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Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: The Origin of Buddhist Diet and the Buddha's View on Food

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Mixed-Grain Rice

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Vegetarian Fried Mixed-Grain Rice

Main content:

1: Dharma Talk: The Origin of Buddhist Diet and the Buddha's View on Food

Hello everyone! Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, I am Hao Liu! Today, I would like to share the Dharma Talk topic: The Origin of Buddhist Diet and the Buddha's View on Food. Buddhist Diet is one of the dietary practices followed by Buddhists during their spiritual cultivation. The core principle behind this practice is not just the moderation of food intake, but more importantly, through simplicity and restraint in food, to nurture the practitioner's spirit and mind. This helps them avoid being enslaved by desires and greed, ultimately leading them toward enlightenment and liberation. The practice of vegetarianism in Buddhism is deeply influenced by the Buddha's teachings and is closely related to his personal lifestyle. Through the Buddha's story, we can understand how he conveyed the importance of "moderating desires" through food, and how this helped him progress spiritually.

The Buddha lived a simple and austere life. Not only did he maintain simplicity in his material life, but his approach to food was also marked by great restraint. His lifestyle, particularly his choice of food, exemplified the core teachings of Buddhism—moderation of desires and purification of the mind. In the *Anguttara Nikaya*, the Buddha told his disciples: "The success of spiritual practice is not determined by the abundance and deliciousness of food, but by the moderation and purity of it." The Buddha emphasized the importance of eating in moderation, discouraging indulgence, as excessive desire and luxury would become obstacles to spiritual practice.

In the Buddha's time, Indian society was rife with food-related desires and greed. The Buddha gave a counterexample through his own behavior: he refrained from attending lavish banquets and from indulging in excessive eating. Instead, he ate only once a day. This simple dietary practice was part of his spiritual discipline. His behavior not only embodied restraint in food consumption but also represented a complete transcendence over desire. Through simple eating, the Buddha maintained a pure body and mind, and he encouraged his disciples to remove their attachment and greed towards food.

The Buddha's dietary habits were closely linked to his practice of meditation. Buddhism emphasizes the "Middle Way," and vegetarianism, as one of its practices, signifies that practitioners should avoid both excessive dependence on food and excessive desire for it. In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the Buddha mentioned: "One should not be greedy for food." He warned practitioners to always maintain an appropriate attitude toward food and not allow desires to dominate their actions. This teaching was not merely about limiting food intake but was also a guideline for one's entire attitude toward life: that practitioners should maintain a pure mind at all times, free from external distractions.

In his daily life, the Buddha put these principles into practice. His dietary choices demonstrated his commitment to diligent spiritual practice. The Buddha not only required his disciples to eat at set times and in appropriate amounts but also encouraged them to be mindful while eating, paying attention to the source and significance of the food, and cultivating gratitude and sharing. Through these practices, practitioners gradually developed self-restraint in food consumption, strengthening their ability to control desires and preventing these desires from disturbing their minds.

In the *Dhammapada* and *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the Buddha further expounded on his dietary prohibitions and precepts. In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha stated: "Excessive eating will deplete the body's strength and scatter the mind's focus." He reminded his disciples that overeating would not only burden the body but also cloud the mind, hindering the progress of spiritual practice. In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the Buddha pointed out that practitioners should observe the precept of "not eating before meals," meaning they should avoid allowing food to become an obstacle in their practice, thus preserving a pure and focused mind.

The core of this dietary prohibition is to help practitioners maintain a clear mind and a strong body, which in turn enables better meditation and wisdom cultivation. Overeating not only leads to indulgence in sensory pleasure but also fosters greed for food, diverting one from the true goal of spiritual practice. By moderating food intake and avoiding eating before meals, the Buddha taught his disciples how to better control their desires for food, strengthening their mental faculties and maintaining alertness within themselves.

The purpose of Buddhist Diet goes far beyond satisfying basic physiological needs; it has a deeper spiritual and meditative significance. First, by simplifying the variety and quantity of food, vegetarianism helps practitioners detach from reliance on desires. As the Buddha said in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, the purpose of food is not enjoyment but to maintain the health of the body, so that one has the energy to practice the Dharma. The simplicity and restraint in diet prevent practitioners from focusing on their craving for food and enable them to concentrate more fully on their inner spiritual practice, enhancing meditation and wisdom.

Second, vegetarianism is a way to purify the mind through the restraint of food desires. By reducing greed and dependence on food, practitioners can strengthen their inner peace, enhance mindfulness, and become more focused on their practice in daily life, rather than on external temptations. Through his own life example, the Buddha taught his disciples how to use food as a tool to cultivate inner self-control and wisdom.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Mixed-Grain Rice

In the Buddhist vegetarian diet, food is chosen not only for nourishment but also for its harmony with body, mind, and nature. Mixed-grain rice—a blend of red, black, brown, and white rice—is considered a wholesome staple that embodies balance, simplicity, and mindfulness in eating.

Balanced Energy

Whole grains digest more slowly than polished white rice, providing sustained energy and promoting satiety without heaviness.

Rich in Fiber and Nutrients

Red and black rice varieties are high in fiber, iron, and antioxidants such as anthocyanins, which help regulate digestion and support heart health.

Gentle on the Body

Mixed grains are plant-based, low in fat, and free from animal products, aligning with Buddhist precepts of non-harming (ahimsa) and purity.

Stabilizes Blood Sugar

The complex carbohydrates in whole grains release glucose gradually, helping maintain stable blood sugar levels and reducing fatigue during meditation or long periods of mindfulness practice.

Supports Inner Balance

According to traditional East Asian dietary philosophy, combining grains of different colors and energies (yin-yang balance) harmonizes the body's internal elements—earth, water, fire, air, and space.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Vegetarian Fried Mixed-Grain Rice



Ingredients:

Vegetarian Fried Mixed-Grain Rice

Cooked mixed rice (red, black, and white rice) – 2 cups

Carrot – 1 medium, diced

Sweet corn kernels – ½ cup

Green peas – ½ cup

Ginger – 1 tsp, minced

Salt – to taste

Vegetable oil – 1 tbsp

(Optional) Soy sauce or sesame oil – for extra flavor

Steps:

1. Prepare the rice:

Cook a blend of red, black, and white rice in advance. Let it cool completely — using day-old rice gives the best texture for frying.

2. Blanch the vegetables:

Dice the carrot and briefly blanch it along with the corn and green peas in boiling water for 1–2 minutes. Drain well.

3. Stir-fry the aromatics:

Heat the vegetable oil in a wok or large skillet over medium heat. Add minced ginger, and sauté until fragrant.

4. Add the vegetables:

Stir in the blanched vegetables and cook for 1–2 minutes.

5. Add the rice:

Add the mixed-grain rice. Stir-fry for 3–5 minutes, breaking up any clumps and ensuring everything is evenly combined.

6. Season and serve:

Add salt to taste. Optionally drizzle with a little soy sauce or sesame oil for extra aroma. Serve warm.