a type of malt that has a high food value. We recommend eating some type of sprout daily. Almost all pulses and grains can be sprouted, providing their skins are intact. Moong dal is one of the easiest and most nutritious to sprout.

1 cup moong beans
2 cups water

cheesecloth bag

Soak the beans overnight in water. In the morning drain off the water and rinse well. Tie up the soaked beans in a cheesecloth bag and hang it in a dark place. In the evening rinse once again and hang overnight as before. Rinse and drain morning and evening for three days, until the sprouts are well formed. Wash off the excess hull before using. Sprouts are best when used immediately, but they can be kept in a plastic container in the refrigerator for a few days.

Garam Masala is a special blend of spices that is commonly used in Indian cooking. It not only adds flavor to the food but helps to preserve it, since many of these spices have disinfectant properties.

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| 1 tbs. black cardamom seeds | 2 tbs. cloves |
| 2 tbs. cinnamon bark | 2 tbs. black peppercorns |
| 2 tbs. dill seeds | 2 tsp. bay leaves |

Dry all ingredients very well and grind into a fine powder with an electric grinder. Keep in an air-tight container. This mixture can be used in all recipes calling for garam masala.

How to Make Garam Masala

One should become a sabhari kanua (one who, having conserved his vitality by proper eating, has gained wisdom) to become closer to the Lord. Thus becoming wise, one eats to live and does not live to eat.

—SAMA VEDA