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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: One of the Five Precepts — refraining from stealing is the baseline of civilization

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Wakame

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Miso Soup with Tofu and Wakame

Main content:

1: Dharma Talk:

Hello everyone! Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, I am Hao Liu! Today, I would like to share the Dharma Talk topic: One of the Five Precepts — refraining from stealing is the baseline of civilization. One of the Five Precepts — Refraining from Stealing Is the Baseline of Civilization: A Reflection from the Life of the Buddha

Among the Five Precepts that form the ethical foundation in Buddhism, refraining from stealing is not merely a rule against taking what does not belong to us—it is a vital principle that supports trust, harmony, and moral integrity in any society. This precept resonates deeply when reflected through the life and teachings of the Buddha, whose own journey provides profound lessons on the importance of respect for others' rights and property.

Before becoming the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama was born into a royal family with abundant wealth and privileges. However, he became deeply troubled by the suffering he witnessed beyond the palace walls. He renounced all material possessions and luxuries, choosing instead a life of simplicity, mindful living, and ethical discipline. In doing so, he exemplified the principle of not taking more than what was needed and respecting the lives and property of others.

One pivotal story from his early life illustrates this vividly. After his renunciation, Siddhartha survived by receiving alms from villagers. These gifts were freely given, a mutual act of generosity and trust between giver and receiver. Siddhartha never took anything that was not offered, showing deep respect for others' property and choice. This practice symbolized a profound ethical stance: refraining from stealing is not just about avoiding theft but about honoring the dignity and autonomy of others.

The Buddha's teachings further emphasize that stealing arises from greed, ignorance, and attachment—all sources of suffering. He taught that true freedom comes from letting go of these desires, living honestly and contentedly. By refraining from stealing, individuals cultivate self-discipline and compassion, creating a society based on fairness and mutual respect.

In the broader context, the precept against stealing underpins the very structure of civilization. Without respect for property and trust in others, social relationships deteriorate, leading to conflict and instability. The Buddha's life serves as a timeless example that ethical conduct is the foundation upon which peace and harmony are built.

In our modern world, this precept calls us to reflect not only on physical theft but also on subtler forms—such as dishonesty in business, plagiarism, or exploitation of resources without regard for fairness. Embracing the Buddha's example means fostering a culture where generosity, respect, and ethical responsibility guide our actions.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Wakame

Wakame is a tender, subtly flavored sea vegetable commonly used in East Asian vegetarian dishes, particularly in Japan and Korea. It is usually sold dried and rehydrated before cooking. Wakame is a popular ingredient in miso soup, seaweed salads, and stir-fries, often paired with tofu, rice, or simple broths.

Health Benefits of Wakame

Rich in Iodine

Essential for thyroid function and hormone regulation.

High in Calcium and Magnesium

Supports bone health and helps maintain a calm nervous system.

Low in Calories, High in Nutrients

Aids in weight balance and promotes overall vitality.

Antioxidant Properties

Contains fucoxanthin and other compounds that may help reduce inflammation and oxidative stress.

Digestive Health

Wakame is a good source of soluble fiber, which supports gut health and gentle detoxification.

Heart Health

May help reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels when part of a balanced diet.

Wakame is more than just a sea vegetable—it's a symbol of harmony between health, nature, and ethics. In a Buddhist diet, it reflects the ideals of nourishment without harm, simplicity without deprivation, and mindfulness in every meal. Whether in a humble bowl of soup or a nourishing salad, wakame offers a gentle, grounding contribution to both body and spirit.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Miso Soup with Tofu and Wakame



Ingredients:

Water – 500 ml (about 2 cups)

Miso paste (white or red) – 2 tablespoons

Soft or silken tofu – 100–150 g, cut into small cubes

Dried wakame seaweed – 1 tablespoon (rehydrate in water for 5 min)

Optional: A small piece of kombu (kelp) for added umami

Steps:

1. Optional kombu base (for added flavor):

Add the kombu to the water in a small pot and heat gently. Remove just before boiling.

If skipping kombu, just bring water to a gentle simmer.

2. Rehydrate wakame:

Soak dried wakame in a small bowl of water for 5 minutes until it expands.

Drain and set aside.

3. Add tofu and wakame:

Add the tofu cubes and wakame to the simmering water. Cook gently for 2–3 minutes.

4. Add miso paste (important):

Turn the heat to low or off — avoid boiling miso.

Dissolve the miso paste in a ladle or small bowl using a bit of hot soup liquid, then stir it back into the pot. Gently stir to combine.