



BASICS

Introduction to Ayurvedic Cooking

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STAPLES & SIDES

In my Ayurvedic cooking, these are my go-to basics that provide the prep and pizzaz to each meal. Ghee, vegetable broth and milk (almond, coconut as good substitutes for dairy) provide rich foundations. Pesto, raita, chutney are the garnish or pizzazz that finish a meal with color, digestive power and a pop of flavor.

Traditional basil pesto is always good, but pesto can also be seasonally modified to bring any meal right into balance with your environment and dosha, and with the recipe below it becomes a “detox” pesto to help your body lighten its load.

On its own, Ayurveda considers yogurt to be heavy, wet, cold and digestion-clogging, therefore not ideal for Kapha or Kapha time of day. While it’s fine to have a bit of yogurt with your warm breakfast bowls, the best time for yogurt is lunchtime. Raita is Ayurveda’s savory, digestive-enhancing, yogurt-y *side*.

“The great thing about Ayurveda is that its treatments always yield side benefits not side effects.”

-SHUBRA KRISHNAN

Lunchtime is also the best time for a lassi. In India, a traditional Ayurvedic lunch finishes with buttermilk, but it is a buttermilk prepared fresh - and nothing like the commercial variety we find in our markets. Our “buttermilk drink”

is lassi, made from whole, organic yogurt blended with equal parts water, and spices to make a light, clean, warming, digestion-promoting drink to ensure your largest meal of the day flows and transforms properly.

BASICS

Recipes



Vegetable Broth | Sprouted Mung Beans | Almond Milk | Almond Yogurt |
Coconut Milk | Coconut Yogurt | Seasonal Raita | Detox Pesto | Pan-fried
Lemon Chutney

Vegetable Broth

Makes about 3 quarts

Ingredients

1 tablespoon ghee
1 onion, quartered
2-4 cloves garlic
1 handful fresh ginger, chopped
4 carrots, scrubbed and roughly chopped
2 sticks celery, roughly chopped
1 bunch parsley, stems removed
1 bunch cilantro, stems removed
optional: thyme, oregano, red pepper flakes
1 tablespoon gluten-free tamari or shoyu, or balsamic vinegar
pink salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste



Instruction

Melt the ghee in a large soup pot. Add the onions and “sweat” - cook on medium heat, stirring occasionally until the onions begin to soften. Stir in the garlic and ginger and sauté another few minutes. Put in everything else except the last two ingredients. Add 4 quarts filtered water and bring to a boil. Cover and reduce to simmer. Allow to gently boil for 2-3 hours. Remove from heat and let cool. Strain and stir in the tamari/shoyu or vinegar. Taste and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Use as the basic broth for your soups and kitchari, or sip warm as an afternoon tonic. Store in a mason jar in the refrigerator for up to a week.

**“A soup is not one whit
better than the stock with
which it is made.”**

-CRAIG CLAIBOURNE

Sprouted Mung Beans

For cooking or salads, this is highly digestible, high fiber, clean protein with a refreshing crunch.

Ingredients

1 cup whole mung beans

4 cups water

Instructions

Rinse the beans in a colander or strainer until the water runs clear. Pour into a bowl and cover with water. Put aside and let soak 8 hours.

Rinse again in a colander or strainer. If you have a sprouting bag, pour into the bag and hang the bag over a bowl to capture the drips of water that will drain out. Every four hours or so, rinse, massage and re-hang.

If you do not have a sprouting bag, a bowl works. Place a paper towel or a really absorbent clean tea towel in the bowl and pour the well-drained mung into the bowl, over the towel, so that the towel can absorb any excess water. Cover the bowl and set in a warm place. On a warm sunny day, a windowsill works. On colder days, place near a radiator or in the oven with the warming tray on.

The key here is that the beans are moist but not wet. If they stay wet they can rot or get moldy, which is why the sprouting bag works. But a bowl works just as well, as long as the beans are well drained and there is something to absorb the excess water.

Leave the beans for 24-48 hours, although every 12 hours I like to massage, rinse, drain and reset. If you will be cooking them, a 24 hour sprout is sufficient. If you want them for a salad, 48 hours is better.

Once they are sprouted, use immediately or store, dry and covered, in the refrigerator and use within 4-5 days. As always, serve at room temperature.



