



tips for winter yin/yang balance

- **Listen** to your body and be **gentle** with it; **rest/relax** as needed
- Use to season to focus inward and **nourish Yin** through quiet meditation, introspection, walking in the woods, etc.
- **'Stay active** enough to keep the spine and joints flexible' (Pitchford). Do whatever you **enjoy** – regular, moderate physical activity is better than pushing yourself too hard
- Laugh! **Cultivate joy!** Spend time with company you enjoy. Or watch comedies.
- Layer up, **get outside**. Sit near windows. Get natural light, especially in the morning.
- You may need to **rest** or sleep more than in the warm seasons. Try to **sleep earlier** so that you can wake up earlier and enjoy the most daylight (keep your circadian clock going).
- Keep **lower body warm** (lower back and abdomen, legs and feet) – wear enough layers and use a hot water bottle, heat pad or moxa stick on that area
- Get into 'parasympathetic nervous system' mode (i.e. **relaxed**) as often as you can: massages and bodywork, slow stretching, deep breathing, sex, baths, etc.
- **Reach out:**
 - **acupuncture** is effective for relaxing and improving mood. Check out my website soon (paulinehwang.ca) for links to affordable acupuncture and other resources
 - talk to a naturopath or holistic (non-TCM) nutritionist for supplement recommendations. It's beyond my scope of practice to prescribe supplements, but I believe vitamins like Vitamin D would be vital for everyone living here...
- Work on **fears** and insecurities; cultivate **patience**, persistence and willpower

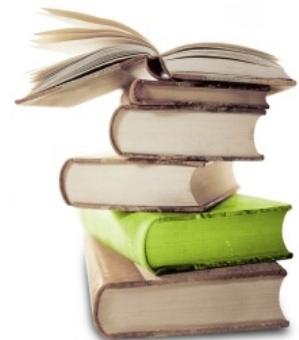
more resources

THE incredible nutritional resource from an integrative TCM perspective:

Pitchford, Paul. *Healing with Whole Foods: Third Edition*. North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, California, 2002.

Excellent simple articles are available on the Six Degrees Community Acupuncture website: <http://pokeme.ca> See 'Self-care Articles', e.g.:

- “Thoughts to Chew On... General Guidelines for Eating Well”
- “Seasonal Awareness”
- “How to Stay Healthy this Winter”
- “Beat the Winter Blahs”
- “Food as Medicine”



Another good short article on TCM guidelines for winter diet:

<http://www.holisticnetworker.com/170/traditional-chinese-medicine-nutrition-guide-to-eating-with-the-season-winter/>

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5 winter food tips from traditional Chinese medicine

DISCLAIMER: *This is generalized information and doesn't replace the importance of having a personalized assessment by a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioner, and a therapeutic food plan specifically for your constitution (yin/yang, hot/cool, dry/moist, organ system balances, etc.). To address specific health issues that are bothering you, a more personalized TCM diet should take priority over these general / seasonal ones.*

1) How we eat is at least as important as what. Mindful eating (paying attention to tastes, textures, smells, etc. while eating) is the single best 'dietary' change we can make. A keen ear for your body's messages is more important than memorizing all the rules in a nutrition textbook. Also, relaxed eating is good from both the Chinese medicine and biomedicine point of view. When you're stressed and in 'sympathetic nervous system' (i.e. 'fight or flight' mode), your body shifts blood circulation away from digestive functions. Stress reduces stomach acid levels, hampering digestion and absorption. In Chinese medicine, not only stress but any 'pensiveness' interferes with digestion (you digest 'thoughts' as well as the food). So, **don't stress about what you eat! Nourish yourself with a kind, loving, accepting, and gentle attitude**. Eating a slow meal with yourself in quiet, or relaxing with good friends is excellent. Deliciousness and joy is important for nutrition too!

