

A TCM-INSPIRED NUTRITION
GUIDE TO SEASONAL WELLNESS

BALANCED BITES

HEALING STARTS WITH WHAT YOU EAT



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CHAPTER 1



Introduction



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Balanced Bites!

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), food is more than fuel—it's medicine, rhythm, and a way to align our bodies with the natural world. Each season brings unique energies, challenges, and opportunities for nourishment.

By eating in harmony with these seasonal shifts, we support better digestion, stronger immunity, and a deeper sense of balance and well-being. **Balanced Bites** is your gentle guide to tuning in with nature's wisdom through food.

Whether you're new to TCM or simply curious about a more intuitive way of eating, this guide offers practical tips, simple recipes, and timeless insights to help you feel your best—season after season.

MEET DR. THAO BUI!

Dr. Thao, founder of Acupuncture Heals, blends modern and traditional healing approaches to support each person's unique path to wellness. Having lived with a chronic autoimmune condition since the age of 16, she deeply understands the importance of balance, resilience, and compassionate, mindful care. She holds a Doctorate in Chiropractic and a Diploma in Traditional Chinese Medicine Acupuncture, bringing a well-rounded, integrative approach to every treatment.



Dr. Thao is also trained in Zhu's Scalp Acupuncture, a specialized technique for neurological and chronic conditions, and Mei Zen Cosmetic Acupuncture, a natural method for facial rejuvenation that promotes both inner and outer vitality.

Balanced Bites is an extension of her clinical practice and her passion — created to help you embrace the healing power of seasonal eating and reconnect with the wisdom of Traditional Chinese Medicine. We look forward to welcoming you to Acupuncture Heals. Your journey to balance begins here.

Dr. Thao Bui

CHAPTER 2



Spring: A Season of Renewal and Growth



SPRING: A SEASON OF RENEWAL & GROWTH

In TCM, spring is the season of the Liver and the Wood element—a time of rising energy, movement, and new beginnings. Just as plants sprout and grow, our bodies are ready to awaken and release the stagnation of winter. Spring is ideal for gentle detoxification, lightening up the diet, and supporting the smooth flow of qi.

BEST FOODS TO EAT

Focus on fresh, light, and slightly sour foods to support the Liver and promote smooth energy flow and detoxification

Proteins (light & cleansing):

- Eggs (especially soft-boiled or poached)
- Chicken or turkey
- White fish (cod, haddock, tilapia)
- Tofu and tempeh
- Lentils and mung beans (mildly detoxifying)

Vegetables (fresh, green, and upward-growing):

- Dandelion greens
- Spinach
- Mustard greens
- Asparagus
- Pea shoots
- Celery
- Artichokes
- Leeks and scallions
- Sprout (like mung or alfalfa)

Fruits (slightly sour and cleansing):

- Lemons
- Limes
- Apples
- Grapefruit
- Cherries (moderately)
- Berries (if in season)

Herbs & Seasonings:

- Ginger (for qi movement and digestion)
- Mint (cooling and supports Liver)
- Cilantro
- Basil
- Turmeric
- Fennel
- A small amount of vinegar or lemon juice (to stimulate the Liver)

FOODS TO LIMIT OR AVOID

Foods that are heavy, greasy, and excessively spicy. These foods can burden the Liver and hinder qi flow, making you feel irritable, sluggish, or bloated.

Proteins (damp-producing): **Fruits (mucus-forming or cold**

- Red meat (especially fatty in nature):
 - Bananas
- Processed meats (bacon, sausages)
 - Melons
- Excessive dairy (cheese, cream)
 - Oranges (too cooling and damp for early spring)
- Shellfish (can cause damp accumulation)
 - Pineapple (very cooling)

Herbs & Spices (too hot or drying):

Vegetables (heavy or overly root-based):

- Potatoes
 - Excessive chili/cayenne
- Sweet potatoes (limit)
 - Too much garlic or raw onion (can cause qi to rise too aggressively)
- Turnips
 - Black pepper (in moderation only)
- Excessive mushrooms (damp-producing in excess)

Spring Tips from TCM:

- Eat lightly and avoid heavy, greasy foods. Think fresh and green.
- Favor sour flavors which gently stimulate the Liver.
- Cook lightly: Use quick sautéing, steaming, or light broths.
- Support movement: Go for walks, stretch, and breathe deeply to support Liver qi.