Milk



According to Maharishi Ayurveda, “When digested properly, milk nourishes all the tissues, promotes balanced emotions, and helps to balance all the doshas. It is one of the most important foods to promote Ojas. Ojas is a refined substance the body produces from the most subtle level of proper digestion. Ojas brings strength, strong immunity, happiness, and contentment. Therefore milk is a very important food to include regularly in one’s diet especially if you follow a vegetarian lifestyle.”

Traditionally, Ayurveda has called for milk and ghee as important staples of any diet. In India, though, traditionally cows were free-ranging, grass-eating and, as a sacred animal, treated with loving reverence. Milk, according to custom, was only taken in the spring during calving season, *after* the calves had their needs met first. The milk for human consumption, then, was fresh, whole, organic, non-homogenized and collected according to the principle of Ahimsa, or non-harming.

Vegans can replace ghee with coconut oil for cooking. Coconut milk is a good stand-in for dairy milk and delicious added to stews and stir-fry. Almond milk is good for teas and tonics, and great refreshment own its own or with rose water and lime.

Almond Milk

Vegetable broth and almond milk are singular proof that no commercial enterprise will ever replace your own loving hands when it comes to nature's rich and nourishing goodness.

Ingredients

- 1 c raw almonds
- 4 cups water
- 2 medjool dates, pitted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 pinch pink salt

Instruction

Soak the almonds overnight in two cups water. In the morning drain the almonds and rinse until the water runs clear.

Put the almonds in your blender with the remaining two cups of water and blend on high for 2-3 minutes. Strain through a muslin cloth set in a mesh strainer. Reserve the almond meal for an almond yogurt (recipe below). Rinse your blender jug and pour the milk back in. Add the dates, vanilla and salt and and blend again on high speed until the dates are thoroughly ground and integrated into the milk.

Store in the refrigerator, but drink warm.



Almond Yogurt

After making almond milk, a good deal of almond meal remains. Instead of discarding, this can be used for a high fiber yogurt, which is good in smoothies, lassi, stirred into a hot breakfast bowls or all on its own.

Ingredients

Almond fiber

1/2 - 1 cup almond milk

1 probiotic capsule

optional:

1 teaspoon maple syrup or raw honey

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

dash cinnamon, cardamom



Instructions

In a medium-sized bowl stir the almond with 1/2 cup of the almond milk. Add more almond milk to get the right consistency. The yogurt will thicken up slightly over the next 24 hours, so you can make it a little bit more on the soupy side.

Open a probiotic capsule into the meal and stir. Cover the bowl. Set in a warm place. A warm oven top or toaster is good. You want it to be warm enough to ignite the probiotics, but not above 110 degrees, as you don't want to cook it.

After 2-4 hours, you should have yogurt. Taste. If there is no sour taste yet let it stand, covered, another hour or two. Once it begins to taste sour, whisk in the maple syrup or honey, vanilla and spices, if adding a sweet taste. Cover and store in the refrigerator another 24 hours to let it all meld before serving.

Kept in the refrigerator it should be good for up to a week.

Coconut Milk

Makes 2 cups

Coconut milk is creamy, hydrating, sweet, balancing for Vata and sweet, soothing, and cooling for Pitta. Less heavy than dairy, coconut milk can be thinned and warmed with hot water and a dash of cinnamon for good alternative “milk” for Kapha.



Ingredients

- 1 cup shredded coconut
- 1 teaspoon coconut oil
- 2 cups hot water

Instructions

Put the shredded coconut into a blender and pour in the hot water. Add the coconut oil and blend on high for several minutes. Lift the lid and scrape down the sides of the blender. Blend for another 1 or 2 minutes, until the mixture is thick and creamy. Pour into a strainer placed over a bowl.

Use immediately, or store in an airtight mason jar in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. (The coconut fiber can be blended into smoothies or stirred into a hot breakfast bowl. Otherwise, compost.)

Tip: To make a coconut milk for drinking rather than cooking, stir in 1/2 teaspoon maple syrup, a pinch cardamom, and dash of pink salt after straining.

Coconut Yogurt

This is the only time I use a canned anything, but it makes a coconut yogurt that is so rich and tasty... and my Ayurvedic teachers, molecular biologists and purist friends give a thumbs up to this exception.



