

Date: 11/09/2024 11/10/2024

Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Topics:

1: Dharma talk: Liberation - Renounce and depart from the Five Desires, Cultivate the mind for the noble path

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Bean curd sticks

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stewed mixed vegetables (Luohan Zhai)

Main content:

1: Dharma talk: Liberation - Renounce and depart from the Five Desires, Cultivate the mind for the noble path

Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, everyone! Liberation, in the context of Buddhism, refers to the ultimate freedom from suffering, attachment, and the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara). It is the realization of one's true nature, unclouded by ignorance, desire, and ego. In Buddhism, this is often referred to as nirvana—a state of profound peace and awakening where the mind is free from the distortions of craving, aversion, and delusion.

The Five Desires—desire for wealth, sex, food, fame, and sleep—are considered in Buddhism to be attachments that hinder the soul's journey towards enlightenment. When our hearts and minds are entangled in the pursuit of these desires, we find ourselves caught in cycles of dissatisfaction, longing, and dependency. While these desires bring temporary pleasure, they also create suffering, as nothing in the material world is permanent or fully satisfying.

To walk the path toward liberation, one must recognize the temporary nature of these attachments and consciously choose to let go. Renunciation, however, is only part of the journey. As one releases attachment to the Five Desires, space is created for cultivating a noble and disciplined mind. This involves practicing mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom—qualities that form the foundation of the Eightfold Path. By transforming one's thoughts and actions to align with these noble virtues, the practitioner gradually unveils the essence of the Dharma, seeing reality more clearly and breaking free from the cycles of suffering.

In practice, this renunciation is not necessarily about abandoning life's pleasures but about seeing them for what they are: impermanent, limited, and often a distraction from deeper truths. By loosening our attachment to the Five Desires, we create space within ourselves for spiritual growth. This allows us to align more closely with the Eightfold Path and walk steadily toward awakening.

The path to liberation is also marked by the cultivation of the Noble Eightfold Path, which guides one in right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Through these practices, the mind becomes purer, the heart more compassionate, and the individual more aligned with the truth of impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

Thus, liberation is not only the abandonment of external desires but also the deep internal cultivation of an awakened mind. This path leads one from the shadows of desire and delusion to the light of wisdom and peace, fulfilling the promise of the Noble Path.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Bean curd sticks

Bean curd sticks, also known as yuba or tofu skin, are a popular ingredient in Buddhist cuisine. Made from soybeans, these versatile sticks are created by skimming the thin layer that forms on the surface of heated soy milk. They are then dried and packaged for later use. Bean curd sticks are highly valued in the Buddhist diet for their protein content, texture, and adaptability in various dishes.

Nutritional Benefits of Bean Curd Sticks

Bean curd sticks are packed with nutrients and are particularly appreciated for their high protein content, making them an excellent source of plant-based protein for those following a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. Here's a closer look at their health benefits:

Rich in Protein: With a complete profile of essential amino acids, bean curd sticks are an ideal protein source for muscle repair, cell regeneration, and overall health.

Low in Carbohydrates: Bean curd sticks are low in carbs, making them a good choice for those looking to control blood sugar levels or maintain a low-carb diet.

High in Fiber: Bean curd sticks contain fiber, which helps with digestion, promotes a feeling of fullness, and supports cardiovascular health.

Mineral-Rich: They are a good source of calcium, iron, and magnesium. Calcium is crucial for bone health, while iron is essential for oxygen transport in the blood. Magnesium aids in muscle function and energy production.

Antioxidant Properties: Soy-based foods, including bean curd sticks, contain phytoestrogens and antioxidants that help combat oxidative stress and may lower the risk of chronic diseases.

In Buddhist cuisine, bean curd sticks embody the principle of mindful eating. They allow practitioners to honor the values of compassion and non-harming by providing a nutritious and satisfying source of protein without harming animals. Their simple, wholesome nature aligns with the Buddhist emphasis on moderation, balance, and awareness in dietary choices.

Bean curd sticks, along with other soy-based foods, are treasured in Buddhist traditions for their purity and adaptability, which can nourish both body and mind. By incorporating this ingredient into meals, individuals can benefit from its nutritional value and find a delicious way to support a compassionate lifestyle.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stewed mixed vegetables (Luohan Zhai)



Ingredients:

Vegetables and Main Ingredients

- 1 cup dried shiitake mushrooms, rehydrated and sliced
- 1 cup napa cabbage, chopped
- 1 cup bok choy, chopped
- 1/2 cup lotus root, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup carrot, sliced into rounds
- 1/2 cup wood ear mushrooms (reconstituted, if dried)
- 1/2 cup bamboo shoots, sliced
- 1/2 cup snow peas, trimmed
- 1/2 cup fried tofu puffs, halved
- 1/4 cup baby corn
- 1/4 cup water chestnuts, sliced

Seasonings and Sauces

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil (such as peanut or sesame oil)
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon dark soy sauce (for richer color, optional)
- 1 teaspoon sugar (or adjust to taste)
- 1/4 teaspoon five-spice powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (or adjust to taste)
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 cup vegetable broth or water

Steps:**1. Prepare the Ingredients**

Rehydrate the dried shiitake mushrooms by soaking them in warm water for about 20–30 minutes until softened. Drain and slice. Prepare other vegetables by washing, peeling, and slicing them into bite-sized pieces as needed.

2. Sauté the Aromatics

In a large wok or pot, heat the vegetable oil over medium-high heat. Add the rehydrated mushrooms and stir-fry for 2–3 minutes until fragrant.

3. Add Vegetables and Tofu

Add harder vegetables first, such as lotus root, carrots, and bamboo shoots. Stir-fry for 3–4 minutes, allowing them to absorb some flavor. Then, add the softer vegetables like napa cabbage, bok choy, snow peas, wood ear mushrooms, tofu puffs, baby corn, and water chestnuts.

4. Season the Dish

Pour in the soy sauce, dark soy sauce (if using), sugar, five-spice powder, salt, and white pepper. Stir to coat the vegetables evenly.

5. Simmer the Stew

Pour in the vegetable broth or water. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to low. Cover and let it simmer for about 15–20 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender and the flavors are well combined. Adjust seasonings as needed.

6. Serve

Transfer the stewed vegetables to a large serving bowl.