

learn to eat like a Yogi

Try yoga's healthy and delicious
sattvic foods and boost
your *prana* to a new level

By Elaine Gavalas

Though yoga is most often celebrated as a pillar of twenty-first century fitness, it is actually a 5,000-year-old comprehensive philosophical discipline that includes healthy eating guidelines. The yoga diet has an ancient lineage, dating back to the Vedas, sacred Hindu scriptures (2500 B.C.E.), the Yoga Sutras (2 B.C.E.), written by the great Hindu sage, Patanjali, and the Bhagavad Gita (1 B.C.E.), a classic Hindu text. Yoga's holistic approach to healthy eating is just as important and relevant today - to purify, strengthen, and nourish our body, mind, and spirit.

The ultimate purpose of the yoga diet has always been to reach a higher consciousness and attain enlightenment through eating pure (*sattvic*) foods, fasting, detoxification (*panchakarma*), breathing (*pranayama*), meditation, and yoga poses (*asana*). Eating pure yogic foods increases our body's life-force energy or *prana*.

According to yoga dietary guidelines, all foods possess different vibrational energy properties. Pure *sattvic* foods like fresh, organic fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, dairy products, and natural sweeteners such as honey, encourage balance and good health, and have the highest *prana* of all foods. *Sattvic* foods should be included in the diet as much as possible. Bitter, salty, and sour *rajasic* foods like meat and fish cause aggression and discomfort, and have a lower *prana* than *sattvic* foods. Putrified and contaminated *tamasic* foods like junk foods, overcooked foods, and genetically engineered and irradiated foods, promote overeating and laziness and have the lowest *prana* of all foods. The consumption of *rajasic* and *tamasic* foods should be limited or eliminated as much as possible.

Four Yoga Diet Guidelines

Yoga *sattvic* foods

The vegetarian, Mediterranean, Asian, and Ayurvedic diets embody the yoga diet by including *sattvic* foods that promote the body's *prana*.

PHOTOS BY FRAN GEALER

Numerous medical studies confirm the power of vegetarian, Mediterranean, Asian, and Ayurvedic foods to lower the risk of heart disease, cancer, obesity, hormonal imbalances, diabetes, and other chronic diseases.

You can easily incorporate the yoga sattvic philosophy into your diet by eating less meat and animal foods, and getting the majority of your protein from high fiber grains, legumes, and soy. Organic whole grains, beans, and fresh vegetables (cooked and raw), form the foundation of every meal and seasonally fresh fruits are enjoyed daily. Low- or non-fat organic dairy and healthy fats such as olive and canola oils are eaten in limited amounts.

Go veggie

Many yoga practitioners face a common dietary dilemma. Do you have to be a vegetarian to be a yogi? Not necessarily! Vegetarianism is a healthful dietary guideline, not a yoga mandate. Over the centuries, yoga practitioners chose vegetarianism in order to follow the yoga moral principle of ahimsa or "non-harming", including killing and eating living creatures. Meat-eating was also avoided because it is a tamasic food that disturbs awareness and adds to the impurities of the mind and body. According to yoga philosophy, only a pure or sattvic mind is capable of attaining enlightenment and self-realization.

Most yogis agree that your eating choices should come from an honest look at how your diet affects your body and mind. For instance, one yogi may find that eating meat sustains their yoga practice, while another yogi may feel that a vegetarian diet upholds the doctrine of nonviolence. What you choose to eat should support your specific needs including your state of health, age, beliefs, and yoga practice.

Fasting and detoxification

Throughout the millennia, fasting practices and detoxification (panchakarma) were an important part of the yoga diet to help develop a sattvic body and mind. Periodic fast-

FIT YOGA

YOGA DIET PANTRY

To help you make your best food choices, reach and maintain your healthiest weight, and enjoy a lifetime of deliciously healthful eating, try adopting the following yoga sattvic foods into your meals.

Organic Fruits and Veggies

Powerful, healing phytochemicals imbue fruits and vegetables with a rainbow of colors including Green (leafy vegetables), Orange/Red/Yellow (tomato, sweet potato, oranges, lemons, garlic) and Blue/Purple (blueberries, grapes, eggplant).

Organic Whole Grains

Organic whole, unrefined grains such as brown rice, brown basmati rice, bulgur, kamut, oats, quinoa, and whole wheat in your diet reduces the risk of cancer and heart disease. They contain many protective nutrients including dietary fiber, antioxidants and phytoestrogens.

Bean Power

Beans and legumes such as black beans, chickpeas, lentils, and mung beans contain powerful nutrients that help prevent certain cancers, and lower cholesterol and blood sugar.

