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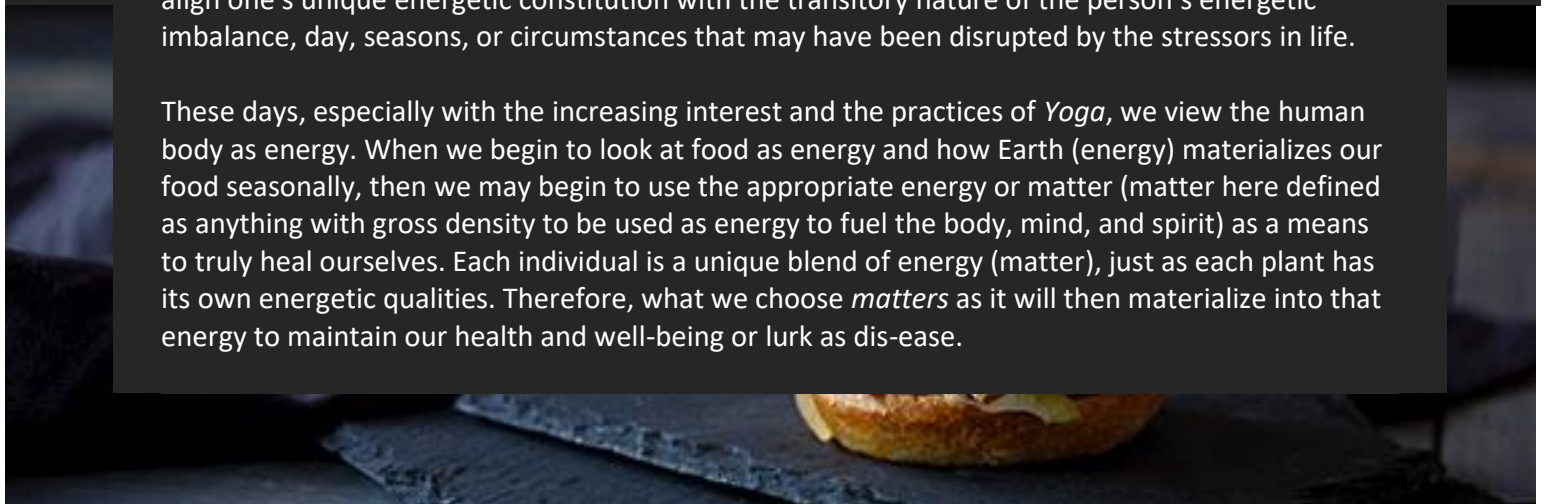


## ANCIENT ĀYURVEDA

*Āyurveda* has been described as many things: Indian Medicine, *Yogic* Lifestyle, Holistic Health Care, the Sister Science to *Yoga*, and perhaps (some may say, unfortunately) may be on the fast track as a food or diet trend. It has even been said, even by me when I first started learning in 2002, that *Āyurveda* is an ancient science. Lately, I've been pondering the term ancient, and rather incorporating the word timeless when describing *Āyurveda*. You may be wondering, why does this matter? It is just a word. First, it must be acknowledged that *Āyurveda* is rooted in the *Vedic* scriptures, originating 2,000 – 5,000 years BCE, and that the word *Āyurveda* comes from the *Sanskrit* language. *Sanskrit* translates as well formed, or pure. It is important to remember and revere the particular words with sincerity, valuing the vibration of its healing potential. *Āyurveda* comes from two words, the root word “*ayus*” meaning life, and “*veda*” meaning sacred knowledge. Thus, it may be translated as sacred knowledge of life, and through this knowing, we can delve deeper into our own self-knowledge as a way towards better caring for ourselves. Even though *Āyurveda* dates back thousands of years, it has been resurfacing in our contemporary time, therefore, I feel it is timeless, timeless like the universe where *Āyurveda* has its roots.

*Āyurveda* follows a philosophy known as *Samkhya*, a theory and philosophy that describes how spirit becomes matter. Using Meriam - Webster's dictionary, matter is defined as “the substance of which a physical object is composed.” The Oxford Dictionary states that matter is “Physical substance in general, as distinct from mind and spirit; (in physics) that which occupies space and possesses rest mass, especially as distinct from energy.” Interestingly, the *Samkhya* philosophy sees that there is a distinct connection with spirit and matter. *Āyurveda* uses an integral approach to healing by using anything and everything that nature (or Mother Earth) provides as a way to align one's unique energetic constitution with the transitory nature of the person's energetic imbalance, day, seasons, or circumstances that may have been disrupted by the stressors in life.

