Date: 10/31/2026 11/01/2026
Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center
Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:
1: Dharma Talk: Living with Clarity — From Refraining from Intoxicants to a Mindful Life
2: Buddhist Diet Health: Bamboo Fungus
3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Steamed Bamboo Fungus with Asparagus

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: Living with Clarity — From Refraining from Intoxicants to a Mindful Life. Among the Five Precepts of Buddhism, "refraining from intoxicants" seems somewhat different from the preceding precepts. Killing directly harms life, stealing involves another person's property, sexual misconduct concerns emotions and responsibility, and false speech concerns trust between people, while drinking alcohol itself does not necessarily directly lead to these things. So why did the Buddha still include refraining from intoxicants among the Five Precepts for laypeople?

From the perspective of the spirit of the Buddhist precepts, one important reason is that alcohol can easily cause a person to lose clarity, making the body, speech, and mind, which could originally be controlled, become unrestrained. When a person is sober, he may know what should be done and what should not be done; once mindfulness is lost, the boundaries that were previously maintained may be crossed. Therefore, "refraining from intoxicants" reminds us not merely about the choice of a particular beverage, but more importantly about cherishing the two words "clarity" and "awareness."

Buddhist practice places great importance on mindfulness. Mindfulness does not mean constantly monitoring oneself with tension; rather, it means knowing what one is doing, what one is thinking, and what one is experiencing. When eating, knowing that one is eating; when walking, knowing that one is walking; when angry, knowing that one is angry; and when sad, knowing that one is sad.

If a person does not even know his own state, it is very easy for him to be led by his habits. Modern people may not necessarily drink alcohol, but there are many things that can similarly cause the mind to lose clarity. A mobile phone can make people constantly scroll and browse, entertainment can make people continually pursue stimulation, the internet can immerse people in a flood of information, fame and wealth can make people forget their original intentions, and even work can become a way of escaping from one's inner self. Therefore, if "refraining from intoxicants" is understood only as "not touching alcohol," we may miss the reminder it offers to modern people.

What the Buddhist precepts seek to prevent is "heedlessness." Heedlessness is a state in which the mind loses its ability to take care of itself. A person knows that staying up late is harmful to the body, yet stays up late again and again; knows that a certain relationship is hurting him, yet continues because he is unwilling to give up the stimulation; knows that he is becoming addicted, yet tells himself, "Just one more time"; knows that anger will cause harm, yet continues to look for opportunities to vent. At such times, although a person may be physically awake, the mind may not truly be clear. Therefore, genuine

“abstinence from alcohol” can also lead us to consider further: Are there other things in my life that cause me to lose clarity?

When my phone rings, do I necessarily have to check it immediately?

When someone criticizes me, do I necessarily have to respond immediately?

When I feel bored, do I necessarily have to seek stimulation?

When I am in a bad mood, do I necessarily have to escape through consumption, entertainment, or other means?

If a person can pause for a few seconds during these moments, something has already changed.

This extra moment of awareness is itself a form of practice.

Why does Buddhism place such great importance on thoughts and mental states? Because many times, people are not trapped by the events themselves, but by their own reactions to those events. The same sentence may be quickly forgotten by one person, while another person may suffer from it for many days. The external event is the same, but the inner reactions are different, and therefore the results are also different. Thus, the degree of a person’s freedom depends to a great extent on whether he has the ability to observe his own mind. This is also why keeping the precepts and developing concentration cannot be separated from each other.

Observing the precepts can reduce many actions that we may later regret, while concentration can gradually make the mind more stable. When a person is led every day by desire, anger, fear, and information, it is difficult for him to truly see himself. Only when he slows down somewhat does the mind have an opportunity to reveal itself. Therefore, the “clarity” spoken of in Buddhism is especially important for people today.

A person who is clear-minded will gradually discover that many desires are not his true needs, but merely thoughts continually stimulated by the surrounding environment. Mindfulness can help a person return to the present moment. Buddhist practice is not about turning oneself into a person without desires or emotions, but about becoming increasingly able to see these things clearly without being completely controlled by them. Therefore, what “refraining from intoxicants” protects is a state of clarity. At the end of keeping the precepts, there is not bondage, but awakening.

