



# five flavours

rooted in the wisdom of Chinese Medicine

**harmonious health**  
**everyday food**



introductory issue

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## Editor's space wendy morrison


Five Flavours emerged from my personal experience of working with patients on a daily basis providing dietary advice to support the acupuncture. A niggling feeling had been in the back of my mind that whilst patients were receiving treatment, they were supported in looking after their diet. However, when the course of treatment ended, their focus on food receded. Something extra was needed, but what? So the idea for a seasonal food guide came about. I believed that it would be just the thing to gently inspire people on a regular basis because everyday food is the foundation of ongoing good health.



The idea eventually grew into reality when I met with Daverick Leggett, author of 'Recipes for Self Healing' in January 2011. He agreed that there was indeed a real need for a food guide of this kind, rooted in the wisdom of Chinese medicine and that he was happy to "support the magazine in an advisory role", for which I'm very grateful. Daverick will also be a regular contributor of articles in future issues.

My personal hope is that it will support, empower and reveal how food can really make a difference to health. Spreading the word about this subject has become a real passion of mine. I loved creating this issue and I hope you love reading it and many more issues to come too! **Don't forget to subscribe to receive your 4 copies each year, either online from my website or fill in the form at the back.**

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# The Story of the Three Doctors

The story tells of a Prince who dies and a doctor happened to be passing-by and brought him miraculously back to life!

The King was obviously over the moon and said to the doctor “You must be renowned throughout the Kingdom for your incredible medical skills!”

The Doctor replied “I am the youngest of three brothers who are all doctors.

My eldest brother prevents illness by advising on appropriate food, exercise and lifestyle for his patients - he is the most renowned throughout the Kingdom. My middle brother cares for his patients with acupuncture and herbs to rebalance them back to good health when they become ill and therefore he is the next famous. I am simply a surgeon who is called upon when all else fails, therefore I am the least famous”.



Dr Zhan, Head of Tuina  
Hangzhou Hospital of  
Traditional Chinese Medicine

Dr Zhan told the ‘Story of the Three Doctors’ to our group of Acupuncturists during a Study Trip to Hangzhou, East China in September 2010.

The moral of the story is that the first two doctors are the Chinese Medicine approach to good health and the third doctor, the Surgeon, is a metaphor for western medicine and the powerful pharmaceutical drugs.

## Vision Statement

**T**o raise the awareness of how  
Chinese Dietary Therapy  
can maintain good health and  
remedy unbalanced health  
in every day life  
using every day food

and

**T**o bridge the gap between  
East and West with  
practical and  
down to earth advice.



**Note:** The information contained in this guide is for general use only.  
For specific dietary guidance please contact a qualified practitioner.

## Where to start?

**The first step** towards eating more consciously ....is within yourself.

**Decide that you really are worth it after all!**

Once you've realised that eating good wholesome food can really make a difference to how you feel physically, emotionally and mentally, then future steps will become easier.



**Can you change your diet overnight?** Not many can, therefore a great way to start is **with small steps.**

For example, by including one or two nutritious foods into your day. Why not try having porridge for breakfast, made the old-fashioned way?

The recipe is on page 10 with sweet tasting apricots that nourish the Blood

OR

include more grains such as brown rice with your curry or dark green leafy vegetables such as kale or cabbage at lunch and/or for dinner.

**Maybe sweet things are your downfall?** this means that your body is craving the ‘sweet flavour’ not sugar.

If you begin by eating more foods that are in the sweet flavour category, such as sweet root vegetables (carrot, parsnip, sweet potato) baked in their jackets, white rice or adding dates to your porridge during cooking, you will begin feeding your body what it is asking for. Gradually, after approximately 3 - 4 weeks, the sweet cravings begin to diminish. Honest they do!



**If you tend not to eat many vegetables.** Someone said to me once, “eat something green everyday, even if it’s just a sprig of parsley”.

You’ll learn in a later issue what a wise suggestion that truly was. Parsley is incredibly high in vitamin C, much higher than any fruit.

# Basic principles

The Basic Principles of Chinese Dietary Therapy, that underpin this way of eating, will be a regular feature of Five Flavours.

You will learn how they relate to food and how to apply them in your daily life.

In Chinese medicine we categorise the effects of food as follows:

## Five Flavours:

flavours indicate the energetic actions and directions of food:  
sweet, pungent, salty, sour and bitter (and neutral).

## Temperature:

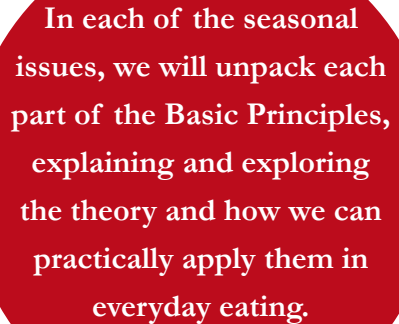
the thermal effect of food either warms the body up or cools it down:  
heating, warming, neutral, cooling, cold.

## Route:

food takes a certain route in the body, influencing and resonating with particular organs, meridians, and substances.

## Therapeutic Action:

food can be used to tonify, support or disperse.



In each of the seasonal issues, we will unpack each part of the Basic Principles, explaining and exploring the theory and how we can practically apply them in everyday eating.

## Cooking Methods:

Methods of cooking influence the food in differing ways and are chosen according to a person's condition.

