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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: Śīla arises from the mind, Affliction Is Also a Mirror.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Zucchini

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Old Beijing Vegan Hu Tazi

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: Śīla arises from the mind, Affliction Is Also a Mirror.

Many people believe that spiritual practice means distancing oneself from troubles and afflictions. But the deeper teaching of Buddhism is not to escape affliction, but to understand it.

Where do our afflictions come from?

Greed, anger, jealousy, pride, doubt—on the surface, they may seem to be caused by circumstances outside us. In reality, external circumstances are merely conditions. What truly gives rise to affliction are the habitual tendencies and attachments that already exist within our own minds.

If there is no seed within, external circumstances may not be enough to make it sprout.

This is why Buddhism places such great emphasis on the mind.

The Dhammapada describes the mind as the foundation of all our actions: when a thought arises, words and actions follow; wholesome and unwholesome thoughts eventually lead to different consequences.

During the Buddha's time, there was a very well-known story about a woman who lost her only child. Overwhelmed with grief, she carried the child's body from place to place, desperately searching for someone who could bring the child back to life.

Eventually, she came before the Buddha and begged him to save her child.

The Buddha did not immediately tell her, “Life is impermanent.”

Instead, he said to her:

“Go and find some mustard seeds.”

The woman was overjoyed, believing that there was finally hope.

But the Buddha added:

“There is one condition. The mustard seeds must come from a household in which no one has ever died.”

The woman went from house to house looking for such a family.

At the first house, the owner said, “We have mustard seeds, but an elderly person in our family has died.”

At the second house, they said, “We have mustard seeds, but we once lost a child.”

Then she went to a third house, and a fourth, and another after that.

At last, she realized that there was not a single household that had never experienced death.

Through this process of asking and listening, she gradually came to understand something profound:

Death was not a tragedy that had happened only to her. Impermanence was something that all living beings were destined to encounter and could never escape.

She returned to the Buddha.

This time, she was no longer clinging to the hope of bringing her dead child back.

The Buddha then taught her the Dharma, and gradually she began to see the truth of impermanence through her suffering.

The truly moving part of this story is not that the Buddha performed a miracle and changed what had happened.

It is that he changed the way she understood what had happened.

The child's death did not change.

The external reality did not change.

What changed was her understanding of that reality.

This is the wisdom of the Dharma.

Much of the suffering we experience in life is like this.

We suffer when we lose someone we love.

We suffer when a relationship comes to an end.

We suffer when our career fails.

We suffer when we are misunderstood by others.

Yet the same event can produce very different degrees of suffering depending on the state of the mind.

Buddhism does not deny human grief.

The Buddha never demanded that someone who had lost a loved one should “cheer up” immediately.

What the Dharma truly does is lead us to look within and ask:

Why am I suffering so deeply?

Perhaps it is because I am attached to the thought, "He must not leave me."

Perhaps I am attached to the belief, "Things must happen according to my expectations."

Perhaps I am attached to the thought, "Others must understand me."

Perhaps I am attached to the belief, "I absolutely must not fail."

These attachments are like ropes that bind the mind tightly.

So sometimes we think we are fighting against the outside world, when in fact, we are struggling against our own attachments.

The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch says:

"If one recognizes one's original mind and sees one's own true nature, one is called a great being, a teacher of gods and humans, a Buddha."

To recognize one's original mind does not mean having some mysterious or extraordinary thought.

It means beginning to see ourselves honestly and directly.

Why am I angry right now?

Why am I jealous?

Why am I afraid?

Why do I need others to approve of me?

Why can I not let go?

To be able to ask ourselves these questions is already a form of awareness.

And only after awareness arises does letting go become possible.

Buddhism speaks of "affliction itself as the path to awakening"

This does not mean that affliction itself is wisdom.

Rather, it means that when we use our afflictions as a way to observe our own attachments, those very afflictions can become an entrance to awakening.

In this sense, the difficulties we encounter in life can sometimes become mirrors.

They reveal our temper.

They reveal our greed.

They reveal our fears.

They reveal our attachments.

A true practitioner does not simply try to smash the mirror.

Instead, they use the mirror to see their own face clearly.

And slowly, we begin to understand:

Other people are our mirrors.

Our circumstances are our mirrors.

Adversity is also our mirror.

When the mind is lost in delusion, obstacles seem to appear everywhere.

