

A month of focus on 'Sattwic' Food – The Purest Sustenance for body & soul

The Maryadas, if followed thoroughly, ensure power and safety in our way of life. The purpose of this to take those guidelines on the preparation of pure food, and suggest a variety of ways in which such invaluable information can be merged into appealing programmes and practical ways to help people adopt these principles and take maximum benefit from pure food.

Here we offer a menu of suggestions from which you can choose to focus on in the month of April, together with some tips and thoughts.

1. A Pure Food day held in the centre
2. A Panel Discussion on the Benefits of Wholesome Healthy Food & offered to God.
3. A Exploration of Virtues in Pure Food – an interactive workshop
4. Food & Soul, a seminar on the connection between what we eat & what we are

1. A Pure Food day held in the centre

When we create something, one of the most important things we should pay attention to is the state of our thoughts and feelings towards this creation. Besides anything else, the way we do something will show through in the result. Everything that we create with our hands, or our minds, hides behind its design the energy of our care and that is the effect that leaves an imprint on others.

Create a day of various activities in which the focus is on pure food.

- Karma yoga in the kitchen, invitation to Brahmins, who don't usually, to have an experience of preparing food in silence and yoga.
- Talk: giving definitions of food ('Sattwic', 'Rajasic' and 'Tamsic'), create leaflet on the benefits.
- Discussion on the benefits and practical tips Brahmins can share.
- Collecting together those practical tips and reports of people's experiences which can be collated and reproduced for others to share – making a Centre booklet of Food for Thought.

SAMPLE CONTENT

Our love and concern for the things we create is hidden, so too are the thoughts and feelings for the ones we are creating something for. So the secret is not only hidden in the kind of food we choose to give power to our body, but also the energy included in the food itself. So, externally, the food could be something very simple, but within this form of matter, we can be aware of the existence of a wealth of calm and clear thoughts. One secret ingredient that flavours and enhances all we prepare is silence. Food cooked without the distraction of unnecessary conversation benefits from our concentration, in taste and in power. Even having background noise like the radio or music (unless it is music created to help our remembrance) is a distraction. Worrying, worldly news items or gossip exchanged in preparation can affect the food itself. Food prepared in a peaceful atmosphere has the finest flavour of all. Similarly, food prepared in resentment or anger cannot have the beneficial effect of food prepared with love.

2. What sustains us: body, mind and soul? A panel discussion

Effect on the body

Nutritional studies have shown that vegetarians are healthier and less prone to: heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, diet-related diabetes, obesity, arthritis, rheumatism and kidney disease. Medical research supports this.

Effect on the mind

Eliminating foods that tend to arouse anxiety and irritation gives benefit. Calm and clear thoughts can turn something simple into something delicious. Calmness in the preparation, food that is cooked from the heart in a cool, calm and collected way gives power to the minds of those who eat it.

Effect on the soul

The purer one's diet, the more the emotions remain in a state of equilibrium that brings tranquility to the consciousness and greater clarity to the mind and intellect. Fresh, pure food prepared in a state of focus and in loving thoughts gives power to the whole being.

Invite a panel of two or three guests: for example a nutritionist or specialist doctor; someone to speak on spiritual side - a senior sister or a guest; someone to speak on practical angle (e.g. a mother who cooks a lot for the centre or her own home).

An Interviewer/MC to question the guests in turn, bringing out each one's perspective on the effects and benefits of pure food.

Finally a Question and Answer session.

Prepare some questions to put to the panelists:

- Q. Why do some people who enjoy plenty of good food, not enjoy good health?
- Q. Are there some foods that are known to effect our moods and feelings?
- Q. How do we practically change our diet and cooking to healthier habits?
- Q. What are the benefits of cooking in God's remembrance & offering to God?

3. A Exploration of Virtues in Pure Food – an interactive workshop

While preparing food we are able to practise and incorporate many virtues: care and thoughtfulness in the planning, concentration and carefulness in the preparation, skill and experience in the mixing and stirring, creativity in the flavouring and producing, even patience in waiting for bread to rise or foods to be cooked through. Through everything we add calm and loving thoughts.

Design a workshop around virtues in the kitchen.

Start with meditation

Prepare a set of cards with virtues on.

Invite everyone to pick one, and consider how that virtue could be used in food preparation.

Get them to share in pairs, feedback to the whole group.

Facilitator to draw out the qualities from each.

Invite groups to share their findings.

Invite each to consider how they can use these qualities more widely for sustaining their lives.

Provide pens, paper, art materials – so people can creatively illustrate the virtues they've identified

SAMPLE CONTENT – Virtues

Accuracy, too, is a necessary quality. To prepare just the right amount of food for those we are feeding, so that no-one will go without, nor will there be waste quantities to throw away. Because freshness is of the essence, we do not want to be faced with left-overs, with little nutritional value. Old food collects waste thoughts and negative vibrations.

4. Food & Soul, a seminar on the connection between what we eat & what we are

Purity in everything. In every thought, every word and every action. In every moment, every step and even every mouthful of food. That is the aim. 'As a person eats, so he thinks. As a person thinks, so he acts. As a person acts, so he is.' Therefore the purity of the food we eat, how we prepare it, our consciousness and how we offer it to God – all these affect how nutritious the food is for our bodies and how well it gives us deeper sustenance.

A seminar based on the book **Food & Soul** and delivered by a variety of Brahmins – of all ages, young and old bodies, male and female, many who do not usually deliver talks – has resulted in a very enjoyable and powerful event.

- * Quiet reflection
- * Introduction and reading from introduction to the book
- * Six or so live 'demonstrations' from the Recipe book
- * Each demonstrator shows their ingredients, demonstrates the method in front of the audience, mixing, stirring, rolling out etc. Gives personal tips and experience of benefits
- * Each one has brought some samples of their recipe which has been prepared in advance and is shared afterwards with the audience.
- * Each one also gives some aspect of the maryadas or spiritual insight connected with food – preparing in yoga, using certain items to replace egg, to flavour without onion and garlic (and why).
- * At end of session, offer samples of all the food and explain offering food.
- * General tasting session (much enjoyed by audience).
- * Prepare a booklet of the recipes used to give to all attendees.
- * Ask all to complete a feedback form to gauge response. Offer, if people give their email addresses, to send them six free recipes via the internet (this resource is freely available to any centre that wants to do a programme like this).

Examples of information given at such a programme

SAMPLE CONTENT: Offering food

Having prepared our food in thoughtfulness and remembrance throughout the process, when the meal is ready we take a moment or two to offer it, to add the finishing touch – that of gratitude and thankfulness to the One who provides all our needs. Taking a small amount of the food we have prepared and putting it in a small container (reserved exclusively for this purpose) we sit for a few moments in remembrance, giving our thanks, and permitting the purity of our thankful thoughts to purify the food and acknowledge the grace of God. The pure vibrations in this small portion of food spreads through all that we have prepared, so that everyone who tastes it can have the benefit.

SAMPLE TIP: Flavour & Freshness

Sometimes onions and garlic are recommended to non-vegetarians as blood-purifiers and to help counteract the build-up of harmful animal fat and cholesterol. However the healthy vegetarian does not need such protection. ON the contrary, these foods tend to arouse anxiety and irritation, and impede serenity and peace of mind. When the ingredients of meals are fresh and they have been freshly prepared, we get the maximum benefit from them. Stale food loses its value, and food left lying around takes on negative vibrations.