

Macrobiotic Diet For Health

By Ngam Su May

The Macrobiotic Diet and lifestyle originated from Japan, with the objectives of attaining a long life that is free from diseases. It is based on Eastern concepts of yin and yang energies in food and body constitution, as well as local climates. June Ka Lim, a graduate of the Kushi Institute, the world's leading Macrobiotic education center, gives an insight into the basic principles.



June Ka Lim

A good, balanced diet will lead to a balanced hormonal system – that in essence is what June Ka Lim, vegan chief, holistic nutritionist and proponent of Macrobiotic Diet proposes to prevent hormonal imbalance and other health problems. While foods such as soy have been linked to helping women overcome menopause and prevention against hormone-related cancers, June emphasizes that there is no single food that can heal a certain ailment. She champions the Macrobiotic Diet and lifestyle that originated in the East. According to her, this diet is balanced in three aspects:

- balanced 'energy' of food as identified by *yin* and *yang* principles in Traditional Chinese Medicine

- compatibility with one's body constitution
- compatibility with the climate of one's geographical location.

What is the Macrobiotic Diet and is it easy to follow? The word macrobiotic originates from Greek roots and means 'long life'. The Macrobiotic Diet was developed by a Japanese educator named George Ohsawa, and later refined by his student Michio Kushi. Kushi opened the Kushi Institute in Boston in 1978 and popularized the diet in North America and later Europe and other parts of the world. Tens of thousands of students from all over the world have graduated from the Kushi Institute. The strong following of the Macrobiotic Diet in the West has

attracted the attention of the medical fraternity. A clinical study, sponsored by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, US, is currently on-going to gauge the effects of the Macrobiotic Diet and flax seed on hormone-dependent cancers, cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis (see www.clinicaltrials.gov)

Predominantly Vegan

The standard guidelines under the Macrobiotic Diet shows that it is basically a low fat, higher fibre diet which is predominantly vegan. June, a graduate of the Kushi Institute, notes that there are standard ratios for food groups in the Diet but these can be adjusted for those with health problems.

Guidelines For Macrobiotic Diet

- Whole grains – 50%
Grains that are not polished, processed or refined. Examples are brown rice, whole wheat berries, barley, millet, rye, buckwheat
- Vegetables and fruits – 30%
Can be cooked and raw
- Beans and legumes - 10%
- Seeds and nuts – 10%
- Seasonings – Natural sea salt, brown rice vinegar. Commercial sauces are not recommended.
- Cooking methods – Cooking with gas is recommended. Avoid microwave and electric appliances.

Complex Carbohydrates

The emphasis on whole grains in the Macrobiotic Diet has sparked concern on whether there is over dependence on carbohydrates that could cause one to put on weight. June explains that whole grains are complex carbohydrates which release energy gradually and stabilizes blood sugar. Brown rice, she notes as an example, is healthy and suitable for diabetics.

What about the shortage of proteins? "Adults do not need much

protein and the body cannot store excessive proteins," June explains. Excess protein requires more energy for metabolism. This makes us feel tired and increases the propensity of higher cholesterol, fat and obesity.

Why are dairy products not recommended? According to June, these foods are mucus forming and block the energy pathways. Over time, the functions of the lungs and the lymphatic system will be weakened which will lead to illness as the body's internal energy is blocked.

According to June, people with health problems such as fatigue, high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, renal problems, skin problems and even cancer have benefited when they change their diet following Macrobiotic principles. When consulted, June will design a complete menu based on the person's constitution, diet and lifestyle.

For most people, the difficulty is going meatless. June says that fish can be taken once or twice a week and this can be gradually reduced. Organic produce are recommended so that the healing process is faster. She emphasizes that the Macrobiotic principles extend to a healthy lifestyle that includes exercises and good

mental attitudes. The Do-in exercises are recommended by the Kushi Institute.

Macrobiotic Concept of Yin and Yang

Following the Macrobiotic Diet, one fine tunes the selection of the food groups by first understanding the 'energy' of food, whether *yin* (cold or cooling), *yang* (warm and 'heaty') or neutral (neither warm or cold). June elaborates that fruits and vegetables generally emit *yin* energy while meat are considered *yang* energy.