When the mind awakens, everywhere can become a place of practice.

This is why we say:

The Way arises from the mind.

This does not mean that the mind can arbitrarily create reality.

It means that an awakened and observant mind can transform the way we meet reality.

When the mind is no longer so tightly bound by attachment, many afflictions lose the power to continue growing.

And so, sometimes, the greatest change we need in life is not a change in the world around us, but a change in the way we see it.

When the mind becomes clear, the path becomes clear.

When the mind learns to let go, suffering begins to loosen its grip.

And when we can truly see our own mind, even our afflictions can become a doorway to awakening.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Zucchini

One vegetable, one natural flavor; one clean and mindful meal. Embracing the freshness of nature and nourishing a balanced diet.

Tender, juicy, and mild in flavor, zucchini is a popular vegetable in plant-based cuisine. It can be enjoyed on its own or paired with grains, beans, mushrooms, and other plant-based ingredients, adding freshness, texture, and nutritional variety to everyday meals.

Nutritional Value of Zucchini

Light and Refreshing — A Natural Choice for a Balanced Diet

Zucchini has a high water content and is relatively low in calories, while also providing dietary fiber. When paired with grains and beans, zucchini can increase the proportion of vegetables in a meal and contribute to a more varied and balanced diet.

Dietary Fiber — Supporting Everyday Nutrition

Zucchini contains dietary fiber. Including it as part of a daily vegetable intake can contribute to overall fiber consumption. Combined with other vegetables, beans, and whole grains, it can be part of a diverse and wholesome plant-based diet.

A Source of Vitamins and Minerals

Zucchini provides nutrients such as vitamin C, B vitamins, and potassium. While no single food can provide all the nutrients the body needs, eating a variety of vegetables in different colors and from different plant groups can help create a more diverse nutritional profile.

Naturally Mild — Ideal for Light Cooking

Zucchini has a naturally mild, slightly sweet, and juicy flavor, so it does not require heavy seasoning to taste delicious. Cooking methods such as steaming, boiling, braising, or lightly stir-frying can help minimize the use of added oils while allowing the vegetable's natural flavor to shine.

Although zucchini is a simple everyday vegetable, it reflects an important principle of plant-based cuisine: embracing natural ingredients and appreciating their original flavors. There is no need for complicated seasoning. Simple cooking allows the natural color, fragrance, texture, and freshness of the ingredients to speak for themselves.

One vegetable, one natural flavor;

one mindful meal, one moment of gratitude.

Eat simply, nourish naturally, and savor every meal with a peaceful and mindful heart.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Old Beijing Vegan Hu Tazi



Ingredients:

1 zucchini (about 400 g / 14 oz), finely shredded

About 100 g (3½ oz) all-purpose flour

1 tbsp cornstarch

½ carrot, finely shredded

50 g (1¾ oz) fresh shiitake mushrooms or other fresh mushrooms, finely chopped

½ tsp salt

A pinch of white pepper

Cooking oil, as needed

Light Dipping Sauce

2 tbsp Chinese black vinegar or rice vinegar

1 tbsp light soy sauce

½ tsp sesame oil

A small pinch of salt

A little white sesame seed, optional

Steps:

1. Prepare the zucchini

Wash and finely shred the zucchini. Add a small amount of salt, mix well, and let it sit for 5–10 minutes until the zucchini naturally releases some moisture.

2. Make the batter

Add the shredded carrot and chopped mushrooms. Add the flour, cornstarch, and a pinch of white pepper. Mix thoroughly, using the natural moisture from the zucchini to form a thick batter.

3. Adjust the consistency

If the batter is too dry, gradually add a small amount of water. The batter should be thick enough to hold together while still being easy to spread. Let it rest for about 5 minutes so the flour can absorb the moisture.

4. Cook the pancakes

Lightly oil a nonstick skillet and heat over medium heat. Spoon the batter into the pan and spread it into a thin round pancake.

5. Cook gently

Cook over medium-low heat until the bottom is set and golden brown. Carefully flip and continue cooking until the other side is golden and fully cooked.

6. Make it crisp

For a slightly crispier texture, increase the heat briefly and cook each side for another 30–60 seconds.

7. Prepare the dipping sauce

Mix the vinegar, light soy sauce, sesame oil, and a small pinch of salt. Sprinkle with white sesame seeds if desired.