

The
AYURVEDIC
Vegan **KITCHEN**



**Finding
Harmony
Through
Food**

TALYA LUTZKER

Contents

iv	Dedication
v	Foreword
vii	Acknowledgments
1	CHAPTER 1 What Is Ayurveda?
6	CHAPTER 2 The Doshas
13	CHAPTER 3 The Six Tastes of Ayurveda
17	CHAPTER 4 Foods for Your Dosha
27	CHAPTER 5 Before You Begin
31	CHAPTER 6 Drinks, Teas, and Tonics
41	CHAPTER 7 Breakfast
56	CHAPTER 8 Salads and Salad Dressings
73	CHAPTER 9 Sauces, Spreads, and Condiments
93	CHAPTER 10 Main Meal Dishes
125	CHAPTER 11 Side Dishes
139	CHAPTER 12 Snacks
143	CHAPTER 13 Desserts
164	Glossary
169	Resources
172	Index

Ayurveda and the Digestive System

It's not what you eat, it's what you digest that counts.

—Robert E. Svoboda

A healthy digestive system is at the core of ayurvedic medicine because what we eat feeds the blood, and the blood feeds every other body system. Since a vigorous digestive system is key to a healthy, whole body, almost every ayurvedic remedy is geared to making sure the digestive system is operating at its best.

A highly functional digestive system is said to have strong digestive fire, or *agni*, which helps the body absorb what it needs and eliminate the rest. It uses the food we eat to produce vital life fluids, called *ojas*, which feed the body's tissues and maintain vitality, immunity, and radiance.

A fast-paced lifestyle of overactivity and anxiety, for example, can reduce your digestive ability and deplete your vital fluids. A wholesome diet and adequate rest will feed them, of course, but there are more simple practices you should adopt to help keep your digestive system on track:

- Avoid iced drinks. Drink water that is warm or room temperature.
- Eat moist foods to help reduce gas, bloating, and indigestion. Moisten dry foods with water and healthful oils.
- Eat both raw and cooked food at every meal.
- Avoid table salt, white sugar, white flour, meat, plants sprayed with chemicals, genetically modified foods, alcohol, caffeine, and fried foods. These tend to create toxins in the body.
- Eat most fruit by itself. Don't combine it with other foods.
- Chew your food thoroughly, until it becomes almost liquid in your mouth.
- Don't eat when you're not hungry. Eating when you're not hungry causes gas, indigestion, and weight gain, and can lead to serious digestive disorders.
- Be present with your food. Spend some time each day eating in silence.
- Do not overeat.
- Do not eat late at night.
- Eat what you love. Your food should look good, smell good, and taste good.

This book is a celebration of the benefits of ayurveda and a vegan diet. A vegan lifestyle has been shown to diminish one's carbon footprint and contribute to the health of the planet. Ethical vegans believe that their commitment to veganism causes less suffering to other beings and the world. And, although some people may argue that a vegan diet lacks proper nutrients, it has been shown to be one of the most healthful ways we can nourish our bodies.

Ayurveda can help you feel good by nurturing your nature with dosha-appropriate foods. Why not have those foods be plant-based ones?



CHAPTER 3

The Six Tastes of Ayurveda

I've grown new vegetables just to see what they taste like.

—Barbara Kingsolver

Taste, called *rasa* in Sanskrit, is the key to understanding ayurvedic nutrition. It is why certain foods influence some people's digestion in a positive way while not for others.

In terms of importance, taste is second only to water—the element without which taste would not exist. (If the tongue is dry, it cannot taste.) Rasa is the immediate taste on the tongue, the one we remember, and the immediate experience of how that particular taste influences the body. Taste is made from the same five elements that comprise the doshas—ether, air, fire, water, and earth—and a rasa may be sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter, or astringent. Its corresponding short-term effect will have a direct influence on vata, pitta, and kapha.

Rasa also translates as “emotion,” since what is taste to the tongue is emotion to the mind. For example, we often feel really happy when we are given something sweet. Yet we may feel somewhat bitter about having to finish all the greens on our plate. We may go to food specifically for the feeling it lends to our state of being, not caring quite as much about the flavor it emits on the tongue. Like too much of any good thing, even a taste that balances your dosha should be taken in moderation.

Each taste has a direct energetic effect on digestion, creating either a heating or a cooling sensation. This action on the digestive system, called *virya*, may be felt immediately after tasting a food, or some time later. For example, a sweet mango has a heating virya and tends to enhance digestive function. A medjool date is also sweet, but it has a cooling virya and tends to slow digestive function. You may feel more full five minutes after eating the

date than five minutes after eating the same amount of mango, because the date is denser and has a heavier, more cooling effect on the digestive system.