Sautéed Greens with Garlic & Lemon

A light, cleansing dish that supports Liver qi and promotes gentle detoxification.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 4 cups mixed leafy greens (dandelion, mustard greens, spinach, kale, or bok choy)
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1–2 tsp olive oil or sesame oil
- A squeeze of fresh lemon juice
- Pinch of sea salt
- Optional: toasted sesame seeds or a drizzle of tamari

Directions

- Wash and roughly chop the greens.
- In a pan, heat oil over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté until fragrant (about 30 seconds).
- Add the greens and a pinch of salt. Sauté for 2–3 minutes, just until wilted and vibrant.
- Remove from heat and finish with a squeeze of lemon juice.
- Garnish with sesame seeds or a splash of tamari if desired.

TCM Tip

Eat this dish in the morning or at lunch when Liver qi is most active. Pair with warm tea or miso soup for a complete spring meal.



Mung Bean & Vegetable Soup

A cooling, detoxifying soup that soothes the Liver and supports gentle cleansing.

Ingredients

- Serves 3-4
- 1/2 cup mung beans (soaked for 2–4 hours if possible)
- 1 carrot, chopped, 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 1 small zucchini, chopped
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, sliced
- 5 cups water or light vegetable broth
- 1–2 tsp olive oil or sesame oil, Sea salt to taste
- Optional: fresh cilantro or green onion for garnish

Directions

- Rinse mung beans and add them to a pot with water/broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce to simmer.
- Add ginger, carrot, and celery. Cook for 20 min.
- Add zucchini and simmer for another 10–15 minutes until all ingredients are tender.
- Season with salt and drizzle with oil before serving.
- Garnish with fresh cilantro or chopped green onion if desired.

TCM Tip

Eat warm to support digestion, and avoid icy drinks alongside to keep Liver qi flowing smoothly.



Lemon-Ginger Steamed Chicken with Greens

A light, qi-moving dish that supports Liver detox, boosts circulation, and soothes stagnation.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 2 boneless chicken breasts or thighs, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger, julienned
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce or tamari
- 1 tsp sesame oil, juice of 1/4 lemon
- 2 cups mixed greens (mustard, dandelion, bok choy, or spinach)
- Optional: chopped green onion or cilantro for garnish

Directions

- In a bowl, marinate sliced chicken with ginger, soy sauce, sesame oil, and lemon juice. Let sit for 10–15 minutes.
- Steam chicken over medium heat for 10–12 minutes until cooked through.
- Add greens to the steamer during the last 3–4 minutes until just wilted.
- Serve warm, garnished with green onion or cilantro if desired.

TCM Tip

Pair with a small bowl of warm rice or millet to support the Spleen and aid digestion. Best enjoyed for lunch or early dinner, when Liver qi is naturally more active.



Stir-Fried Beef with Ginger & Broccoli

A warming, blood-nourishing dish that supports Liver function, strengthens qi, and boosts vitality.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 200g thinly sliced beef (sirloin or flank steak)
- 1 cup broccoli florets
- 1/2 red bell pepper, sliced (optional)
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger, julienned
- 1 tbsp sesame/avocado oil, 1 tbsp soy sauce/tamari
- 1 tsp rice wine vinegar or a splash of lemon juice
- Pinch of sea salt and black pepper
- Optional: chopped green onion for garnish

Directions

- Heat oil in a pan over medium-high heat. Add ginger and beef, stir-fry for 2–3 minutes until just browned.
- Add broccoli and bell pepper; stir-fry for another 3–4 minutes until tender-crisp.
- Add tamari, vinegar/lemon, salt, and pepper. Stir to coat evenly.
- Remove from heat and garnish as desired.

TCM Tip

Serve with warm brown rice, millet, or quinoa to support Spleen qi and aid digestion.



