

HEALTHY LIVING

## To your health

In ayurveda, a balanced diet is medicinal

By ELIZABETH HAMILTON  
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"Food is medicine," says Sapna Punjabi-Gupta, as she squeezes half a lime into a glass pitcher.

She's making fresh limeade in her home kitchen in Irving. To the two squeezed limes, she adds about four cups of water and her own spice blend: chaat masala, which includes cardamom, fennel and roasted cumin seed powder. She stirs them together with a long wooden spoon, pours a glass and takes a sip.

Punjabi-Gupta's limeade is unlike any available in the frozen food sections of Western grocery stores. This is limeade ayurveda-style.

What is ayurveda (ah-yer-VAY-dah)?

It's the traditional system of medicine in Hinduism, she says. It's still practiced in India as a complement to Western medicine. Punjabi-Gupta, a registered clinical dietitian, says that several of its principles can help anyone who wants to lead a healthier life.

Ayurveda's religious roots are deep. It first appeared in written form more than 5,000 years ago in the Hindu scriptures called Vedas, which teach that the universe is made up of five elements (air, fire, water, earth and ether) and each human being is made up of a unique constitution of these elements.

When these elements get out of balance — say too much earth or too little fire — the body becomes unhealthy, the teachings say. Ayurveda provides guidelines that include cooking, massage therapy and meditation to help individuals balance the elements in their bodies.

Punjabi-Gupta specializes in ayurvedic cooking. She learned it first from her mother while growing up in Mumbai, India, then later by studying under the ayurvedic physician Vasant Lad at the Ayurvedic Institute in New Mexico and while earning her master's degree in nutrition from Case Western Reserve University.

She taught a lecture series on ayurvedic wellness at the Crow Collection of Asian Art this summer and teaches ayurvedic cooking classes throughout the year.

Punjabi-Gupta is quick to insist that you need not be Hindu or accept the premise that the universe is made of up five elements to practice ayurveda. Nor do you need to be a vegetarian.

To practice ayurveda, all you need to do is be aware of what you eat and how it affects the well-being of your body and your mind. It can take the form of eating fresh foods, using spices for medicinal purposes, eating foods that pacify, rather than agitate, your digestive system and eating a balanced diet.

According to ayurveda, a balanced diet doesn't mean consuming the right amount

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Photos by Lara Solt/Staff Photographer

Sapna Punjabi-Gupta, a registered dietitian, serves an ayurveda meal of chila, chutney and shikanji. Ayurveda is a Hindu system that emphasizes the medicine properties of food.



The ayurveda spices of life are turmeric, whole mustard seeds, roasted cumin seed powder, dry mango powder, red chili powder, coriander seed powder and whole cumin seeds.

THEATER

## 6 small companies to debut at Wyly

It's a new level with Elevator Project

By NANCY CHURNIN  
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Six small, acclaimed local companies will make their Wyly Theatre debut as part of the Elevator Project, a new collaboration between the AT&T Performing Arts Center and the Dallas performing arts community that kicks off Aug. 22.

Second Thought Theatre, DGDG: the Danielle Georgiou Dance Group, Cara Mia Theatre Co., African American Repertory Theater, Dallas Actor's Lab and Upstart Productions will present shows in the 98-seat performance spaces on the building's sixth and ninth floors.



DANIELLE GEORGIOU and her Danielle Georgiou Dance Group will present *Nice* in November.



DAVID LOZANO's Cara Mia will perform the play *Lydia*.

Dallas Theater Center presents most of its shows in Potter Rose Performance Hall on the ground level, with occasional shows, including this season's *Oedipus El Rey*, on the sixth floor. DTC will present shows at Potter Rose and the Kalita Humphreys Theater next season.

In addition to the increased visibility offered by the Wyly Theatre, a \$100 six-play sampler package offers potential for each company in the Elevator Series to widen its fan base.

Upstart Productions will open with *Year of the Rooster*, a play about cockfighting by Eric Dufault that *The New York Times* called "astonishingly entertaining" in a 2013 review of the show at New York's Ensemble Studio Theatre. The season continues with DGDG's *Nice*, a dance piece that breaks down the dangers of hiding feelings and motives.

The show by Dallas Actor's Lab, with a title still to be announced, will be followed by Second Thought Theatre's *Bull* by Mike Bartlett, a dark look at office politics that opened in

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VISUAL ARTS

## Meadows gets 3 new pieces

Museum's collection of Spanish works has nearly doubled in last 35 years

By MICHAEL GRANBERRY  
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The Meadows Museum at Southern Methodist University announced Monday the acquisition of three works by noted Spanish artists.

The newly arrived pieces by Raimundo de Madrazo y Garreta, Miquel Barceló and Juan Muñoz are already on display. Meadows officials credit the acquisitions with fortifying the

collection as a whole, bolstering especially its 19th- and 20th-century holdings and its contemporary art portfolio.