The phrase “the precepts arise from the mind” reveals another meaning here: what truly needs to be protected has never been a person’s outward appearance, but his awareness. When the mind is clear, actions have direction; when the mind understands, choices have proper measure; when the mind is stable, life will not easily be led by external circumstances. To live with clarity is itself a form of practice. And to preserve this clarity amid the complexity and distractions of the world is the deepest compassion a person can offer himself.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Bamboo Fungus

Bamboo fungus is an elegant and delicate mushroom with a light appearance and a tender, crisp texture. It has a distinctive subtle aroma and delicate flavor, and simple cooking is enough to bring out its

natural savory taste. Bamboo fungus contains protein, dietary fiber, a variety of vitamins, minerals, and other naturally occurring plant-based nutrients, making it a nutritious ingredient for a light vegetarian diet.

In Buddhist vegetarian cuisine, bamboo fungus is valued for its delicate and natural qualities and does not require heavy seasoning to bring out its savory flavor. Paired with natural ingredients such as asparagus, lotus root, and shiitake mushrooms, and prepared using simple cooking methods such as steaming or simmering, it preserves the natural flavors of the ingredients while reflecting the Buddhist dietary principles of "purity, simplicity, vegetarianism, and cleanliness."

Nutritional Value of Bamboo Fungus

Contains Plant-Based Protein

Bamboo fungus contains a certain amount of protein and can contribute to the plant-based nutrient intake of a vegetarian diet. When paired with tofu, legumes, and whole grains, it can add variety to the sources of plant-based protein in a meal.

Rich in Dietary Fiber

Bamboo fungus contains dietary fiber. Consuming a variety of plant-based foods rich in dietary fiber, such as mushrooms, vegetables, and whole grains, can contribute to a more balanced and diverse everyday diet.

Contains a Variety of Vitamins and Minerals

Bamboo fungus contains various nutrients, including certain B vitamins and minerals such as potassium, phosphorus, and magnesium. Its actual nutritional content can vary depending on the variety, growing region, drying process, and cooking method. Therefore, it is best enjoyed as one of several types of mushrooms and vegetables in a varied diet.

Low in Calories and Suitable for a Light Diet

Bamboo fungus is relatively low in calories. When prepared by steaming, simmering, or light stir-frying, it can add savory flavor and a pleasing texture to vegetarian dishes without significantly increasing the amount of added fat, making it suitable for those who prefer a light and balanced diet.

Contains Natural Mushroom Polysaccharides and Other Plant Compounds

Bamboo fungus is a type of edible fungus and contains natural compounds such as polysaccharides. These naturally occurring compounds found in mushrooms contribute to the nutritional diversity of a plant-based diet. Including a variety of mushrooms in moderation can help diversify the range of foods in the daily diet.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Steamed Bamboo Fungus with Asparagus



Ingredients:

100 g fresh bamboo fungus (or 20 g dried bamboo fungus)

200 g asparagus

50 g carrot

3–4 slices fresh ginger

Goji berries, as needed (optional)

1 tablespoon light soy sauce

1 teaspoon sesame oil

A small amount of salt

A small amount of white pepper

1–2 tablespoons water

Steps:

1. Prepare the bamboo fungus

If using dried bamboo fungus, soak it in clean water for about 15–20 minutes, changing the water once or twice. Once softened, trim off the ends, wash thoroughly, and drain well. If using fresh bamboo fungus, simply wash it thoroughly.

2. Prepare the asparagus

Wash the asparagus and trim off the tough ends. Cut into pieces about 4–5 cm long. Cut the carrot into thin strips or slices.

3. Arrange the ingredients

Spread the asparagus evenly on a serving plate. Place the bamboo fungus and carrot on top, then add the ginger slices. For a more colorful presentation, sprinkle a small amount of goji berries over the top.

4. Season

Mix the light soy sauce, sesame oil, a small amount of salt, white pepper, and water. Pour the mixture evenly over the bamboo fungus and asparagus.

5. Steam

Bring the water in the steamer to a boil. Place the plate in the steamer and steam over high heat for about 6–8 minutes. The asparagus should remain bright green and slightly crisp, while the bamboo fungus should be fully cooked. Avoid over-steaming.

6. Serve

Remove the ginger slices and serve while warm. For an extra fragrant finish, drizzle a few drops of sesame oil over the dish before serving.