2) Have a bit of each of the 5 flavours daily, but slightly more salty and bitter flavours in the winter. The 5 flavours are: sweet, salty, sour, pungent (a.k.a. acrid/spicy), and bitter. The 'sweet' flavour means the 'full sweet' tastes of grains, vegetables, etc. (not 'empty sweets' of sugars, desserts, etc.), and this flavour should predominate in all seasons. In the winter, however, a slight increase in the **salty** and **bitter** flavours can benefit the *Kidney-adrenals* and the *Heart* (closely tied to our mental-emotional state). Some foods with bitter (and other) tastes include: kale, turnip, celery, asparagus, burdock root, carrot top, lettuce, watercress, parsley, endive, rye, oats, quinoa, chicory root, and many herbs. Salty foods include seaweeds, salt, millet, barley, miso, etc.

3) Eat to minimize 'Dampness.' Dampness = fluid where it's not supposed to be... phlegm/mucus-type stuff, edema, cysts, tumours, yeasts, etc. *Dampness* leads to feeling heavy/sluggish/foggy (physically and mentally); it impairs your digestive 'fire' and overall warmth/energy; and it contributes to allergies, low immunity, and chronic illnesses. Damp-causing foods include: **dairy** (especially cow), almost all **sugars** (including most fruit), **wheat** (sprouting helps), **overly-salty** food, **meats** and **eggs**, most **fats** and **oils**, yeasted **breads**, **alcohol** (i.e. liquid sugar), food that is **hard to digest** (raw, cold, inadequately chewed, etc.), and **refined, processed, stale** or **rancid** food (including most commercially shelled **nuts** and **seeds**, especially **peanuts**). Eating **excessive** amounts, overly **complex** meals, and **late** at night also contribute to Dampness, as do **toxins, anxiety** and **worry!**

4) Eat warmer and protect your digestive fire. In winter, it is best to cook foods longer, at lower temperatures, and using less water. These factors increase the meal's **warming** qualities. Making your food "warmer" and easier to digest will preserve your 'digestive fire' and help you absorb more nutrients. Easier to digest = (1) at least slightly **cooked** or broken down, (2) in **moderate** amounts ("until 70% full"), in **simple** combinations (unless all cooked in the same pot like a stew or soup), (3) warm in **temperature**, and (4) **well-chewed**. If you have cold signs, eat **warming foods** such as oats, parsnips, mustard greens, winter squash, butter, quinoa, walnuts, onion family, chicken, lamb, trout and salmon. Warming **spices** include dried ginger, cinnamon, cloves, fenugreek seeds, fennel. Food that is too '*hot*' actually releases warmth and cools you (e.g. chilies, hot peppers).

5) Be Kind to your Kidneys. Eat **dried** foods, small dark **beans** (adzuki, black beans, etc.), **seaweeds**, and steamed winter **greens**. Many of the warming foods listed in #4 increase Kidney **Yang**. Seaweeds, millet, barley, and most beans increase Kidney **Yin**. **Legumes** and **black/blue foods** are generally good for the Kidney-adrenals. See the **bone marrow soup** recipe. Avoid toxins in food and water, as well as intoxicants and heavy metals. **Meditate** regularly, and keep your **lower trunk and legs** warm! (See my "Tips for Winter Yin/Yang balance")

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Eating “Warmer”

Every food has a 'thermal' nature. When we talk about 'cold' or 'warm' foods in Chinese medicine, we aren't just referring to physical temperature. Foods are generally 'warmer' when they:

1. are **cooked for longer periods of time**, or with more heat/pressure/dryness
 - from hottest to coolest: deep-frying, baking, stir-frying/sauteing, pressure cooking, simmering, steaming, waterless cooking, fermenting, marinating, sprouting
2. come from **plants that take longer to grow** (carrot, rutabaga, parsnip, cabbage, ginseng, plants that don't use chemical fertilizers to make them grow faster). Generally summer fruits and veggies are cooler than fall/winter ones
3. are **chewed** more thoroughly
4. are eaten **warm** rather than cold (in temperature)
5. are **cooked** rather than raw
6. are **red, orange or yellow** (versus blue, green or purple)
7. are broken down more in **preparation** (chopping, pounding, grinding, etc.)

