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For The Best Diet Advice, Look To The East

Jason Bussell

Compare the shape of the average American to the average Asian and you will be reminded that America, with all of its diet fads, is the most obese nation in the world. Chinese culture, on the other hand, has adhered to a diet plan of balance and moderation that we can all practice to live healthier. The various cuisines of Asian countries are very different; but they all adhere to the same principles; a diet of simple whole grains, slightly cooked vegetables, and a little bit of everything else. Too much or too little of any one thing is not good.

All foods have upsides and downsides. **A good diet should be like a good stock portfolio – diversified.** Having the same thing every day overloads you in one sector; making you more prone to the dangers of that sector and missing out on all the other good things happening in the market. So like a good portfolio, you should hedge your bets. Eating smaller amounts of more foods ensures no single one has too great an influence.

White rice is better than brown, which has a thick hull around it. This is similar to eating a walnut with its shell on. The nutrients in the hull have a poor bio-availability. Digesting the hull is difficult, which robs energy and slows our metabolisms. But a variety of grains are better than any one. Simple grains should be taken more than breads and pastas.

Cooked vegetables are better than raw. It is true that cooking slightly will destroy a little of the nutrients (about 10%), but that remaining 90% is then unlocked and available. Whatever you put in your stomach that is cold and raw, you have to heat and cook. This takes time, energy, and slows your metabolism. We get all of our energy from our food. We want to get the energy and life out of it and excrete that which we don't need. Cooking outside the body lightens the load and then we simply act as a filter: sending the good stuff to the tissues, the bad to the tissue paper. We should eat a wide variety of vegetables, mostly locally grown, fresh, and organic.

Calories don't matter. The average person in China consumes between 25-40% more calories than the average American, but they have much less obesity. This is because of the kinds of calories they consume and how they are prepared. Calories from natural sources give you a more steady release of energy, satisfy your hunger, and facilitate appropriate elimination of waste. Cookies, snack foods, artificial sweeteners, sodas, etc, spike our blood sugars, make us hungrier, and slow our digestion. Don't go hungry; just keep yourself full of good, natural food.

Eat a little red meat. Eating too much red meat is associated with myriad health problems. Vegetarians almost have it right, but giving up meat completely will almost always will lead to a long-term deficiency. Chinese medicine recommends we get two ounces, twice a week of specifically mammal meat. One famous Chinese doctor wrote that "Vegetarianism is best suited to monks, living in the shelter of a temple, spending their days in seated meditation". Those of us with a more active lifestyle need a little more of an active food source. Fish and fowl are good too, but we need a little mammal in the rotation. White meat is not better than dark; chicken is not better than beef. We should have a little of most things.

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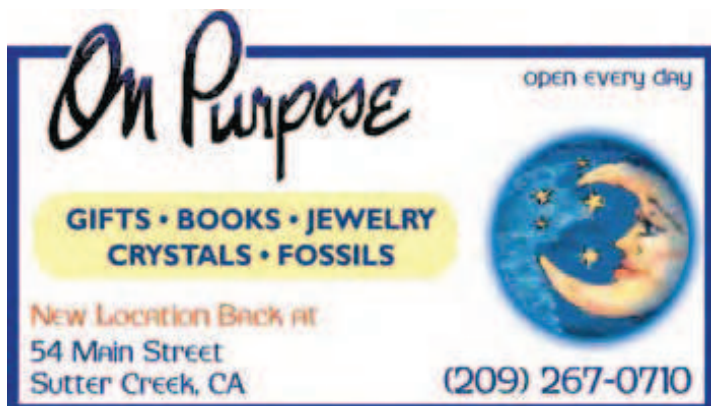
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Minimize Dairy. Dairy is designed by nature for infants to turn into substance in the body. Humans are the only animals that have dairy after infancy. Dairy does have calcium, but it is overwhelmed by the amino acid Casein that actually robs the bones of calcium. Green leafy vegetables are a much better source of calcium for our bodies, with less ill effects.

Chinese medicine teaches that in adults, dairy turns into a substance called phlegm. Phlegm can manifest in many different ways: fat, mucus, sinus infections, mental fog, respiratory problems, skin conditions, and even fibroids and tumors. A little dairy won't kill you, but a lot of it is not good. Your primary beverage should be water (room or body temperature), number two should be green tea. Everything else, including coffee, should be occasional.

Try and put these principles to use in your and your family's diet and you will see the benefits. Trust what has worked for millennia. Keep it simple, balanced, and moderate. *

Jason Bussell is an acupuncturist, herbalist, President of the Illinois Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, and author of *The Asian Diet: Simple Secrets For Eating Right, Losing Weight, And Being Well*. The Asian Diet is published by Findhorn Press, and available at bookstores, Amazon.com and www.findhorn.com, as well as on The Asian Diet site www.theasiandiet.com.



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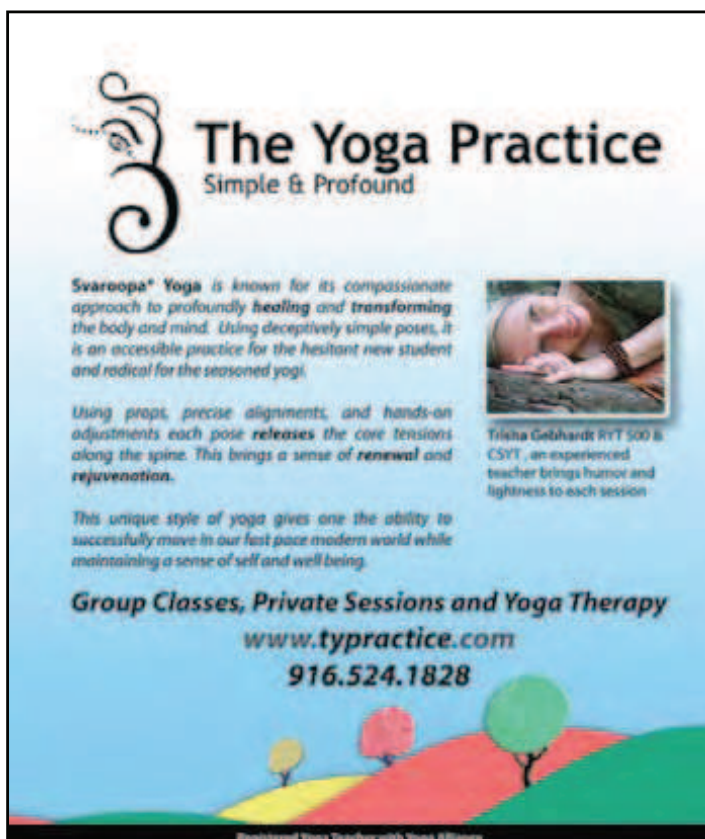
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