Every taste has a long-term effect on our metabolism after digestion is complete, and all the nutrients have been assimilated in the tissues. This effect is known as *vipak* and is either sweet, sour, or pungent. The vipak of sweet is deeply nutritive and building; the vipak of sour enhances digestive fire, and the vipak of pungent creates increased elimination.

These qualities will be best understood through personal experience and practice. You will discover more about your true nature by noticing how foods make you feel as you digest them. Noticing how you feel is quite possibly your most powerful tool for healing in ayurveda.

It should be noted here that there are some rare and unexplainable mysteries and exceptions to these ayurvedic rules. One is that certain foods create an action on the body that is contradictory to its taste. For example, lemon is sour and should therefore have a warming virya, but it is cooling to the body. Turmeric, which is bitter and should therefore have a cooling virya, is heating.

How to Use This Cookbook

The key to ayurvedic cooking is to look for recipes that decrease, pacify, or balance your dosha. In this cookbook, the particular effect of a recipe on the doshas is noted at the top of every recipe page and included with all of the recipe variations.

The Six Rasas

Sweet (*Madhura*) decreases vata and pitta, increases kapha

Sweet has a cooling virya, with some exceptions, and a sweet vipak. Of all the six tastes, sweet is the most grounding and nourishing. It's balancing to vata and pitta and, when eaten in moderation, promotes longevity, strength, and healthy bodily fluids and tissues. It's the taste to emphasize for someone who is trying to gain weight, as it will quickly increase kapha when taken in excess. Its heavy, oily, moist qualities tend to slow down digestion, so it's often suggested in ayurveda to eat dessert first. The sweet taste abounds in foods such as wheat, rice, maple syrup, brown rice syrup, agave nectar, dates, licorice root, and slippery elm bark.

Salty (*Lavana*) decreases vata, increases pitta and kapha

The salty taste has a heating virya and a sweet vipak. Salt is grounding and moistening, which makes it best for vata. Its warmth and unctuousness helps vata stay grounded and hydrated, but its heat may aggravate pitta. Kapha will be attracted to the warmth of salty flavors, but this flavor tends to promote more weight gain and water retention than kapha really wants. Salt stimulates digestion, helps maintain proper electrolyte balance, softens tissues, and has a mildly laxative effect when taken in moderation. Sea vegetables, salt, tamari, black olives, and processed foods are laden with the salty rasa.

Sour (*Amla*) decreases vata, increases pitta and kapha

Sour's heating virya is followed by a warming, sour vipak. The sour taste stimulates appetite and saliva production, and is stabilizing in its light, heating, and oily properties. But it should be eaten in moderation, for its refreshing influence is strong, and a little bit goes a long way. Sour balances vata, but the sour taste tends to unbalance pitta with heat, and can suffocate kapha with its slippery, grounding nature. Sour improves appetite, digestion, and elimination, and includes such foods as lemons, ume plum, amla berry (sour Indian gooseberry), vinegars, and pickled and fermented foods.

Pungent (*Katu*) increases vata and pitta, decreases kapha

Air and fire give rise to the pungent rasa whose virya is heating and vipak is pungent. The hottest of all the rasas, the pungent taste improves appetite, clears sinuses, stimulates blood circulation, and motivates the senses. The pungent rasa will taste hot and stay hot from start to finish, thereby benefiting kapha more than vata. The pungent taste, with its light and dry qualities, will aggravate pitta quickly. It is sure to balance wet, heavy kapha, but it can be too hot and dry for vata when taken in excess or paired with too many other drying foods. Vata does best when the pungent taste is combined with sour, sweet, or salty foods. Fresh ginger, hot peppers, onions, garlic, mustard, and hot spices all share the quality of pungency.

Bitter (*Tikta*) increases vata, decreases pitta and kapha

Of the six tastes, bitter is the coolest and lightest, making it best for pitta and least effective for vata, especially when taken without a proper balance of other tastes. Air and ether comprise this rasa, whose virya is cooling and whose vipak is pungent, making it quite

cooling in the short term, but warming in the big picture. Kapha benefits from foods like dark leafy greens that abound with the bitter taste while providing calming magnesium and calcium. Dandelion root, turmeric, and fenugreek are also great sources of bitterness with cool and drying qualities.

Be careful to avoid the bitter taste in excess, as it's known to create immediate coldness that can bring on bouts of grief and depression. Like sour, a little goes a long way. Make the bitter rasa a regular part of your meals but in small amounts. It will enhance the flavor of other foods and help to gently purify and cleanse the body.