stir fry, steam, stew, bake, roast

**“being fanatical about food is almost as bad as not caring at all”**

*Flaws & Wolfe, Prince Wen Hui's Cook, Paradigm Publications, 1983*

# balance

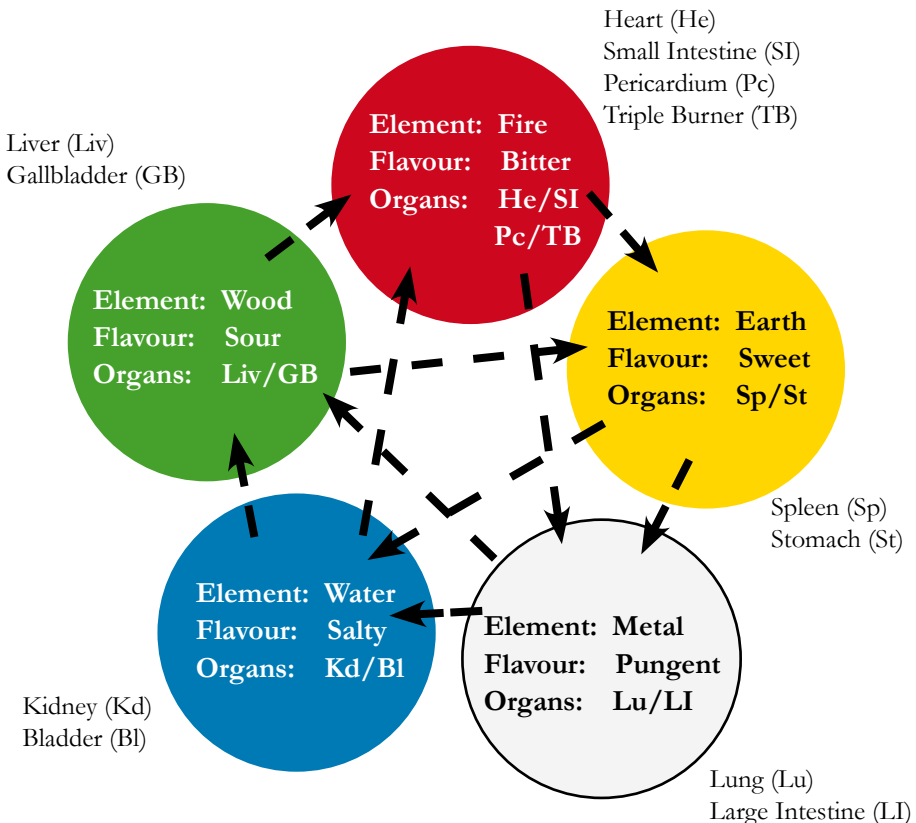
A balanced diet includes all flavours and a wide variety of foods.

# tilting

Flavours and temperatures are chosen to maintain harmony in the body. The balance will differ according to each person's needs.

# less is more

An excess of one flavour or one type of food can also create an imbalance.



## Food can be our most powerful medicine

We see Jamie Oliver on the television and read in the health section of newspapers that food affects our health i.e. if we put junk in our body, our body will under-perform. Rather like never servicing your car with fresh oil - it eventually coughs and splutters and refuses to start!

**So how do we know what food will make our engine/body run well? A balance of fresh, wholesome, good quality, unprocessed food:**

This section is the basis for understanding how food can be used as medicine. Future issues of *Five Flavours* will expand a little more on this subject. However, the very best way to start is by taking one step at a time! And what better place to start than with a good nutritious breakfast.

**40% grains, 50% vegetables  
and 10% protein.**

The following is an example and helpful guide:

**Grains:**

oats, brown rice, white rice, quinoa, cous cous, barley, wheat.

**Vegetables:**

dark leafy greens e.g. kale, cabbage  
root vegetables e.g. carrot, parsnips, sweet potato, turnip, swede

**Protein:**

lentils, split peas, aduki beans, kidney beans, haricot beans, nuts  
eggs, tofu and tempeh  
organic: beef, lamb, liver, chicken or fish

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# eat breakfast like a King lunch like a Merchant supper like a Pauper

## breakfast

Eating breakfast is extremely important because your body has been without food all night. The stomach, spleen and pancreas produce blood/nutrition from the food you eat which nourishes every organ, every muscle, every bone, every single cell in your body. Therefore MORNING is THE time to give your cells a good start!

## suggestions:

Porridge oats, cooked the old-fashioned way in a pan on top of the cooker, not in the microwave. If you cook it slowly on a low heat it becomes lovely and creamy without a hint of dairy milk in sight!

## 1 portion:

- 1/2 cup organic jumbo porridge oat flakes
- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 tbsp roasted sunflower seeds
- 2 chopped unsulphured apricots

Bring the water to the boil then sprinkle oats into pan with chopped apricots and sunflower seeds. Turn the heat down to a very low simmer and cook for 10-15 mins, stir and serve with chopped plum, pear or blueberries on top (preferably not banana or tropical fruit - I'll explain why in a later issue). Yummy!

If porridge isn't to your liking, try an organic muesli soaked overnight with rice or oatly milk and add chopped fruit on top, or if you don't soak it, always have warm or room temperature rice or oatly milk (not direct from the fridge).



## When making porridge, why use water rather than dairy milk?

Non-organic cow's milk can contain many undesirables and in Chinese Medicine, dairy milk is termed 'Damp forming' i.e. can slow the digestion down, rather like walking through mud! If your digestion is strong then dairy is ok, but always choose organic where possible. (Sheep and goats milk are less Damp forming).

### healing properties of oats:

- They are naturally thermally warming.
- Soothing, restore nervous and reproduction systems.
- Strengthen spleen-pancreas and therefore beneficial for the blood.
- Remove cholesterol from the digestive tract and arteries.
- Strengthen cardiac muscles.



## sunflower seeds

- Act as a qi tonic, improving lethargy
- Support the spleen-pancreas
- Lubricate the intestines and are therefore good for constipation of the dry type



*Spread the seeds out on a baking tray in the oven on a very low heat for 10 minutes. This makes them easier to digest and also tastier!*



## unsulphured apricots (the brown ones)

- Nourish the blood and are therefore good in treating anaemia.
- Moisten the lungs and are good for a dry throat, thirst, asthma



Don't use if phlegm is present in the lungs.



**NUTS AND SEEDS STORAGE:** Rancid seeds are neither tasty nor good for you. When buying seeds, buy in small quantities and eat them soon as they degrade quickly. Store in a dark glass bottle in a cool place as heat and light speed oxidation - DON'T store in plastic as oil-rich food combines with plastic to form plasticides. TRY to buy organic non-sprayed ones wherever possible as toxins tend to accumulate in seeds.

# If we listen to our body, it speaks to us!

## Introducing Lucy

Lucy is a fictitious character, but one who represents many women.

symptoms:

- uncomfortable bloating after eating
- feels lethargic and heavy limbed
- poor sleep, poor appetite
- gains weight easily though doesn't eat a lot
- yo-yo dieting
- worries or over-thinks
- cravings for sweet things

**Diagnosis:** These symptoms indicate a deficiency or weakness in the energy of the Stomach/Spleen & Pancreas (St/Sp/P). Basically speaking, these organs transform the food we eat into food essence and when there is a weakness, the transformation fails to be done adequately and creates excess fluid called Dampness in Chinese medicine, rather like runny mucus mmm!. Due to the weakness, Dampness slows the digestion accumulating as excess weight around the lower abdomen, bottom and thighs, causing lethargy, heavy limbs and sometimes pain in the muscles and joints.

**Emotions:** When Lucy worries or over-thinks, this affects these same organs, or putting it another way because the organs are weak, this can BE one of the causes of worry and over-thinking. Worry knots the qi and impedes digestion. A vicious circle is created.