Soy Good

Soy foods such as tofu, tempe, and fortified soy milk, have been found to lower the risk of heart disease, certain cancers, and digestive disorders, relieve the symptoms of menopause and PMS, and prevent osteoporosis.

Sacred Cow

Consume organic low-fat and non-fat milk and dairy products in limited quantities and include healthy alternatives such as soy milk, rice milk, and goat's milk.

Friendly Fats

Good fats including olive oil, expeller-pressed canola oil, and flaxseed oil contain healthful omega-3 and omega-9 fatty acids, which have been shown to prevent heart attacks, obesity, diabetes, depression, and breast and prostate cancer.

Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds such as walnuts, flaxseed, soy nuts, almonds, and sunflower seeds are excellent sources of protein, contain healthy fats, and should be consumed in moderation.

ing provides a way to practice self-discipline (niyama) and detoxify the digestive system, while promoting good health. Studies have shown that fasting may help a variety of health problems including migraines, rheumatoid arthritis, skin diseases, obesity, and allergies.

A one-day partial yoga fast including fruit or vegetable juices, herbal teas, and optional small portions of whole grains is most often recommended, as it is unlikely to cause

any harm and is well tolerated by most healthy people. However, some experts believe that longer periods of fasting or a complete fast from all food may be dangerous because it depletes the body of important nutrients. Fasting is not recommended for pregnant women and individuals with certain health conditions. You should consult with your health care professional before beginning a fast.

An ayurvedic panchakarma detox-

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The Healing Power of Horses

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reflection are important to Jill when she mounts up on either Oreo or Sundance, her two 'bomb proof' horses that she loves riding. From the back of a horse she clears her head, relaxes her mind, and just plain enjoys being outside with all the beauty and serenity the experience has to offer. She is not alone – many of the celebrities she has interviewed over the last year feel exactly the same way.

"What was so amazing about doing the interviews for this book was traveling around the country and meeting with these stars who seem bigger than life and seeing first hand how down to earth and into nature they really are," marvels Jill. "It was such a joy for me

words," he reveals to Jill. "It's all about mutual respect and discipline." Jill adds, "To see Redford in his environment where he is truly the happiest, was so amazing. He seemed so comfortable and almost blissful, riding up on his beautiful Palomino, Chance."

Jill has also been good friends with Christy Brinkley for almost 20 years, ever since the television correspondent met the then supermodel on assignment and interviewed her on horseback at a stable in Bridgehampton. Their friendship was formed on horseback and this relationship was one of the things that had made Christy's participation in the book so special.

After a five year absence from riding to raise her three children, Christy is back in the saddle again, riding her favorite horse, Good Bar Miss, that husband Peter Cook tracked down at a ranch in Texas and gave to her as a surprise 50th birthday gift. A successful celebrity competitor in the cutting horse arena, Christy strongly believes that riding is not just about working out aerobically. She feels that many people are now learning that it is just as important to mentally let go, as it is to physically ramp up.

"A deep satisfaction comes from the joy and solace of being on the back of a horse," Christy explains. "This horse and rider relationship is very important for the mind as I am also able to mentally and even emotionally unwind when I ride. Riding gets me connected back to my life and what is important in it. My way of relaxing and centering myself is to do something that I really enjoy and I find this kind of release on the back of a horse."

As much as the 80s and 90s were all about vigorous muscle workouts, Christy believes that today, to be truly fit, you need to exercise your body, mind and soul by incorporating muscle strengthening and fat burning routines along with good nutrition and mental relaxation "Riding has always connected me to nature and allows my mind to wander in a very good way. Like Yoga, there is a lot to be said for the Zen of riding and the relationship you forge with these amazing animals is such a plus." 🌀

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ification program consists of a series of body treatments to detoxify, balance, and rejuvenate the body, mind, and spirit. Some of the cleansing methods include massage using organic sesame oils and essential oils (abhyanga), herbal steam baths (swedana), aromatic inhalation therapy (nasya), asana practice and a cleansing diet. The same foods are eaten for several days, usually a simple diet of kichari, an easily digestible dish including mung beans, basmati rice, ghee (clarified butter), and herbs. A full panchakarma program is always done under the supervision of an ayurvedic physician.

Healthy weight

Including yoga sattvic foods in your diet (see Yoga Diet Pantry) along with daily asana practice (see Yoga Diet Asanas), will help you achieve and maintain your healthiest weight and feel great. Instead of fad weight loss programs that emphasize diets toward more protein or carbohydrates, the most healthful way to reach and maintain your perfect weight is to eat smaller portions of more kinds of sattvic foods. Portion control is easy when you include yoga foods, herbs, and seasonings high in flavor and variety. In this way, you can enjoy your meals and never feel deprived, and won't be sacrificing valuable nutrients. You can brown-bag sattvic foods from home or assemble them at most salad bars. When eating out at restaurants, practice portion control and make sure that whole grains, beans and vegetables take center stage on the plate, with little or no meat.