Examples of specific foods classified as 'warming' include:

dried ginger	fennel	cherry
black beans	dill	citrus peel
aduki beans	anise	date
lentils	caraway	butter
cinnamon bark or twig	carob pod	mussel
cloves	cumin	trout
basil	sweet brown rice and products	chicken
rosemary	(e.g. mochi)	beef
oats	parsnip	lamb
spelt	parsley	
quinoa	mustard greens	small pinches of hot peppers,
sunflower seed	winter squash	warm unrefined sweeteners
sesame seed	sweet potato	(molasses, barley malt, rice
walnut	kale	syrup) – too much will be
pinenut	onion family (leek, chive, garlic,	cooling
chestnut	scallion)	

A note on meat-eating

Especially in the winter, *small amounts* of meat or meat products *may* be helpful for some who are more on the 'deficient' and 'cold' side, as they are generally 'warmer' than vegetables. However, if suitable to your constitution, small quantities are likely best, with the vast majority of the diet still from plant sources. Making a stock or soup from bones or a few pieces of meat can provide the 'Yang' (warming) qualities, without the sticky/heavy effect that excess meat produces. Cracking meat bones will allow you to make a 'bone marrow' soup which is excellent for nourishing your Kidneys.

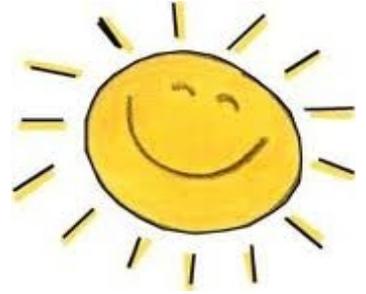
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More Recipes for the Winter and for your Kidney-Adrenals!

Winter Sunshine Soup: A good soup to brighten your day

From Paul Pitchford, Healing with Whole Foods.



1 cup yellow split peas, soaked	1/2 cup parsley, chopped
2 quarts water	1/2 teaspoon salt
1 5-inch piece kombu*, soaked	Miso to taste
1/2 onion, cut into crescent moons (optional)	
2 carrots, cut into flowers	
1 cup winter squash, diced	

- Place kombu and peas in a pot with water
- Bring to scald. Reduce heat and simmer 30 minutes.
- Add onion, carrots, squash, and salt. Simmer until peas and vegetables are tender.
- Add miso diluted in stock and simmer 5 minutes more.
- Serves 8

Baked Vegetables in Nut Gravy

From Paul Pitchford, Healing with Whole Foods.

1/4 onion, minced (optional)	2-3 tablespoons ground nuts or seeds (fresh)
1 clove garlic, minced (optional)	1/2 teaspoon kelp powder
1 teaspoon oil (optional)	1 teaspoon cinnamon
2 rutabagas, diced	1 tablespoon soy sauce
4 parsnips, diced	1/2 cup water

- Preheat oven to 350 F.
- Saute onion and garlic 1 minute.
- Add rutabagas and parsnips. Saute 5 minutes more (optional).
- Combine nuts, kelp*, cinnamon and soy sauce with water.
- Transfer vegetables to a casserole dish that has been lightly brushed with oil / lecithin.
- Cover with gravy. Cover and bake 30-40 minutes. Serves 4.

Winter salad: Cooked Pressed Salad

From Paul Pitchford, Healing with Whole Foods.

- Use one or more leafy greens: kale, bok choy, chard, watercress, cabbage, or parsley.
- Plunge whole leaves into scalding water and cook 2-3 minutes.
 - Method 1: Roll leaves in a bamboo mat and press out excess water.
 - Method 2: Place leaves on a plate. Cover with a flat dis. Put a weight on top. Let stand 30 minutes. Pour off water.
- Chop finely.
- Add miso, toasted nuts or seeds, or salad dressing.