**Cravings:** Provide us with important clues. The body is quite amazing if we listen carefully, it tells us exactly what it needs. This is true in the case of craving sweet things. The body is saying to Lucy that it is the 'sweet flavour' NOT sugar it needs.

**Remedy:** Lucy can **STRENGTHEN** these organs by eating more sweet flavoured foods such as well cooked rice and sweet potato baked until soft and delicious in their jackets.

The 'sweet' flavour resonates with these organs (one of the five flavours). If you imagine the nurturing feeling associated with this flavour and group of foods i.e. warming, comforting, nourishing; and grounding; these are aspects of her life which have often been missing. She tends to be the one who cares for others and fails to look after herself.

**Balance is required.**

**Raw food cools the digestive fire:** Lucy tends to eat a lot of salads because she believes this will help her to lose weight. Unfortunately it weakens her digestion even more because the St/Sp/P need to warm the food up BEFORE digestion can begin. This uses up valuable energy and depletes the yang, active, warming, moving aspect of the digestive process. Accumulation of fluids build-up even more.

**Remedy:** Lucy needs to give her digestion a helping-hand by eating cooked food (lightly steamed greens, warming soups, more grains, baked sweet potato in their jackets etc.) which will strengthen these weak organs in the long-term and her natural weight and health will gradually return.



**Yo-Yo Dieting** is a sign and also a cause of a weak digestion. The only sure way of Lucy finding her natural weight is to INCLUDE foods that strengthen and avoid foods that don't. Lucy has had a life-time of excluding foods, psychologically she has been 'doing without' for years.

**The remedy to Yo-Yo dieting:** is to psychologically change her focus to INCLUDING, NURTURING and STRENGTHENING herself through the food she eats and let go of 'dieting'. Five Flavours promotes food for life not just for 6 months. We discuss the food suggestions on page 17 and 18.

## Lucy doesn't eat very much and still gains weight, why?

Our bodies need food to create good quality Blood which nourishes all our organs, bones, muscles and skin. If it fails to receive SUFFICIENT nourishment, it will hold onto anything it has i.e. choosing not to eliminate because it will try to salvage nutrition from almost anything. This is when accumulation of wastes build- up.

Inadequate nutrition weakens the whole body, creating sagging facial and bodily tissue, premature ageing, sluggish kidney function such as soft stools, irritable bowel and other health related problems. The accumulation of waste can be experienced as excess weight.



**Water Retention:** The same applies if the body fails to receive sufficient fluid (water or herbal teas) on a regular basis; it will 'hold-on' to what it has because it doesn't know when the next water will arrive. This is when fluid retention occurs.

**Remedy:** to eat little and often; this will gradually strengthen the weak organs by not giving them too much to do at any one time AND good nutrition regularly. Sip warm drinks throughout the day such as hot water with a slice of ginger, yogi tea with warming aromatic spices or herbal teas such as green or nettle tea.

**Sweet cravings reduce over a three week period by eating in this way alongside avoiding sugary foods.**



**Testimonial:.....**

A woman of 58 wanted to lose weight. She had high blood pressure and felt low in energy. Over a three month period of working together with her acupuncturist she started to include more of the 'sweet flavoured' food into her diet and also that of her husband, children and grandchildren! She was a woman at the centre of her whole family. Slowly but surely she lost 2 stones in weight, felt like she had a skip in her step again, her blood pressure lowered to a level where she didn't need medication any more and the added bonus was her whole family benefited!

As mentioned on the previous pages, the focus for Lucy is to INCLUDE strengthening and nourishing foods which give a warm and satisfying glow and REDUCE the foods that create Damp/mucus. Therefore we will begin by looking at foods that slow the digestion down.



### About ice cream:

Ice cream is very COLD, as we all know! and because of this it cools the digestive fire down rapidly. It is sweetened, often artificially with chemical additives that 'shock' the Sp/St into failing to do their job properly. It also contains dairy cream which as we've previously mentioned is Damp Forming.

### Personally I call it a pot of Freezing Cold Damp!

Regular consumption can cause cysts, lumps, tumours and other Damp conditions such as candida.

Susceptible people should avoid it.

## Foods to Reduce/Avoid

These are DAMP/MUCUS forming foods:

**DAIRY:** including cows milk, cheese, cream, yoghurt, ice cream

**SUGARY FOODS:** cakes, biscuits, chocolate bars (80% cocoa is better), artificially sweetened fizzy drinks

**FATTY FOODS:** fried food, fatty meats, lard and butter (avoid hydrogenated margarines altogether), oily foods such as nuts especially roasted peanuts

**TROPICAL FRUIT & JUICES:** concentrated orange juice, bananas and pineapple

**OTHER FOODS:** wheat, bread, beer, concentrated tomato puree, nuts (sunflower and pumpkin seeds, walnuts and almonds are less congesting).



*It is helpful to separate the dessert from the main meal and have it as a snack on its own. This assists a deficient (weak) Spleen/Stomach in the digestive transformation of food essence.*

The approach is to **reduce** foods which are damp forming, **include** foods that strengthen, drain and dry Dampness AND are also deeply satisfying.

## Foods to Include

**GRAINS:** white rice, brown rice, cous cous, quinoa, barley

### VEGETABLES:

carrot, sweet potato, parsnip, turnip, squash, pumpkin

**LEGUMES:** red lentils, aduki beans (have Damp draining qualities)

**SPROUTS:** alfalfa sprouts (particularly effective in resolving dampness) Tip: sprinkle the alfalfa sprouts liberally on top of vegetables and greens

**DARK GREEN LEAFY VEG:** kale & cabbage lightly steamed

**Pungent foods** break through Dampness: onion family, aromatic herbs (coriander) and spices (ginger, cinnamon)

**Great recipes:** Vegetable & Lentil Curry, page 32  
Fish Soup with added grains such as barley, page 31

The dietary approach is one that satisfies Lucy physically and emotionally and includes well cooked hearty food such as soups and stews, eaten in smaller quantities at intervals throughout the day as this allows the spleen to release energy slowly and steadily. Foods that strengthen the organs and also drain dampness are basically a low-fat wholefood diet including grains, root vegetables, good quality protein and aromatic spices and herbs that help avoid stagnancy.



