

TCM Dietary Therapy

Class 1

Learning Objectives

- What this class is about:
- Part of Chinese Herbal Medicine (CHM) curriculum
- Food Therapy as an extension of Herbal Med
- Basis in Pattern Diagnosis

- Food Therapy is milder in effect than CHM
- Becomes part of unified treatment plan
- Pattern -> Tx Principle -> Acupuncture, Herbs, Food, Tui Na, Qigong, Etc
- So objective of class is to understand TCM properties of different foods and correlate to pattern diagnosis

- What this class is NOT about:
- Nutrition
- Any medical system other than TCM (Ayurveda, Naturopathy, Macrobiotics, etc)

Origin and development of Dietary therapy in TCM

- Shi Liao / Shi Zhi = Dietary Therapy
- Various early texts
- Sun Simiao's Qin Jian Yao Fang classified properties & applications of foods
- Can use as an adjunct to treat disease or to nourish life

General indications for food therapy:

- Production & Balancing of Vital substances (Qi, Blood, Fluids, Jing)
- Supplementation of Vital substances (Qi, Blood, Fluids, Jing)
- Can be used to supplement specific substances (eg: Wei Qi)
- Calm Spirit
- Harmonizing with seasons

- Best in mild cases - acute or chronic
- Useful especially for SP/ST issues:
Damp, Phlegm, etc
- Pediatrics
- Obstetrics / Post-Partum
- Patients on multiple medications or who
are otherwise not well suited to CHM

General properties of food

- Similar to herbal medicine
- Some herbs are food-like (eg Shan Yao, Yi Yi Ren, Lu Dou)
- Mild, sweet herbs more nutritional (mild tonics)
- Stronger tasting herbs = stronger pharmacological effects

Thermal property (Qi)

- Hot-Warm-Neutral-Cool-Cold
- Most foods are Warm-Neutral-Cool
- Hot = Some spices
- Cold = Some fruits
- More hot or cold = more potential toxicity
- May be modified by preparation methods

Taste (Wei)

- Acrid (pungent, spicy) - disperses, moves Qi & Blood
- Sour - contracts, tightens, restrains leakage
- Salty - softens, moistens and descends
- Sweet - tonifies, moistens, harmonizes
- Bitter - drains and dries
- Bland - promotes urination

- Specific tastes often correspond to classes of chemical compounds.
- Acids, which produce free hydrogen ions, are detected by the presence of a sour taste, and the strength of the acidity is roughly proportional to the intensity of the perception of sour.

- Metal salts containing sodium and potassium ions are detected as a salty taste.
- Alkaloids, some of which are highly toxic, are generally bitter; this is why we have a natural aversion to bitter tasting plants as foods.
- Terpenes and essential oils usually create an acrid or spicy taste.

- Sugars, polysaccharides and glycosides are detected as a sweet taste.
- All the basic structural and energy-producing compounds of the body, including sugars and starches, fats, and proteins are sweet to taste, and sometimes bland.
- It is for this reason most tonics in CHM are considered to be sweet.

- Sour, salty, astringent, bitter, and acrid, are normally present in the diet only in small quantities of the corresponding chemical constituents, but their importance lies in their ability to potently alter body functions.

Channel entry

- Based on function
- Examples:
- Ginger - ST: Nausea, low appetite
- Watermelon - ST: Thirst
- Persimmon - LU: Moistens dry cough
- Honey - LU: Moistens dry cough

- Mustard Greens - LU: Resolve phlegm
- Water Chestnut - LU: Resolve phlegm
- Lycium Fruit (Gou Qi Zi) - LR: Eyes
- Nuts - LI: Moisten dry intestines
- Most organ meats enter the pertaining channel - eg: Cow's liver enters LR channel

Comparison to CHM

- Milder foods - staples
- Similar properties to mild tonic herbs
- Largest quantity consumed

- Stronger foods - more sparingly used
- Condiments, coffee, tea, etc
- Stronger medicinal effect
- Can balance menu like herb formula
- e.g.: Dal w/curry