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Hearty Black Beans

From Paul Pitchford, Healing with Whole Foods.

2 cups black (turtle) beans, soaked
3 1/2 cups water
1/4 onion, chopped (optional)
1 clove garlic, minced (optional)
1 tsp ground coriander

1 1/2 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp oil (optional)
1/2 tsp sea salt
Pinch of cayenne
Juice of 1/2 lemon



- Place beans in water. Bring to boil. Cover.
- Reduce heat and simmer 1 hour.
- Saute onion, garlic, coriander and cumin.
- Add to beans
- Add salt, cayenne and lemon juice.
- Continue cooking until beans are done.
- Serves 4.

Wakame*-Sesame Seed Mixture (condiment)

From Paul Pitchford, Healing with Whole Foods.

Roast 1 ounce wakame in oven at 350 F for 10-15 minutes until dark and crispy. Grind to a fine powder, in mortar and pestle or suribachi using even, gentle pressure in a circular motion. Dry-toast sesame seeds in skillet over medium heat, until they have a nutty aroma and begin to pop. Add to wakame and grind until seeds are 90% crushed. (Can do the same with 1 ounce dry-toasted dulse).

Bone Marrow Soup (for Kidney Essence / Longevity)

From Paul Pitchford, Healing with Whole Foods.

Use bones from an organically-raised animal (poultry preferred). Break the bones and cook them just below boiling for 18 hours. Add water as necessary. Root vegetables, slightly acid vegetables (e.g. carrots, celery, squash, beets), and seaweeds* help to extract minerals and nutrients from the bones and their marrows into the broth. A tablespoon of apple cider vinegar or lemon juice will do the same. When cooked, remove the bones and use this broth alone, or as a liquid base for other foods.

**Pauline's Note: Seaweeds (kelp, kombu, wakame, hijiki, dulse, etc.) and micro-algae (chlorella, spirulina, wild blue-green algae, etc.) are excellent for building Kidney Yin. They are an excellent source of protein, vitamin A, nucleic acids, chlorophyll, and essential minerals like calcium, iodine, magnesium, iron, etc. They also detoxify the body, reduce phlegm and masses (e.g. tumours), and have many other excellent qualities. They should be used with caution for very 'Cold' type constitutions, as they are generally thermally cold (Chlorella is least cold of the micro-algae, less extreme, and generally safe to take). Seaweeds can be added to legumes and grains while cooking, or to soups, stews, etc. directly.*

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Organic Brown Rice Kitchari

From Amrita Sondhi, The Modern Ayurvedic Cookbook.

1/2 cup organic short-grain brown rice	1/4 tsp turmeric (optional)
1/4 cup split mung dal*	2 cups water
salt to taste	2 tsp flax or hemp oil (or ghee or butter)

In a medium pot on high heat, combine all ingredients, except oil, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer, cover with lid, and cook for 45 minutes. Let sit covered for 5 minutes. Drizzle with oil before serving.

Makes 2-3 servings.

*If you have time, soak the split mung dal in 1/2 cup water for a few hours before cooking and drain before using. This activates the seed, increasing the nutrients and digestibility.

[Pauline's note: This recipe is not specifically warming, but grounding, strengthening, cleansing and nourishing. If you find the split mung dal that still has the green skin on it (e.g. in Chinatown), the skin is more detoxifying than the inside of the bean.]

Beat the Cold Soup

From Amrita Sondhi, The Modern Ayurvedic Cookbook.

