Date: 11/21/2026 11/22/2026
Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center
Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:
1: Dharma Talk: Taking Precepts as the Foundation, Purifying Body and Mind Before Entering Meditation
2: Buddhist Diet Health: Bean Curd Sticks
3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stir-Fried Bean Curd Sticks

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: Taking Precepts as the Foundation, Purifying Body and Mind Before Entering Meditation. In Buddhist practice, the cultivation of the mind is of utmost importance. The saying, “Samadhi arises from the mind,” does not mean forcing oneself to think of nothing or deliberately suppressing thoughts. Rather, it means following the proper methods of practice so that a scattered mind gradually becomes collected, a restless mind gradually becomes calm, and a deluded mind gradually gains clarity.

Buddhism teaches the Threefold Training of Precepts (Sila), Concentration (Samadhi), and Wisdom (Prajna). Precepts are the foundation, concentration is the pivotal practice, and wisdom is the ultimate goal. These three complement and support one another, and none should be neglected. If one wishes to cultivate genuine meditative concentration, one must first begin with the observance of precepts.

The Sutra of the Bequeathed Teachings states: “Precepts are the foundation that rightly leads to liberation; therefore, they are called Pratimoksha.”

The precepts are an essential foundation on the path to liberation. If a person is careless in speech and conduct in daily life, frequently engaging in false speech, anger, greed, or harming others, the mind will naturally become burdened with guilt, worry, and uneasiness. With such a mind, even when sitting on a meditation cushion, it is difficult to attain genuine calm and stability. Therefore, the cultivation of concentration must begin with the observance of precepts.

For lay Buddhists, one may begin with the Five Precepts: abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxicants. One can then proceed to study and practice the Ten Wholesome Actions, disciplining body, speech, and mind so that one's conduct becomes upright, one's words become truthful, and one's thoughts and intentions gradually turn toward goodness.

Observing the precepts does not mean practicing them only in the Buddha hall; rather, it means maintaining constant awareness of oneself in everyday life. When interacting with others, one should

avoid causing harm lightly. When faced with personal gain, one should refrain from greed. As one's conduct becomes increasingly pure, inner attachments, worries, and regrets naturally diminish, thereby establishing a firm foundation for meditative concentration.

The Diamond Sutra states: “One should give rise to the mind without abiding anywhere.” Do not allow the mind to become attached to external circumstances.

One may set aside a fixed period each day for seated meditation. Beginners can start with 20 or 30 minutes. Choose a quiet and clean place, sit upright with the spine naturally straight, rest the hands comfortably, and keep the eyes gently closed or naturally lowered. Then, lightly place your attention on the breath.

When inhaling, know that you are inhaling; when exhaling, know that you are exhaling. Do not deliberately control the breath, nor pursue any extraordinary sensations. Simply remain clearly aware of each breath.

When distracting thoughts arise, do not blame yourself or struggle against them. Simply acknowledge, “I am thinking about something.” Then gently bring your attention back to the breath. Discovering wandering thoughts again and again, and returning to the present moment again and again, is itself the process of cultivating concentration.

In the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, the Sixth Patriarch emphasizes the inherent purity of one's own nature, pointing out that spiritual cultivation should not focus solely on outward forms and rituals, but must also involve working diligently on one's own mind. True meditative concentration means maintaining awareness even in everyday life. When eating, know that you are eating; when walking, know that you are walking; when speaking, be aware of whether your words are kind; when carrying out tasks, be mindful of whether your thoughts and intentions are pure. Maintaining mindfulness in daily life is how meditation extends beyond the cushion and becomes part of one's entire life. Seated meditation is the training; daily life is the test. True inner stability does not mean finding peace only after withdrawing from the world. Rather, it means being able to preserve mindfulness and remain grounded within oneself while facing the many changes and challenges of the world.

In the Samyukta Agama, the Buddha repeatedly taught the importance of mindfulness, clear comprehension, and meditation practice. Spiritual cultivation is not a momentary burst of enthusiasm, but a continuous process of daily practice and refinement. Maintaining a daily meditation routine, even if it lasts only fifteen minutes, is better than occasionally sitting for several hours without consistency. Each day, examine your words and actions, and whenever you recognize a fault, sincerely repent and correct it. Observe your thoughts daily, and whenever greed, anger, or ignorance arise, recognize them promptly. Treat others with compassion, handle matters with equanimity, and approach learning with humility.

