

Chinese Lifestyle



CHINESE FOOD LIFE CARE

Yang Hua
Guo Wen

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A Natural Way to Health

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Revision by Du Zhengming



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Introduction to Chinese Lifestyle

China, a country of appealing mysteries.

The Chinese nation, a nation intermittently strong and weak, honorable and infamous, awake and asleep, with a history of five millennia at the shortest and probably longer, has experienced the highest stage of ancient civilizations in the most prosperous dynasties of the world, and made indelible contributions to the advance of human societies. As the world's biggest nation, the Chinese people account for approximately a quarter of the whole population on earth.

And as a standing member of the UN Security Council, it is exerting enormous influence on international affairs. Economically speaking, it is the world's largest consumer market and human resource reservoir, as well as the largest base of processing industries.

For the recent three decades, China's opening to the world has brought about unprecedented contact with the people of all other countries, resulting in great advancement of the Chinese society and drastic growth of its economy, which have drawn ever greater attention of the world.

Now again as in the past when China was in its prime, the world find it impossible to overlook China and its people.

However, for its many sufferings in pre-modern and modern history of social unrest and setbacks, natural disasters and social misfortunes, China has for a long time remained relatively backward, listed as a "developing country" of the world. And for the same reason, The Chinese people and their civilization have been neglected in the developed countries, and what is now known of China to quite many people in the West remains to be what it was 30 or 50 years ago.

In view of the above conditions, we hereby present to our readers this brand-new *Chinese Lifestyle* with the aim to help those interested in things Chinese learn about the people and their social life, and ultimately discover "the last hidden world" and the nation that is once more on the rise

in the Oriental, so as to more effectively communicate with them in all walks of life.

Within this series are five books, respectively on the language, folk culture, rites and rituals, traditional food, and traditional physical exercises of the Chinese people. Drawing upon vast resources from libraries and internet materials, these books are all written with special perspectives of the writers themselves, and infused with their individual insight. What's more, the style of the language may also be interesting to the western English readers because the writers are all native Chinese themselves who teach English in higher institutions of education in China. This means that their English language may smack of some "Chinese flavor," somewhat different from that of the native English writers but nevertheless are pleasantly readable after minor revision by invited native English first readers.

Chinese Language by the undersigned chief-editor of this series begins by a general introduction of various "Chinese languages," languages of different Chinese ethnic groups as well as the majority Han people. The relation between Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects is also explained with fair clarity. Through reading the introduction, you will learn why Mandarin Chinese has become "the Common Language" (Putonghua) of the nation, how Chinese written characters evolved into the present form, and what differences exist between the classic and modern language, and between the formal written style and informal speech. In addition, the systems of Mandarin Chinese Pinyin and Tones are introduced in detail to serve as a threshold for exploring the contents of the book.

After the introduction are six chapters elaborating on the distinctive features of Mandarin Chinese, respectively in terms of its phonology, tones, morphology and syntax. In each chapter, typical and practically usable examples are provided along with annotation of the tones and translations, so as to help readers learn with ease.

Chinese Rites and Rituals is written by Feng Ge (冯鸽), an associate professor with the Northwest University, and translated by Huang Jieting (黄洁婷) and Jiang Yinji (蒋茵佶), English teachers of Suzhou Vocational University. It is an overall introduction of the Chinese ritual systems and the related social norms. The first part begins with an elaboration of the central Chinese

concept *Li* (礼), which carries a wide range of connotations including not only rites and rituals but also what are generally concerned as good manners, appropriate behavior and acceptable ceremonies on various social occasions. The contents are divided into two parts, with the first part on traditional rites and rituals and the second on the modern practice. Actually all possible aspects appropriate to be considered under the general title of *Li* are touched on, from individual social conducts to state rules. With the understanding that *Li* is a matter of great importance in Chinese culture, we believe this book is of special value for learning about the Chinese society and the people's way of thinking and life.

From *Chinese Food Life Care*, authored by Yang Hua (杨姍) and Guo Wen (郭雯), lecturers of English at Soochow University of Science and Technology, readers are expected to learn about the traditional Chinese way of eating, and find their opinions as regards the choices of food in various situations. They will also familiarized themselves with a great variety of traditionally consumed Chinese food items and understand why some items are more popular than others in China, and why the Chinese people generally believe "food and medicine are of the same origin." It is our hope that the detailed accounts of the properties of different food items will serve as useful references for making decisions on what one should choose to eat according to his or her own physical conditions.