1 tbsp good oil	3/4 cup zucchini, chopped
1/2 cup onions, chopped	1/4 cup tomatoes, diced
3 tsp fresh ginger, minced	2 cups vegetable stock
2 tsp fresh green chilies, minced (optional)	4 whole peppercorns
2 tsp garlic, minced	2 cloves
1/2 cup celery, diced	1 cup broccoli and cauliflower florets (mixed)
1/2 cup carrots, diced	Juice of 1 lemon
1/4 tsp cayenne pepper	Salt to taste
1/2 tsp turmeric	1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped (for garnish)
1/2 tsp garam masala	
1/2 cup mushrooms, chopped	

In a large pot on medium-high, heat oil. Add onions, ginger, and green chilies and saute until onions start to soften, about 4 minutes. Stir in garlic and celery and continue to saute for a few minutes. Add carrots, cayenne, turmeric and garam masala and saute for a few more minutes. Add mushrooms and zucchini and saute for another minute. Stir in tomatoes and saute for an additional minute. Add vegetable stock, peppercorns, and cloves, then reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Add broccoli and cauliflower florets and cook for another 7 minutes until softened. Just before soup is done, stir in lemon juice and salt to taste. Remove peppercorns, garnish with cilantro and serve.

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A Tasty Soup for Warming your Kidney Qi



Warming Black Bean & Azuki Vegetable Stew (gluten free,vegan, acid friendly)

From **Six Degrees Community Acupuncture pokeme.ca.**
Compiled by **Stacey Hess and Lamia Gibson**

Full of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and protein; this soup will warm you up and start you off on the right foot for a healthy and warm winter season!

- 4 cups of butternut squash, peeled and cubed (or any other winter squash)
- 4 cups broccoli florets and stems, chopped (fresh or frozen)
- 2 cups cooked black beans
- 1/2 cup cooked azuki beans
- 2 shallots or 1/2 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- OPTIONAL: 1 tbsp chickpea tamari
- 1 quart water, broth or leftover bean cooking liquid
- 1-2 tbsp ghee, olive oils, sesame oil, or coconut oil
- GARNISH: 2 scallions, thinly sliced

Prepare vegetables as directed. In a large soup pot, heat oil until hot, then add cumin seeds. Heat until fragrant, turn heat to medium-low and add scallions. Saute until tender, then add coriander and ginger, and stir. Add butternut and saute for 2-3 minutes. Then add liquid and cook until butternut is almost tender. Add cooked beans and broccoli, and simmer until all vegetables are tender. Add tamari if using and adjust seasonings to taste. Serve hot, garnished with thinly sliced scallion. ENJOY!

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Warming Black Bean & Azuki Vegetable Stew, cont'd

HOW IT HELPS.....

Squash - warming, sweet flavour influences the spleen and stomach (promoting good digestion), improves Qi circulation. High in vitamin A

Broccoli - cooling (helps balance the soup), brightens the eyes, more vitamin C than citrus, enters the spleen, stomach and bladder channels (supporting digestion and purification)

Black beans - warming, beneficial to kidneys and reproductive function, builds yin fluids and blood. Used for low back ache, knee pain and infertility

Azuki or (adzuki) beans - neutral, influences the heart and small intestine (aids in circulations), tonifies the kidney-adrenal system, detoxifies the body, disperses stagnant blood, reduces swelling. Useful for damp conditions as it is drying

Onions - lowers blood pressure and cholesterol, decreases phlegm and inflammation of the nose and throat, inhibits allergic reactions, induces sweating and is a cure for the common cold

Cumin - warming, helps diminish flatulence in bean dishes

Coriander - warming, drying, useful for damp conditions. Aids the digestion of winter squash

Ginger - acrid and hot, warms the center and dispels cold, helps diminish flatulence in bean dishes. Dried ginger feeds the properties of foods and herbs to the lower extremities - the colon, kidneys, ovaries sexual organs and legs

Ghee - according to Ayurvedic medicine ghee (clarified butter) enhances the ojas, an essence that governs the tissues of the body and balances hormones. Ojas can be compared to the jing essence in Chinese medicine which is eternally connected with our kidney energy. Also promotes the healing of injuries and gastro-intestinal inflammations such as ulcers and colitis and increases "digestive fire"

Olive oil - enters the lung and stomach channel. Can help to moisten the lungs

Sesame oil - neutral, enters the liver and kidney channels. Moistening

Coconut oil- warming, enters the spleen, stomach and large intestine channels, moistening

Above information compiled and written by Stacey Hess and Lamia Gibson. Recipe and further resources available at pokeme.ca

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More Warming Meal Ideas

especially for cold, tired, sluggish, depressed types :)

(As you read the explanations, please remember the 'Kidney', 'Spleen', 'Liver', etc. in TCM are not the same as your anatomical kidney, spleen and liver!)

