

Ayurveda Ahara Paddhati - Ayurvedic Cuisine – Part I

The only thing that keeps us going on in life, is THE FOOD. Food is called Ahara in Ayurveda. Ahara means that which keeps flowing and sustains the bodily functions. They influence the balance between vata, pitta, kapha in the body and also satva, rajas and tamas of the mind.

Ayurveda gives a mantra for good health “*Hita Bhuk, Mita Bhuk, Shuchi Bhuk*”, which means Food that is conducive to a person, in the right quantity which is procured and processed in a hygienic way gives great health.

Coming to the TASTE, Ayurveda explains six different kind of tastes. The shad rasas –

- Madhura-sweet,
- Amla-sour,
- Lavana-salt,
- Katu-pungent,
- Tikta-Bitter,
- Kashaya-Astringent.

Each dosha is either nourished or malnourished by these rasas. A healthy meal is that which comprises of all 6 tastes.

There are 8 factors based on which the quality of food is dependent on. These factors decide the nourishment of tridoshas of the body and mind. They are –

1. Prakriti – Nature of Food
2. Karana – Method of Processing
3. Samyoga – Combination of Foods
4. Rashi – Quantity
5. Desha – Geographical origin of the acquired food
6. Kala – Time of consumption
7. Upayoga Samstha – Rules of Dietics

8. Upayokta – Personalisation of food according the person

In this topic we are only Considering the Diet Rules pertaining to Vata Prakriti people. Or the diet that palliates the vata dosha.

It is inherent that amongst the three doshas, Vata is the most powerful one. The Pitta and the Kapha limps without the aid of Vata dosha. Further, they themselves cannot manifest into health or illhealth.

Let's quickly expound the What, Where and How of Vata Dosha. Vata dosha is Dry, Agile, Cold, Harsh, Petite, Motile qualities of the body. It is majorly located in Lower Gastrointestinal Tract, in the Flanks of the abdomen, Bones, Auditory channel, entire Neuronal activity and the skin. Also we can learn that, wherever in the body there is functionality, activity and charm of life, there is Vata. It is extremely easy to aggravate the Vata dosha in the body and to restore it is the hardest of all.

Let me begin the Culinary Art of Palliating Vata Dosha.

Now, that we know the qualities of Vata, it is obvious that similar properties aggravate it and opposite qualities pacify. The increase in Vata dosha in the body is mainly caused by extensive and strenuous activities, intake of spicy, salty, dry foods.

Sweet and sour nature of the foods immediately brings down Vata aggravation. Also these are the most conducive for people of Vata Prakriti. As explained earlier, the 8 factors of Diet shall now be curated according to Vata dosha or Vata Prakriti People.

1. Prakriti – Nature of Vata - hara Food

- Taste be sweet or sour.
- They must possess oily content.
- Warm or Hot foods should be preferred.
- Dry and Raw foods except the fruits and nuts should be avoided.

- Examples: Cooked Veggies, Fruits, nuts, Pulses, whole grains, Butter, Ghee, Milk, Yogurt.
- Spices like fresh ginger, basil, cilantro.
- Hot Soups, Broths.

2. Karana – Method of Processing.

- While preparing Vata recipes, it is very important to cook the vegetables and greens and fry your spices. The optimum way to cook is first dry-fry your raw foods with a little bit of fat, and then add some water and allow to cook in a closed pan/pot. This way, oil is coated on the vegetables and they don't lose their volatile nutrients. The vegetables shouldn't be cooked too long as they will lose their nutritive value. Also one must make sure that they aren't undercooked as they increase toxins in the body. The best way to check if the veggies are cooked is, the change of colour and their softness. When you poke a spoon into them, they break.
- The spices when fried, release their flavour into the oil and lose their pungency which aggravates Vata dosha.
- Lemon is always added at the end of the recipe just before serving. Heat kills Vitamin C.
- Proteinaceous foods like whole beans, legumes, are best when soaked in water overnight and then cooked in pressure. These are basically dry seeds and their vitality comes into action only after they absorb water. Sprouts are full of life only after soaking them. Also they have thick skin and the time taken to cook them is too long and they start losing their vitamins minerals due to persistent heat. Instead pressure cook it such that, the cook time is reduced and seeds are cooked perfectly.
- Baking should be very meticulous and is mostly to be avoided. Deep frying is an occasional option.

- Never heat Honey and Yogurt. It turns them toxic and has fatal effects on body. You can only add them to warm foods. In fact, Honey is not conducive for Vata Dosha.
- Roughage as in Greens and fibrous food are a big no in this category. Greens cooked in the above said manner are allowed.
- Processed, tinned foods, Frozen desserts with preservatives are supposedly completely prohibited.
- Anything that stimulates the brain activity, like coffee, chocolate, alcohol, smoking etc should be avoided.

