

THE SIX AYURVEDIC TASTES

Instead of looking at the individual components of foods—ie: carbohydrates, protein, fats, and calories—as Western-based nutrition does, Ayurveda identifies six “tastes” of foods: **sweet**, **sour**, **salty**, **bitter**, **pungent**, and **astringent**. Each taste has specific effects on the three doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha). By including all six tastes in each meal we satisfy our nutritional and dietary needs without the need to count calories or consult a manual.

THE SWEET TASTE :: EARTH + WATER

...is heavy, moist, and cool. This increases Kapha and decreases Vata and Pitta. Examples are nuts, grains, oils, and most dairy.

THE SOUR TASTE :: FIRE + EARTH

...is heavy, moist, and hot. This increases Pitta and Kapha and decreases Vata. Examples are pickles and fermented foods such as yogurt.

THE SALTY TASTE :: FIRE + WATER

...is heavy, moist, and hot. This increases Pitta and Kapha and decreases Vata. Examples are sea salt, sea vegetables and seafood.

THE PUNGENT TASTE :: FIRE + AIR

...is light, dry, and hot. This increases Pitta and Vata and decreases Kapha. Examples are chili peppers, ginger, and black pepper.

THE ASTRINGENT TASTE :: EARTH + AIR

...is dry and cool. This increases Vata and decreases Pitta and Kapha. Examples are most beans, cranberries, and pomegranates.

THE BITTER TASTE :: AIR + ETHER

...is light, dry, and cool. This increases Vata and decreases Pitta and Kapha. Examples are leafy greens and herbs such as goldenseal.

THE VATA FOOD PROGRAM

Qualities to Reduce:

hot, light, dry

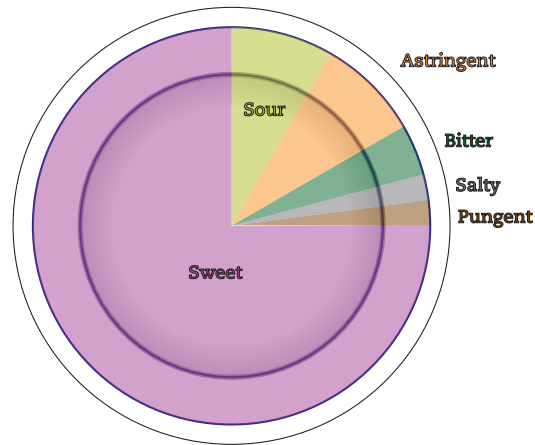
Best Taste:

sweet

Most Aggravating Tastes:

sour, astringent, bitter, salty, pungent

THE VATA DINNER PLATE



Katrina Johnson

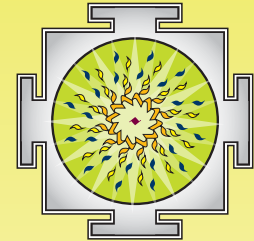
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Vata Food Program

a holistic wellness practice
steeped in the timeless traditions
of Ayurveda





FOOD LIST FOR VATA

GRAINS

It is best to eat these as a cooked grain or as an unyeasted bread. Small amounts of yeast breads are all right, however.

Best:* amaranth, oats (cooked), quinoa, rice (white or brown), wheat

Small Amounts:* barley, millet

Minimize:* buckwheat, corn flour (chips, bread, and tortillas), dry oats (granola), polenta, rye

DAIRY

It is best to use raw or organic milk. Milk should be taken warm with a small amount of spice such as ginger, cardamom, or fennel.

Best:* butter, buttermilk, kefir, milk, sour cream, yogurt (fresh)

Small Amounts:* hard cheeses

Minimize:* ice cream, frozen yogurt

SWEETENERS

Moderation is important; overuse of even the best sweeteners will increase vata.

Best:* raw, uncooked honey, jaggery (raw sugar), maltose, maple syrup, molasses, rice syrup, sucanat

Small Amounts:* date sugar, grape sugar

Minimize:* brown sugar, white table sugar

NUTS AND SEEDS

Lightly roasted nuts are best. Dry roasting should be avoided. Salted nuts are fine. Nut butters are highly recommended except for peanut butter.