There are also different energy profiles for the wide range of whole grains in the Macrobiotic Diet. Brown rice, for instance, is neutral while soyabeans are *yin* and adzuki beans are *yang*. Size makes a difference. "The bigger the size of the beans, the more the *yin*," June reveals.

Colour are also indicators. Temperate fruits such as grapes, plums and prunes are stronger in colour, denoting *yang* of *yin* essence.

Besides identifying *yin* and *yang* properties, the choice of food must be in harmony with one's body constitution. This again relates to the *yin* and *yang* energies presiding in every human being. "The shape of the face and features, body shape, fingers are the telltale signs of one's constitution," June explains. A muscular and big-sized person, for instance, would be considered to have a *yang* constitution. Those who are tall, slim and slender fall generally into the *yin* category. Knowing one's constitution, one should then select foods that pose no conflict so as not to create imbalance in energies.

Local Climate

Another element in the Macrobiotic diet relates to the climate of the country one is living in. Malaysia is hot and humid and therefore considered *yang* in character. By this correlation, eating too much meat (*yang*) is not

Rejuvenating Drink (Serves 2)



A high energy drink and remedy for chronic fatigue. Lotus seeds has claming effect, multigrains are rich in minerals such as B complex, E, protein, iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium and silica.

Ingredients

- 1.5 litres pure water
- 1 tbsp lotus seeds (soaked)
- 100g organically grown whole multigrains (consists of millet, oat, rice, wheat and barley), soak for 4 hours

Method

1. Bring water to boil, add all the ingredients, continue to boil for a further 10 minutes. Filter.
2. Keep warm in a flask.

Multi Grain Rice With Sesame Salt Topping (Serves 6)



Whole grains are rich in vitamin B, E, iron, potassium, calcium, folic acid, fibre, complex carbohydrates with sustained energy, fat and protein. The vitamin content of sprouted grains especially E increases manifold. Sprouting also makes the grains more digestible.

Ingredients

360g multi grains (consisting brown rice, millet, barley, wild rice or you could use half white rice and half brown rice to suite your taste. If white rice is used, no presoaking is needed)
3 cups pure water

Method

1. Sprout grains with 2 times pure water for about 4 hours.
2. Use a stainless steel pot, bring water to a boil, add rice.
3. Simmer for about 30 minutes until all the water in the rice is completely absorbed and the rice is cooked.
4. Alternatively, you could steam the rice until cooked.
5. Top rice with sesame salt. Serve warm.
6. Sesame salt – Blend 1 cup of brown same with 1½ tsp Celtic sea salt.

Macrobiotic Concepts of Yin and Yang

Yin	Yang
Woman	Man
Short	Tall
Thin	Fat
Small	Big
Right	Left
Back	Front
Low	High
Down	Up

The art of balancing energy in a diet appears related to the art of longevity as well outlined under Macrobiotic diet and lifestyle concepts. The principles are not new to Asian cultures. In terms of practice, foregoing meat appears to be the hardest part of the regimen. Food sources such as brown rice, fruits and vegetables are grown locally but most of the other whole grains are imported and will cost more. 😊

compatible. On the other hand, spices are considered *yin*. Natural spices and chilies are therefore in consonance with our hot climate. Conversely, people in cold countries should not overeat spicy food as they need warm (*yang*) food to balance the severities of the weather.

Herbs also have their different energy polarities. For instance, *wai san* (wild yam) and *yuk chok* deliver *yin* energies. Ginseng, on the other spectrum, is noted for its 'heaty' properties and is not recommended unless one has very weak health. *Yang* herbs are suitable for new mothers who have just delivered babies as they need to balance the *yin*.

Even beverages have their *yin* and *yang* features. Green tea is *yin* while black tea (roasted) is considered *yang*.

In terms of cooking methods, Macrobiotic principles also focus on how the fuel energy is directed and affects the energy of the food. Cooking with gas is ideal as the energy is stable. Microwave cooking

is not advisable due to the 'extreme vibrational energy' of the oven. "This is unsettling energy and unstable for the nervous system," June clarifies.