Astringent (*Kasaya*) increases vata, decreases pitta and kapha

Cool, dry, and light, the astringent rasa has a cooling virya and a pungent vipak. It is less cold than bitter but very dry and firm, which makes it a taste for vata to avoid. Many beans and legumes are astringent in nature, as are broccoli and cauliflower, all of which are known to create gas and thus aggravate the vata dosha.

Pitta will benefit from the astringent taste's coolness, while its dry, light qualities help balance kapha. The constrictive nature of the astringent taste will also slow down digestion. Green grapes, unripe bananas, cranberries, pomegranates, alfalfa sprouts, green beans, and okra all exhibit the astringent taste. You will know this taste when it makes your mouth pucker and feel dried out.

Creamy Coconut Kefir

decreases vata
balances pitta and kapha

Preparation Time: 10 minutes, plus 3 to 4 days fermentation time

Yield: 8 cups; 8 to 12 servings

I was skeptical about making vegan kefir until the first time I tasted it. It's better than you could ever imagine, especially when you spice it appropriately (and deliciously) for your dosha. The making of this recipe is a bit of an adventure, so bon voyage.

3 young coconuts

2 cups raw almonds

1 cup raw cashews

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

1 packet vegan kefir starter

To make the coconut cream, place one coconut on its side. Use a sharp, heavy-duty knife to scrape and shave down the pointy top of the coconut to reveal the brownish, inner shell. Cut the top off the coconut by tapping around the circumference of the exposed inner shell with the square corner of the knife, creating a lid that comes right off.

Pour the coconut juice into a blender. Use a spoon to scrape out the coconut meat and put it in the blender. Repeat with the two remaining coconuts.

Put the almonds, cashews, cinnamon, and cardamom in the blender with the coconut. Process on high speed until creamy, stopping occasionally to scrape down the blender jar.

Pour the coconut mixture into a large saucepan. Cook over the lowest possible heat until it reaches 92 degrees F, or about body temperature. Use a candy thermometer to make sure the cream does not exceed 92 degrees F.

Remove from the heat. Stir in the kefir starter. Pour the mixture back into the blender. Process just until creamy. Pour the kefir into large, glass jars. Refrigerate for 3 to 4 days, or until the mixture becomes thick and sour, like yogurt. Stored in the refrigerator, Creamy Coconut Kefir will keep for about 5 days.

Variation: Garnish each serving with ½ cup soaked prunes or raisins and ⅛ teaspoon of cardamom for vata; ¼ cup chopped medjool dates or figs for pitta; or 1 tablespoon of grated fresh ginger and a pinch of cinnamon for kapha.

Amazing Pesto Chutney

balances vata, pitta, and kapha

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Yield: About 4 cups

SEE PHOTO FACING PAGE 121.

Meet the queen of condiments. Packed with nutritious greens, enzymes, protein, essential fatty acids, and hydrating minerals, this pesto will be your new go-to addition to almost any meal. It freezes well and, stored in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator, will keep for 3 weeks.

½ cup raw tahini or almond butter

**½ cup toasted sea palm or
raw, wild nori**

Juice of 1 lemon

**1 cup olive oil, plus more as needed
for desired consistency**

1 bunch cilantro, chopped

1 bunch dill weed, chopped

1 bulb fennel, chopped

2 teaspoons ground cumin

1 teaspoon ground coriander

1 teaspoon salt

**½ teaspoon ground pepper
(omit for pitta)**

Put the tahini, sea palm, lemon juice, and ½ cup of the olive oil in a food processor or blender. Process for 5 to 10 seconds. Add half each of the cilantro, dill, and fennel. Process for another 20 seconds. Add the remaining ½ cup of olive oil, the remaining cilantro, dill, and fennel, the cumin, coriander, salt, and pepper. Process for another 2 minutes, or until smooth and creamy, stopping occasionally to scrape down the work bowl or blender jar. If the pesto is too thick, add another 1 to 2 tablespoons of olive oil and process again.

Note: It's admittedly difficult to measure ½ cup of sea vegetables perfectly. Pack some into a measuring cup, and do your best to estimate.

The background features several intricate, light-colored mandala patterns. One large, detailed mandala is centered at the top, partially overlapping the chapter title. To the right, another mandala is partially visible, and to the left, a third one is shown in profile. The overall aesthetic is clean and spiritual, with a focus on geometric and floral motifs.