Chinese Physical Exercises and Health Care was written by Professor Wang Kaiwen (王开文), an expert in Chinese Kungfu and Taijiquan, and Qu Jianmei (曲建梅) and Sun Lixia (孙丽霞), Teachers of English at Yantai University. It begins with a brief account of the basic knowledge of Chinese Physical Exercises and Health Care, a short History of the Development of various ways of traditional physical exercises such as Taijiquan and Qigong, the Basic Theories concerning their efficacy and mechanism, and the methods generally adopted in practice. Then, in the following chapters are presented the concrete procedures of exercises, all well illustrated with clear pictures to aid the practitioner. In addition, traditionally practiced supporting like various ways of self-massage is also introduced at length. It is our belief that the explanations and illustrations will not only make the reading of the book an effortless experience but also help in practice.

Chinese Folk Customs, by Zhang Weihua (张伟华) and Fang Huawen (方华文), projects before the readers a changing and kaleidoscopic view of the Chinese social phenomena seen in different areas and ethnic communities, in both the ancient times and present. Although it is understandably difficult for the writers to account for how much or to what extent the old customs have lasted to date, we can well assume that quite a lot have, even though possibly in somewhat changed forms. At any rate, they should have some unelectable impact on the Chinese contemporary way of life. And with growing consciousness of the importance of protecting traditional culture, some wholesome folkways that had once fallen to the verge of extinction are now being recovered, while others are still often found in Chinese literary works even if they have fallen out of date. Thus, reading about them should be awarding, and as I hope could also be a pleasure.

The five books in this *Chinese Lifestyle* on the whole form a kind of knowledge pool for readers interested in the Chinese society, the people and their way of thinking and social behavior. And I believe they will be of very practical use for those who are presently working in China or considering a visit or some time of stay here. And for those who have the interest in Chinese literature, the contents should also be something worth reading.

In the end, I feel obliged to acknowledge the help of many who have given me very good suggestions as regards the contents of the books, including in the first place Professor Fang Huawen, my colleague at Soochow University and a proliferate writer. And of special help in making this series publishable is Mr. Deng Jinhui (邓锦辉) at China International Press, who has cooperated with me from the very beginning of the planning through to the end. Without his far-sighted vision of the possible readership and their expectations, all efforts may be just spent for nothing.

March 19, 2010
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Preface

Most people receive drug treatment when ill, often taking recovery for granted. But it's not that simple. It is universally acknowledged that no quick fix comes without a downside and that a drug may cause a number of unwanted side effects along with its intended curing results.

Here's a question: If you were told a drug you were taking would eventually lead to death, would you stop taking it? Your first response might be: "Of course!" But on reflection you might change your mind. For instance does that statement mean you are more likely to die if you took the drug over a short period? Absolutely not. In fact there might be some very real benefits. If there is a risk of addiction, would you refuse to take painkillers only to suffer needlessly? If a drug for lowering cholesterol is linked to "significant" sleep problems but your cholesterol will go through roof without it, what would you do?

These questions will certainly put you in a dilemma! Typically you'll look endlessly for articles and books and ask doctors and consultants and anyone who is involved in your treatment for answers. But you'll most probably run into a brick wall. Despite who you ask hardly anyone seems able to answer these questions.

So is there an alternative? Can we avoid falling into this kind of dilemma? Can we avoid the need to take drugs that may have serious side effects? Can we address health problems before we actually get ill? Well, the answer is a most emphatic yes! Our body's working mechanism, with the help of the right food, has the natural ability to defend, repair and restore its health. No above-mentioned dilemma; no need to spend hours in the gym; no expensive anti-ageing treatments. You just need to start with your diet, and eat for optimal health to strengthen your immunity. When your immune system is healthy, it can counteract the development of disease and any ad-

verse effects it may have. It will also enable you to heal yourself when there are latent problems. To achieve this you only need to care about the quality of life and be willing to learn a few basic principles that can be readily applied to your life. Most people are perfectly capable of reading literature and making a responsible decision on what, when and how they eat. "If our diet is wrong, no doctor can cure us; if we eat right, no doctor is needed" (Victor G. Rocine about 1930). As an example, Su Ma La Gu (苏麻喇姑), a famous Chinese lady in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), lived for 92 years without taking any medicine. And there are numerous people in China who have lived longer for the same reason, that is, following the law of traditional Chinese life care, to which reasonable diet is an indispensable part.