Wholemeal Almond Sesame Cake (Serves 10-12)

This is a delicious cake rich in calcium, fibre, protein, potassium, complex carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals.

Ingredients

1 packet whole meal almond sesame cake mix
9 tbsp almond oil
1 cup soy milk



Method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Prepare cake mix according to package instruction
3. Add oil and soy milk to cake mix.
4. Bake for about 20 minutes. Serve with fruit sauce such as blueberry or strawberry.



Age: 51

Marital Status: Single

Qualifications: B. Commerce, B. Science Food Nutrition, Graduate Kushi Institute Europe

Occupation: Vegan Chef, Restaurateur, Holistic Nutritionist, Zen Meditation Teacher

Hobbies: Pottery and Chinese calligraphy

June Ka Lim wears many hats in the health-related field – vegan chef, holistic nutritionist and Zen meditation teacher. She is among the rare breed of chefs who specializes in vegan cooking. June trained as a vegan chef at the Institute of Awakening, Seattle, US and Natural Gourmet Cookery School, New York as well as completed a food and beverage training course in Kobe, Japan. And this chef is extraordinary in that she knows what to cook and how to cook to propagate the health value of various foods. She has topped her credentials by learning and teaching the principles of Macrobiotic Diet, which has a wide following in US, Europe, Japan and many other countries.

June became a vegan about 12 years ago. "I was not feeling well, with gastric problems, indigestion and constipation," she recalls. So she studied and researched on ways to heal herself. "I felt light and good," she notes after removing meat from her diet and her health problems soon disappeared. That made her decide to be a full time vegan. June explains that vegans do not eat meat and dairy products. She also does not subscribe to the mock meats made from gluten, common in Chinese vegetarian dishes.

June teaches macrobiotic cooking once a month in Petaling Jaya. She tried to restrict her class to 20

participants. But due to good response, she had to expand to a class of 50. "It shows that many people are health conscious and want to know how food affects health," she enthuses. Her cooking classes are unique in that she incorporates face reading and physical Do-in exercises so that participants know their basic body constitution and how to improve their wellbeing. June imparts her knowledge on the energy and nutrient value of foods and how to cook and present them.

Between Tuesday and Sunday, June is busy at her restaurant, Woods Eco-cuisine, located in Damansara Utama. Started 10 years ago, the restaurant was a pioneer in serving vegan cum organic cuisine. After graduating from the Kushi Institute, June changed the menu and cooking style in the restaurant following macrobiotic principles and presentation in 1996.

June's interest in organic food started when she became an importer and wholesaler of organic products in 1988. She remembers there were only 2 organic farms and 2 organic shops. Now, she reckons there are at least 30 organic farms and 80 organic shops. Despite the developments, June thinks that Malaysia is still in the 'infant' stage compared to the West which has a 50-60 year lead. "It is growing at 20% a year in the US," she claims and therefore sees potential in Malaysia as well.

June plays her part in helping the organic food movement as a director of Organic Alliance since 2000. It is a non-profit organization of 20 organic retailers and processors who are working with the Ministry of Agriculture to come out with formal standards and certifications for various stages from farming, processing, packaging to retailing.

Besides food, June is a firm believer that the holistic approach to health also incorporates physical exercise and mental health. She advocates exercises such as swimming, qi gong, dia ji, yoga and brisk walking. June practices Zen meditation to reduce stress and is a meditation teacher for beginners at Dharma Drum Mountain Malaysia, a Malaysian chapter of the international Zen Buddhism group. According to her, meditation helps to make creative and happy cooks. "It is difficult to cook when your muscles are tense. You need to reduce stress, calm your nervous system and have clarity of mind" she explains.

Do-in Exercises

Do-in exercises are recommended for everyone.

The exercises are actually self massage and designed to work on the body's energy meridians to improve, maintain and develop overall well-being and health. They help open up any blockages that you may be experiencing in your body so that you feel more invigorated and energized.