

Date: 11/08/2025 11/09/2025

Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: The Religious Significance and Spiritual Connotation of Buddhist Diet

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Almond

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Goji Berry, Almond & White Fungus Sweet Soup

Main content:

1: Dharma Talk: The Religious Significance and Spiritual Connotation of Buddhist Diet

Hello everyone! Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, I am Hao Liu! Today, I would like to share the Dharma Talk topic: The Religious Significance and Spiritual Connotation of Buddhist Diet. Buddhist Diet, as a religious ritual, has a profound meaning that far exceeds merely meeting the body's needs. It is not just about dietary restraint but also a manifestation of spiritual practice. This article explores how Buddhists, through the teachings found in Buddhist scriptures, use vegetarianism to achieve inner purity and enlightenment. As part of their spiritual practice, vegetarianism helps practitioners maintain control over their desires and, through the concept of "no-self" (anatta), guides them to transcend attachment to food, experience the impermanence of food, and gain wisdom.

In Buddhist practice, vegetarianism is not just about satisfying physical needs; it is a form of spiritual cultivation that transcends the body. By moderating their food intake, practitioners avoid becoming ensnared by the temptations of desire and thus maintain purity in both body and mind. Buddhism emphasizes the idea of "purity of body and mind," meaning that only when both the body and the mind are pure can one approach enlightenment. In this process, vegetarianism plays a crucial role in helping practitioners maintain control over their desires, reducing the interference of materialism with their spiritual journey.

Through the practice of vegetarianism, practitioners learn to sustain their physical needs with simple food while avoiding excessive desires and attachment. This allows them to shift their focus from sensual pleasures to inner cultivation, strengthening their meditation and wisdom. The *Avatamsaka Sūtra* mentions that practitioners should "diligently practice morality, concentration, and wisdom, and control the mind as if it were a diamond," indicating that discipline and dietary restraint are closely related. Only by maintaining a pure mind can one experience higher levels of wisdom and enlightenment.

The Buddhist concept of "no-self" (anatta) has a profound influence on the culture of vegetarianism. In Buddhism, "no-self" means the dissolution of the individual ego and the relinquishment of attachment

to material things. In terms of food, the "no-self" concept is reflected in how practitioners no longer view food as a tool to satisfy personal desires but as a means to sustain life and aid in spiritual practice. Vegetarianism, through its simplicity and restraint, helps practitioners transcend attachment to food, experience the impermanence of food, and recognize the fragility of life.

In the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*, Vimalakīrti's dialogue with the Buddha emphasizes the key role of "no-self" in practice. Vimalakīrti uses his wisdom to teach disciples that practitioners must recognize the impermanence of their relationship with food. Food itself is impermanent, and its true nature cannot be grasped. Thus, vegetarianism is not only a means of controlling desires but also helps practitioners understand the impermanence of all things, cultivate wisdom, and ultimately attain liberation.

In Buddhist scriptures, food is not only seen as a physical need but also as a tool for wisdom and spiritual practice. Through vegetarianism, practitioners gradually cultivate the correct attitude towards food, seeing it as a means to aid their practice, rather than as a tool for satisfying cravings. Food becomes part of the practitioner's purification of the mind and growth in wisdom, rather than a goal for sensory pleasure.

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* states, "All beings have Buddha nature, and food should also be purified." This teaching suggests that food itself can be seen as a means of purification. Through mindful consumption, practitioners can further experience the Buddha nature and wisdom. By practicing vegetarianism, practitioners can maintain mindfulness during meals, reflect on the origin and significance of food, express gratitude for it, and cultivate inner wisdom and compassion.

The *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* also mentions, "If food can increase wisdom, the practitioner should consume it with right mindfulness." This indicates that food should be consumed with awareness and mindfulness, not driven by desire. Through vegetarianism, practitioners can increase their wisdom and enhance their spiritual awareness while maintaining clarity of mind.

The core spiritual meaning of Buddhist Diet reflects the Buddhist principle of "less desire, contentment." Buddhism encourages practitioners to reduce desires and dependence on material things, achieving inner peace and satisfaction. The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* teaches, "Not greedy, not desiring, one can attain enlightenment," meaning that if practitioners can control their desires for food and material pleasures, they can clearly see the true nature of things and achieve enlightenment.

The purpose of vegetarianism is to allow practitioners to return to inner purity and contentment through dietary restraint. By sustaining themselves with simple food and avoiding luxury and indulgence, practitioners cultivate an attitude of contentment and joy. This mindset not only supports their spiritual growth but also helps them remain focused on their inner self in daily life, rather than being distracted by material temptations from the outside world.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Almond

In the Buddhist vegetarian diet, almonds are cherished for their purity, nourishment, and balance. As a natural plant-based food, the almond represents ahimsa (non-harming) and mindful sustenance — providing energy and strength without taking life. Almonds are often included in temple cuisine, herbal tonics, and nourishing desserts such as Goji Berry & White Fungus Sweet Soup.

Health Benefits

Pure Source of Plant Protein

Almonds supply essential amino acids that support muscle and tissue repair. In a vegetarian or vegan Buddhist diet, they serve as a wholesome substitute for animal-based protein.

Heart and Mind Nourishment

Rich in unsaturated fatty acids and vitamin E, almonds help lower “bad” cholesterol and support cardiovascular health — aligning with the Buddhist ideal of maintaining a calm, balanced heart.

Supports Concentration and Meditation

In temple life, monks often eat small portions of almonds or almond milk before meditation. Their slow-release energy stabilizes blood sugar and sustains mental clarity without heaviness.

Natural Beauty and Longevity Food

Traditional Chinese Buddhist cuisine classifies almonds as (“moistening the lungs and beautifying the skin”). Regular consumption supports clear skin and healthy respiratory function.

Balancing the Elements

Almonds are considered mildly warming and harmonizing — ideal for those seeking balance between yin and yang energies, especially in cold or dry seasons.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Goji Berry, Almond & White Fungus Sweet Soup



Ingredients:

Dried white fungus (Tremella) – 50 g

Goji berries (wolfberries) – 1 tbsp

Almonds (blanched or peeled) – 20 g

Red dates (pitted) – 4–6 pieces

Rock sugar – to taste (about 2–3 tbsp)

Water – about 6 cups (1.5 liters)

Steps:

1. Prepare the ingredients:

Soak the dried white fungus in warm water until fully expanded and soft (about 20–30 minutes). Trim off the hard yellow stem and tear the fungus into small pieces.

Soak the almonds and red dates separately in warm water for 10–15 minutes.

2. Start cooking:

Bring the water to a boil in a large pot. Add the white fungus, almonds, and red dates.

3. Simmer:

Lower the heat and simmer gently for about 40–50 minutes, until the soup thickens slightly and the white fungus becomes jelly-like and tender.

4. Add sweetness:

Stir in the rock sugar and goji berries. Continue to simmer for another 10–15 minutes until the sugar fully dissolves and the goji berries soften.

5. Serve:

Enjoy hot or chilled. The soup is light, nourishing, and mildly sweet.