3. Samyoga – Combination of Foods. Some combinations of foods are very deadly in nature. They prove toxic to our system in a very multitude scale.

- Milk is incompatible with Fish, Salt, Melons, Sour Fruits, Vegetables.
- Most fruits except Banana and Apple are completely incompatible with Yogurt.
- Hot beverages made of fruits
- Ghee and oil
- Milk and Yogurt
- Tea and Milk

4. Rashi – Quantity

The best thing about Vata alleviating foods is you may eat as much as you want but the golden rule is never eat before the previous meal is digested. Never eat less.

5. Desha – Geographical origin of the acquired food

Foods procured from water abundant region like a river silt is more preferred. On the contrary, those procured from dry and barren lands again aggravates. An exception to this rule is Dates fruit.

6. Kala – Time of consumption

Consume as much Vata-alleviating foods you want in the beginning of the day and after the sunset. Because the end of the

day(sunset) and night (before sunrise) is a predominant Vata period.

7. Upayoga Samstha – General Rules

- Begin and End your day with a cup of boiled water.
- Anoint yourself with lipid-based moisturiser.
- Keep your Breakfast protein and fat based.
- Generously use ghee and butter.
- Do not be anxious or distracted during the mealtime.

8. Upayokta – Personalisation of food according the person

This section is making the food palatable and pleasing to individual needs. It is as much important than any other factor. As discussed previously, Food partaken with a contentment is completely assimilated not giving room for malnourishment.

Absolute Don'ts for a Vata Person.

1. Uncooked Greens, Potatoes, Peas, Honey, Starchy foods
2. Exposure to Cold and Wind.
3. Eating food when Thirsty
4. Drinking water when hungry
5. Long Immersed Baths
6. Overuse of spices

Dos for Vata people

1. Abhyanga snaana – head to toe at least once a week
2. Yogasana and Pranayama
3. Listen to soothing music every day.

4. Moisturise every night.

Vata Recipes

I have two important recipes for Alleviation of vata. It helps reduce the stress of your body and mind and provides instant energy. These are richly nutritious and anti-oxidant in nature.

Simple Yellow Lentil-Rice Porridge – Pongal - Khichdi

Simply cook Yellow lentils and Rice together in a pot until they are quite mushy like consistency of a cake batter. Quickly whisk it through for 2 minutes. Set aside. In a large wok, Heat 2 table spoons of oil/ghee, add a tsp of mustard, cumin, grated ginger, black pepper powder and a few cashews. Allow to crackle until the cashews turn golden brown . Add the Mushy Lentil-Rice and mix it well. Add salt as per your requirement. Garnish with lemon juice and Cilantro/ Coriander.

This recipe has Yellow lentils which are cooling in nature but at the same time is also an excellent energizer. Ginger and Black pepper roasted in oil, lose their pungency to give a nice aroma. Mustard and Cumin in itself are vata pacifiers.

Nutritive Value.

1 serving (140ggrams)	Calories from Fat – 49	Calories 216
Total Fat	8%	5.5g
Saturated Fat	14%	2.9g
<i>Trans</i> Fat		0g
Cholesterol	4%	11mg
Sodium	0%	2.3mg
Potassium	4%	140mg
Total Carbohydrates	12%	37g
Dietary Fiber	10%	2.6ggrams

Sugars		0.7g
Protein		5g
Vitamin A	3%	
Vitamin C	1%	
Calcium	2%	
Iron	7%	

2. Tender Coconut Drink - Hemakirana Panaka

Tender coconut water is mixed with a dash of lemon juice and sugar, churned well and consumed. This is the best refreshing drink for summer. It is a little bit heavier for digestion and hence shouldn't be consumed after sunset.

Nutritive Value

1 cup (200 ml)	Calories from Fat 4.3	Calories 46
Total Fat	1%	0.5g
Saturated Fat	2%	0.4g
Polyunsaturated Fat		0g
Monounsaturated Fat		0g
Cholesterol	0%	0mg
Sodium	11%	252mg
Potassium	17%	600mg
Total Carbohydrates	4%	13.1g
Dietary Fiber	10%	2.6g
Sugars		6.3ggrams
Protein		1.7ggrams
Vitamin A	0%	
Vitamin C	10.8%	
Calcium	4.4%	
Iron	3.9%	

Well, we have come to the end of the topic. See you soon with another theme.

||Sarve Janah Sukhino Bhavantu ||