



Your Partner in Wellness

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Eat Like A Yogi

By Desiree Nielsen, RD, the Choices Dietitian

While many people explore yoga for better health, a calmer mind and a stronger body, is it possible to extend the principles of yoga to the dinner table? Eating like a yogi is not about following a specific diet or fasting. The goal is to tune into your own needs to find a way of eating that nourishes your body, mind and spirit.

Begin with Mindfulness

In our society, it is common to eat for reasons other than hunger. Whether out of boredom, anger or pain, eating can also be a way of concealing emotion. It may also be a long-standing habit to eat at a certain time of day, week or month or even during a certain activity, which may all lead to eating the wrong kinds of foods or eating on a full stomach.

One of the core teachings of yoga is being mindful or living in the moment. Many yogis find that their compulsion to overeat subsides over time, simply because they are more in tune with what their body requires. This finding is now more than just anecdotal. Recent research published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found that people who practice yoga regularly tend to eat more mindfully and maintain a healthier body weight over time, independent of the effect of the exercise itself. But you don't have to be a yogi to explore this. Before rushing off to eat, take a moment and ask yourself, "Am I really hungry? What does my body need right now?" These simple questions may be enough to awaken mindful eating.

Drawing Energy from Foods

In yogic philosophy, Prana is the life force that animates all living beings, and we practice yoga to both awaken and harness the Prana within. Not surprisingly, everything we eat has the ability to either energize us or weigh us down. Foods

that are unprocessed and close to nature (whole grains, vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, seeds) feed the body more energy than processed foods (frozen pizzas, boxed side dishes, snack bars). Increasing the amount of naturally energizing foods in your diet is easy. First, steer clear of foods with excess salt, sugar and sulphites. Second, dedicate one meal or snack to energizing foods. If you typically eat a granola bar mid morning with your coffee, why not select your favourite dried fruits and raw nuts to make a trail mix? Upping your intake of raw fruits and vegetables will sustain energy levels, thanks to the incredible bounty of vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals they contain.

Achieve Balance

To reach a balance that meets the needs of your lifestyle and inner yogi, feel free to explore variations in your diet. For some, converting to a vegetarian diet makes sense. For others, choosing organically grown and ethically raised meats may be a better solution. Looking to alternative nutrition principals such as Ayurveda may inspire new eating habits. Finding balance may even be as simple as experimenting with a various dining styles from Mediterranean to Mexican, Indian to Italian. Keep in mind when finding balance, try to avoid rigid dogmas, stay flexible and open-minded and remember: eating like a yogi means enjoying life and enjoying food...so dig in!



Desiree Nielsen, RD, is the Choices Dietitian. Have a nutrition question for Desiree? Visit www.choicesmarkets.com/nutrition or get nutrition tips on Twitter by following @ChoicesMarkets and @DesireeRD



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