MILD EFFECT

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NOURISHING

FOOD

Staples -
Grains, Rice,
Legumes, etc

Animal products

Coffee, Alcohol

Spices / Condiments

Raw foods - fruit / veg



Tonics - Qi,
Blood, Yin

Tonics - Yang

Move Qi & Blood

Warm Int

Clear Heat

HERBS

Drain Damp - Bland

Drain Damp - Bitter

NEUTRAL

WARM / COOL

HOT / COLD

HOT / COLD

- Hot & Cold nature of food depends on:
- 1) inherent property of specific food
- 2) preparation methods

**EXAMPLES OF
THERMAL
PROPERTIES OF
FOOD**

HOT

- Beverages: Alcohol (high proof), chai
- Meat / fish: Lamb, venison
- Spices: chili, ginger, cinnamon, curry, garlic, cloves

WARM

- Beverages: Cocoa, coffee, red wine
- Dairy: Butter, goat's cheese
- Meat / fish: Beef, chicken, eel, salmon
- Fruit / vegetables: Cherry, fennel, leek, peach, onion
- Spices: Anise, basil, rosemary

NEUTRAL

- Condiments: Honey
- Dairy: Cow's milk, cheese
- Meat / fish: Carp, duck, chicken eggs, goose, pork
- Fruit / vegetables: Carrot, cauliflower, grape, fig, plum, potato
- Grains / legumes: Corn, lentil, millet, peas, rice, spelt

COOL

- Beverages: Black tea, green tea, fruit juices, peppermint tea, soy milk, wheat beer
- Dairy: Yogurt
- Meat / fish: Rabbit
- Fruit / vegetables: Celery, cucumber, soybean, sprouts, spinach, zucchini
- Grains / legumes: Barley, tofu, wheat
- Spices: Tarragon

COLD

- Beverages: Water
- Condiments: Salt, soy sauce
- Meat / fish: Shrimp, crayfish, crab
- Fruit / vegetables: Asparagus, banana, orange, rhubarb, seaweed, tomato, watermelon
- Spices: Dandelion, gentian

Preparation methods

- Generally use heat, which adds Yang
- Water adds Yin
- Most methods use either heat (BBQ) or heat + water (boiling)

Grilling / Broiling / BBQ

- strongest warming effect
- may develop toxic substances in foods
- avoid in heat patterns

Smoking

- adds Yang, less so than grilling
- smoked fish for Kidney Yang in cold climates
- use sparingly, esp if xs salt

Frying / Roasting

- More warming
- Blast frying / searing - balances yang and yin (fried outside, moist inside)
- avoid using too much oil

Baking

- gently supplies yang to foods
- ameliorating cooling effects of foods
- good for vegetarians who need more yang

Boiling / Simmering

- dependent on cooking time
- prolonged boiling increases Yang
- "Master Soup" up to 36 hrs
- esp recommended for meat/bones
- Yang-boosting effect "offsets vitamin loss"
- vegetarian soups use spices instead of long cooking time

Blanching / steaming

- neutral methods
- make foods more digestible

Cooling

- Fruit / sprouts / lettuce - adding offsets Yang effects (e.g.: lettuce & tomato on a burger)
- Salting / pickling - Reduces Yang, increases Yin

Other methods

- Alcohol - warms, upbears, increases circulation
- Spices - generally have warming effect

General recommendations

- high quality, clean, unprocessed; organic when possible
- relaxed ambience at meals
- regular meals 3-5/day
- chew well
- breakfast > lunch > dinner

- stop when it tastes best
- only small amounts of liquid w/meals
- plan meals for your individual constitution
- appropriate foods for the season
- if vegetarian, make sure enough warming foods

- Food quantity:
- 50-80% grains
- 30-40% cooked vegetables
- 5% meat
- 5% raw salad, fruit, etc (more in summer)

- Avoid:
- too much raw/cold food and tropical fruits
- weakens ST-SP
- ice cold drinks - weakens ST-SP
- too much dairy - cold-dampness, phlegm
- too much oily/fatty food - damp-heat,
phlegm

- too much sugar/sweet - damp-heat, phlegm
- too much alcohol - damp-heat, phlegm
- too much meat - damp-heat, phlegm
- overly opulent meals - causes food stagnation, weakens ST-SP
- late night eating - causes food stagnation
- excessive fasting - weakens ST-SP

Recommended Foods for Different Life Stages

Children

- Introduce healthy eating early
- Strengthen middle burner
- Neutral or mildly warming foods, sweet taste