Ingredients

- 1 can organic coconut milk
- 1 probiotic capsule

Instructions

Open the can of coconut milk and spoon out only the congealed white cream into a small bowl. Whisk in about half the coconut liquid. Open a probiotic capsule and stir the powder into the coconut cream.

Cover the bowl and set in a warm place. As with the almond yogurt, you want it warm enough to ignite the probiotics, but not above 110 degrees, so it doesn't cook.

After 2-4 hours, you should have yogurt. Taste. If there is no sour taste, let it sit, covered, another hour or two. Keep tasting until it becomes sour. Then seal and store in the refrigerator. In another 24 hours it will be a wonderful, thick consistency. It is not sweet, though. Natural yogurts are not. Blend in 1 chopped date, or drizzle in a bit of maple syrup to make it really divine.

Seasonal Raita

Makes about 1 cup

Traditionally Raita is a side, but it is so much more versatile than that. It can be a dipping sauce for vegetables, a spread on toast, or whisked with olive oil for a salad dressing. In the summer, replace the lemon with lime.



Ingredients

- 1/2 cup whole yogurt
- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 carrot, celery or cucumber, depending on your season, dosha, taste
- 1 handful dill
- 1 very small handful cilantro
- 2-3 basil or mint leaves, depending on season, dosha, taste, availability
- 1 pinch pink salt, fresh cracked black pepper

Instructions

In a small bowl, whisk together the yogurt, lemon juice, zest, and coriander. Grate the vegetable, chop the herbs, and stir in. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Depending on the season, ground ginger, fennel, or red pepper flakes can be added to boost digestive power. This can be also made with almond or coconut yogurt.

Detox Pesto

This pesto makes kitchari sing. It is good on salad, toast, pasta, rice, or with sautés and roasted vegetables. For more detox power, add 1 teaspoon dulse. For more seasoning, try 1 teaspoon tamari or shoyu, or shakes of cayenne or red pepper flakes, or more garlic if you are feeling kapha stagnation.



Ingredients

- 1 bunch cilantro, stems removed
- 1 bunch basil, stems removed
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tablespoon ghee
- 1 handful raw pumpkin seeds
- 1 handful sunflower seeds
- 1 handful brazil nuts
- 1/4 cup fresh squeezed lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil
- salt & pepper to taste

Instructions

Put the cilantro, basil and garlic in a cuisinart or blender and chop. Blend in the ghee, seeds and nuts. Scrape down the sides, add the lemon juice and blend until it is a fine consistency. Taste, add salt and pepper, taste again and adjust. Sometimes it needs more lemon juice, sometimes more garlic.

Drizzle in the olive oil and pulse once for 1 second. Transfer to a serving bowl or a jar, seal and store in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

Lemon Chutney

Makes about 1 cup

Somewhat sweet, certainly bitter, mostly sour, this is a sunny way to give bright flavor and digestive power to bread, toast, sandwiches, salad dressings, breakfast bowls and mains. Use basil in spring, autumn or winter, mint in summer, or dill, thyme, oregano - according to dosha and your tastes.

Ingredients

3 lemons, organic are best
1 tablespoon coconut oil
1 half-inch piece ginger root, peeled
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon honey
pink or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons chopped basil or mint



Instructions

Wash the lemons with soapy water. Put one lemon aside. Slice the two lemons into rounds. Discard the ends. Remove the seeds.

Melt the coconut oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Lay the lemon slices evenly in the pan, and sauté until they brown, then turn to sauté on both sides. Altogether it is about 4-5 minutes. Add a spoonful of water, reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer another 4-5 minutes.

Put the ginger in a food processor and pulse until it is minced. Transfer the lemons and lemon juice to the food processor. Juice half the remaining lemon, and pour into the food processor. Pulse until the lemons are chunky. Add the olive oil and honey, and pulse again until the chutney is creamy-chunky. Season with salt and pepper. Taste and adjust: Add more lemon juice, or honey, or olive oil, accordingly.

Transfer to a small bowl, and let sit for at least an hour for the flavors to integrate. Just before serving, stir in the fresh herbs, taste and again adjust. Store in the refrigerator for up to five days, but serve at room temperature or with something hot.