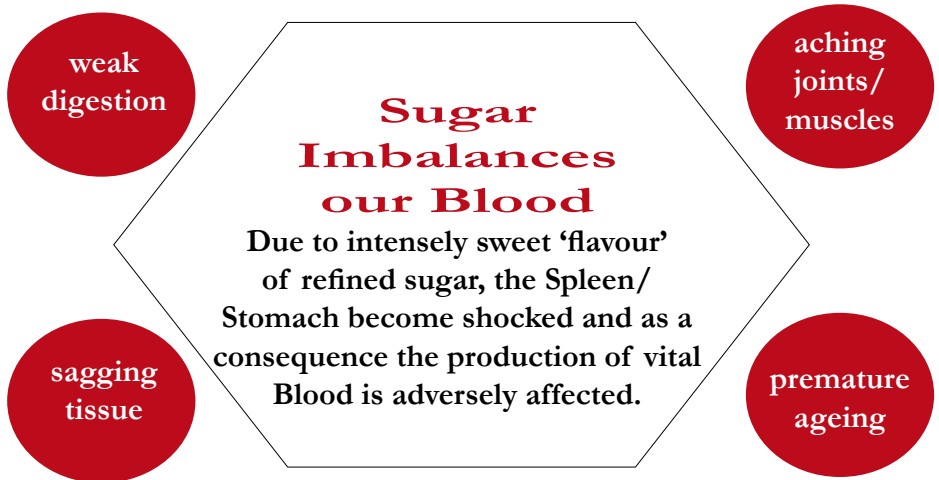
*The Stomach is like a washing machine. If you overfill it digestion doesn't work as well. It needs space to do its job.*



*Do your best not to eat late at night. Gravity helps in digestion i.e. if you're lying down it doesn't work so well!*

## Spotlight on refined sugar

Refined sugar is known as ‘The White Poison’ in Japan and ‘The Great White Death’ in China. It is intensely sweet, creates strong highs and lows both physically and mentally and also cravings if eaten regularly. This guide isn’t intended to beat you over the head saying ‘you must not eat this’. It is simply providing you with the information so that you can make your own informed decisions. “A little of what you fancy does you good but too much can become your poison”.



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**D**averick Leggett says “from a western point of view, sugar overstimulates the pancreas and exhausts the adrenals, leaches some minerals (specifically upsetting the phosphorus/calcium balance causing excretion of calcium supplies) and upsets the protein/carbohydrate balance. Its overconsumption is a major cause of immune weakness and allergy” *Recipes for Self Healing, Meridian Press, 1999*

**I**n small quantities it can be used as medicine, such as a piece of 70% cocoa chocolate now and then! However if consumed regularly as chocolate snacks, biscuits, cakes or ice cream it can lead to obesity, hypoglycaemia, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, anaemia, bone density loss and contributes to herpes and yeast infections, cancer, PMT and menstruation problems. On the mental health side of things it can lead to memory loss, lack of concentration, nervousness, anxiety “and the desire for only the sweet things in life” *Pitchford, Healing with Wholefoods, North Atlantic Books, 1993*



**S**o ....you're getting the picture of the effect refined sugar has on the body, it's pretty scary isn't it!

The following is a short case study of a 64 year old woman suffering from Fibromylgia and eczema. Her symptoms were pain in her lower legs and feet, incredibly itchy red patches of skin on various parts of her body and an inability to lose weight despite dieting.



### Case Study

We will be discussing this case in more detail in a future issue in terms of the contributing factors causing her to gain weight. However, for this article we will explore the effects of sugar.

**In this case Fibromylgia was a ‘Damp/Heat’ condition  
Heat in the skin manifesting as hot, itchy, red patches  
Background of ‘Deficient Blood’ that fails to nourish the skin and muscles**

As we’ve previously discussed, refined sugar has a dramatic effect on the spleen/stomach’s ability to produce good quality blood. The term ‘Deficient Blood’ in Chinese medicine means the vitality of the Blood isn’t too good; rather like watered down wine or more to the point, wine that has gone-off. During one of the treatments, this lady acknowledged that she was eating a spoonful of icing sugar every morning to get the sweet ‘hit’. Her body was speaking loud and clear, saying the spleen and stomach were weak and needed the ‘sweet flavour’ that resonates with these organs to strengthen them, not refined sugar. It became a vicious circle.

**During one of the treatments, this lady acknowledged that she was eating a spoonful of icing sugar every morning to get the sweet ‘hit’.**



This vicious circle manifested as the muscles became soggy with Dampness and as a consequence, this stagnation created Heat in her body. The sugar also created Heat, rather like stoking up a fire. The muscles were crying out with pain and the skin was too. The scratching of the skin drew blood which was the body's way of releasing Heat, literally through the blood.

## Remedial Diet

Instead of a spoonful of icing sugar in the morning, the sugar 'hit' was replaced with natural sugars:

dates, apricots, sultanas and rice syrup as snacks, in drinks and on porridge

*Important Note: too much 'sweet flavour' can prolong the imbalance therefore the natural sugars were also reduced over time.*

Small and frequent meals were eaten from the 'sweet, bitter and pungent flavours' food categories (to be discussed in Basic Principles in future issues):

carrot and sweet potato baked in their jacket, more grains such as brown and white rice, aduki bean and pumpkin stew, to strengthen St/Sp/P, lentil & leeks and a slice of lemon in hot water to drain

Dampness.

Damp Forming foods were reduced: dairy, wheat, spreads, concentrated orange juice, tomato puree and fatty foods. Lots of dark leafy greens were included to nourish the Blood.

The sweet cravings receded after 4-6 weeks and it was approximately 4 months before her skin became less itchy and the pain in her muscles became bearable. Acupuncture played an important part in the healing process in this case and the dietary therapy supported the treatment and empowered the patient.



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# Healthy Eating - A Chinese Medicine Perspective

by Daverick Leggett

This article is about how I am becoming more of a simpleton as I get older. It essentially states the obvious, or perhaps what is obvious to me. But because something is obvious we should not stop saying it. Below are some reflections on what is important when we look at the question of what constitutes healthy eating. The lens through which this question is viewed is that of Chinese medicine which has informed my work for the last three decades.



## Don't Worry

These days this is the single most important piece of advice I give to my clients. I mean it. In Chinese medicine we understand that emotions and states of mind impact our Qi. Worry, the emotion associated with the Spleen, knots the Qi. This manifests as tension in the digestive system and inhibits our ability to digest clearly. When Chinese medicine says “Anxiety damages the Blood” it is describing this process. So worry, especially about food, is damaging. In fact I would go further and say that today worrying about food, overwhelmed as we are by too much often contradictory information and stimulation, has become a pathology.



Related to this is the state of the body when receiving the food. In the words of the bard

**“Unquiet meals make ill  
digestion”**

**(Shakespeare, Comedy of Errors)**

Relaxation and enjoyment are key and are part of the ‘yin’ aspect of digestion. A relaxed body will digest food more easily and enjoying our food is how we open to nourishment. Digestion begins even before we put the food into our mouths. The sight and smell of the food on our plate begins the production of digestive enzymes. Therefore, taking time to appreciate food before we put it in our mouths is part of healthy eating. If I achieve nothing else with a client beyond convincing them to slow down, stop worrying and enjoy their food I am happy with the session.