CHAPTER 10

Main Meal Dishes

ALL SENSE OF CONTROL IS LOST when we're at a great party or restaurant and the meal is just too fabulous to pass up. Many of us rely on eating outside the home, where we're not in control of the ingredients in our food. The downside to all this is that we often consume greasy cooked oils, sticky flours, white sugar, and salt-laden fare, which can leave us feeling full, bloated, heavy, and cranky.

If going out to eat is a staple of your lifestyle, there's no need to force yourself to eat at home. It's completely possible to incorporate ayurvedic nutrition into almost any meal, even to a small degree. Here's a quick guide to integrating healthful practices when you go out to eat, followed by recipes for delicious main dishes for cooking at home.

Tips on Eating Out for Vata

Dip yeasty breads into olive oil sprinkled with cracked black pepper. Restaurants will almost always provide you with a side of both. Choose well-spiced curries at Indian and Thai restaurants, and cooked grains, soups, and broths with lots of vegetables, ginger, and rice noodles at any Asian restaurant. Sip mint or ginger tea throughout your meal, and avoid all iced drinks (including iced water).

Tips on Eating Out for Pitta

Stick with Japanese restaurants, salad bars, and raw food restaurants, where an abundance of light, fresh vegetables are served. Avoid fried foods. Choose soups (except for tomato), spring rolls, coleslaws, steamed grains, and bean dishes, with fresh fruit as dessert.

Tips on Eating Out for Kapha

Sip hot or room temperature water with lemon, and order vegetable soups, light curries, and fresh salads. Avoid bread at all costs. Order brown rice instead of white rice when you can, and ask for it to be sprinkled with cracked black pepper. Choose raw, steamed, grilled, and baked foods, and fresh fruit or dark chocolate as dessert. Avoid sweet-and-sour soups and all fried, heavy foods.

Dadus

decreases vata
balances pitta
increases kapha

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Yield: About 30 balls

SEE PHOTO FACING PAGE 152.

The Sanskrit word for ball is ladu (pronounced LAH-doo) and specifically refers to sweets. I had been making these little cookies for my uncle because he loved them, but I didn't have an official name for them until the night we came across ladus at an ayurvedic restaurant, and he mistakenly proclaimed the name we now use for these tahini-based confections.

1 cup raw, vegan granola, raw almonds or Gingersnaps (page 158)

Pour the granola into a food processor. Process until finely ground. Transfer to a small bowl.

1 (16-ounce) jar raw tahini

8 medjool dates, pitted and chopped

Put all the remaining ingredients in the food processor. Process until it is well mixed and forms a sticky mass, stopping occasionally to scrape down the work bowl. Alternatively, for a chunkier texture, mix all the remaining ingredients in a large bowl with a wooden spoon.

¼ cup maple syrup or brown rice syrup

¼ cup carob powder

½ cup currants or raisins

Roll the mixture into 1-inch balls with your hands. Roll each ball in the ground granola until well coated. Place on a serving plate. Keep refrigerated. Stored in a covered container in the refrigerator, Dadus will keep for 4 to 6 weeks.

½ cup raw sunflower seeds

2 tablespoons raw cacao nibs

3 tablespoons minced crystallized ginger

Note: These cookies are high in protein and essential fatty acids, making them extremely healthful in the "good fat" kind of way.

1 tablespoon peeled and minced fresh ginger

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

½ teaspoon ground cloves

⅛ teaspoon vanilla extract or cardamom extract



Ayurveda is a holistic healing system developed in ancient India to increase an understanding of the human body, mind, and spirit. It organizes the elements of ether, air, fire, water, and earth into three body types, or doshas, and even though each person is unique, one of these doshas will predominate their constitution and will need to be balanced on a regular basis.




Dairy products are important foods in traditional ayurveda; however, for every milk-based food that ayurvedic healers revere, there is an equally effective whole-food, vegan alternative. *The Ayurvedic Vegan Kitchen* follows the same nutritional principles as traditional ayurveda and is an exceptional educational resource for people who wish to practice an ayurvedic diet without the use of animal products.

Over 120 delicious recipes provide healing flavors and harmony to the mind and spirit. Notations on each recipe page show how the unique chemistry of that recipe can be used to balance the body's constitution.

Talya Lutzker is a certified ayurvedic practitioner, certified massage practitioner, yoga teacher, professional chef, and the founder of Talya's Kitchen, an organic, nutrition-focused catering business. Catch her cooking segments on talyaskitchen.com and visit Talya's Kitchen on Facebook.



Book Publishing Company
978-157067-286-6

 Your purchase supports our commitment to using postconsumer recycled paper and plant-based inks.

\$19.95 US ■ \$23.95 CANADA

ISBN 978-1-57067-286-6



5 1995



9 781570 672866