

SUMMER SOLSTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Yang energy reaches its peak at summer solstice.

Activity is in full bloom, circulating, interacting, expanding and growing. There is great abundance, but from this point on, yang begins its inevitable decline into fall and winter.

In Chinese medicine, **summer is associated with the fire element**, which corresponds with the heart in all its manifestations: joy, laughter, and excitement. It is a natural time to engage in plentiful activity, to play and have fun, to interact and be passionate — but be careful to avoid extremes which can lead to heat-related conditions such as insomnia, anxiety, headaches, infections, fevers, and irritability. While it is important that we absorb some of the yang energy of summer for use in winter, too much hot qi at this time of year can scorch our body fluids or linger in our system, causing a variety of chronic illnesses which can emerge in later seasons.



- **Socialize:** instead of isolating, celebrate (especially outdoors), be a little wild, dance, sing
- **Swim:** movement in the cool yin of water helps to balance the hot qi of summer

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.

By July and August, the hot summer qi also takes on a damp quality, as the fluids in our bodies begin to thicken in preparation for winter. This creates vulnerability to many chronic ailments. To adapt to these environmental changes and prevent later problems, keep your circulation moving (but don't exhaust yourself) and consider these recommendations:

- **Be active:** continue to rest appropriately, but don't give in to warm weather laziness (and be careful not to sweat profusely)
- **Be carefree:** travel, rest, relax, enjoy leisure activities
- **Avoid the midday sun**
- **Complete:** finish projects in summer, while there is available energy to bring things to fruition
- **Anticipate:** autumn is coming, so toward the end of summer, begin to slow activity down, and think about what aspects of your life can be pared down in the fall



FOOD RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECIPES

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An abundance of juicy nourishment emerges during summer, to help protect us from the seasonal heat. To take advantage of this bounty and prevent damage from heat, eat melon on hot days, and drink green or chrysanthemum tea. Eat smaller meals, but more frequently. Eat light soups and light suppers, steam foods, reduce intake of dairy products and heavy seasoning.

Foods to emphasize: celery, barley, fresh mint, basil and all green herbs, bitter melon, zucchini, taro, lotus root, seaweed, bean thread noodles, mung beans, wheat, buckwheat, rice, all beans, lettuce, leafy greens, summer

squashes, watercress, sweet corn, fresh ginger and garlic, tomatoes, eggplant, radish, scallions, peas, wood ear mushrooms, limes, peaches, plums, Asian pears, berries, cabbage, cucumbers, tofu, miso, eggs, fresh white fish, lean beef, pork, quick pickles.

Avoid: barbeque, soy oil, salmon, fried/oily foods, oranges, stored food, nuts, dairy products, starchy foods (i.e. potatoes, squash), excess alcohol, coffee, spicy foods and sugar. Be cautious with iced drinks and ice cream, which are easy to crave this time of year, but which can cause digestive problems later. Avoid fruit and salads in excess: natural sugar (i.e., from fruit) is good, useable yang; in moderate quantities it invigorates, but too much will create heat and dampness in the body.

Bean thread noodles with sesame sauce

- 1 10-12 ounce package bean thread noodles
- ½ cup sesame tahini (non-toasted)
- Splash soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- Lemon juice or brown rice vinegar to taste
- Drizzle of maple syrup
- Water for desired consistency
- Garnish: chopped fresh cilantro, cucumber slices, shredded chicken breast

Add bean thread noodles to boiling water; turn off heat and let stand until noodles are cooked (3-5 minutes), then drain and rinse with cold water. Mix remaining ingredients, pour sesame sauce over noodles, and toss.

Simple summer split pea soup with fresh peas and corn

- 1 cup green split peas, sorted and washed
- 6 cups water
- 1 strip kombu
- ½ cup fresh corn, taken off the cob
- ½ cup fresh or frozen peas
- Sea salt to taste
- Garnish: fresh chopped parsley

Bring water with kombu to a simmer, add split peas, skim off any foam. Simmer approximately 1 hour, until split peas have broken down, adding water as necessary. Discard kombu, add corn and peas, season with salt and garnish with parsley.

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