

Return to the Earth

Realigning Ourselves with Nature Through Macrobiotics

By Jill Sherman Skeem

What is macrobiotics? I am sure many of you have heard the word but have no idea what it means. The term, translated from Greek, means “Great Life” and was first used by Hippocrates, the Father of Western Medicine, to describe people who were healthy and long-lived. It is a diet based on 5000 year old Oriental principles, combining the best foods of the East and the West. Meals are focused around a grain and complimented by locally grown vegetables and fruits, bean and bean products, sea vegetables, nuts, seeds and white meat fish.

BACK TO OUR BODIES

Macrobiotics is more about balance and aligning with nature than with taste. It is taking a food and preparing it in a way to make it balanced in the body. The principles of yin and yang, the two complimentary and antagonistic energies, categorize everything in nature, and in macrobiotics are used to balance food and its affect on the body. In order to align with nature you need to eat foods that are in season and in your climate. So just because strawberries can be purchased in the dead of winter, it is not the right season to eat them.

We focus around a grain because that is the more natural food to eat. Most civilizations, from the beginning of time, focus a meal around a grain, which is where the term “meal” came from. The type of grain is chosen based upon the time of year or your body’s needs.

Many foods discussed in the news and in magazines today originated in other countries out of their need to adapt to their own climate. For example, soymilk originated in Indonesia, an incredibly hot country. However, in oriental medicine, soymilk cools a person off, which helps the Indonesians handle the extreme heat, but to drink soymilk in a temperate climate during the winter months will not help you stay warm.

TURNING THE WHEEL

In addition to the types of foods that we choose to eat, another way to help us adapt to the season is with incorporating the foods and cooking styles of the upcoming season approximately 6 weeks prior to the next season so your body will transition more easily. For example, baking and barbecuing should be used more during the Fall and Winter months while quick sauté and blanching are best in the Spring and Summer months.

When a food is eaten out-of-season, it can be more harmful to your body than when it is eaten during the natural season. So, eating ice-cream in December is more harmful to your body than eating it in July when the weather is hot and your body can eliminate it more easily. When we align with nature, our bodies adapt easier to the change of season and handle the heat of summer and the cold of winter much better.

EATING BY THE SUNDIAL

In today’s society, home-cooked meals and mealtimes are becoming a thing of the past. Now people are being told to eat 5-6 small meals a day and to substitute a protein bar or shake for a meal. How more removed from nature can we be if we are no longer eating real food? Family dinners are becoming a distant memory while children are being fed a fast-food meal in the back of a SUV on their way to soccer practice. Eating 3 meals a day at regular times helps us align with nature because meal times are dictated by the sun’s movement. They are not arbitrary. Every organ and system in your body operates at different times during the day and night. So, when you eat a snack at 11:00 p.m. and go to bed, it interferes with the liver’s job to clean and repair the body.

When a person is in balance and aligned with nature, they are healthier. They feel more comfortable and their body works better. So as the seasons change, think about changing with it by eating food that is available at that time and pass on the blueberries this January.

Jill Sherman Skeem relocated to the Magic Valley in December 2003 after graduating from the Strengthening Health Institute, a premier macrobiotic educational institute located in Philadelphia, P.A. Jill is a certified macrobiotic health counselor, educator and cook. She teaches health and cooking classes at CSI in Twin Falls and Blaine County and Rudy's - A Cook's Paradise. She also lectures about health at companies and associations and has an active counseling practice. You can reach her at 208/732-5677 or jillasherman@yahoo.com.

For a more in-depth look into the world of macrobiotics, Jill will be holding a class at CSI in Hailey on November 1st– Macrobiotics 101. Register through CSI. She also recommends *The Macrobiotic Way*, by Michio Kushi.

Published in the Spirit of the Valley Oct/Nov 2005 Issue