### Less is More

A cook once held out her cupped hands to me and said “Look, this is the size of your stomach”. It was significantly smaller than the amount of food most of us put on our plates, including me. So this brings me to the issue of quantity. Perhaps the most radical thing we can do in support of our health is limit how much we eat. Now this sounds hard and ascetic but consider: all scientific studies have shown how limiting the intake of food has extended lifespan, brought about freedom from most diseases such as heart disease and cancer, and extended reproductive life. And it is clear, surely, that over-consumption is a prime cause of many of our modern ills. So when the Chinese say “Eat til you are two thirds full” they were on to something.



Let's unpack this a little further. In Chinese medicine there is a concept of foods possessing a balance of Wei and Qi. Wei is the dense nutritious aspect of food which builds structure. Qi is the dynamic energetic aspect which assists with the processes of digestion and absorption, with transit through the system. We balance these according to our needs. For example, someone carrying excessive weight with sluggish digestion and signs of Heat may do well to eat more foods that are high in Qi and less that are high in Wei. Someone struggling to maintain weight and vigour showing signs of Deficiency may do well to do the opposite.

An overburdened digestive system becomes sluggish and is unable to keep pace with detoxification and elimination. Cultivating the (difficult) habit of stopping before we are full and ensuring we eat sufficient foods high in Qi i.e. fresh vegetables, fruits and whole grains will support the health of the digestive system.

### Quality

If reducing the sheer quantity of what we consume is helpful it must be balanced by increasing the quality. Here again is a radical step. Simply upgrading the quality of our

food, from chemically to organically grown, from old to fresh, from distant to local will have the effect of increasing our health, helping us to be more satisfied by our food (and therefore inclined to eat less).



Eating food with good flavour increases satisfaction and improves digestion. And the flavours are the nutritious essences of food. Dean Ornish, an American doctor and heart specialist, once said “As human beings we need a certain amount of gratification, and if we don't get it in quality we tend to make up for it in quantity.” I like him for this. If food tastes good, and we are slowed down enough to appreciate this, we will eat less. Simple.

## Timing

Then comes the issue of timing. Chinese medicine recognises that the body's systems display a tidal movement of energy symbolised by the Chinese clock. Digestion is strongest in the morning and weakest in the evening. The implication here is that we should attend to breakfast. The Chinese clock is supported culturally by sayings such as “eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a merchant and supper like a pauper”. It is supported also by modern science. Many studies have shown how the habit of eating breakfast gives us the best chance of regulating our weight, avoiding diabetes and managing our energy levels through the day. Similarly studies have also shown how the timing and quantity of supper affects weight management – lighter and earlier suppers best supporting those who are attempting to regulate their weight.



Although making breakfast the biggest meal of the day may not work for most of us (it doesn't for me), the important message here is that distributing nutrients more evenly through the three meals of the day and both reducing the quantity and lateness of the evening meal is pivotal in supporting our health.

A recent study on weightloss showed that the “Big Breakfast Diet” i.e. a diet involving some fat and protein for breakfast was significantly more successful in achieving weightloss than a lighter carbohydrate based breakfast.

despite an overall higher consumption of calories by the Big Breakfast group throughout the day. As they say in Spain “Better lose a supper than have a hundred physicians.”

Seasonally too our diet needs to be responsive. More foods high in Wei for the winter and foods with warming energy; more foods high in Qi and generally cooler in the summer. This is not news. However, it is when we go counter to the seasons that we invite trouble. For example, it took me a long time to realise that if I followed the natural offering of Spring – more greens, less heating foods and a bit of a Spring clean – my summer hayfever was significantly better.

## Digestive Fire

Digestion is a warm process dependent on the Yang of the Spleen and ultimately the Kidneys. Healthy eating means looking after this fire. If we continuously fill the body with chilled foods and cold energy foods we weaken this fire. If we eat a mostly warm, cooked diet we support it. The extent to which we need to do this will depend on our constitution. Eating raw (cold) foods can also be buffered by the use of warming ingredients in dressings such as mustard, black pepper, horseradish and vinegar and by chewing well to warm and break down the food on the mouth.

This notion is pivotal to Chinese medicine's understanding of nutrition.

*“Sui Ren (Fire Man) invented fire by drilling wood and instructed the people to take cooked food to prevent digestive diseases.” (The Book of Rites, 11th century BC).*



Although the inclusion of some raw food in our diet is certainly supportive to health, the current vogue of raw food fundamentalism is misguided. It is the head leading the body. I have seen enough clients to know that, in almost all cases, a raw food diet is both unsustainable and ultimately damaging to health. Supporting the digestive fire is fundamental to healthy eating.

## The Qi of the Cook

So, what about the fire in the heart of the cook? Working as we do with Qi, it will be apparent to us that the Qi of the cook enters the food. I often tell the story of how, when I was gathering recipes for my book, I met a pizza chef who made the best pizzas in town. I used to hang out in his pizza joint and chat with him as he multi-tasked with complete equanimity, warm and humorous with all his clients, relaxed in the busy environment of the kitchen. When I asked him for his pizza recipe he smiled and said “Oh, it’s the same as Jo’s down the road”. I was not convinced. His pizza was extraordinary, Jo’s was not.

**“It’s not the ingredients,” he went on,  
“it’s the dance”.**

And he’s right. And not just the cooking but the growing and transporting and selling all leaves its Qi imprint. So I tell you this story and do with it what you will.

## Balance

“Eating a balanced diet” would be viewed by most of us as sound advice. But what does this mean? Balance in diet may be looked at as the balance of Wei and Qi as discussed earlier. A diet too heavy in Wei will impede the dispersal and transformation process and a diet too high in Qi may be too light, failing to provide a sufficient ground of nourishment.

It may also be looked at in the balance of all five flavours.

*“If people pay attention to the five flavours and blend them well, their bones will remain straight, their muscles will remain tender and young, breath and blood will circulate freely, the pores will be fine in texture, and consequently breath and bones will be filled with the Essence of life.” Huang Di, Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine, 2500BC.*

The flavours all have functions in the regulation of digestion and the habitual omission of a flavour or its overuse has consequences.

To take an example, the sour flavour has the function of supporting the digestion of fat, toning the body’s tissues through its astringent nature and encouraging movement of Liver Qi. Its omission may make the liver sluggish, encourage loss of tone and prolapse of body tissues, and fail to regulate the Stomach’s appetite. Its overuse may exacerbate the retention of Dampness.