Steamed Fish with Ginger & Greens

A gentle, Liver-loving dish that supports detox, nourishes blood, and promotes smooth qi flow.

Ingredients

- Serves 1
- 1 fillet white fish (cod, haddock, sole, or tilapia)
- 1 tsp fresh ginger, julienned
- 1 scallion, sliced thinly
- 1 tsp sesame oil or olive oil
- 1 tsp tamari or soy sauce
- 1–2 cups bok choy or spinach, lightly steamed
- Optional: a squeeze of lemon for brightness

Directions

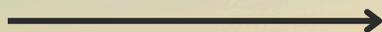
- Place fish on a heatproof plate and top with ginger and scallions.
- Steam over gently boiling water for 6–8 minutes, or until fish flakes easily.
- Drizzle with sesame oil and tamari, and serve over steamed greens.
- Add a light squeeze of lemon if desired (just a touch to support Liver without overdoing sour).

TCM Tip

Enjoy this dish warm, especially for lunch or early dinner. Pair with a small serving of rice or millet for a complete, qi-friendly meal.



CHAPTER 3



Summer: The Season of Expansion and Joy

SUMMER: THE SEASON OF EXPANSION & JOY

Summer in TCM corresponds with the Heart and the Fire element—a time of warmth, outward energy, and emotional expression. The Heart governs blood circulation and houses the Shen (spirit), making summer the perfect season to nourish joy, movement, and social connection. To stay balanced, focus on cooling, hydrating foods that calm the Heart and clear heat. Enjoy seasonal fruits and bitter greens to gently detox and cool the body. Avoid overly spicy or greasy foods, and stay well-hydrated. This is the season to move freely, laugh often, and embrace the fullness of life.

BEST FOODS TO EAT

Foods that are cooling, hydrating, colorful, slightly bitter to supports circulation, joy and emotional balance.

Proteins

- Tofu
- White fish
- Duck (moistens dryness)
- Mung beans
- Light legumes

Fruits

- Watermelon (moderate)
- Strawberries
- Kiwi
- Lemon
- Pears

Vegetables

- Cucumber
- Zucchini
- Bok choy
- Watercress
- Lettuce
- Celery

Herbs & Spices

- Mint
- Cilantro
- Chrysanthemum
- Basil
- Dill

FOODS TO LIMIT OR AVOID

Avoid excessively spicy, greasy, or stimulating foods that overheat or dehydrate the body.

Proteins (greasy, spicy, and heavy meats overstimulate the Heart and generate excess heat):

- Spicy BBQ meats
- Fried meats
- Fatty red meats
- Sausages and bacon

Vegetables (pungent and overcooked veggies add excess heat and dehydrate the body.):

- Hot chili peppers
- Raw onions (in excess)
- Garlic (raw and in excess)
- Deep-fried vegetables

Fruits (overheating or dehydrating fruits disturb summer cooling and hydration balance):

- Lychee
- Durian
- Cherries (in excess)
- Dried fruits

Herbs & Spices (hot and pungent herbs further fan the Fire element):

- Cayenne
- Chili flakes
- Cinnamon
- Ginseng (if not deficient)

Summer Tips from TCM:

- Keep it light and cooling to balance summer's heat.
- Favor bitter flavors which clear heat and support the Heart.
- Cook simply: Try steaming, blanching, or enjoying more raw veggies (in moderation).
- Stay hydrated: Drink herbal teas like chrysanthemum or mint, and add fruits like watermelon or cucumber to your water.

Chilled Cucumber & Mint Salad

A crisp, cooling salad to clear summer heat and uplift your energy.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 1 large cucumber, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup fresh mint, chopped
- 1 tsp rice vinegar
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- Pinch of sea salt
- Optional: sprinkle of toasted sesame seeds

Directions

Toss all ingredients in a bowl and chill for 15 minutes before serving.

TCM Tip

Cucumber and mint both help clear excess internal heat, which can build up in the Heart during summer.



Watercress & Mung Bean Soup

A gentle detoxifying soup that cools heat and nourishes fluids.

