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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

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Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: Buddhist Diet Culture and Spiritual Purification

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3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Braised Tofu with shiitake mushroom

Main content:

1: Dharma Talk: Buddhist Diet Culture and Spiritual Purification

Hello everyone! Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, I am Hao Liu! Today, I would like to share the Dharma Talk topic: Buddhist Diet Culture and Spiritual Purification. In Buddhist practice, the Buddhist Diet is not just a set of guidelines for how to eat; it is deeply rooted in Buddhist philosophy and moral teachings. Vegetarianism is not only related to physical health, but also closely connected to the purification of the mind, inner clarity, and the cultivation of wisdom. From the story of the Buddha's life to the teachings found in Buddhist scriptures, the practice of diet holds profound spiritual significance in Buddhism. This article explores how the Buddhist Diet serves as a path for spiritual purification, helping practitioners transcend desire and cultivate wisdom through the Buddha's life and Buddhist scriptures.

In the life of the Buddha, food played a central role. From the luxurious lifestyle as a prince in his youth to abandoning his royal title in search of enlightenment, the Buddha's choices and transformations regarding food reflect the Buddhist "Middle Way" philosophy—neither indulging in pleasure nor engaging in extreme asceticism, but maintaining balance through appropriate moderation.

After attaining enlightenment, the Buddha led a simple life and relied on "alms food" to meet his daily needs. In his teachings, food is part of daily life, but it is not the goal of practice. The Buddha told his disciples that food's purpose is to sustain the body's basic needs and should not become a source of craving. In Buddhism, the Buddhist Diet helps practitioners purify the mind and reduce dependence on material desires, thereby focusing more on wisdom and awakening.

Buddhist scriptures not only incorporate dietary rules but also discuss how practitioners can achieve mental purification and wisdom through food moderation. Texts such as the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, and *Vinaya Pitaka* provide various guidelines and teachings on Buddhist dietary practices.

In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the Buddha emphasized the importance of food in spiritual practice. He pointed out that while food is necessary for maintaining bodily existence, it should not become an obstacle to practice. Dietary discipline should be closely connected with the precepts in a practitioner's daily life. Food is not merely to satisfy bodily desires; it is also for purifying the mind and correcting one's attitude.

In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the Buddha teaches, "Food is only temporary nourishment; if one becomes attached to food, true wisdom cannot be attained." He emphasized that attachment to food leads one to be ensnared by the Five Desires, preventing the mind from becoming pure. Practitioners should maintain a moderate and pure attitude toward food, understanding its impermanence. They should not cling to the taste, quantity, or form of food but should accept it with a grateful heart, thus purifying the mind.

The *Majjhima Nikāya* contains teachings on the "Three times of eating" rule, where the Buddha stipulated that monks should only eat three times a day: in the morning, midday, and afternoon. They should not become attached to the taste, quantity, or other external conditions of food. Here, the Buddha taught his disciples that moderation in food consumption is a form of practice, helping to prevent greed and attachment.

In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, there is a story of the Buddha demonstrating how to cultivate a pure heart through food moderation. The Buddha, through his alms round, received food offerings from followers, but he was never attached to the food he received. His mind was never swayed by the type or quantity of food, but remained pure. This mindset helped the Buddha overcome the temptations of the material world and set an example for his disciples. The Buddha, through his practice of alms food, showed how to connect desire and mind purification, emphasizing the importance of moderating food intake to purify the heart.

The *Vinaya Pitaka* outlines clear regulations regarding food for monastics. Practitioners must moderate their eating habits and avoid excessive craving. The *Vinaya Pitaka* stresses that food should serve as a means of sustaining bodily health rather than as a source of indulgence. The Buddha specifically reminded that overindulgence in food not only burdens the body but also contaminates the mind and obstructs the path to awakening.

Through moderation and purification of food, the Buddha aimed for his disciples to overcome greed and attachment, achieving inner peace and clarity. The *Vinaya Pitaka* also mentions that monks should share their food with others, reflecting the spirit of compassion and selflessness, further helping practitioners recognize the true meaning of food from within.

In Buddhism, the practice of vegetarianism is not merely about nourishing the body—it is also an exercise for spiritual cultivation. The culture of Buddhist Diet demonstrates how Buddhists purify the mind, transcend desire, and achieve spiritual elevation through their dietary practices in daily life.

The Buddhist Diet helps practitioners reduce their dependence on food and attachment, leading them toward a state of "desirelessness." In the Buddha's teachings, desire is the root of suffering, and any form of desire leads to turmoil and restlessness within the mind. Through moderation in food, practitioners avoid overeating and maintain a peaceful mindset, cultivating a state of non-desire and focusing on the purification of the heart and the cultivation of wisdom.

The Buddhist Diet also represents gratitude and respect for life. Before eating, many monasteries and practitioners engage in prayers and meditations, expressing gratitude for the offerings made by others and wishing for the well-being of all sentient beings. Through these acts of gratitude, practitioners not only purify their hearts but also cultivate compassion and strengthen their connection with all living beings.

Buddhism emphasizes that all food is the result of offerings by sentient beings, and practitioners should accept food with a heart of gratitude, while also maintaining compassion and respect for all beings. This shift in mindset helps purify the heart, reduce selfishness and greed, and lead toward a higher spiritual realm.

The Buddhist Diet helps practitioners maintain physical health, but it also cultivates wisdom through the moderation of desire and the purification of food. By exercising self-control over food, practitioners gradually overcome inner cravings, build self-discipline, and lay the foundation for the development of wisdom.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Shiitake mushroom

In Buddhist cuisine, food is more than just nourishment—it is a reflection of mindfulness, compassion, and health. One dish that embodies these principles beautifully is Braised Tofu with Shiitake Mushrooms. Combining the soft, protein-rich texture of tofu with the umami richness of shiitake mushrooms, this dish is both flavorful and aligned with Buddhist dietary practices.

Health Benefits

Braised Tofu with Shiitake Mushrooms is a highly nutritious dish:

Plant-Based Protein: Tofu provides essential amino acids for muscle health and energy.

Rich in Fiber: Mushrooms and vegetables aid digestion and support gut health.

Low in Saturated Fat: The dish is light, making it heart-friendly and suitable for mindful eating.

Immune Support: Shiitake mushrooms contain polysaccharides that may help strengthen immunity.

Vitamins and Minerals: Carrots, green onions, and mushrooms provide a range of micronutrients, supporting overall wellness.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Braised Tofu with shiitake mushroom



Ingredients:

200g firm tofu, cut into cubes

6–8 dried shiitake mushrooms, soaked and sliced

1 small carrot, sliced

1–2 slices of ginger

1–2 tsp soy sauce (adjust to taste)

1 tsp vegetable oil

A pinch of salt

Steps:

1. Prepare Ingredients:

Soak shiitake mushrooms in warm water until softened, then slice.

Cut tofu into cubes, slice carrot, and slice ginger.

2. Sauté Aromatics:

Heat oil in a pan or clay pot over medium heat.

Add ginger slices; sauté until fragrant.

3. Cook Vegetables:

Add sliced mushrooms and carrot to the pan. Stir-fry for 2–3 minutes.

4. Add Tofu and Seasoning:

Gently add tofu cubes.

Add soy sauce and a pinch of salt. Stir carefully to avoid breaking the tofu.

5. Simmer:

Cover the pan and let simmer for 5–7 minutes until the flavors are absorbed and vegetables are tender.

6. Serve:

Transfer to a serving dish and enjoy warm, as a main or side dish.