The History of Chinese Food Life care

Food is an integral part of Chinese culture. Since time immemorial, people have been creating dishes with fascinating combinations of flavors, textures and colors that are not only delicious but promote good health.

Derived from Taoist philosophy and based on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM: characterized by herbal remedies, acupuncture, massage, and *Qi Gong* (deep breathing exercises)), Chinese food healthcare dates back as early as 3000 BC, accredited to Shen Nung (神农) who accidentally discovered the medicinal properties of many plants. This was during a time he conducted a series of dangerous experiments in which he tasted poisonous foods. Today, in recognition of his pain and pioneering work, people recognized him as the father of Chinese herbal medicine. The first TCM literature published around 500 BC was entitled *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*, also known as *Nei Jing* (《黄帝内经》). This book first proposes "the homology of medicine and food (药食同源)." Moreover, food is classified into five types in accordance to five tastes and different functions on body. During the Tang Dynasty (618–907), the association between food and medicine was further emphasized, and food life care developed into a sophisticated practice among Chinese

people. As Sun Simiao (孙思邈), a nationally renowned TCM practitioner, summarized, “food is for everyday life care, and medicine for acute diseases (安身之本, 必资于食; 救疾之速, 必凭于药).” During the Qing Dynasty, Chinese royal families were all staffed with a nutritionist in charge of the Emperor’s diet. Perhaps their most famous representative is that of Emperor Kang’xi, whose reign of 61 years made him the longest-reigning Chinese Emperor, or Empress Ci’xi, whose beauty seemed ageless.

Featuring natural ingredients, Chinese food life care to date has accumulated a large repertoire of delicious health recipes that have been continuously improved through thousands of years.

What is an Appropriate Diet According to Traditional Chinese Medicine?

In general, three principles are deemed most crucial in Chinese food life care: Ingredients should be proper, balanced and personal.

“Proper ingredients” means fresh and in season. In *The Analects* (《论语》, 300 BC), Confucius said: “Ingredients can never be too fresh or prepared too delicately, for the sake of bringing out their charm and soul. No mouldy, rotting, discolored food should be eaten (食不厌精, 脍不厌细, 肉败不食, 色恶不食).” Ingredients should be in season. TCM regards the body as a microcosm of the natural world, waxing and waning with the movements of the seasons. Eating foods which are in season helps the body keep pace with Mother Nature. These days grocery shelves may look much the same in December as they do in July, thanks to modern food producing methods and world-wide distribution channels, but their goods often contain added hormones, antibiotics and drugs. Ingredients which are in-season and homegrown are regarded as being far superior to their under ripe, genetically engineered versions.

“Balanced ingredients” means we need to maintain a balance between *Yin* and *Yang*. These two terms are to a person what cathode and anode are to a battery. Anything characterized by solid, excessive, exterior, upward, warm or hyperactive can be put into the category

of *Yang*. While anything liquid, deficient, interior, downward or cold can be put into the category of *Yin*, a concept opposite to *Yang*. The two keep a dynamic equilibrium by fighting and restricting each other. TCM believes that most of our health problems are related to the imbalances of ingredients in our diet. By eating food of the right combination the necessary balance can be maintained, or if lost, restored. *Yang* type food is regarded as “hot.” Typically it includes tonics, meat, seafood, and anything fried. *Yin* type food is regarded as “cold.” Typically it includes vegetables and fresh fruit. Excesses of food featuring only *Yin* or *Yang* can result in illness, e.g. *Yang* excess results in fever and dehydration.

Similarly, Chinese lay great stress on the harmonious combination of food properties such as nature (hot, warm, neutral, cool, cold (性热, 性温, 性平, 性凉, 性寒)) and taste (sweet, sour, bitter, salty and pungent (甘, 酸, 苦, 咸, 辛 in *Nei Jing*)). TCM holds that when each nature or taste is consumed in moderation, it benefits the whole body. Over-indulgence in any nature or taste will create an imbalance that might harm an organ and lead to illness.

Last but not least, Chinese food life care is tailored to the individual. “Personal ingredients” means we should eat according to our physical condition or constitution. There are about seven types of constitution. These include: *Yin-Yang* harmonious (平和体质), Hot (热性体质), *Yin*-deficient (阴虚体质), *Yang*-deficient (阳虚体质), Phlegm-damp (痰湿体质), *Qi*-deficient (气虚体质) and Blood-stagnated (淤血体质).