One of the values of the bitter flavour is illustrated by the Maasai diet. The Maasai, whose diet is high in milk, eat a soup rich in bitter bark and roots which lower cholesterol and counter the congesting effect of the dairy. Urban Maasai, who don’t have access to the bitter plants, tend to develop heart disease.

A Five Element approach might encourage a “rainbow” diet balancing all the colours which, incidentally, provides a full range of anti-oxidants. Balance may also be considered as the balance of different foods on the plate i.e. the proportion of grains, vegetables, proteins etc.

For example, a more meaty diet is best balanced with higher intake of vegetables and fruits/less grains and a more vegetable protein diet is complemented by a higher intake of grains.

We must be careful not to form rigid views about food. Human beings are adaptable and there is no perfect diet. Even the notion of balance must be considered thoughtfully. An Eskimo may eat a diet high in protein and fat, a Maasai may consume vast amounts of milk, a Seventh Day Adventist may follow a vegetarian diet: all three are very healthy populations. Each of these populations has two things in common: a knowledge of how to balance the potentially negative impact of their staple foods and a strong supportive culture.



So, some simple notions: don't worry, enjoy, eat less, eat better, consider the rhythms of nature, have fun in the kitchen and eat an inclusive, broad diet. In my view we need to address these broad issues of how we relate to food before we enter the nitty gritty of what particular foods support our health. Actually all foods can support health. The critical factor, as Paracelsus says, is quantity. Meat nourishes our Blood and provides warmth. How much we should eat depends on the individual's constitution and condition and will also depend on what other foods are being consumed. And this is where this article ends. The field of differential diagnosis and how we translate this into more specific individual recommendations is a different article.

Better to end with the wise voice of the comedian Fran Lebowitz

**“Food is an important part of a balanced diet.”**

*Daverick Leggett*

*Note: During 2011 Daverick launched the UK's first training in Traditional Chinese Medicine nutrition.*

*Details of his work can be found at*

*[www.meridianpress.net](http://www.meridianpress.net)*

*[www.qigong-southwest.co.uk](http://www.qigong-southwest.co.uk)*



# recipes

“Diet is the third of the Eight Limbs of Classical Chinese Medicine. Although acupuncture and herbal therapy are much more widely known and popular in the West, if they are not supported by proper dietary therapy their effects will not be satisfactory or long-lasting.”

*Prince Wen Hui's Cook by Bob Flaws and Honora Wolfe,  
Paradigm Publications, 1983*

# Fish Soup

## Ingredients for 4 servings:

*large white fish filleted (e.g. choose pollock or ling as they are less heavily fished)*  
*seaweed (2" piece kombu)*  
*vegetables: handful string beans, 3 carrots sliced,*  
*1/4 shredded cabbage, 1 fennel diced*  
*2 onions diced*  
*2 tbspn dried mixed herbs*  
*fresh parsley*  
*2 bayleaf, 1 whole dried chilli (optional)*  
*good pinch of sea salt, freshly ground black pepper*  
*3 tbspn virgin olive oil or sesame oil*  
*1 or 2 organic vegetable bouillon stock cubes*  
*fish bones for stock (available free of charge from fishmonger)*

## Method:

1. Boil the fish bones in approx. 2 pints of water for 2 hours. Strain the stock and retain.
2. Once the fish stock is ready, heat the oil in a deep pan (I personally like cast iron pots) and gently fry the onion and dried herbs, bayleaf, and chilli (optional) for 2-3 minutes stirring continuously to release their flavours.
3. Add the chopped vegetables, sea salt and pepper to the pot, mix together and fry for a further 1 minute.
4. Add the fish stock to the pan and simmer for a further 30 minutes adding the seaweed, freshly chopped herbs and fish pieces during the last 10 minutes (do not boil the seaweed as this degrades it).

During the winter season our Kidney energy needs a little helping hand and the salty flavour of this dish improves this deep subtle energy. The fish bones are great for building our bone marrow and as the Kidneys are the foundation of our body it is important to keep them happy! If you don't have time to make the stock, then just cut this part out of the recipe - it's quick, easy and still very tasty. When you do have time to make the stock, you'll most definitely taste and feel the difference!



**The Kidneys influence:  
diabetes, urinary problems,  
osteoporosis, hypertension**

5. Serve and enjoy this Kidney nourishing soup!

*Note: Avoid hot chilli if you are low in energy OR have high blood pressure as it is too heating in its thermal nature (a future issue will discuss the thermal nature of food).*



*Left-overs can be heated up the next day and taken in a thermos flask for lunch.*

# Vegetable & Lentil Curry

Lentils have a mild flavour and are a great accompaniment to vegetables as they add protein and also give the curry a nice consistency. This recipe is good for people who have poor blood circulation, heart weakness or generally feel lethargic. Lentils increase the vital essence of the Kidneys.

## ingredients (serves 4 - 6)

*1 onion, 4 carrots, 2 medium sweet potato, (peeled and sliced into 1" pieces)*

*handful of string beans, 1 medium parsnip peeled and sliced*

*2 organic vegetable bouillon stock cubes*

*2 tbspn of mild curry powder*

*2" cinnamon stick, 7 crushed cardamon pods,*

*2 bay leaves, 1 dried chilli (discard after cooking)*

*good pinch sea salt and freshly ground black pepper*

*half cup red organic lentils (washed in cold water)*



1. Put lentils in a pan of boiling water (do not add salt as this makes them hard) and bring back to the boil. Boil vigorously for 5 minutes skimming off any froth, then simmer for 10 minutes. Then strain excess liquid. If tinned lentils used, no need to pre-cook.
2. Meanwhile, heat some oil in a deep pan, add the chopped onion and fry for 3 minutes.
3. Add all the spices (curry powder, cinnamon stick, cardamon pods etc), coating the onion. This releases their aromatic flavours.
4. Add all the chopped vegetables, again coating them in the spices.
5. Add stock cubes dissolved in 1 cup of boiling water. Add another cup of boiling water and cook the vegetables for 15 minutes.
6. Add the strained lentils (or tin) and stir thoroughly. Cook for a further 20 minutes stirring occasionally to avoid lentils sticking to bottom of pan, adding an extra cup of boiling water as required.
7. Serving suggestions: well cooked (40 mins) organic brown rice, steamed kale or cabbage and mango chutney. If you have a weak digestion, try organic white basmati rice. Add freshly chopped herbs.
8. If you like sweetness, then add a few chopped unsulphured apricots to the curry. This is a good way to nourish this craving.