Ingredients

- Serves 3
- ½ cup mung beans (soaked 2 hours)
- 1 bunch fresh watercress
- 4 cups water or light vegetable broth
- 2 slices fresh ginger
- Sea salt to taste

Directions

Simmer mung beans and ginger in water for 30 mins. Add watercress and cook 5 more mins. Season and serve warm or at room temperature.

TCM Tip

Mung beans are known in TCM to clear heat and toxins, making this soup ideal for hot weather.

CM



Lemon-Herb Poached Chicken

Light, moist chicken infused with cooling herbs and citrus to soothe the Heart.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 2 boneless chicken breasts
- 4 cups water
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Fresh herbs: 2 sprigs mint, 2 sprigs basil
- 2 slices ginger
- Sea salt to taste

Directions

Bring water, lemon, herbs, and ginger to a boil. Add chicken and simmer for 15–20 mins until cooked through. Cool slightly before slicing.

TCM Tip

Poaching keeps the chicken moist and easy to digest while lemon and mint support circulation and clarity.



Stir-Fried Beef with Bitter Melon

A slightly bitter and savory dish that cools summer heat and supports Liver Qi.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 1 cup thin-sliced beef (flank or sirloin)
- 1 small bitter melon, sliced thin
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tbsp olive or avocado oil
- 1 tsp tamari or low-sodium soy sauce

Directions

Stir-fry garlic and beef until nearly done. Add bitter melon and cook for 2–3 mins more. Finish with tamari.

TCM Tip

Bitter melon is a summer superfood in TCM—clearing Heart fire and reducing inflammation.



Steamed Fish with Ginger & Cilantro

A gentle, light dish that clears heat and supports Yin fluids in summer.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 2 small white fish fillets (cod, sole, or tilapia)
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger, julienned
- 1 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 tbsp light tamari or coconut aminos
- 1 tsp sesame oil

Directions

Steam fish fillets with ginger for 8–10 mins. Drizzle with tamari and sesame oil, top with cilantro.

TCM Tip

White fish nourishes Qi without being too heavy. Ginger supports digestion, and cilantro helps release internal heat.



CHAPTER 4



Late Summer: The Season of Grounding and Digestion



LATE SUMMER: THE SEASON OF GROUNDING AND DIGESTION

Unique to TCM, Late Summer is governed by the Spleen and Stomach, and belongs to the Earth element. It's a time to slow down, nourish the body, and support digestion. The Spleen thrives on warmth, regularity, and simple nourishment. Focus on sweet, grounding foods and avoid raw, cold, or overly processed foods, which can dampen digestion. Warm soups, porridges, and gently cooked meals help harmonize the body and restore balance. Emotionally, this season invites us to center ourselves, care for the digestive system, and cultivate stability in our daily routines.

BEST FOODS TO EAT

Moistening, warming foods that protect against dryness and boost immunity.

Proteins

- Tofu
- White fish
- Duck (moistens dryness)
- Mung beans
- Light legumes

Vegetables

- Cucumber
- Zucchini
- Bok choy
- Watercress
- Lettuce
- Celery

Fruits:

- Apples
- Grapes
- Cantaloupe
- Pears (in moderation)

Herbs:

- Ginger
- Cinnamon
- Basil
- Cardamom

FOODS TO LIMIT OR AVOID

Foods that are drying and cold. These foods can dry out Lung Yin and weaken immunity during a season prone to dryness.

Proteins:

- Overly spicy meats
- Smoked meats

Fruits:

- Dried fruits (unless stewed)

Vegetables:

- Hot peppers
- Onions (excess)
- Raw radish

Herbs:

- Chili
- Horseradish
- Too much garlic

Autumn Tips from TCM:

- Moisturize and protect against dryness.
- Favor pungent flavors like ginger, garlic, and onion to support the Lung.
- Cook warm: Bake, roast, and use longer cooking times to build internal warmth.
- Breathe deeply: Practice meditation or gentle movement to support Lung qi.

Roasted Root Vegetable Medley

A grounding and sweet assortment of roasted root vegetables to support digestion.