The additions enhance what Meadows officials call its "robust acquisition initiative" by focusing on pieces that "complement, unify and expand" its existing collection, which has nearly doubled in the last 35 years. The Meadows will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2015.

"We are thrilled that these three outstanding works of art are becoming part of the Meadows collection," Meadows director Mark A. Roglán said in a prepared statement.

Since each is "created by an influential Spanish artist, these acquisitions will serve as perfect counterparts to our growing collection of works by such older masters as Goya and Velázquez," Roglán said. "We are excited to offer our audiences an increasingly cohesive representation of Spanish art from the medieval

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**Seated Figure Looking Backwards** (1996), by Juan Muñoz, is a gift to the Meadows Museum from the Barrett Collection.

The Barrett Collection

# Are you ready for ayurveda?

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of the five food groups, but rather, eating meals that contain all six tastes. These tastes include sweet, sour and salty — tastes readily available in most Western diets — and those used less frequently: bitter, pungent and astringent.

By eating all six tastes, you make sure you receive a healthy dose of all five elements.

“Do you know why Starbucks is thriving right now?” asks Punjabi-Gupta. “We are craving the taste of bitter.”

For astringent tastes, Punjabi-Gupta recommends any kind of legume: lentils, garbanzo beans and even sprouts. For pungent, she recommends red chile powder and peppers.

## Digestion is key

In ayurveda, good digestion is the cornerstone of good health, she says. Those who practice ayurveda cook with spices and herbs that she says aid digestion.

“Spices are these magical little pearls, gemstones, I would say, in a cuisine,” says Punjabi-Gupta.

She recommends eating a sliver of ginger drizzled with lemon juice before a meal to “kick-start your digestive fire.”

A slice of fresh ginger in a morning cup of tea or mixing dried ginger into homemade salad dressings will also do the trick, as will adding a little cumin to a bowl of yogurt or slipping some fennel seeds into a dish of lentils.

If eating ginger before a meal “stimulates your gut fire,” drinking a glass of ice water does just the opposite.

“Ice is not nice,” sings Punjabi-Gupta, then adds more



Lara Solt/Staff Photographer

**Sapna Punjabi-Gupta** makes shikanji (Indian spiced limeade). Punjabi-Gupta is a nutritionist and expert in ayurvedic cooking. Ayurveda is the traditional system of medicine in Hinduism. Ayurvedic cooking uses spices and herbs to aid digestion.

seriously, “If you think about it ... our temperature is hot inside. It’s warm inside because we’re eating raw food, we’re eating cooked food, and all that has to be broken down and absorbed. ... Ice is not nice because it’s like dumping ice on fire. You’re shutting the temperature down in your stomach so the food just stays there.”

Angela Lemond, a registered dietitian and nutritionist in Plano, says Punjabi-Gupta may be right about the digestive powers of these herbs and spices, but there haven’t been enough evidence-based studies for conventional health care professionals to embrace them.

“People don’t get paid to do research on herbs because herbs aren’t patented,” she says.

For those who want to use herbs and spices to help with medical issues like digestion, Lemond suggests first making sure the herb or spice won’t interact with current medications in harmful ways. A good place to find out is the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (nccam.nih.gov), which provides information about the medicinal properties of each spice and herb.

And, Lemond adds, those who are pregnant or nursing, the young and old, and anyone suffering from a medical condition should be especially careful when using alternative remedies for health issues.

But “ice is not nice” — that’s true, Lemond says.

During meals, “The best scenario is not to drink any-

thing. The second is drinking water at room temperature.”

While the presence of water in the stomach doesn’t affect the breakdown of nutrients, she says it can cause gas production, which leads to stomach pains and belching, especially for people with sensitive stomachs.

## Know yourself

Punjabi-Gupta adds that people should also take into account their personal digestive powers when deciding what to eat and how to prepare it. The body will have a harder time digesting foods that are dry, hard and processed than, say, something warm and fresh, she says.

For example, someone with constipation or irritable bowel syndrome will digest a granola bar differently than a person with an active digestive system, she says.

“If you’re somebody that has a digestive issue, why don’t we take all the elements that we put in a granola bar and make you a warm oatmeal or a warm granola? You can get the whole nourishment by changing the way it’s presented to you.”

The gut will digest both the oatmeal and the granola bar, she says, but it will have to work a lot harder to digest the granola bar, and that extra work may be the difference between irritation and contentment for someone with a digestive issue.

Punjabi-Gupta says no one can go wrong by cooking according to season.

“It’s Texas hot weather right now,” she says. “We need to calm the heat that’s generated by the season.”

Instead of eating spicy foods, like bell peppers or red chile peppers, she suggests eating salads with root vegetables and fresh fruit, and cooking with spices like coriander and fennel, herbs like mint, basil and cilantro, and even coconut oil.

“These have a cooling effect throughout your body,” she says. “It’s internal pacifying.”

She lifts her glass of limeade as an example of a cooling summer drink, then points out that it’s not only cooling, but also fresh.