*Beans and pulses are most nutritious cooked from their dried form so if you're short of time buy tinned (salt & sugar free, organic if possible).*



*Lentils don't need pre-soaking and cook quicker than other pulses.*

# Golden Casserole

## ingredients: (serves 4-6)

*1 cup dried chickpeas (soaked overnight and cooked as per instructions)*

*OR 1 large tin pre-cooked chickpeas*

*1/2 butternut squash, deseeded, peeled, cut into chunks*

*3 carrots peeled and sliced*

*2 white onions diced*

*1 large sweet potato peeled and cut into 1" chunks*

*half medium turnip peeled and cut into 1" chunks*

*1 dessertspoon ground ginger*

*1 1/2 tablespoons ground coriander*

*2" piece cinnamon stick*

*2 bayleaf, good pinch of sea salt and black pepper*

*3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or sesame oil*

*2 organic vegetable bouillon stock cubes*

1. Heat the oil in a large pan. Add diced onions and fry until they become translucent.
2. Add the salt, pepper, ground ginger, ground coriander, cinnamon stick and mix thoroughly to release their fragrances.
3. Add all the chopped vegetables and mix with spices and onion. Add a large mug of boiled water. Simmer for 10 minutes stirring occasionally.
4. Add the pre-cooked chickpeas and mix thoroughly. Adding a further 2 cups of boiled water. Add the bayleaf.
5. Crumble the stock cubes into the pot and mix thoroughly.
6. Cook for a further 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Alternatively at this point the pot can be transferred to the oven and cooked on gas mark 3/160°C for a further 30 minutes.
7. Serve with freshly chopped coriander, well cooked brown rice and lightly steamed kale or cabbage.

This dish strengthens weakness and improves lethargy. The warming spices encourage movement of yang energy, so for those of you who feel the cold this is also fantastic!

Chickpeas contain more iron than other beans & pulses so they're great for nourishing the Blood.



*Cooking this dish slowly in the oven creates a deeper warmth for the body which nourishes the Kidney/Spleen/Stomach energy.*

# Baked Pears in Apple Juice with Soya Custard

## ingredients (serves 4):

4 small whole pears (Comice)  
1 bottle natural apple juice (unsweetened)  
1 packet of soya custard or  
other non-dairy dessert cream.

## Method:

1. Wash the pears and place in a deep earthenware dish.
2. Pour in the apple juice so the pears are completely covered.
3. Bake in the oven for 40 minutes on a moderate heat (gas mark 4, 180°C or until the pears are soft.
4. Serve the pears with soya custard or other non-dairy dessert cream..

[www.wendymorrison-acupuncture.co.uk/fiveflavours.html](http://www.wendymorrison-acupuncture.co.uk/fiveflavours.html)



# Rhubarb & Pear Crumble

## ingredients (serves 4):

5 stems of rhubarb sliced into large 2" pieces  
2 or 3 just ripe pears, peeled, de-cored and thinly sliced

## for the crumble:

1 1/2 cups organic jumbo oats  
2oz soft organic butter  
2 tablespoons rice syrup

pears benefit the Lungs  
and rhubarb stem benefit  
liver stagnancy  
example: emotional outbursts  
of anger

## Method:

1. Put the rhubarb pieces in a pan with half a cup of water. Bring to the boil and turn down to a simmer for 5-10 minutes or until soft. Strain liquid and keep as a drink!
2. Rub butter well into the oats.
3. Place cooked rhubarb into ovenproof dish, place sliced pear evenly over rhubarb.

4. Spoon crumble mixture over the fruit filling.
5. Pour rice syrup over the oats evenly (this replaces the need for sugar). If you like a sweeter fruit filling, add some sultanas to the fruit.
6. Cook in the middle of the oven on gas mark 5 or 190°C. for 20 minutes.
7. Serve hot with soya custard.



# shopping list for recipes in this issue

## fresh food

(organic where possible)

carrot, onion  
sweet potato, string bean  
turnip, parsnip  
dark green leafy cabbage  
kale  
butternut squash, fennel bulb  
parsley, coriander  
root ginger  
pear  
rhubarb  
organic butter

## dried food

red lentils  
chickpeas  
organic jumbo oats  
brown basmati rice  
unsulphured apricots  
sunflower seeds  
sultanas  
seaweed (kombu, hiziki)  
mixed dried herbs

## other

honey, rice syrup, soya dessert custard,  
natural apple juice, extra virgin olive oil or  
sesame oil

## where to buy

farm shop, good health food store, fishmonger and supermarket.

## kitchen utensils

chopping board  
vegetable knife  
food blender (hand) for future recipes  
pestle & mortar  
heavy casserole pot  
earthenware dish  
flat baking tray

## animal protein

white fish (pollock, ling or other)  
fish bones for stock

## seasonings

organic vegetable bouillon stock  
good quality sea salt (grey in colour)  
black peppercorns  
ground ginger  
ground coriander  
ground garam masala  
mild curry powder, cinnamon sticks  
bayleaf, dried chilli, cardamon pods

# Food suggestions for autumn/winter

## Breakfast

- Porridge made with oats (recipe page 10), rice or millet flakes (one grain only) and add chopped plum, blueberries, pear or red grape on top.
- Baked beans or poached egg on wholemeal toast. Note: regular baked beans contain sugar so choose a brand such as Whole Earth.
- Egg fried rice with spring onions, string beans, shredded cabbage, left-over vegetables, cubes of organic tofu. Note: half a dozen eggs a week is fine.
- **To Drink:** Try to reduce coffee and black tea and replace with herbal tea e.g. green tea, rhoibosh or nettle (which is exceptional for the blood). Juices such as pear, carrot or beetroot rather than concentrated orange juice which can create Dampness (i.e. slow the digestion down).

## Lunch

### (eat well with a larger portion)

- Big bowl of hearty Fish Soup (recipe is on page 31)  
**Note:** can be taken to work for lunch in a thermos flask.
- Vegetable & Lentil Curry with brown rice and steamed greens (recipe is on page 32).
- Stir fried cubed tofu or tempeh and vegetables (green beans, courgette, broccoli, shredded cabbage, green chilli) with cous cous and lightly steamed cabbage.
- Sweet potato and organic carrots baked in their jackets in the oven, with oven baked salmon in foil to retain juices, steamed kale and quinoa or rice.
- **For dessert:** Rhubarb & Pear Crumble with soya custard or Baked Pear (recipe on page 35).

**Note:** Left-overs from previous day's meals can be taken to work for lunch in a food box and eaten at room temperature - still really tasty!