Children

- Millet, rice, barley, carrots, fennel, apples, honey, raisins, poultry, beef, potatoes, grape juice, fennel tea
- Replace sugar with honey (after age 1), maple syrup, pear juice, molasses, apple butter, warming fruits, dates
- Avoid cold foods, acrid spices, sugar, excess dairy, fatty foods

Adults

- All foods are suitable, vary the diet but adjust according to constitution and climate.
- Avoid excess meat, raw foods, fats, dairy, coffee, alcohol

Elderly

- Smaller frequent meals, support Kidneys and middle burner
- Well cooked foods, porridge, eggs (in moderation), fish, stews, Master soups
- Avoid raw foods, fatty foods, excessive salt consumption

Qi deficiency

- Qi deficiency
- Use sweet, acrid, salty tastes, neutral, warm and hot foods and neutral to warming methods of cooking.
- Oats, millet, short grain rice, long grain rice, spelt, corn

Qi deficiency

- Poultry, lamb, beef
- Trout, salmon, tuna, shellfish
- Fennel, carrots, leeks
- Lentils, walnuts, black sesame, hazelnut

Yang deficiency

- Same as Qi deficiency, add more warming methods and foods like raisin, cherry, peach, acrid spices, venison

Yin Deficiency

- Use cooling foods and cooling cooking methods. Sweet, salty and cool or neutral foods to help generate fluids.
- Pork, oysters, octopus, perch, carp
- Refreshing fruits, pears, grapes
- Refreshing vegetables, spinach, tomato, seaweed

Yin Deficiency

- Tofu, soy milk
- Spelt, rice, wheat
- Fruit juice
- **AVOID:** hot foods, acrid or bitter tastes

Blood deficiency

- Sweet, sour; warm, neutral or cool
- Oats, amaranth, rice
- Neutral vegetables - red beets, red cabbage, carrots, spinach
- Chicken, liver, beef, veal, lamb
- Oysters, mussels, eel, perch

Blood deficiency

- Red grapes, longan, plum, apricot, sweet cherries
- Sesame seeds, sunflower seeds
- Red juices, red wine
- Egg yolk
- **AVOID:** hot foods, acrid or bitter tastes

Yang Excess

- Neutral, cool, cold
- Sweet, sour (bitter)
- Wheat, barley
- Apples, pears, citrus, raspberries
- Tomato, spinach, cucumbers, celery
- AVOID: hot foods; no meat for 6 weeks

Yin Excess

- Moderately warming food & preparation
- Bitter, salty, sweet tastes
- Use foods from Qi Deficiency list
- AVOID: Dairy, raw fruit/veg, sweets, eating fast or irregular times, eating late, oils/fats, refrigeration

Treatment of Pathogenic Factors

COLD

- Use warming foods:
- Spices like chili, ginger, cinnamon, leeks, garlic, cloves, coriander
- Alcohol (high proof) in small amounts
- Oats, fennel, lamb, venison

HEAT

- Use cooling foods, bitter and sour flavors
- Pineapple, tangerine, melon, lemon, kiwi.
- Dandelion, tomato, cucumber, endive, spinach
- Salads, mung bean sprouts, yogurt, wheat, barley, black or green tea, mineral water

WIND

- Wind Cold: chili, ginger, cinnamon, garlic, green onions
- Wind Heat: Eggplant, green tea, watermelon, chamomile tea
- Internal Wind: Eggplant, celery, water chestnut, sunflower seeds, banana, pike, perch, bass, rabbit

DAMP

- Use warming, drying foods that transform Damp; bitter, acrid, sweet tastes
- Millet, rice, amaranth, pear, cherries, grapes, ginger
- AVOID: Dairy, sweets, sugar, oils/fats, pork, bananas

DRYNESS

- Cool, sweet foods which moisten dryness
- Pear, melon, tomato, bananas, grapes, wheat, peanuts, pine nuts, soy, dairy, pork

PHLEGM

- If Heat: Bitter, salty, sweet, cool
- Endive, dandelion, soy milk, mung beans, radish, pears, grapes, carp, salt, seaweed
- **AVOID**: Dairy, meat alcohol, fats, sweets
- If Cold: Bitter, acrid, warm
- Ginger, leeks, garlic, cardamon, cherries