“Having this lime juice freshly limed right now has a life force energy vs. buying it from the store which was pre-packaged months ago,” she says.

Lemond agrees.

“I am a big proponent of seasonal eating because it’s a lot fresher produce if you’re eating in season,” she says.

In ayurveda, the freshness of food is called its prana, and the more prana, the more rejuvenating and pleasurable to the taste.

For those who want to try ayurveda, Punjabi-Gupta suggests starting slow.

“I wouldn’t go cold turkey and start changing everything and start wearing different clothes and burning an incense stick,” she says.

If nothing else, she suggests being aware of your body and being intentional with what you eat.

“Ayurveda is all about teaching you to take care of yourself.”

Follow Elizabeth Hamilton on Twitter at @hamiltoneliz.

## Ayurvedic spices

Sapna Punjabi-Gupta uses these spices in her cooking and credits them with these therapeutic properties:

**Cardamom:** stimulates digestion, clears mucus, prevents bad breath

**Fennel:** stimulates digestion, laxative, diuretic

**Coriander:** lessens bloating, diuretic

**Turmeric:** prevents inflammation, antioxidant

**Cumin:** stimulates digestion, relieves gas

SOURCE: Sapna Punjabi-Gupta

## For more info

■ For more information about Punjabi-Gupta and her classes, visit [naivedhya.com](http://naivedhya.com).

■ Upcoming free classes include “Raising Vegetarian Families,” Aug. 13; “Radiant Health Through Balanced Agni,” Aug. 20; and “Back-to-School Ayurvedic Health Tips,” Aug. 27. Classes are from noon to 1 p.m. at the Crow Collection of Asian Art, 2010 Flora St., Dallas. Call 214-979-6430.

*Shikanji is a refreshing summer drink. The limes are cooling, roasted cumin seed powder is good for digestion and for cooling the body, and rock salt replenishes electrolytes. Change up the spices as desired.*

## SHIKANJI (INDIAN SPICED LIMEADE)

- 4 tablespoons lime juice
- 6 tablespoons turbinado sugar or Sucanat
- 1 teaspoon rock salt
- 2 teaspoons roasted cumin seed powder
- 4 cups room-temperature water
- A few roughly chopped mint leaves for garnish

Whisk lime juice, turbinado sugar, rock salt and roasted cumin seed powder in a bowl until the sugar dissolves.

Add the 4 cups of room-temperature water.

Pour in glasses and garnish with mint leaves. Makes 4 servings.

**PER SERVING:** Calories 75, Negligible fat, No cholesterol, Sodium 491 mg, No fiber, Carbohydrates 20 g, No protein, Sugar 18 g  
SOURCE: Sapna Punjabi-Gupta

*Enjoy this chutney as a spread or condiment on Indian pancakes. The mangoes can be substituted for other summer fruits like peaches, plums or apples. The mint is cooling to balance the warmth of the fruit. The cumin seeds aid digestion.*

## MANGO AND MINT CHUTNEY

- 1 ripe mango
- 2 cups fresh mint
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 (½-inch) piece fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon rock salt

In a blender, grind all the ingredients to a smooth paste, adding a little water as needed.

Refrigerate the chutney in an airtight container for up to 4 to 5 days.

Makes about 1 cup.

**PER 2-TABLESPOON SERVING:** Calories 21, Negligible fat, No cholesterol, Sodium 242 mg, No fiber, Carbohydrates 5 g, No protein, No sugar  
SOURCE: Sapna Punjabi-Gupta

“I began to panic as the glare from oncoming traffic blinded me...”



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The versatile cheela recipe can be made for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

This versatile pancake can be eaten for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Change up the spices to suit your preference. Slip it into a hamburger bun if desired.

## CHEELA INDIAN PANCAKES

- 1 cup chickpea flour (also known as besan)
- ¾ cup chopped onions
- ¾ cup chopped tomatoes
- ½ cup finely chopped kale leaves
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- ½ teaspoon carom seeds
- ½ teaspoon crushed black pepper
- A pinch of asafetida
- Salt to taste
- Oil for cooking
- 1 to 1½ cups water

Combine all the ingredients except the oil and water in a bowl.

Gradually add about 1 to 1½ cups of water to get a smooth

batter without any lumps. The batter should be slightly thinner than pancake batter consistency.

Heat a skillet or a heavy-bottom frying pan, add ½ teaspoon of oil and spread it evenly across the pan.

Pour about ½ cup of batter into the pan and spread evenly to about 6 inches in diameter. Add ½ teaspoon of oil around the perimeter of the pancake.

Let cook for several minutes until the edges are slightly crisp, then flip.

Let brown and crisp on both sides.

Serve warm or at room temperature with chutney. Makes 4 servings.

**PER SERVING:** Calories 159 (60% from fat), Fat 7 g (1 g sat), No cholesterol, Sodium 218 mg, Fiber 4 g, Carbohydrates 19 g, Protein 6 g, Sugar 5 g  
SOURCE: Sapna Punjabi-Gupta