Ingredients

- Serves 4
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 1 sweet potato, cubed
- 1 parsnip, chopped
- 1 small kabocha squash, peeled and cubed
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Sea salt and rosemary to taste

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).
- Toss vegetables in olive oil, salt, and rosemary.
- Roast for 35–40 minutes until golden and tender.

TCM Tip

Root vegetables strengthen the Earth element and help transform dampness and phlegm.



Mild Ginger Pumpkin Soup

A warm, smooth soup that comforts the gut and boosts digestive Qi.

Ingredients

- Serves 4
- 1 small pumpkin or butternut squash, peeled and cubed
- 1 medium carrot, chopped
- 1-inch fresh ginger, sliced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- Salt to taste

Directions

- Sauté onion and ginger until fragrant.
- Add pumpkin, carrot, and broth. Simmer until soft (20 mins).
- Blend until creamy. Add salt as needed.

TCM Tip

Ginger adds warmth to support the Spleen and reduce internal dampness.



Steamed Chicken with Jujube and Goji Berries

Tender chicken infused with Qi-tonifying jujube and blood-nourishing goji.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 2 boneless chicken thighs
- 4 dried red dates (jujube)
- 2 tbsp goji berries
- 2 slices ginger
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce
- Scallions for garnish

Directions

- Place chicken in a shallow bowl with dates, goji, ginger, and soy sauce.
- Steam for 20 minutes until cooked through.
- Garnish with scallions before serving.

TCM Tip

Jujube tonifies the Spleen and calms the mind, perfect for seasonal transition.



Beef and Barley Stir-fry

A hearty yet balanced stir-fry to strengthen Qi and drain dampness.

Ingredients

- Serves 4
- 300g lean beef, thinly sliced
- 1 cup cooked barley
- 1 zucchini, sliced
- 1 carrot, julienned
- 1 tbsp ginger
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- Tamari or light soy sauce to taste

Directions

- Stir-fry beef with sesame oil and ginger until browned.
- Add veggies and cook 3–5 minutes.
- Toss in barley and season with tamari.

TCM Tip

Barley (Job's tears) supports the Spleen and eliminates dampness — ideal in humid Late Summer.



Stewed Pears with Cinnamon & Honey

A soothing, naturally sweet dessert that nourishes the Spleen and supports digestion during late summer.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 2 ripe but firm Bartlett pears, peeled, halved, and cored
- 1 cup filtered water
- 1 small cinnamon stick (or ½ tsp ground cinnamon)
- 1-2 thin slices of fresh ginger (optional, for warming)
- 1 tbsp raw honey (add after cooking)
- Zest of ½ a lemon (optional for brightness)

Directions

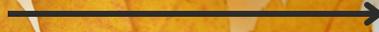
- In a small saucepan, combine the water, cinnamon stick, ginger slices, and lemon zest.
- Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat.
- Add the pear halves, cut side down.
- Cover and simmer gently for 15–20 minutes, or until pears are soft but not mushy. Turn pears once halfway through cooking for even flavor.
- Remove from heat. Let cool slightly.
- Stir in honey while the mixture is warm, not hot (to preserve the medicinal qualities of raw honey).
- Serve warm, garnished with a few soaked goji berries if using.

TCM Tip

During late summer, favor warm, mildly sweet foods like stewed fruits to support the Spleen and prevent dampness accumulation.



CHAPTER 5



Autumn: The Season of Letting Go and Protection



AUTUMN: THE SEASON OF LETTING GO AND PROTECTION

Autumn is associated with the Lungs and the Metal element, bringing a shift inward—toward reflection, refinement, and letting go. The Lungs govern breathing and the immune system, so this season is all about moistening, warming foods that protect against dryness and boost immunity. Avoid dry, spicy, or overly cooling foods. Incorporate soups, stews, and teas that nourish Lung Qi.

Emotionally, Autumn encourages letting go of what no longer serves you, and preparing body and mind for the quieter months ahead.

BEST FOODS TO EAT

Moistening, warming foods that protect against dryness and boost immunity.