The precepts are the foundation, and meditative concentration is the path. Concentration is not something to be sought outside oneself; it arises from within the mind.

Observe the precepts daily, maintain awareness of the mind at all times, and practice seated meditation regularly. Do not seek quick results, and do not give rise to thoughts of retreat or discouragement. As distracting thoughts gradually subside, attachments gradually lessen, and compassion steadily grows, one will naturally become able to preserve a place of inner purity amid the turmoil of the world. This is the true meaning of cultivating meditative concentration.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Bean Curd Sticks

Among the rich and diverse ingredients used in Buddhist Diet cuisine, bean curd sticks stand out for their distinctive soybean aroma, high plant-based protein content, and excellent nutritional value. They are a wholesome vegetarian ingredient that combines delicious taste with health benefits.

Bean curd sticks, also known as dried tofu skin or yuba, are made primarily from high-quality soybeans through a traditional process involving soaking, grinding, heating, the formation of a soy milk skin, collection, and drying.

They retain many of the natural nutrients found in soybeans and are prized for their rich soybean flavor, pleasantly chewy texture, and excellent ability to absorb seasonings. Bean curd sticks are not only a staple ingredient in traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine but also a valuable source of plant-based protein in modern healthy diets.

Five Nutritional and Health Benefits of Bean Curd Sticks

1. High-Quality Plant Protein for Daily Nutrition

Bean curd sticks are rich in soy protein, which helps support the growth and repair of body tissues. Protein also plays an important role in maintaining muscle mass and supporting everyday physical activities, making bean curd sticks an excellent protein source for vegetarians.

2. Contains Soy Isoflavones to Support Overall Well-Being

Soybeans naturally contain isoflavones and other beneficial plant compounds with antioxidant properties. These compounds may also offer potential benefits for women's health and bone health.

3. Cholesterol-Free for a Heart-Conscious Diet

As a plant-based food, bean curd sticks contain no dietary cholesterol. When combined with vegetables, mushrooms, and whole grains, they can be part of a balanced and nutritious diet.

4. Provides Essential Minerals for Normal Body Function

Soy-based foods can provide important minerals such as calcium, iron, magnesium, and potassium. The actual mineral content varies depending on the production process and product type. These minerals help support healthy bones, muscle function, and other essential bodily processes.

5. Promotes Satiety and Supports Healthy Eating Habits

With their relatively high protein content, bean curd sticks can help promote a feeling of fullness. Enjoying them in appropriate portions and choosing healthier cooking methods such as steaming, boiling, stewing, or cold mixing can help reduce excess oil consumption and support a balanced diet.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stir-Fried Bean Curd Sticks



Ingredients:

200g dried bean curd sticks (dried tofu skin)

4 shiitake mushrooms

Wood ear mushrooms, as needed

Celery, as needed

A few slices of ginger

2 tbsp light soy sauce

½ tbsp dark soy sauce

½ tsp sugar

A pinch of white pepper

A little sesame oil

Steps:

1. Soak the Bean Curd Sticks: Soak the dried bean curd sticks in warm water until softened. Rinse, cut into sections and drain well.

2. Prepare the Ingredients: Slice the shiitake mushrooms, soak and drain the wood ear mushrooms, and cut the celery into sections.

3. Sauté the Ginger: Heat some oil in a wok. Add the ginger slices and sauté until fragrant.

4. Stir-Fry the Mushrooms: Add the shiitake mushrooms and wood ear mushrooms. Stir-fry until aromatic.

5. Add the Bean Curd Sticks: Add the bean curd sticks and stir-fry well. Season with light soy sauce, dark soy sauce, sugar and white pepper.

6. Simmer to Absorb the Flavour: Add a little water, cover with a lid and simmer for 3 – 5 minutes.

7. Reduce the Sauce: Add the carrots and celery, then stir-fry until just tender. Drizzle with a little sesame oil before serving.