



Wholesome Food for A Healthy Society

Story by Jeffrey Warner with pictures by S.P.

To a modern and 'civilized' society, what is, or has become, the process of eating, really? Generally speaking, many people seemingly just eat – versus mindfully pondering where their food comes from, what it contains and is (or isn't) doing to and for the body.

"A healthy attitude is when you eat something, you eat with thanks. When you are fed with commercial intentions, how much do you appreciate the food? To save your life, you take another life. Appreciate it." Noriko Yabata

Has this life-sustaining habit somehow become simply about shoveling material into the body in an attempt at muffling the empty stomach's wailing voice? Heeding this beckoning will surely clear space for the gabbing mind-machine, affective at guiding the physical body on its next task (i.e. work).

A seemingly widespread calling for improved eating habits (and overall human health) has also cultivated brilliant marketing ploys.

"Organic (even if it's not)," along with "globalization," are popular household terms nowadays. "Vegetarian:" Amidst the meat and fast food-worshipping Western cultures, they remain receiving a tough break, being semi-ostracized (yet latently respected, ironically).

What if more of our energies were invested in pondering both the inner and outer components of food? What overall affect would this have on the lives of individuals and society as a whole?

Do we eat simply to remain alive, or to truly live?

A long (but not so long) time-ago, humans everywhere ate what grew seasonally, naturally and locally – in-balance with their environment, like other living creatures. Non-industrialized societal groups nowadays – those not plugged into capitalism's ever-growing grid – still do, at least in-part. Of course people still get sick. However,

locally grown foods serve as the medicine for which they are.

"You can find macrobiotic cooking everywhere, if you dig into (cultural) traditions," says Noriko Yabata, who is well-versed on the macrobiotic lifestyle.

She has studied in-person the eating habits related to some of Northern Thailand's tribespeople. Noriko is also the event organizer for Japan's contribution to the Chiangmai International Food Festival 2011, happening from 14th - 18th July.

Food sources were once somewhat limited, she says. "Therefore, it was easy to find out what is good or bad," adding that globalization is resulting in people eating foods from all over the world, creating a plethora of problems.

Additionally, the tongue is "an important sensor for finding out what is good food for you. But now all of this is paralyzed by chemical-laden, acidic food. It's addiction." She says food nowadays is consumed more as "pleasure for the mouth only; not for the body."

People often mindlessly continue eating even when experiencing a full stomach because their body is craving more nutrition. Consider a seafood-flavoured potato chip. The brain thinks it's eating seafood. However, the body is not receiving the related nutrition.

"(The result of) eating makes up our body and mind...Food makes us crazy nowadays," she said, with a

somewhat serious laugh. "Now, the biggest intention all over the world is profit. They (marketers) don't care about people's health. It's the last issue to talk about."

Eating has its more intangible factors, such as those relating to psychological conditions. Consuming energy-stuffed foods equals a well-fed brain, potentially resulting in this activated, organic, information processor to usher the body toward doing actions that are productive for one's life.

Noriko says studies have revealed that most juvenile criminals in the United States have previously experienced poor nutrition, often coupled with a precarious family setting. "Chocolate is served for breakfast," for example. Some of these youths – regrettably, yet fortunately – now in the care of social service institutions providing them with proper nutrition their, and are experiencing improvement in psycho-social development.

Noriko maintains that most children nowadays (particularly in Western cultures) lack deep understanding of where a fillet of fish or piece of chicken come from, that it was once part of a living creature. And this ignorance is resulting in a nature-disconnected existence.

"A healthy attitude is when you eat something, you eat with thanks," said Noriko. "When you are fed with commercial intentions, how much do you appreciate the food (or anything)?"

Left: Begin your day-adventure with a body balancing breakfast.
Centre: Cooperate, rather than fight, with the heat by eating foods designed for this climate.
Right: Settle the dust from your day with foods that relax you.



Enjoy your health. Live, life.

"To save your life, you take another life. Appreciate it."

Are you familiar with 'macrobiotics'? This medical-like term may sound like the name of yet another new-age trend or something for eradicating those bacteria blooming amid your intestines. However, digested, it means "macro (large) – bio (life) – tique (method or technique).

The earliest recorded use of the term macrobiotics is found in the writings of Hippocrates (460 - 370BC), the father of Western medicine. He introduced this word for describing people who were healthy and long-lived. Herodotus, Aristotle, Galen and other classical writers used this term for describing a lifestyle that includes a simple, balanced diet promoting health and longevity.

However, Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland – a German, eighteenth century physician – was the first to formally use the word macrobiotics in the context of food and health. Hufeland referred to a life-force which he claimed is present in everything and most easily detected in 'organic beings (living organisms),' where it manifests in response to external stimuli. In his view, illness is prevented primarily by pursuing a balanced diet and lifestyle.

Then there was Sagen Ishizuka, a late 1800s Japanese military doctor, and the founding father of *shokuiku* ('food for health'). Sagen experienced great success with helping people recover from serious health problems by using Japanese macrobiotic foods, and was the pioneer of spreading the more formalized



Buy seasonally available foods. They're medicine.

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science of macrobiotics to the world outside of Japan.

One goal of modern macrobiotics is becoming sensitive to the actual affects of foods on human health and well-being, rather than rigidly following dietary rules and regulations. Dietary guidelines, however, help in developing a related intuitive, balanced sense for this.