Proteins:

- Duck
- Pork
- Eggs
- Tempeh

Vegetables:

- Cauliflower
- Cabbage
- Daikon
- Turnips
- Bok choy

Fruits:

- Pears
- Persimmons
- Apples
- Loquats
- White grapes

Herbs:

- White fungus
- Lily bulb
- Astragalus
- Thyme

FOODS TO LIMIT OR AVOID

Drying and cold foods, they can dry out Lung Yin and weaken immunity during a season prone to dryness.

Proteins:

- Fried meats
- Heavy red meats
- Processed deli meats

Vegetables:

- Iceberg lettuce
- Cucumbers (too cooling)

Fruits:

- Watermelon
- Kiwi
- Banana

Herbs:

- Mint (too cooling)
- Raw garlic (too harsh for digestion)

Autumn Tips from TCM:

- Moisturize and protect against dryness.
- Favor pungent flavors like ginger, garlic, and onion to support the Lung.
- Cook warm: Bake, roast, and use longer cooking times to build internal warmth.
- Breathe deeply: Practice meditation or gentle movement to support Lung qi.

Pear & Fennel Soup

A light, fragrant soup that soothes the lungs and eases digestion.

Ingredients

- Serves 2-3
- 2 ripe pears, peeled and chopped
- 1 small fennel bulb, chopped
- 1 small potato (optional, for thickness)
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Salt to taste
- Optional: a squeeze of lemon or pinch of white pepper

Directions

- Heat olive oil in a pot over medium heat.
- Sauté fennel until fragrant (about 3–4 minutes).
- Add pears and optional potato. Stir briefly.
- Pour in vegetable broth. Bring to a boil.
- Reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook 15–20 minutes.
- Blend until smooth. Season to taste with salt and lemon if desired.

TCM Tip

Pear nourishes Lung yin, while fennel warms the digestion—perfect for dry, cool autumn days.



Beef & Daikon Stew

A hearty stew with beef, daikon, and warming spices like star anise and cinnamon.

Ingredients

- Serves 4-5
- 1 lb stewing beef, cut into chunks
- 2 cups daikon radish, peeled and cubed
- 1 thumb-sized piece of ginger, sliced
- 2 star anise
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp oyster sauce (optional)
- 1 tsp sugar
- 4 cups beef broth or water

Directions

- Brown beef in a heavy pot, remove and set aside.
- Sauté ginger, then add star anise and cinnamon.
- Return beef to pot, add soy sauce, sugar, broth. Bring to a boil.
- Cover, reduce heat, and simmer for 45 minutes.
- Add daikon and simmer for another 20–30 minutes until tender.
- Season to taste and serve warm.

TCM Tip

Daikon clears stagnation while beef nourishes blood—ideal for strength and circulation in fall.



Miso Soup with Daikon, Shiitake & Tofu

A savory, umami-rich soup that clears phlegm and supports immunity.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 3 cups water
- 1 tbsp miso paste (white or red)
- ½ cup thinly sliced daikon radish
- 4–5 dried shiitake mushrooms, soaked & sliced
- ½ cup cubed soft tofu
- 1 scallion, sliced (optional)

Directions

- Bring water to a boil. Add daikon and simmer 5 minutes.
- Add tofu and shiitake mushrooms; simmer another 3–5 minutes.
- Turn off heat. Dissolve miso paste in a bit of warm broth and stir back in.
- Garnish with scallions before serving.

TCM Tip

Daikon clears phlegm; miso and mushrooms boost Qi and immunity.



Roasted Sweet Potato & Carrot Mash with Thyme

A sweet, earthy mash that warms the digestion and nourishes Qi.

Ingredients

- Serves 3-4
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 2 large carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil or ghee
- 1 tsp fresh thyme (or ½ tsp dried)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).
- Toss sweet potatoes and carrots with olive oil and thyme.
- Spread on a baking sheet and roast for 25–30 minutes until soft.
- Mash with a fork or potato masher, season to taste.

TCM Tip

Sweet potatoes strengthen the Spleen and Qi; carrots benefit digestion and support Lung function.