Breakfast cereal of quinoa, cooked with raspberries and cinnamon. If creamy texture desired, use rice milk or almond milk. If sweetener desired, can use molasses, barley malt, or rice syrup.

- **Quinoa** is a nutrient-dense, warming grain that specifically tonifies Kidney Yang. Classified as sweet, with some sour and bitter, it strengthens the Spleen, while helping clear stagnancy or greasiness in the Liver, and draining dampness that may tend to accumulate with a cold Spleen and Kidney.
- **Raspberries** benefit the Liver and Kidneys, and support the Blood.
- **Cinnamon** is a deeply warming, anti-oxidant, pungent-flavoured spice (also helping to clear a sluggish Liver). **Dried ginger** is also deeply warming and pungent.
- **Rice milk** and **almond milk** are less likely than dairy to lead to Dampness. Moderate amounts of unrefined sweeteners can be warming, especially the choices given.

Carrot and ginger soup, with onions, garlic. Eat with whole rye as grain. Can make with a meat stock e.g. beef or chicken stock, or use bay leaf to flavour.

- **Carrot** is neutral, sweet, strengthens the Spleen, improves Liver function, and treats indigestion. Carrots also contain a lot of anti-oxidant Vitamin A, many other vitamins and minerals, including magnesium (necessary for muscle relaxation).
- **Ginger** is a warming (especially dried) and a pungent spice (also helping to clear a sluggish Liver).
- **Garlic**, like onions is mildly pungent and warming, disperses stagnant Liver Qi, promotes warmth, and expels coldness. Cooking the soup in a **meat stock** provides the Yang, warming energy of the meat, without the stagnancy that excess meat-eating can create in the Liver.
- **Bay leaf** helps stimulate the Liver out of stagnancy.
- **Rye** is a neutral, bitter grain that drains dampness and excess water, clears Liver stagnancy, increases strength, and affects the Liver, Gallbladder, and Spleen. Rye also contains iron, magnesium, and numerous other nutrients.

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two simple meditations to help your kidney-adrenals

Qi Gong Standing

1. Stand with feet parallel, shoulder-width apart
2. Bend knees and waist **slightly** as if about to sit on an invisible chair
3. Lift top of head to elongate spine, tuck chin and shift weight forward **slightly** until weight is over centre of feet
4. Keep eyes half-closed and directed toward the ground ~2 feet in front of you.
5. Relax whole body; only tension should be in front of thighs and spine to hold you up. Relax the rest, and let body weight sink.
6. (optional) Raise arms as if hugging a tree (keep shoulders relaxed)
7. Let thoughts go, focus on breathing in and out of your 'dantian' (2 inches below the navel, between the front and back of your body). Observe any sensations you feel in the dantian area.



Picture credit: http://www.luohan.com/html_uk/ukqg_zhan.html

Notes: If your legs shake, take a break. You can gradually do this for longer. This exercise has many many health benefits. Look up “standing on stake” (there are different variations).

Waking up your Kidneys

1. Assume same standing posture as above.
2. Relax your hands into a half-fist.
3. Gently knock on your back with both hands to 'wake up your kidneys' (at base of the ribcage).
4. Let yourself groan while you do this.
5. Rub hands together (in front of you) to warm and put energy in them.
6. Cover lower back with your hands and breathe the energy into your kidneys.
7. Repeat 6 or 9 times. Best in the mornings!

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