

AUTUMN EQUINOX RECOMMENDATIONS

The fall equinox marks the point at which the decline of warmth and the increase of cold meet — now yin

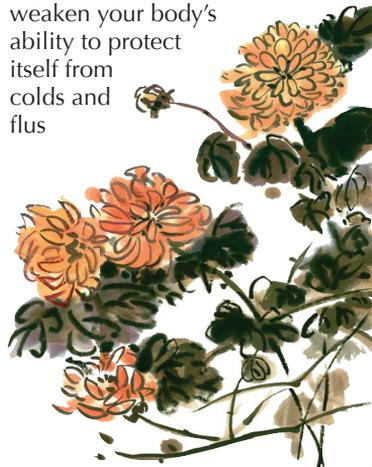
becomes dominant and yang begins its decline into dormancy. Trees are pulling their qi back from their leaves into their roots; their winter survival depends on less outward expenditure of energy. For us too this season is about preparing for winter and gathering resources. But it is essential that before we store the harvest we have edited away any excess heat from summer — along with everything else extraneous in our lives.

ACCORDING TO CHINESE MEDICINE, the best way for us to maintain health is to have an appropriate **RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR ENVIRONMENT**. In addition to acupuncture and Chinese herbs, learning to live harmoniously with natural, seasonal cycles can be a powerful way of promoting our wellness and resolving illness.

If we can **ALLOW OUR BODIES TO ADAPT** to the different seasons, to the qi as it changes throughout the year, then health will flow naturally. Taoists closely observed the **NATURAL QI CYCLES** of 24 different seasons in order to harmonize their energy with that of their environment. The following daily practices and dietary recommendations are based on this tradition.

In Chinese medicine, the fall is related to the metal element (the lungs and large intestine) which governs grief, taking in and letting go, and our body's ability to defend itself from colds and flus. Our fluids are now becoming slower and more concentrated to keep us warm, and to protect our lungs from the dry fall weather — but it's important that this process doesn't happen too fast or congestion and illness will result. Consider these recommendations for the fall:

- **Refine:** the clear, direct energy of metal helps separate the pure from the impure; be meticulous about which aspects of your life you harvest and store for winter
- **Reflect:** calm the mind, emphasize contemplation rather than emotionality
- **Contract:** think twice about expending energy, pull back from excess activity, read instead of watching television or googling
- **Let go:** everything is naturally dying off now, so this is an excellent time of year to let your existing patterns drop and to simply be
- **Stay warm:** avoid wind and cold, bundle up (especially wear a scarf and socks)
- **Get treatment:** the thickening of our fluids makes blood more accessible to our tissues, so it's a good time to treat old injuries
- **Move:** exercise consistently and gently, but try not to sweat too much as this will weaken your body's ability to protect itself from colds and flus





FOOD RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECIPES

As fall progresses, our appetite naturally shifts to richer and more warming foods,

but be careful not to make this transition too quickly or congestion will result. The vegetables of fall are starchy and sweet, and require longer cooking; this adds necessary viscosity to our fluids, and helps to nourish our bodies. Spicy is the flavor of the fall, but a little goes a long way—use small amounts of white pepper, black pepper, garlic, or ginger to invigorate fluids to avoid congestion, and also use foods with bitter and salty tastes to help condense fluids. Lubricating foods such as seeds and pears are especially good this time of year. Small quantities of dairy products, eaten separately from other foods, are appropriate now.

Foods to emphasize: early harvest root vegetables (carrots, turnips, rutabaga, yams, beets, sweet potatoes, squashes), aduki beans, black beans, seaweed, agar, barley, millet, celery, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, all leafy greens, parsley, chestnuts, daikon, endive, scallion, mushrooms, tofu, green and oolong tea, yogurt, abalone, crab, chicken or duck egg, white fish, scallop, lamb, pork, beef, buffalo, persimmons, pears, figs, pomegranate, apples.

Avoid: fried foods, salads, raw foods, chili peppers, excess spicy foods, alcohol, salmon, turkey, tomatoes, cucumber, smoked foods.

Potato, Leek, Chicken Soup

- 4-5 leeks, cleaned and sliced
- 1 skinless, boneless chicken breast
- 1 quart chicken stock
- 2-4 potatoes, cut in small chunks
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Sea salt and white pepper

Simmer chicken breast in approx. 2 cups water 10-15 minutes, until done and set aside. Sauté leeks 5 minutes, until soft. Add chicken stock, liquid from chicken, and potatoes; simmer until potatoes are easily mashed (20-30 minutes). Roughly mash potatoes with spoon, add shredded chicken breast and salt and pepper to taste.

Root Vegetable Nishime with Pumpkin Seeds

- Root vegetables: carrots, parsnips, winter squash, onion, turnips, daikon, or others, as available
- 1 slice kombu, soaked
- Shoyu and mirin to taste (optional)
- Pumpkin seeds, rinsed and toasted

Cut vegetables in large chunks and place in a heavy pan with ¼ inch water; simmer covered on low for 30-40 minutes, or until tender. Remove kombu, slice thinly, and return to pan. Add a splash of shoyu and mirin, and top with toasted pumpkin seeds.

Many thanks to Liu Ming's "Nourishing Within" classes (www.dayuancircle.com) from which this information was derived.