Here, TCM diverges from the approach taken in the West. The US Food and Drug Administration’s food pyramid stresses consuming 6–11 servings of grains (rice, bread and pasta), 3–5 servings of vegetables, 2–4 servings of fruit and 2–3 servings of meat and milk products per day, in order to receive the “recommended daily allowances.” TCM however, maintains not everyone should have these quantities, for it depends on the individual’s physical constitution. Even water is not always suitable for everyone.

Clearly, determining diet requires careful consideration. The last

chapter of this book will elaborate on this.

Criticism of Traditional Chinese Medicine

TCM may appear rather philosophical with seemingly vague concepts like *Qi*, *Yin*, and *Yang*. There are no double-blind placebo studies, so seen through the lens of biology or biochemistry it may seem to lack a solid scientific base. So let's briefly address any concern over the effectiveness of TCM, on which Chinese life care is based.

Firstly, many of the old TCM beliefs have now been corroborated by scientific evidence. For example, crab was recently found to contain a considerable amount of copper, and it is known that copper promotes inflammation or growth. The Chinese dietary system has long believed that crab has such a function. Another example concerns pearl. Many ancient TCM classics record pearls' medicinal value in treating faintness, stopping bleeding, and counteracting toxic effects. Now, scientists have discovered that pearls contain a large amount of calcium carbonate which is a strong inhibitor of bacteria. In another example scientists at Garvan Institute have proven that the alkaloid berberine is an effective treatment for diabetes type II. TCM practitioners have long known that roots from plants such as barberry, from which berberine is obtained, is a valuable remedy. Indeed it may come to pass that science will validate the effectiveness and mechanisms of other herbal medicines, but that research will not come quickly or easily due to logistical problems. After all, Aspirin, which has been in use for a hundred years, has only recently had its physiological mechanism explained.

Secondly, TCM has stood the test of time. It has been developed over thousands of years, and is widely used in China to treat digestive disorders, respiratory diseases, strokes, infertility and many other difficult-to-treat conditions. There is a huge amount of anecdotal evidence to support the effectiveness of TCM in treating these kinds of disorders. For instance, one of the writer's colleagues suffered long after having stomach surgery. She vomited almost all she ate, and was unable to lay flat in bed for sleep at night. She tried many west-

ern medicines, virtually all in vain. Finally after turning to a so called *Pian Fang* (TCM folk formulary), she began to recover. She can now eat with ease and stretch out to sleep. This is the truth. For further case studies, please check *Traditional Chinese Medicine: Clinical Case Studies* edited by Professor Chen Keji, MD, published by Foreign Languages Press and New World Press, Beijing, 1994.

It is worth mentioning that most ancient TCM practitioners died of a natural death, and wrote books such as *Essentials of Nei Jing* (《内经要旨》) by Xu Chun-fu of the Ming Dynasty, *Commentary of Classic on Medical Problems* (《难经经释》) by Xu Da-chun of the Qing Dynasty. The point is that, if TCM was only placebo, its practitioners, in case of repeated failure, would have been put to death long before they could write down their experiences, observations, methods and remedies.

Possibly the greatest difference between Western medicine and TCM is that a Western patient is looking for a drug to treat symptoms with quick results while a Chinese patient would see the prescribed TCM treatment as part of a longer-term process to restore the body's overall equilibrium. On balance, while it is widely admitted that Western medicine is an optimum approach to most acute diseases, TCM is probably more effective in chronic cases, in prevention and life care. The point is not ignoring the differences, but seeing them from both sides. It is advised that in addition to pharmacological and physical treatments, you could also learn a different approach toward health from their Eastern counterparts — a more holistic, far-reaching approach.

About the Book

This book offers a well illustrated guide to Chinese food life care. A vast amount of trial-and-error medical practice, carried out over a 3,000-year period, proves these principles work. With this book you are empowered to take full advantage of this time-tested wisdom of eating purposely for beauty, health and longevity.

There are six chapters: Chapters 1–5 focus on commonly-eaten foods, their effects and uses. Chapter 6 introduces personal solutions,

taking into account an individual's physical condition (constitution), a food item's property and the season.

In the page ahead, you will be learning something very serious and useful: how to treat yourself better and make your body treat you better.