As the Law of the Conservation of Energy states, the energy can neither be created nor destroyed; only changed from one form to another.

Although a macrobiotic diet involves eating grains as a staple food supplemented with other local fruits and vegetables – while avoiding the use of highly processed or refined foods and most animal products – it's fundamental tenets are rooted in knowledge related to the building block of life: Energy.

Macrobiotic theory defines very early the energy patterns in food – yin and yang – while promoting understanding of how these patterns interact with one another. If our minds can grapple with this, choosing our food becomes more automated, naturally.

Yin-yang energy exists in two forms, together represented as a spiral: Expansive (yin) and contractive (yang); energy spiraling outward and that for which is moving inward. When these energies are balanced, a self-sustaining orbit is created. Satellite technology, for example, uses this principle for tossing energy into the heavens.

Think of the earth. It is yang energy. Dirt. The sky is yin energy; air. Concentrated foods, those progressing toward the earth's (or our body's) center – such as meat, carrots and potatoes – are yang energy. Those growing away from the earth, such as lettuce and tomatoes, are yin energy. When one eats meat, a leafy, energy-balancing, vegetable must also be consumed.

Yang foods are concentrated and heavy (eggs). Yin foods (tropical fruits) are lighter in-nature and water-based. Yin is winter energy. Therefore, yang-like, body-warming foods (potatoes; pumpkin) grow during the winter months. Yang is summer energy. Therefore, cooling foods such as fruits and cold, sugary sweets are often craved during this time.

Yin is night energy (white); yang is daytime (yellow). Women are moon energy. Men are sun energy. Feelings

are energy, and men are generally inclined to be inward; women are often more expressive. Each energy needs the other as a balancer.

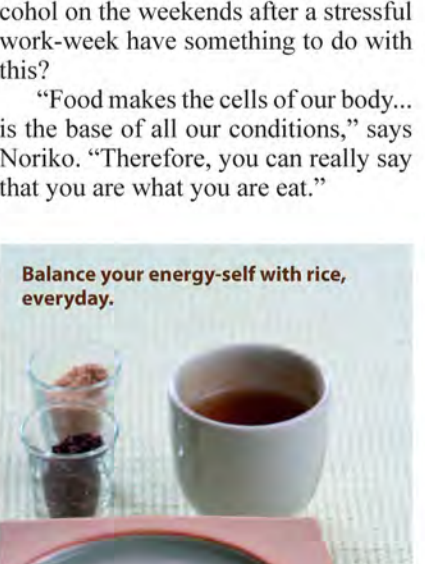
When balanced (at least temporarily), sometimes babies are made. A child is yang energy. He or she is compressed and small; therefore, often has colouring (red). When one dies, he or she energetically expands, releasing energy. The eyes open and the breathe releases. The body becomes white; yin.

Children (yang) crave balancing sweets (sugar; yin). And generally, people's sugar-tooth lessens with age because the body doesn't need it.

"Life is the journey from yang to yin," said Noriko. "In this journey, this balance is ever-changing. Therefore, in each stage of life, what kind of food you eat (and need) is also different."

Acidic foods make the blood dirty which, according to macrobiotic science, is the cause of all illness. Cancer and other ailments are highly prominent in the far West, for example. Could a yang-heavy diet consisting of highly refined-sugar, salt, fats, chemical-laden food, meat and a flow of alcohol on the weekends after a stressful work-week have something to do with this?

"Food makes the cells of our body... is the base of all our conditions," says Noriko. "Therefore, you can really say that you are what you eat."



Balance your energy-self with rice, everyday.

So, how can we begin tipping the mind-storm toward living more healthily by living a macrobiotic lifestyle? Just, start.

The varied Japanese-style macrobiotic diet consists primarily of well-chewed, whole cereal grains, especially the cancer-fighting brown rice (40-60 percent); vegetables (25-30 percent); beans and legumes; miso soup (5-10 percent); sea vegetables (5 percent) and naturally processed foods (5-10 percent).

Fish and seafood, seeds and nuts (and their butters), along with fruits and beverages may be enjoyed occasionally. Other naturally raised animal products may be included, especially if needed during dietary transition.

"The macrobiotic reputation is not always positive outside of Japan," said Noriko. "Many people maintain that it is bland and with no variation. However, the (diet) variation is infinite."

Khun Pimwalan Pinthuprapa, an expert of macrobiotics and the owner of Ruen Come-in Restaurant and Residence in Chiang Mai, always selects food from the seemingly endless array that is locally grown and seasonally available.

She says a basic, localized, macrobiotic diet consists first and foremost of yin-yang neutral rice and sesame, coupled with pumpkin (sometimes in the form of soup). Soybean; tea, sometimes chilled; lemonade with honey and salt for "being fresh in the daytime when it's hot" are among many meal combinations. During the evening, soup with onions and lotus root or carrots is sometimes on the menu.

Although these ingredients serve as the base for a local, macrobiotic diet, Pimwalan says being healthy is more about balancing the season than the food.

"We have to be balanced. When we are balanced, we are healthy, and our minds and bodies will not be sick anymore, for all of life."

"If you want to be healthy, you have to think about nature...love the animals...love the people around you too. Don't destroy. Then you will be organic in your mind and in your body. This, is the heart of macrobiotics."

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