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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

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Topics:

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

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Vegetable Dumplings

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Steamed Vegetable Dumplings

Main content:

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

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 killing is the baseline of civilization.

At the heart of every civilized society lies a shared understanding: human life is sacred and should be protected. This fundamental value is echoed in countless religious, legal, and moral systems around the world. In Buddhism, this principle is enshrined in the very first of the Five Precepts: to refrain from killing or taking life. More than a personal guideline, this precept represents a universal baseline for any society that seeks peace, justice, and compassion.

To refrain from killing is to recognize the inherent dignity of all living beings. It is a declaration that life is not ours to take at will, and that causing harm — especially the irreversible harm of ending a life — tears at the moral fabric of society. Without this restraint, civilization collapses into violence, fear, and lawlessness. History offers many tragic examples of what happens when life is devalued: war, genocide, oppression, and widespread injustice.

The precept does not only apply to murder in the criminal sense, but extends to all forms of intentional killing — human or animal. In the Buddhist view, all sentient beings have the capacity to suffer and the desire to live. To kill is to deny this shared condition and to assert power over the vulnerable, often for personal gain or convenience. Such actions cultivate cruelty and desensitize the mind, while refraining from them fosters compassion, patience, and respect for life.

In modern times, this precept challenges us to look deeply at the systems we participate in — from violence in our communities to the ethics of warfare, from the treatment of animals to the impact of environmental destruction. It asks us not only to avoid killing directly, but to reduce the harm we cause indirectly, and to advocate for a world where life is cherished and protected.

Refraining from killing is not an abstract ideal. It is a concrete, daily practice — one that begins with the decision to see life in others as we see it in ourselves. As the baseline of civilization, it reminds us that the measure of a society is not in its wealth or power, but in how it treats the most vulnerable and values the most fundamental right of all: the right to live.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Vegetable Dumplings

One of the central tenets in Buddhism is ahimsa, or non-violence, which extends to food choices. Vegetable dumplings, made with fresh vegetables and tofu, embody this principle by avoiding meat and animal products, thereby reducing suffering. Choosing plant-based foods aligns with respect for life and supports ethical eating.

Nutritional Balance in Vegetable Dumplings

Vegetable dumplings combine nutrient-rich ingredients such as:

Tofu: A great plant-based protein source that provides essential amino acids and supports muscle health without the saturated fat found in many animal products.

Vegetables (cabbage, mushrooms, carrots): Rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants, they aid digestion, boost immunity, and reduce inflammation.

Ginger: Not only add flavor but also have anti-inflammatory and immune-supporting properties.

Steaming: This cooking method preserves nutrients better than frying or boiling, keeps the food light, and aids digestion.

Together, these ingredients form a wholesome meal that nourishes the body gently and efficiently.

In Buddhism, eating is considered a mindful activity. Preparing and consuming vegetable dumplings can be a practice of mindfulness—appreciating the colors, textures, and flavors, and acknowledging the effort behind each ingredient. Mindful eating helps improve digestion, prevents overeating, and fosters gratitude.

Benefits for Body and Mind

Because vegetable dumplings are light, low in unhealthy fats, and rich in fiber and nutrients, they support:

Stable energy levels: Avoiding heavy, greasy meals prevents sluggishness and supports concentration.

Detoxification: High-fiber vegetables promote detoxification and gut health.

Emotional balance: Healthy foods can help regulate mood and reduce stress, aiding meditation and spiritual practice.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Steamed Vegetable Dumplings



Ingredients:

Firm tofu (crumbled) – 150g

Shredded cabbage – 100g

Finely chopped shiitake mushrooms – 50g (soaked if dried)

Finely chopped carrot – 50g

Minced ginger – 1 tsp

Soy sauce – 1 tbsp

Sesame oil – 1 tsp

Salt – 1/4 tsp

Ground white pepper – a pinch

Dumpling wrappers – 20 pieces (round, store-bought or homemade)

Steps:

1. Prepare the filling:

In a large bowl, combine crumbled tofu, shredded cabbage, chopped mushrooms, carrot, ginger

Add soy sauce, sesame oil, salt, and white pepper. Mix well until the ingredients are evenly combined.

2. Fill the dumplings:

Place a dumpling wrapper on your palm or a flat surface.

Put about 1 tablespoon of the filling in the center of the wrapper.

Moisten the edge of the wrapper with a little water.

Fold the wrapper in half over the filling and pinch the edges together to seal tightly. You can pleat the edges if you like for a decorative touch.

3. Steam the dumplings:

Prepare a steamer by bringing water to a boil.

Line the steamer basket with parchment paper or cabbage leaves to prevent sticking.

Place dumplings in the steamer basket, leaving space between each dumpling so they don't stick together.

Steam over boiling water for about 10-12 minutes until the wrappers become translucent and the filling is cooked through.

4. Serve:

Serve hot with soy sauce, chili oil, or your favorite dipping sauce.