

Cooking from an Ayurvedic Perspective



**What is Ayurvedic cooking?**

Ayurvedic cuisine is *about cooking and eating for optimal, vibrant health, with the inclusion of seasonal herbs and spices, and using different methods, we synergistically prepare foods.*

All the while, we are mindful about *proper food combinations* in the background.

We use foods that are *fresh, local, preferably organically grown and seasonal.*

**Ayurveda is not a diet program or fad which comes and goes.** It has a tradition of 1000's of years. **Cooking is one of the prime components of Ayurveda and has stood the test of time.** Ayurveda emphasizes the *importance of food for optimal health and happiness.* The *goal of eating is complete fulfillment by nourishing the senses, mind, body and spirit.*

Ayurvedic recipes are:

- *balanced,*
- *easy to understand,*
- *simple to make,*
- *tasty and*
- *delicious and are*
- *optimized for your constitution.*

The *sense of taste* has much importance *in balancing the whole person; each individual has his/her unique way of responding to different foods/seasonings and this can change with the time of day.*

*Ayurvedic cooking is based on a complete system of health and well-being, so it doesn't limit focus on such ideas as the modern low-fat, low-salt, etc., diets. Instead **it focuses on the underlying imbalance in the mind and body.** Once you get this knowledge, you can use it to re-establish balance in mind and body.*

*In Ayurvedic cooking, the constitution of the individual is always taken into consideration.*

So of course, to do that, one needs to know –

1. *Their body type*
2. *Their foods thoroughly, including their properties*

Example: Moong beans are cooling for Pitta people ( Fire Dominant) and Kulith (another type of beans) are hot in quality so need to be eaten in moderation by the people of same body type; likewise, with all the veggies, beans, cereals, fruits and nuts.. **one needs to know their properties in depth to make them to be beneficial.**

That is the foundation of Ayurvedic cooking, or what we like to call **“Food Yoga: Anna Yoga”**

**Three common questions people ask about Ayurvedic cooking are:**

1. *Do I need to be a vegetarian?*
  2. *Why is eating the Ayurvedic way healthier?*
  3. *Can it be adjusted to special needs?*
1. *Do I need to be a vegetarian?*

Traditional Ayurveda is vegetarian, but it also describes the properties and effects of various animal based diets. Every type of food has certain values and effects and *Ayurveda respects the needs and preferences of individuals. We cannot place everyone in one category.*

2. *Why is eating the Ayurvedic way healthier?*

**“When we eat balanced food, it also nourishes our consciousness.”**

**“You are what you eat and you also dig your grave by your teeth.”**

Eating balanced food enlivens the body's inner wisdom. The human body has all the intelligence it needs to maintain balance; it simply needs support and understanding from us.

**“When we have cravings and feelings of dissatisfaction with meals, we need to identify the causative imbalances, rather than focusing on the foods we crave.”**

3. *Can it be adjusted to special needs?*

***In Ayurveda, the individual is always considered.***

- If one has a *Vata imbalance*, they need *Sweet and rich food*.
- When one has a *Pitta imbalance*, they are advised to *eat less Oily, Spicy and Pungent food and more Sweet*.
- When it is a *Kapha imbalance* they need *less Fat and Oil and less Sweet with the exception of Honey*.

We can see from the above that “*one diet does not fit everyone; it gets customized to individual needs*”. ***It also can change several times during the course of a lifetime.***

***“Everyone has tried some sort of diet, either fad or whim, which ended in frustration. Results of most diets are dissatisfaction, more cravings and more urge to find a simple way to eat balanced, tasty and nourishing food.”***

*Ayurveda has a highly evolved logic for preparing food*, which involves:

- ***Which ingredients to use***
- ***Which sequence to add them in preparation***
- ***What goes together or can be mixed together***
- ***Which things one should avoid eating after others***

Following are some recipes with explanations on how the qualities of food change with ingredients used...

**Recipe of Khichadi is found in old scriptures.**





# Rice

- Rice should be unpolished, organic and unprocessed, except hull should be removed.
- White rice is best for digestion and taste.
- Rice should be rinsed twice:
  - Place rice in pot and fill with water
  - Swirl water around, drain and repeat
- To cook rice:
  - Add  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times water to rice for fluffy rice, less for drier rice
  - Cover and bring to boil
  - Reduce heat to lowest and simmer until water is absorbed, approximately 20 minutes



# Dal (Lentils)

- Dal should be dry (not oiled), unpolished and organic.
- Toor dal (yellow "pigeon peas") is easiest to digest.
- Dals may be varied or combined for different flavors:
  - Toor dal
  - Masoor dal (red lentils)
  - Moong dal, whole or split
- Dal should be rinsed 3 times:
  - Place dal in pot
  - Fill pot with water at least several inches above dal
  - Swish water around and drain.
  - Repeat 2 more times
- Cook dal on high pressure in  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 times water for 10 minutes.
- Rice and dal can be cooked at the same time in a pressure cooker inside stainless steel containers made for that purpose.