Baked Apples with Walnuts & Cinnamon

A sweet, warming treat that nourishes yin and boosts Lung health.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 2 medium apples, cored
- 2 tbsp chopped walnuts
- 1 tbsp raisins (optional)
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tbsp honey or maple syrup
- 1 tbsp water or apple juice

Directions

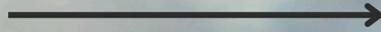
- Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
- Mix walnuts, raisins, and cinnamon in a small bowl.
- Stuff each apple with the mixture.
- Place apples in a baking dish with water or juice.
- Cover with foil and bake for 25–30 minutes.
- Drizzle with honey or syrup before serving.

TCM Tip

Apples nourish fluids; walnuts strengthen the Kidneys and warm the back—great for the dry, cooler season.



CHAPTER 6



Winter: The Season of Rest and Deep Nourishment

WINTER: THE SEASON OF REST AND DEEP NOURISHMENT

Winter corresponds to the Kidneys and the Water element—a time of stillness, conservation, and inner focus. The Kidneys store our vital energy (Jing) and benefit from warming, mineral-rich foods that deeply nourish and replenish.

Embrace hearty stews, bone broths, black beans, walnuts, seaweed, and warming herbs like garlic and cinnamon. Avoid raw, cold, or iced foods, which can weaken Kidney Qi.

Winter is an invitation to rest more, reflect inward, and nourish the foundation of your health. Sleep, stillness, and warming meals are your best medicine this season.

BEST FOODS TO EAT

Dark-colored, warm and cooked foods as these are nourishing to the Kidneys & enhances Yin and Jing (essence). Focus on salty/ and bitter flavors since they help direct energy inward and support Kidney function (e.g., miso, seaweed, tamari, dark leafy greens).

Proteins:

- Duck
- Pork
- Eggs
- Tempeh

Vegetables:

- Cauliflower
- Cabbage
- Daikon
- Turnips
- Bok choy

Fruits:

- Pears
- Persimmons
- Apples
- Loquats
- White grapes

Herbs:

- White fungus
- Lily bulb
- Astragalus
- Thyme

FOODS TO LIMIT OR AVOID

Foods that are cold, raw and energizing. These foods cool the body's core and tax the Kidneys, which need warmth and nourishment in winter.

Proteins:

- Cold cuts
- Cooling seafood (e.g., crab)

Vegetables:

- Raw salads
- Cucumbers
- Sprouts

Fruits:

- Pineapple
- Mango
- Banana

Herbs:

- Mint
- Cilantro
- Cooling teas (e.g., chrysanthemum)

Winter Tips from TCM:

- Conserve energy and nourish deeply.
- Favor salty and warming flavors to support the Kidneys.
- Cook slow: Use stews, bone broths, and warming herbs like cinnamon and clove.
- Rest and restore: Sleep more, stay warm, and slow down your pace.

Black Sesame Congee with Goji Berries & Walnuts

A deeply nourishing congee that supports Kidney essence and warms the body.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- ½ cup white rice (or black rice)
- 1 tbsp ground black sesame seeds
- 1 tbsp goji berries (soaked in warm water)
- 1 tbsp chopped walnuts
- 4–5 cups water
- 1 tsp honey or rock sugar (optional)

Directions

- Rinse rice and bring to a boil with water.
- Reduce heat and simmer 30–40 minutes until soft and porridge-like.
- Stir in black sesame, walnuts, and goji berries.
- Cook for 5 more minutes, sweeten if desired, and serve warm.

TCM Tip

Black sesame and walnuts tonify Kidney yin and yang, essential for winter vitality.



Lamb Stew with Root Vegetables & Ginger

A warming, yang-boosting stew that strengthens the Kidneys and Blood.

Ingredients

- Serves 3-4
- 1 lb lamb shoulder or stew meat, cubed
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1 parsnip or turnip, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 3 slices fresh ginger
- 3 cups bone broth or water
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp rice wine (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- In a pot, brown lamb cubes lightly. Add ginger and onion; sauté briefly.
- Add carrots, parsnips, broth, and seasonings.
- Bring to a boil, then cover and simmer for 45–60 minutes until lamb is tender.
- Adjust seasoning and serve warm.

TCM Tip

Lamb strongly tonifies Kidney yang, while ginger warms and supports digestion in cold weather.