These days, especially with the increasing interest and the practices of *Yoga*, we view the human body as energy. When we begin to look at food as energy and how Earth (energy) materializes our food seasonally, then we may begin to use the appropriate energy or matter (matter here defined as anything with gross density to be used as energy to fuel the body, mind, and spirit) as a means to truly heal ourselves. Each individual is a unique blend of energy (matter), just as each plant has its own energetic qualities. Therefore, what we choose *matters* as it will then materialize into that energy to maintain our health and well-being or lurk as dis-ease.







## TIMELESS TRADITION

*Āyurveda* ought to be viewed as a timeless tradition, where with tradition comes value, and with value comes care. Since *Āyurveda* emphasizes self-care through routine regimens and using food as medicine, it is important to treat Mother Earth and all of her continual gifts as sacred. Remembering that we are as sacred as her seasonal and daily offerings. The *Samkhya* philosophy and *Āyurvedic* view is that all matter is a manifestation of the universe and that all things related to time is cyclical; the course of the day and night, and the seasons, repeating traditionally and timelessly both energetically and effectively providing an abundance of wealthy gifts to sustain our health.



“LET FOOD BE THY  
MEDICINE AND  
MEDICINE BE THY  
FOOD”

-HIPPOCRATES





## FOOD AS MEDICINE

How can we use this timeless tradition while sincerely and sacredly use food as medicine? First, it means to know what our inherent constitution/ *prakriti* (or prime energy) is that is to be determined by a qualified *Āyurvedic* practitioner. If that is not accessible, we may align ourselves by following *dinacharya* (following the day as a teacher towards knowledge) and *rtucaryāyā* (seasonal regimens). In order to live in harmony with nature, we must follow the natural rhythm of time while performing our duties in conjunction to the cycles of the day and night, including what we are eating (and when) in effort to keep the bodily systems in balance and properly functioning. Second, it is vital to prepare and cook your own fresh food (organic if possible) in effort to build a relationship with the food we're eating. Consider joining a CSA (community shared agriculture) at a local farm and get to know your farmer or try volunteering there helping as needed, as these actions will build a more vibrant relationship to food. Knowing exactly where your food comes from is the essence of living *Āyurvedically* and it can aid in developing a deeper understanding of which vegetables are growing in season. Just like our natural born constitution (prime energy) discerns whether we are primarily *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* (VPK) or a combination of the two or a blend of all three, our foods also dominate and/or share the characteristics of VPK through the 5 elements and/or a combination of the bio-elements. Since all of our choices that we make in life affect our inherent constitution, the foods that we eat may do the same as they also have an inherent constitution. Therefore, the foods that we choose may either increase, decrease, or create a swerve (or stasis) in the constitution (*vikriti*). This is where it gets a little tricky and an experienced *Āyurvedic* practitioner may help immensely to help understand your unique constitution and which foods may be more suitable for your lifestyle during the stages of your life and the natural rhythms of the fluctuating seasons. Let's look at simple example of the *Āyurvedic* saying, "like increases like and opposites cure" aphorism and how the foods that we choose can create balance through the opposite qualities of the season:

*Vata* (airy) Season – Foods: Root Veggies with hearty sustenance (earthy + little fiery)

*Kapha* (earthy) Season – Foods: Light and lettuces, beets (airy + little fiery)

*Pitta* (fiery) Season – Foods: cooling and dense (earthy + little airy)

As time transitions VPK overlaps and we experience a fluctuation of the temperature, therefore our food choices may need to vary. Example: Towards the end of summer we may experience a day that is hot and humid (*Pitta*) choosing salads and the next day is cold and windy (*Vata*) choosing soups or warm foods. *Āyurveda* is simple, but sometimes not simplistic. It's vital to understand that our foods/plants come from the earth during specific times of the year associated with VPK and the energetics of the food itself in order to know how the qualities that it imparts will affect the overall VPK. The foods may increase or decrease that particular VPK in the body, mind, and spirit. Most often food choices are meant to be specific to one's personal needs, you may say that *Āyurveda* cooking is characterized as being a "short order cook!" In order to thoroughly meet the needs of an individual and use the science of *Āyurveda* effectively we must consider *prakriti*, *vikriti*, *dinacharya*, and *rtucaryāyā*. These practices help keep us fully present in the moment and harmonious with our environment and connected to the universe.

<http://rebeccadamiayoga.wixsite.com/yoga>

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