**Moong Dal Khichadi: (Vata-Pitta or Pitta-Vata) V P**

Use half portion of Moong Dal to Rice and then mix them together and rinse until the water is clear.

Take a pan and add some oil. When the oil is warm add Cumin, Sweet Spice (Goda Masala- Kitchen King), Turmeric, Asafetida, Paprika (Optional).

Now add double amount of water to the portion of grains used.

One can add salt and jaggery for taste. Make sure the jaggery is dark, as the lighter jaggery is sulphurated.

The cooked khichadi can be served with a little ghee or olive oil on top, which is very satisfying.

It increases Vitality (Shukra Dhatu) and Libido.

**Rice and Moong Beans both are cooling in Virya. Rice is a kapha enhancer but it gets balanced with spices and that's how Moong Khichadi is wonderful for a Vata-Pitta or Pitta-Vata type of Prakruti. (constitution)**

**Moong Dal Soup: (Yushas : Pitta Soothing) P**

**Add 16 times the amount of water to moong beans and heat it until it becomes 1/4<sup>th</sup>.**

**The cooked moong beans – make them in a creamy paste and then filter through cheese cloth.**

**Mix dry pomegranate seeds (you can buy these in Indian stores), or use the fresh ones, Mineral salt, Coriander, Pipli, Dry Ginger Powder (Sunth), Cumin Powder.**



Moong helps with soothing Pitta.

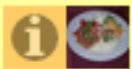
*Masoor ( Red Lentil) Dal Khichadi: (Kapha and Pitta) K P*

## Khichadi

- 1 cup white, basmati or ambemohor rice
- $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 cup dal (lentils)
- 3 - 4 cups filtered water
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon turmeric
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon asafetida
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup shredded carrot (optional)
- 2 T sesame/olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon mustard seed



Combine rice and dal, and rinse 3 times. Add seasonings, carrot, and twice as much water as rice and dal combined. Cook under high pressure for 9 minutes. Release pressure naturally. Meanwhile, in a small pan, heat oil and mustard seed over high heat. Cover with splatter screen and lower heat to medium-low when popping begins. Turn heat off in 1-2 minutes when popping subsides, and pour over cooked khichadi. Alternatively, ghee can be melted over khichadi instead of oil and mustard seed. May be topped with [yogurt](#) and [dal powder](#) for spicy, delicious flavor.



81

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Now add double amount of water to the portion of grains used. One can add salt and jaggery for taste. Make sure the jaggery should be dark as the lighter jaggery is sulphurated.

The cooked khichadi can be served with a little ghee or olive oil on top which is very satisfying.

Rice is *cooling (virya) and soothes Vata and Pitta* and *Red Lentils when cooked reduce Kapha*.

The *Vatagenic tendency of Red Lentils* is balanced by spices.

That makes it a wonderful choice for *Pitta-Kapha, Kapha-Pitta* constitutions.

*Pomegranate seeds help soothe Kapha and also enhance digestion and make food lighter to digest.*

**Toor Dal Khichadi: (Vata Pitta Kapha: Tridoshic) VPK**

**Ingredients:**

1 cup Toor dal

1 cup Basmati Rice

1 Tablespoon Olive oil

1 Tablespoon Sesame oil

1 tsp Salt

½ tsp. Brown Mustard seeds

½ tsp Turmeric

1 pinch Asafetida (hing)

1 /4 cup fresh Green Cilantro.

Place dal and rice together in pot or pressure cooker and rinse thoroughly until the water poured off is clear.

Add 5 cups water, salt turmeric and pinch of Asafetida (hing).

Cook in pressure cooker for 3 whistles or in covered pot until soft (approximately 25 min.)

Place Olive and Sesame oils (in equal proportion) in small pot and warm on medium heat; then add Mustard seeds and wait till they pop. Add pinch of Asafetida (hing) and remove from heat.

Pour over khichadi. Top with chopped cilantro and serve.

