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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: The Story of Buddha's Teaching to Ananda

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Tomato

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Penne with Tomato Sauce

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: The Story of Buddha's Teaching to Ananda. Ananda was one of Buddha's closest disciples and also his cousin. The bond between Buddha and Ananda was deep, with Ananda being almost always by Buddha's side, recording many of the Buddha's profound teachings. The story of Buddha's teaching to Ananda reflects the Buddha's wisdom and patience in guiding his disciples.

One day, during a discussion, Ananda expressed a concern that had long troubled him: "Respected Buddha, I often find it difficult to fully understand the profound teachings you share, and at times, I feel confused about the practice of the Dharma. My heart is filled with pain. How can I better practice and truly understand the Dharma?"

Buddha smiled and replied, "Ananda, the practice of the Dharma is not merely about understanding profound teachings. More importantly, it is about the awakening of the heart. If you can let go of your attachment to self, abandon your craving for knowledge, and truly calm your mind to experience each moment as it is, you will then understand the true Dharma."

Buddha continued with a metaphor: "Look, Ananda, everything in this world is like a reflection on the surface of water. The more you try to grasp the reflection, the more it disappears. Only by stopping your pursuit and returning to inner peace and mindfulness will the reflection naturally appear."

After hearing the Buddha's teaching, Ananda began to understand the deeper meaning behind Buddha's words. He no longer sought external knowledge and understanding in a blind pursuit, but instead focused on cultivating his inner self and awareness. He began to practice meditation and mindfulness, letting go of worries and attachments to truly experience the essence of the Dharma.

Over time, Ananda's heart grew purer, and his wisdom and compassion flourished. Eventually, under Buddha's guidance, Ananda attained a deep understanding of the Dharma and reached the state of Nirvana.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Tomato

In Buddhist dietary practices, the focus is often on foods that nourish both the body and the mind while aligning with the principles of compassion, mindfulness, and non-harm. A Buddhist diet typically emphasizes vegetarianism, avoiding meat and processed foods, and includes a variety of plant-based ingredients like vegetables, grains, fruits, and legumes. Within this context, tomatoes are considered a valuable food due to their numerous health benefits and their alignment with Buddhist dietary principles.

The Nutritional Benefits of Tomatoes in a Buddhist Diet

Rich in Vitamins and Minerals:

Tomatoes are an excellent source of vitamins, particularly vitamin C, which is crucial for immune function and skin health. They also contain vitamin A (in the form of beta-carotene), which supports vision, skin health, and the immune system. Additionally, tomatoes provide essential minerals like potassium, which helps regulate blood pressure, and folate, which is vital for cell growth and function.

Antioxidant Power:

One of the key health benefits of tomatoes is their high content of antioxidants, particularly lycopene. Lycopene is a powerful antioxidant that helps combat oxidative stress and reduces inflammation in the body. Research has shown that lycopene has a protective effect against various diseases, including cardiovascular disease and certain types of cancer, particularly prostate cancer. The antioxidant properties of tomatoes are in alignment with Buddhist teachings on reducing suffering by promoting physical and mental well-being.

Supports Digestive Health:

Tomatoes are rich in fiber, which promotes healthy digestion and regular bowel movements. The fiber content in tomatoes helps prevent constipation and supports the growth of beneficial gut bacteria, contributing to overall gut health. A balanced digestive system is central to maintaining physical health, which is crucial for meditation and mindfulness practices in Buddhism.

Hydrating and Refreshing:

Being composed of about 95% water, tomatoes are highly hydrating, making them an excellent food choice for maintaining fluid balance in the body. Proper hydration is important for overall health and is especially beneficial for mental clarity during meditation, a key practice in Buddhist teachings.

Low in Calories and High in Nutrients:

Tomatoes are naturally low in calories, making them a great addition to a Buddhist diet focused on mindfulness and moderation. They provide a nutrient-dense option without contributing to excess weight gain, which aligns with Buddhist principles of avoiding overindulgence and attachment to material desires.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Penne with Tomato Sauce



Ingredients:

Penne pasta: 200g

Fresh tomatoes: 4-5 (or use canned crushed tomatoes)

Olive oil: 2 tablespoons

Dried chili peppers: 1-2 (optional)

Fresh basil: a few leaves (optional)

Salt: to taste

Black pepper: to taste

White sugar: 1 teaspoon (optional, to balance the acidity of the tomatoes)

Parmesan cheese (optional): to taste

Steps:

1. Cook the Penne: Bring a large pot of water to a boil, add a pinch of salt, and cook the penne according to the package instructions until "al dente" (slightly firm). Drain the pasta, reserving a little pasta water for later use.
2. Prepare the Tomato Sauce: Wash the fresh tomatoes and cut them into small pieces. If using canned crushed tomatoes, you can skip this step and use the tomatoes directly.
3. Sauté the Tomatoes: In a pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat, then add the fresh tomatoes (or canned crushed tomatoes). Stir and cook for a few minutes, adding a pinch of salt and the sugar to help balance the acidity of the tomatoes.
4. Simmer the Tomato Sauce: Continue to cook the tomatoes until they release their juice, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 10-15 minutes, until the tomatoes are completely softened and the sauce has thickened. If the sauce gets too thick, add a little of the reserved pasta water to adjust the consistency.

5. Season the Sauce: Add fresh basil leaves (optional) and black pepper to taste. Continue stirring and adjust the seasoning with more salt or sugar if needed.

6. Combine the Pasta and Tomato Sauce: Add the cooked penne to the tomato sauce and toss well to coat the pasta evenly with the sauce. If the sauce is too thick, add a bit more reserved pasta water to help combine.

7. Serve: Plate the pasta and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese (optional) and fresh basil leaves for garnish (optional). Serve and enjoy!