Information about ingredients is given in a neat and down-to-earth way. First we discuss how each ingredient has been traditionally used in TCM, particularly the conditions on which they are adopted. We then show why these ingredients work, drawing on modern scientific research. Finally we provide a recipe for each ingredient, which we hope you will be able to incorporate into your own food life care plan. All the recipes are practical, and most can be quickly and easily prepared. Pick whichever fit your schedual and lifestyle. Wherever possible we have tried to only include ingredients which can be found on most supermarket shelves. Chinese food lifecare does not emphasize the use of spices, which means some dishes may taste a little plain. So once you've tried a dish, you're welcome to adjust the amount of seasonings to your taste. Flexibility and adjustment is allowed. Commonly used TCM expressions and a list of the 24 solar terms are provided in a glossary at the back.

The intended audience are those interested in taking responsibility for their own health, who are tired of being sick. Keep this book in your kitchen to provide a context for expressing an important part of yourself. Now let's feel good — and enjoy our food!

Whenever Chinese characters are used, the pinyin Romanization is given.

Please bear in mind that diet is only one factor which affects health. Other significant factors which play just as vital a role in life care include: gender, genetics and lifestyle. Don't be too obsessive, as worry is another trigger of diseases. This book presents advice and information that is general in nature. Please consult your doctors for treatment regarding your health conditions and seek their advice when choosing our therapeutic food.

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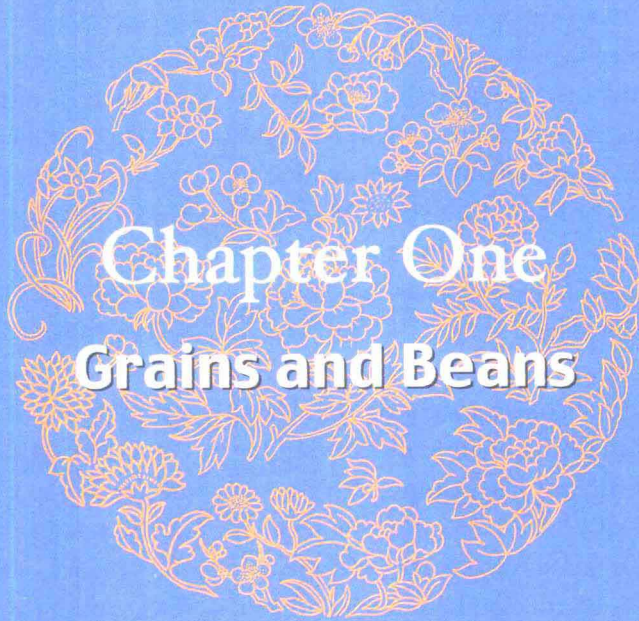
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Chapter One

Grains and Beans



Grains

Chinese people adore coarse grains. Where there is grain, there is food. An indispensable source of nutrition, grain is regarded as a staple food. It is consumed daily by almost every Chinese household. As TCM states, "Grain is best for the spleen. Of all things all heaven fosters, it is the most valuable one".

The types of grains grown in the South of China are different from those which predominate in the North, due to different geographies. This gives rise to a different style of food eaten in the South compared with that eaten in the North. Southern food, with rice as the principal food, is simple, while northern food, characterized by wheat flour, is more complicated.

The following are different kinds of grains that may please different tastes.

1. Rice (大米 dà mǐ)

Nature: Warm

Taste: Sweet

Organ: Spleen and Stomach

Health Benefits:

With a soft taste and flavor, rice is

an essential staple in China, especially in the Southern areas. Easy to digest and rich in nutrients, it is popular among both the elderly and young.

As quoted in *Compendium of Materia Medica* (《本草纲目》): "Polished round-grained rice can invigorate the spleen and replenish Qi, thus nourishing Yin and benefiting stomach. It also promotes fluid production and improves eyesight as well."

Additionally, according to Chinese dietary therapy, rice will benefit those who have a Qi-deficiency in the spleen and stomach, when cooked with lotus seed, ginseng and Chinese dates.

Moreover, it can be made into congee with almonds, which is said to be a suitable dish for those with asthma or cough.

Modern Research:

Rice is rich in sugar, amino acid, minerals, trace elements, etc, helping to enhance the stomach peristalsis and prevent arteriosclerosis.

Some scientists believe the high amounts of insoluble fiber may help protect against a variety of cancers.