## Supper

(eat a smaller portion before 7pm to allow for good digestion)

- Parsnip & Pear homemade soup (recipe will appear in a future issue) with rice crackers and sliced avocado with chopped parsley.
- Aduki Bean and Pumpkin Stew (recipe will appear in a future issue).



## Real life stories

The real life stories section is dedicated to personal journeys or case studies from practitioners, for example:

**“Moving from Being Obese to Not”**

**“How I lowered my high blood pressure  
and can now  
play with the grandchildren”**

**“Rhinitis was the bane of my life -  
now I say “What Rhinitis!”**

An invitation to:  
practitioners  
students and readers

Would you like to write about the challenges faced with a particular health issue and how dietary changes made a real difference?

There are many holistic ways of eating nowadays therefore as Five Flavours is focused on the Chinese Dietary Therapy route, this is what we would like to hear about. So, if you would like to put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard and share your story, please post or email to:

FiveFlavours@hotmail.co.uk  
or Wren Cottage, Silver Street, Buckfastleigh,  
Devon, TQ11 0BQ



The story chosen will be printed in a future issue for the benefit of others facing similar challenges.

We can either print your name so that readers may contact you via the Editor or you can remain anonymous. It's up to you.

We look forward to hearing from you.

The Editor

# Editor's quick tips

## Cooking Pulses

If you don't have time to soak and cook pulses/beans for the allotted time then I'd suggest you buy tinned. This is a great way to begin increasing pulses into your diet. You can add them to vegetables with aromatic herbs and spices to make a really tasty and quick curry.

If cooking beans/pulses from dried, always cook very well because if they're under-cooked they can cause flatulence, bloating and stomach cramps.

## Weak Digestion

If you have Irritable Bowel Syndrome or suffer with bloating, flatulence, indigestion, acid reflux, nausea etc. then it may be beneficial for you to reduce the number of ingredients in your meals. For example, from a western nutrition perspective, two different grains in one meal takes two different enzymes to digest them. Many ingredients create a busy digestion.

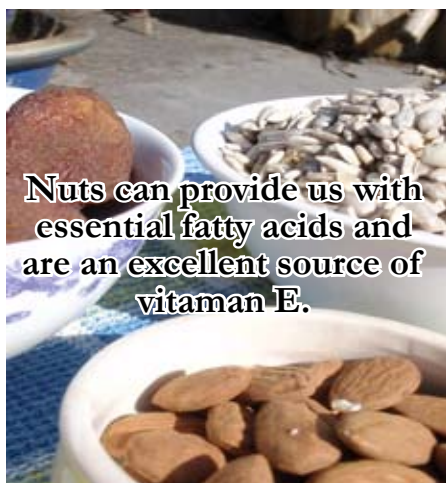
## Snacks

Finding ideas for snacks are often where people fall down on eating healthily. However, some tasty ones are oat cakes with tahini, marmite or other spread. Rice cakes are also great with avocado and chopped parsley or pumpkin seed spread.

## Drinks:

It's best to drink water at room temperature or hot, never freezing cold as this depletes the Kidney energy and the digestive fire.

- Hot water with a slice of lemon is cleansing to the body and is directed to the Liver (the sour flavour resonates with the Liver). Great first thing in the morning.
- Hot water with a slice of ginger is nourishing to the Stomach/Spleen (ginger is warming in its thermal nature and this improves the digestive fire).
- Hot water with a bunch of parsley (as a tea) is great for Kidney problems (urinary infections, kidney stones) and parsley also benefits the optic nerve.



## Who's who

Born and bred in southern England, **Daverick Leggett** began his working life as a farmer and gardener. After several formative years living close to the earth, he worked as a teacher in the state education system before beginning a career as a shiatsu practitioner in the early 80's. Through shiatsu he was introduced to both Qigong and Food Energetics, the two areas which were to become his lifework.

He has trained continuously in the Huagong style of Qigong with Qigong master Zhixing Wang since meeting him in 1991 and is now one of his senior instructors. He runs several trainings throughout southwest England ranging from regular classes through to summer camps and masters degree programmes.



**Wendy Morrison,**  
Editor

**Wendy Morrison** Lic.Ac. BSc(hons) is an acupuncturist and a member of the British Acupuncture Council. Originally from Cheshire, she spent 15 years in the IT industry. In 2002, having been interested in Buddhism since the mid 90's, she decided to spend a year as a volunteer manager at Gaia House Buddhist Retreat Centre in South Devon. This was to be a life changing event, as it gave her the time and space for self-reflection. The idea to study acupuncture came during a silent meditation Zen Retreat with Tenshin Zenki Reb Anderson. In April 2003 she commenced her training at the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine in Reading and qualified in 2007.

**Daverick Leggett**  
Five Flavours  
Advisor



His books on nutrition are standard works for many acupuncture and oriental medicine schools and he is a frequent lecturer at conferences and acupuncture schools. The titles of his two books (Helping Ourselves and Recipes for Self-Healing) contain the essential intent of his work: finding ways of helping people to help themselves to deeper health and more vibrant living. He is well known both for his pragmatic and accessible teaching of oriental nutrition, and for his ability to help people directly experience the subtle world of Qi.

Wendy's food fascination probably started as far back as a child, when she spent time with her nanna who cooked stews for hours on end and made scones by hand at 7am in the morning! However, her passion for how food could benefit health really began in 2002 when she discovered Daverick Leggett's book 'Recipes for Self Healing' because it helped her overcome insomnia and low energy, left over from her previous life in the IT Industry.

Her visit to Hangzhou TCM Hospital, Eastern China, in September 2010 provided her with a wealth of clinical experience alongside her daily Acupuncture Practices in Torquay, Ivybridge and Buckfastleigh where she works with food specific to her patients' imbalances to support their healing both during and after a course of acupuncture.

A selection of suggested topics for future issues:

### **REGULAR FEATURES**

Basic Principles of Food Energetics  
Listen to Your Body  
Spotlight On  
Remedies

### **ARTICLES**

Cravings Give Important Clues  
Why Microwave Cooking Isn't the Way  
How to Regain Your Natural Weight  
Food Focus for Hypertension  
Irritable Bowel Syndrome and Combining Foods  
Lung Weakness: Foods to Strengthen  
    Foods to Disperse Phlegm  
Remedial Diet for Deep Energy Deficiencies  
Menopausal Symptoms and Food  
PMT Can Food Make A Difference?

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Case Studies from Readers and Practitioners

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To raise the awareness of how  
Chinese Dietary Therapy  
can maintain good health and  
remedy unbalanced health  
in every day life  
using every day food

and

To bridge the gap between  
East and West with  
practical and  
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