Asana practice is an important part of the yoga diet to help develop a sattvic body and mind. To burn more calories, practice the vigorous flow-styles of yoga, like vinyasa or power yoga, that are more cardio in nature. Researchers at Adelphi University found that vigorous vinyasa practice can provide the same calorie-burning benefits as traditional aerobic exercises. 🌀



to see this connection when they get on their horses and ride into the mountains. Their idea of Utopia is not about having the biggest house or tremendous box office success; it is about nature and the personal relationship with these fabulous animals. It has a way of making people complete. One of my favorite lines in the book is when Dennis Quaid told me, 'I love the way the world looks from up here.' That really does sum up the feeling of being on a horse – there is no other feeling like it."

When one thinks of celebrities and their enduring bond with horses, Robert Redford is the first name that comes to mind. From *The Electric Horseman* to *The Horse Whisperer*, Redford defines the Hollywood Horseman. "Horses have taught me a kind of meditation that's possible when you're acting as one and communicating instinctively without

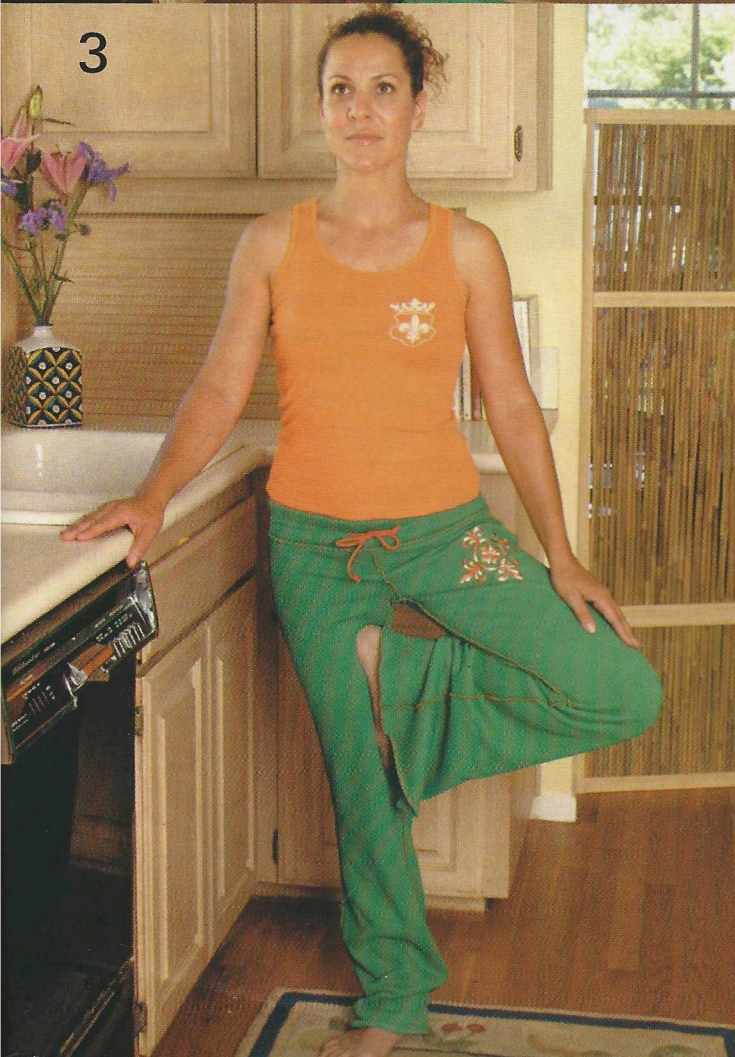
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YOGA DIET ASANAS

Do these quick, revitalizing poses for improved digestion, stress relief, and increased flexibility, energy, and strength, anytime!

1 Chest Expander

It lifts and tones the diaphragm, chest and abdomen, helping to promote digestive health and alleviate heartburn. It's especially good for relieving tension in the back, neck and shoulders, giving an instant boost of energy.

2 Spread-Leg Forward Bend (Prasarita Pada Uttanasana)

It's a great warm-up that stretches the entire body, particularly the hips, legs, and back. It also tones the abdominals, promoting easier digestion.

3 Tree Pose (Vrksasana)

It strengthens the legs, increases the flexibility of the hips and groin, improves balance, and quiets the mind. It fosters harmony of the body and mind, helping you to be in the moment to cook and enjoy your meal.