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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: The Eight Great Awakenings Sutra.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Matsutake

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stir-fried Matsutake with two peppers

Main content:

1: Dharma Talk: The Eight Great Awakenings Sutra.

Hello everyone! Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, I am Hao Liu! Today, I would like to share the Dharma Talk topic: The Eight Great Awakenings Sutra. The Eight Great Awakenings Sutra is a concise and powerful Mahāyāna Buddhist text that outlines eight core realizations (or "awakenings") that all Buddhas and great Bodhisattvas continually reflect upon and cultivate. This sutra is traditionally attributed to Shakyamuni Buddha, and it serves as a guide for monastics and lay practitioners alike to awaken wisdom and compassion. The Eight Realizations are reflections on the truths of life and existence, leading practitioners to gradually loosen their attachments, deepen their understanding, and dedicate their lives to the service of all sentient beings. These Eight Awakenings are not only teachings to be understood, but realizations to be embodied through practice. At the end of the sutra, it emphasizes that these eight realizations are the practice of Great Beings (Mahāsattvas). Whoever diligently cultivates them can transcend suffering and attain ultimate enlightenment. It urges practitioners to recite and reflect on them often, to gradually enter the Bodhisattva Path.

The original text of the Eight Great Awakenings Sutra is as follows:

Buddhist Disciples! At all times, day and night, sincerely recite and bear in mind these eight truths that cause great people to awaken.

The First Awakening: The world is impermanent. Countries are perilous and fragile. The body is a source of pain, ultimately empty. The five skandhas are not the true self. Life and Death is nothing but a series of transformations-hallucinatory, unreal, uncontrollable. The intellect is a wellspring of turpitude, the body a breeding ground of offenses. Investigate and contemplate these truths. Gradually break free of death and rebirth.

The Second Awakening: Too much desire brings pain. Death and rebirth are wearisome ordeals, originating from our thoughts of greed and lust. By lessening desires we can realize absolute truth and enjoy peace, freedom, and health in body and mind.

The Third Awakening: Our minds are never satisfied or content with just enough. The more we obtain, the more we want. Thus we create offenses and perform evil deeds. Bodhisattvas don't wish to make these mistakes. Instead, they choose to be content. They nurture the Way, living a quiet life in humble surroundings-their sole occupation, cultivating wisdom.

The Fourth Awakening: Idleness and self-indulgence are the downfall of people. With unflagging vigor, great people break through their afflictions and baseness. They vanquish and defeat the four kinds of demons, and escape from the prison of the five skandhas.

The Fifth Awakening: Stupidity and ignorance are the cause of death and rebirth. Bodhisattvas apply themselves and deeply appreciate study and erudition, constantly striving to expand their wisdom and refine their eloquence. Nothing brings them greater joy than teaching and transforming living beings.

The Sixth Awakening: Suffering in poverty breeds deep resentment. Wealth unfairly distributed creates ill-will and conflict among people. Thus, Bodhisattvas practice giving. They treat friend and foe alike. They do not harbor grudges or despise amoral people.

The Seventh Awakening: The five desires are a source of offenses and grief. Truly great people, laity included, are not blighted by worldly pleasures. Instead, they aspire to don the three-piece precept robe and the blessing bowl of monastic life. Their ultimate ambition is to leave the home life and to cultivate the Path with impeccable purity. Their virtuous qualities are lofty and sublime; their attitude towards all creatures, kind and compassionate.

The Eighth Awakening: Like a blazing inferno, birth and death are plagued with suffering and affliction. Therefore, great people resolve to cultivate the Great Vehicle, to rescue all beings, to endure hardship on behalf of others, and to lead everyone to ultimate happiness.

These are the Eight Truths that all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great people awaken to. Once awakened, they even more energetically continue to cultivate the Path. Steeping themselves in kindness and compassion, they grow in wisdom. They sail the Dharma ship across to Nirvana's shore, and then return on the sea of birth and death to rescue living beings. They use these Eight Truths to show the proper course for living beings, causing them to recognize the anguish of birth and death. They inspire all to forsake the five desires, and to cultivate their minds in the manner of Sages.

If Buddhist disciples recite this Sutra on the Eight Awakenings, and constantly ponder its meaning, they will certainly eradicate boundless offenses, advance towards Bodhi, and will quickly realize Proper Enlightenment. They will always be free of birth and death, and will abide in eternal bliss.

The above is what we learned today. Everyone is welcome to recite and learn The Eight Great Awakenings Sutra. Namó Amitabha!

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Matsutake

In the serene rhythm of the Buddhist kitchen, every ingredient is chosen with care and reverence—not only for its flavor, but for its harmony with the body, mind, and spirit. Among the cherished treasures of nature, the matsutake mushroom stands as a fragrant and rare delicacy, offering both nourishment and spiritual significance.

What is Matsutake?

Matsutake, meaning “pine mushroom” in Japanese, is a wild mushroom known for its distinctive aroma and firm texture. It grows symbiotically beneath pine trees in autumn and is highly prized in East Asian culinary and medicinal traditions.

In the Buddhist diet—rooted in compassion, moderation, and wholesome living—matsutake is celebrated not for extravagance, but for its natural purity and medicinal energy.

Health Benefits

Rich in Antioxidants

Matsutake contains bioactive compounds that help combat oxidative stress, promoting cellular health and longevity.

Boosts Immunity

Its polysaccharides support the immune system, aligning with the Buddhist ideal of maintaining a strong and healthy body to better serve others.

Low in Calories, High in Fiber

Matsutake is an ideal food for clean eating—light yet satisfying, supporting digestive health and gentle nourishment.

Supports Detoxification

It contains compounds that may assist in liver health and detoxification, making it a grounding food in times of seasonal or spiritual cleansing.

Mood and Mind Clarity

Its subtle aroma and satisfying texture contribute to mindful eating, helping one return to the present moment with gratitude.

In Buddhist cooking, onion, garlic, and other pungent roots are typically avoided. Matsutake provides a naturally deep flavor that satisfies the palate without stimulating the senses excessively, in accordance with the Five Pungent Roots Precept.

In Japanese Zen monasteries and Chinese Chan temples, matsutake is more than food—it is a gift from the forest, a seasonal blessing, and a symbol of impermanence. Its brief harvest season reminds us of life's fleeting beauty, and its hidden growth beneath pine trees reflects the virtue of humility.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stir-fried Matsutake with two peppers



Ingredients:

Fresh matsutake mushrooms – 100g (sliced thinly)

Red bell pepper – 1 small (sliced into strips)

Green chili or mild green pepper – 1 small (sliced into strips)

Ginger – 3–4 slices

Oil – 1.5 tbsp (use sesame oil or light vegetable oil)

Salt – 1/3 tsp (or to taste)

Soy sauce – 1 tsp (light soy sauce)

Mushroom seasoning powder or a dash of white pepper – optional, for extra umami

Steps:

1. Clean the matsutake gently with a damp cloth or soft brush to remove dirt (don't soak in water). Slice thinly.

Wash and slice both red and green peppers into thin strips.

Slice ginger thinly.

2. Heat oil in a wok or skillet over medium heat. Add the ginger slices and stir-fry until aromatic.

3. Add the sliced matsutake mushrooms. Stir gently for about 1–2 minutes until they release fragrance.

4. Add the two kinds of peppers. Stir-fry together with the mushrooms for another 1–2 minutes.

5. Add salt, soy sauce, and optional wine. Stir well to combine.

(Optional) Sprinkle a pinch of mushroom seasoning or white pepper for enhanced flavor.

Stir-fry until everything is tender-crisp and fragrant. Avoid overcooking to preserve texture and aroma.