Best:* almonds

Small Amounts:* cashews, filberts, pecans, pinon, pistachio, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, and any other nut not mentioned

Minimize:* peanuts

CONDIMENTS

Condiments can be used to add one of the tastes to a meal or to balance out any heating or cooling qualities of a dish.

Best:* mayonnaise, vinegar

Small Amounts:* catsup

Minimize:* carob, chocolate

OILS

Healthy oils are very important and should be used abundantly if the skin is dry. They alleviate dryness and are generally heavy and nourishing.

Best:* almond, ghee, sesame

Small Amounts:* avocado, castor, coconut, flaxseed, mustard, olive, peanut, sunflower

Minimize:* canola, safflower

FRUITS

Sweeter fruits are best.

Best:* baked apples, apricots, avocados, bananas (ripe), blackberries, cantaloupe, cherries, coconut, cranberry sauce, dates (not dry), figs (fresh), grapefruit, grapes, lemons, mangos, nectarines, oranges, papaya, peaches, pears, persimmons, pineapple, plums, raspberries, strawberries (ripe), tangerines

Small Amounts:* apples (sour is best), pomegranate

Minimize:* dried fruit of any kind, cranberries

VEGETABLES

Cooked vegetables are best because they are easier to digest.

Best:* avocado, beets, carrots (but not as a juice), leeks, mustard greens, okra, onions (well cooked), parsnips, shallots, acorn squash, winter squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, water chestnuts

Small Amounts:* broccoli, cauliflower, celery, corn, cucumber, eggplant, green beans, kale, medium chilies and hot peppers, mushrooms, potatoes, radishes, seaweed, spinach, sweet peas, zucchini.

The following may be eaten uncooked with a creamy or oily dressing: lettuce, spinach, and any leafy green (occasional use only and with a spicy heavy dressing)

Minimize:* alfalfa sprouts, artichokes (unless served with a butter-lemon sauce), asparagus, bean sprouts, Brussels sprouts, cabbage (even cooked), raw vegetables, snow peas

MEATS

If you choose to eat meat, limit consumption to 2–3 times per week, and eat it at lunch.

Best:* chicken and turkey (dark meat), beef, duck, eggs, fresh water fish, lamb, pork, seafood, venison

Small Amounts:* chicken and turkey (white meat), shellfish

Minimize:* none

SPICES

When spicing, the overall spiciness is more important than individual spices. Even some “Minimize” spices can be used if balanced with other spices on the “Best” list. For vata, food should be spiced moderately and never very hot or bland.

Best:* anise, basil, bay leaf, caraway, cardamom, catnip, cinnamon, clove, cumin, dill, fennel, fenugreek, garlic, ginger (fresh), marjoram, mustard, nutmeg, oregano, pepper, peppermint, poppy seeds, rosemary, saffron, sage, spearmint, thyme, turmeric

Small Amounts:* cayenne pepper, cilantro, ginger (dry), horseradish, mustards (very hot), parsley

Minimize:* none

LEGUMES

Those listed in “Small Amounts” are best as a dal or a spread with spices added. When digestion is weak or constipation is present, even those beans listed under “Small Amounts” should be avoided.

Best:* mung beans

Small Amounts:* tofu, hummus

Minimize:* aduki beans, black beans, chickpeas, fava beans, kidney beans, lentils, Mexican beans, navy beans, pinto beans, soybeans (except as tofu or soy milk)

BEVERAGES

These are best taken at room temperature or warm and never ice cold.

Best:* three or four cups of room temperature or warm water per day; spicy teas such as chamomile, cinnamon, clove, and ginger

Small Amounts:* diluted fruit juices

Minimize:* all alcohol, black tea, carbonated mineral water, coffee, fruit juices, soft drinks



*“Best” Foods can be eaten without reservation on a daily basis. These foods are the most ideal ones as they are the most balanced for this dosha. Individuals who are sick should consume only the foods on this list.

*“Small Amounts” Foods can be eaten in small portions fairly often or in larger portions once or twice each week. Eating a wide variety of these foods is better than an abundance of just one. Overreliance on these foods can cause imbalance.

* “Minimize” Foods should be eaten only on rare occasions, ie: once each month. They can significantly disturb Pitta dosha.