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Topics:

- 1: Dharma talk: What is Zen? How should we cultivate in Zen?**
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Main content:

1: Dharma talk: What is Zen? How should we cultivate in Zen?

Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, everyone! Zen is a school of Mahayana Buddhism that emphasizes direct experience and meditation over doctrine and ritual. The word "Zen" comes from the Sanskrit word "Dhyana", meaning meditation, which passed through Chinese as "Chan". Zen places great importance on mindfulness, self-discipline, and the experience of enlightenment, often expressed as "satori" (a sudden moment of realization). The essence of Zen is rooted in the idea of realizing one's true nature through direct, personal insight, free from intellectualization.

Historical Spread of Zen. Origins in China (Chan Buddhism): Zen developed in China in the 6th century, where it became known as Chan Buddhism. It was profoundly influenced by Taoist philosophy, which shaped its approach to simplicity, spontaneity, and harmony with nature. The Indian monk Bodhidharma is often credited with bringing the teachings of meditation from India to China, where they evolved into Chan.

Cultivating Zen involves a disciplined yet open-hearted approach to life. Here are some key practices:

Zazen (Seated Meditation): The cornerstone of Zen practice is zazen, which is simply sitting in meditation. The goal is not to control thoughts but to observe them with detachment and return to the present moment, often by focusing on the breath. Through regular practice, the mind quiets, and deeper awareness is cultivated.

Mindfulness in Everyday Life: Zen teaches that enlightenment is found not just in meditation but in the ordinary activities of life. Simple tasks like walking, eating, or cleaning are opportunities to practice mindfulness and live fully in the present moment.

Embodying Simplicity and Non-Attachment: Zen encourages a lifestyle of simplicity, non-attachment, and presence. This means letting go of excessive desires, clinging, and aversion, and embracing each moment as it is.

In the Orient (China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam), Zen remains deeply embedded in cultural traditions, temples, and monastic communities. In the West, Zen has adapted to modern life, often practiced in meditation centers or integrated into secular mindfulness practices. In both settings, however, Zen's core emphasis on direct experience, mindfulness, and the cultivation of a peaceful mind remains consistent.

Ultimately, cultivating Zen means returning to the present moment, letting go of distractions, and living with clarity and compassion, regardless of cultural or geographical background.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: String Beans

String beans, also known as green beans or snap beans, are a popular ingredient in the Buddhist diet due to their nutritional value, versatility in cooking, and alignment with the principles of compassionate and mindful eating. As a plant-based food, string beans support the ethical foundation of a non-harming diet, which is central to Buddhist practice.

Nutritional and Health Benefits of String Beans:

Low in Calories, High in Fiber: String beans are naturally low in calories, making them a great option for those who wish to maintain a balanced and healthy weight. A single serving contains about 2.7 grams of dietary fiber, which aids digestion, supports gut health, and helps prevent constipation.

Rich in Vitamins and Minerals: Green beans are a good source of several important vitamins, particularly vitamin C, which boosts the immune system, and vitamin A, which supports eye health and skin regeneration. They are also rich in vitamin K, essential for blood clotting and bone health, and folate, which is important for cell division and DNA production.

Antioxidant Properties: String beans contain a variety of antioxidants, including flavonoids and carotenoids, which help protect the body from oxidative stress and reduce the risk of chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease.

Supports Heart Health: Being low in fat and sodium, string beans contribute to cardiovascular health by helping to regulate blood pressure and cholesterol levels. The fiber in green beans also aids in lowering bad cholesterol (LDL), which can reduce the risk of heart disease.

Bone Health: The presence of silicon, a trace mineral important for bone health, along with vitamin K, makes string beans beneficial for maintaining healthy bones and reducing the risk of osteoporosis, particularly for individuals on a plant-based diet.

In Buddhist cultures, particularly in regions like China, Korea, and Japan, string beans have long been included in temple meals and vegetarian dishes. They embody the simplicity and earthiness of traditional Buddhist monastic cuisine, which emphasizes natural, plant-based ingredients that are in harmony with nature. Eating string beans and other vegetables grown in the local environment aligns with the principle of mindfulness, encouraging practitioners to appreciate food that is fresh, seasonal, and minimally processed.

Moreover, string beans are often used in communal meals in Buddhist temples, promoting the values of sharing and connectedness with the community. Their role in the Buddhist diet is one of balance and moderation, reflecting the middle way between indulgence and deprivation.

String beans are a perfect addition to the Buddhist diet, offering a range of health benefits such as supporting heart health, providing essential vitamins and minerals, and contributing to healthy digestion. Their cultural significance as a simple, plant-based food that embodies Buddhist values of mindfulness and compassionate living enhances their role in both daily meals and special occasions. By incorporating string beans into a mindful, balanced diet, one can enjoy their nutritional value while adhering to the ethical principles of Buddhist practice.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stir-Fried String Beans With Tofu



Ingredients:

- 1 block Tofu
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. cornstarch, Sauce
- 2 Tbsp. soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp. black bean sauce
- 4 tsp. sugar

Steps:

1. To prepare the tofu: Pat the tofu dry with paper towels. In a large bowl, combine the tofu, salt, and 2 teaspoons cornstarch and stir to mix well. Let stand for 15 minutes to marinate while you prepare the other ingredients.
2. To make the sauce: In a medium bowl, combine ½ cup of water with the soy sauce, black bean sauce, sugar, and 2 teaspoons cornstarch. Stir to mix well.
3. To make the stir-fry: In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium-high heat until hot. Strain the tofu and add it to the skillet without overlapping. Let cook undisturbed until the bottoms turn golden, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip over and cook the other sides until golden. Transfer to a large plate.
4. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and the green beans to the pan and reduce the heat to medium. Cook the green beans, stirring and flipping occasionally, until they are browned and tender, 10 minutes or so. Reduce the heat to medium-low if the pan starts to smoke.
5. Increase the heat to medium-high. Drizzle with the 1 teaspoon oil and cook and stir for 1 minute to release the fragrance.

6. Add the tofu back into the skillet. Stir the sauce again to make sure the cornstarch is dissolved, then pour it into the pan. Stir a few times until the sauce thickens and coats the ingredients.
7. Immediately transfer the contents of the pan to a large plate and serve hot over rice (if using).