Sautéed Bok Choy & Black Mushrooms

A quick and earthy side dish that nourishes Blood and supports the immune system.

Ingredients

- Serves 2
- 1 cup fresh or rehydrated shiitake mushrooms, sliced
- 2 cups bok choy, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- Pinch of white pepper

Directions

- Heat sesame oil in a pan. Sauté garlic until fragrant.
- Add mushrooms, stir-fry for 3–4 minutes.
- Add bok choy and soy sauce; cook until wilted but bright.
- Sprinkle with white pepper and serve.

TCM Tip

Black mushrooms (shiitake) and dark leafy greens tonify Blood and strengthen defensive Qi.



Winter Melon & Pork Rib Soup

A clear, cooling-yet-warming soup that strengthens the Kidneys and clears summer's residual heat.

Ingredients

- Serves 2-3
- ½ small winter melon (about 400 g), peeled, seeded, and cut into 1–2 cm cubes
- 300 g pork spare ribs, cut into bite-size pieces
- 4–5 dried red dates (jujube), pitted
- 3–4 slices fresh ginger
- 6–8 goji berries (optional)
- 6 cups water
- Salt to taste

Directions

- Bring a small pot of water to a boil. Add pork ribs and blanch 2–3 minutes to remove impurities. Drain and rinse.
- In a clean soup pot, add the blanched ribs, winter melon cubes, red dates, ginger slices, and water.
- Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to low. Cover and simmer for 1–1½ hours, until ribs are tender and melon translucent.
- In the last 10 minutes, stir in goji berries. Season lightly with salt.
- Serve hot, discarding ginger slices if desired.

TCM Tip

Black mushrooms (shiitake) and dark leafy greens tonify Blood and strengthen defensive Qi.



Ginger Chicken & Shiitake Rice Porridge

A warm, savory congee that strengthens Qi, supports digestion, and warms the interior.

Ingredients

- Serves 2-3
- ½ cup jasmine or white rice, rinsed
- 4–5 cups chicken broth (or water)
- ½ cup cooked, shredded chicken (preferably thigh)
- 3–4 shiitake mushrooms, sliced (fresh or soaked if dried)
- 1-inch fresh ginger, julienned
- 1 tbsp soy sauce (optional)
- Chopped scallions and sesame oil for garnish

Directions

- In a large pot, combine rice, broth, and ginger. Bring to a boil.
- Lower heat to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, for 30–40 minutes until porridge consistency is reached.
- Add shiitake mushrooms and shredded chicken. Cook another 10 minutes.
- Season with soy sauce if desired.
- Garnish with scallions and a drizzle of sesame oil before serving.

TCM Tip

Chicken tonifies Qi and Yang, while ginger warms the Spleen and dispels cold—ideal for winter’s chill.



CHAPTER 7



Conclusion



Conclusion

As you close the final page of *Balanced Bites*, take a moment to reflect on the wisdom you've absorbed – not just from the recipes, but from the ancient principles that have guided this journey. Traditional Chinese Medicine teaches us that true wellness isn't static. It flows, shifts, and transforms just like nature itself.

By aligning your eating habits with the rhythms of the seasons, you are doing more than nourishing your body; you are honoring your connection to the natural world and cultivating harmony from the inside out.

Whether you're simmering a warming stew in winter, sipping herbal teas in spring, enjoying cooling foods in summer, or grounding yourself with hearty grains in autumn, each bite becomes an act of self-care. Each meal becomes a medicine. Remember:

-  Spring is for renewal and gentle cleansing.
-  Summer is for joy, abundance, and cooling nourishment.
-  Autumn is for letting go, grounding, and building immunity.
-  Winter is for stillness, restoration, and deep nourishment.

Let this guide be a gentle reminder that food is more than fuel; it is energy, intention, and balance. As you continue your journey toward wellness, may your meals be mindful, your body vibrant, and your spirit aligned with the flow of the seasons.

With warmth and balance,
Acupuncture Heals

Thanks for Reading!

We'd love to stay in touch!

Feel free to reach out with questions or simply to say hello!

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Yours in Wellness,

Dr. Thao Bui

