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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Topics:

- 1: Dharma talk: Why Take Refuge in the Three Jewels?**
- 2: Buddhist Diet Health: Eggplant**
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Main content:

### **1: Dharma talk: Why Take Refuge in the Three Jewels?**

Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, everyone! Taking refuge in the Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—is a profound commitment that serves as the foundation of Buddhist practice. This act of refuge signifies a practitioner's recognition of the path toward enlightenment and the support offered through the teachings and community. Here are several key reasons to take refuge in the Three Jewels:

#### **1. Guidance and Protection**

**The Buddha as the Teacher.** The Buddha serves as the ultimate teacher, providing a clear example of how to overcome suffering and achieve enlightenment. By taking refuge in the Buddha, practitioners acknowledge his wisdom and guidance, allowing his teachings to illuminate their own path.

**The Dharma as the Path.** The Dharma, comprising the teachings of the Buddha, acts as a guidebook for navigating life's challenges. By adhering to the Dharma, practitioners gain a framework for understanding the nature of suffering, the importance of ethical conduct, and the methods for cultivating mindfulness and compassion.

**The Sangha as Community.** The Sangha offers a supportive community of like-minded individuals who share a commitment to the path. This network fosters encouragement, accountability, and mutual growth, creating a nurturing environment for spiritual practice.

#### **2. Cultivating Inner Peace and Wisdom**

Taking refuge encourages practitioners to engage in practices that cultivate inner peace, such as meditation, ethical living, and mindfulness. These practices help reduce stress, anxiety, and confusion, fostering a clearer understanding of oneself and the world.

The teachings of the Dharma provide insights into the true nature of reality—impermanence, suffering, and non-self. This understanding can lead to greater wisdom and a more profound sense of inner freedom.

#### **3. Building a Meaningful Life**

Taking refuge in the Three Jewels gives life a greater sense of purpose and direction. Practitioners commit to living in a way that promotes compassion and reduces suffering for themselves and others, aligning their actions with their values.

By taking refuge, individuals connect to a rich spiritual tradition that spans centuries. This connection fosters a sense of belonging to something greater than oneself, providing inspiration and motivation to continue on the path.

The act of taking refuge is a commitment to actively seek ways to overcome personal suffering and the suffering of others. It emphasizes the belief that liberation from suffering is possible through understanding and practice.

By taking refuge, practitioners acknowledge their potential for awakening—the realization of their true nature and the interconnectedness of all beings. This awakening leads to compassion, empathy, and a deeper appreciation for life.

#### 4. Lifelong Support and Encouragement

The teachings of the Buddha and the support of the Sangha provide ongoing guidance throughout the ups and downs of life. Practitioners are reminded that they are not alone on their journey, and that wisdom and compassion are always accessible.

Taking refuge in the Three Jewels establishes a solid foundation for personal growth. As practitioners deepen their understanding of the Dharma and strengthen their connections with the Sangha, they are better equipped to navigate life's challenges with resilience and grace.

## 2: Buddhist Diet Health: Eggplant

Eggplant, also known as aubergine, is a versatile and nutritious vegetable that is widely used in various cuisines around the world. In the context of the Buddhist diet, which emphasizes plant-based, wholesome foods, eggplant plays an important role. This post explores the health benefits of eggplant, its culinary applications, and its cultural significance in Buddhist practices.

### Health Benefits of Eggplant

Eggplant is not only a flavorful addition to meals but also offers a range of health benefits that align with the principles of the Buddhist diet, promoting well-being and vitality.

#### Rich in Nutrients

Eggplants are low in calories and contain essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamins B1, B6, K, potassium, and folate. They provide a good source of dietary fiber, which is important for digestive health.

#### High in Antioxidants

Eggplants are rich in antioxidants, particularly nasunin, which is found in the skin. Antioxidants help protect the body from oxidative stress and reduce inflammation, contributing to overall health.

#### Heart Health

Consuming eggplant may help lower cholesterol levels and improve heart health. The fiber content helps reduce cholesterol absorption, while potassium helps regulate blood pressure.

#### Weight Management

Eggplant's high fiber content and low calorie count make it an excellent food for weight management. It provides a feeling of fullness and helps control appetite, making it easier to maintain a healthy weight.

#### Blood Sugar Control

Some studies suggest that eggplants may help manage blood sugar levels, making them a suitable option for those with diabetes. The fiber and antioxidant content can support metabolic health.

In various cultures, eggplants are considered symbols of fertility and abundance, often featured in meals during harvest festivals and celebrations. Eating locally sourced, seasonal vegetables like eggplant

fosters a connection to the earth and the natural cycles of growth, which aligns with the Buddhist principle of mindfulness and gratitude for nature.

The act of preparing and enjoying eggplant dishes encourages mindfulness in cooking and eating. Practitioners can reflect on the interconnectedness of all beings while nourishing their bodies with wholesome foods.

### **3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Three cups eggplant**



#### **Ingredients:**

- 2 medium eggplants, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1/4 cup sesame oil (or vegetable oil)
- 1/4 cup soy sauce (or tamari for gluten-free)
- 1-inch piece ginger, sliced or minced
- 2-3 fresh red chilies, sliced (adjust to taste)
- 1 tablespoon sugar (optional, to balance flavors)
- Fresh basil leaves (Thai basil if available), for garnish
- Salt and pepper, to taste

#### **Steps:**

##### **1. Prepare the Eggplant:**

Cut the eggplants into bite-sized pieces. If desired, sprinkle with salt and let them sit for about 15 minutes to draw out excess moisture and bitterness. Rinse and pat dry.

##### **2. Heat the Oil:**

In a large skillet or wok, heat the sesame oil over medium heat. Once hot, add the ginger, and sliced chilies. Sauté for about 1-2 minutes until fragrant.

### 3. Cook the Eggplant:

Add the eggplant pieces to the skillet. Stir-fry for about 5-7 minutes, allowing the eggplant to absorb the flavors and soften. You may need to add a splash of water to help the cooking process and prevent sticking.

### 4. Add the Sauce:

Pour in the soy sauce and sugar (if using). Stir well to coat the eggplant evenly. Allow it to simmer for an additional 5-10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the eggplant is fully cooked and tender.

### 5. Adjust Seasoning:

Taste the dish and adjust with salt and pepper as needed. The flavors should be rich and aromatic.

### 6. Serve:

Remove from heat and transfer to a serving dish. Garnish with fresh basil leaves before serving.