



The Importance of Whole Grains

Staff of Life

In *AES #6, Five Principles of Dietary Healing*, the importance of Whole Foods was introduced as a means to ensure a balanced intake of *ch'i* through diet. Since it is mostly impossible to eat food that is *absolutely* whole, the reliance on "Centrally Balanced Foods" was recommended. Here it will be shown that Whole Grains are unique within this category, as well as within the category of "Generally Whole Foods," in that they are not only the most energetically balanced, but also the most evolved. These two qualities have broad reaching ramifications for both healing and general "human" development.

Balanced Yin-Yang *Ch'i*

Whole grains are comprised of basically three different components which, in ancient Chinese medical philosophy, correspond to *yang* (which represents activity, heat and externalization), *yin* (which represents rest, cold and internalization) and balance. The outer bran corresponds to *yang*, the inner germ corresponds to *yin*, and the central endosperm corresponds to balance. In acupuncture, this tripartite division corresponds to the *San-chiao* 三焦, or Triple Heater and its three basic kinds of *ch'i*. In Chinese, the word *chiao* 焦 depicts the roasting of a bird, and therefore, by extension, refers to the transformation of food by cooking. The ancient Chinese connected the interrelated effects of agriculture, cooking and the *ch'i* energies of the body to their philosophy of transformational change, *hua* 化, which described the evolutionary processes of the universe through the interworkings of *yin* and *yang ch'i*. In the body the Triple Heater refers to three different areas and their functions of metabolism in the body.

Therefore, the bran corresponds to the upper body (mostly Heart and Lung), and the Defensive *Wei* 衛 *ch'i*; the endosperm corresponds to the middle body (mostly the Stomach and Spleen) and the Nutritive *Ying* 營 *ch'i*; whereas the germ corresponds to the lower body (mostly the intestines, Kidneys and Bladder), and the Generative *Ching-ch'i* 精. By examining the functions of these areas and types of *ch'i* in acupuncture, one can arrive at a simple and clear understanding of the three parts of whole grain, and by implication, the importance of Whole Grains.

Acupuncture Energies and Grain

	Bran	Endosperm	Germ
Polarity	<i>Yang</i>	Balance	<i>Yin</i>
Heaters	Upper	Middle	Lower
<i>Ch'i</i>	Defensive <i>Shen/Spirit</i>	Nourishing <i>Ch'i/Energy</i>	Generative <i>Ching/Source</i>
Organs	Lung/Heart	Stomach/Spleen	Kidneys

Bran and the Upper Heater

The upper heater contains the functions of Heart and Lung. Relevant functions of the Lung include: 1) its ability to protect against the external extremes of weather and climate due to its access to the outside through the skin and pores, and 2) its role in regulating the bowels through its coupled organ, the Large Intestine. These functions of the body noted in acupuncture are also found in bran. The bran is defined as the outer coating that *protects* the inner seed, and is comprised mainly of minerals and vitamin B3, Niacin. Bran is the "skin" of the grain seed. It *protects* the inner, more vulnerable part of the grain seed in the same way that the Lung regulates appropriate boundaries (see *AES #5*), in order to protect the Heart and Spirit (*Shen* 神). Analytically, the protection afforded by the bran is related to its Niacin content. High dosages of Niacin are well known for their flushing effect on the skin which causes a temporary hot and red sensation. Niacin is also used in the treatment of schizophrenia and Pellagra which is associated with what is called the "4 D's: dermatitis, dementia, diarrhea and death." Apparently the *yang* flushing qualities of niacin have a cooling effect on the skin, as well as the bowels and spirit, all of which are connected to the Upper (and outermost) Heater according to acupuncture theory.

Endosperm and the Middle Heater

The middle heater is comprised of the organ functions of Stomach and Spleen and their nourishing role in the digestive process. There is a saying in the ancient *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*: "The Stomach is like a granary which receives the energies of food and drink" (*Su-wen* 29). According to

this text, these energies are then transported to the Spleen where they are distributed as nourishment to all of the other organs. This function in acupuncture is analogous to that of the endosperm with its reservoirs of starch and protein used in nourishing the germinated sprout before it can manufacture its own food through the chlorophyll of its leaves.

Germ and the Lower Heater

The Lower Heater is primarily comprised of the Kidney's organ function which is associated with the Prenatal Generative Force, or *Ching-ch'i* 精氣 (see *AES #3*). The Generative Force, the most refined *ch'i*, is responsible for reproduction and longevity. The Chinese character for *ching* 精 depicts an inner power (*tan* 丹) which gives rise to the growth (*sheng* 生) of grains (*mi* 米). Since the combination of *tan* 丹 (inner power) and *sheng* 生 (growth) forms the word *ch'ing* 青, the green color of chlorophyll, the connection between the germ of cereal grains and the Generative Force is unmistakable.

In modern times the contents analyzed from the germ, especially Vitamins E and B1, can also be strongly compared to the Generative Force. Vitamin E is found in large concentrations in the germ of whole grains, is responsible for normal reproduction, and also believed to retard aging due to its anti-oxidizing properties.

Most of the Thiamine (Vitamin B1), is also found in the Germ. Thiamine is a water soluble Vitamin used in counteracting the effects of beri-beri which is a disease of water metabolism having both wet and dry manifestations. Wet beri-beri results in swelling in the limbs due to the accumulation of fluids. Dry beri-beri is accompanied by wasting and numbness of the muscles. Wet beri-beri is the body's inability to drain fluids, and dry beri-beri is the body's inability to retain them. In acupuncture both of these problems are connected with the Kidneys and the Lower Heater where the body's responsibility for fluid metabolism originates. Energetically, the Generative Force is the Fire within Water at the very source of life's arousal mechanisms. It is this responsibility for regulating fluid metabolism that is also represented by the germ of cereal grains.

A lack of Thiamine is also involved with degeneration of the brain associated with a "disinclination to be active and an inability to adjust in a group accompanied by irritable, depressed, quarrelsome and uncooperative behaviour (*Diet and Nutrition*, Ballantine p. 173). In this case, Thiamine, as the "energy" within the germ of cereal grains, nourishes the Generative Force in order to nourish and support the most fundamental expanding power within the human body, Kidney Fire. The Generative Force, *ching*, is also very important for the development of Spirit, *shen* 神 which resides within the Heart at the Upper Heater. Here, the Generative Force, nourished by the germ of cereal grain, works together with the Heart and Lung in order to maintain and regulate the Spirit in relation to social boundaries.

Refined versus Whole

The energies in the three parts of grain work synergistically with, and in the same way as the Triple Heater does in acupuncture to ensure the unimpeded flow of *ch'i* and the accompanying health of the organism. Unlike refined rice and wheat etc., these parts are found in whole cereal grain in their natural proportions. These are the proportions upon which the evolution of humanity's Destiny and spirit depends. Using whole cereal grains as the staple of one's diet creates a resonance with the wholeness and support of the natural Universe whose only concern, according to ancient Chinese philosophy, is to support the evolution of Man's Destiny and spirit.

Food Evolution: Animal or Vegetable?

From the ancient Chinese perspective, all life is both formed and maintained due to the mutual interaction of Heaven (Spirit) and Earth (Matter). When the spiritual force of Heaven "penetrates" Earth, "inert" matter takes a living shape. Organisms (the Chinese included minerals, vegetables, animals and humans in this category) evolve according to the degree in which this interpenetration is completed. Thus, the highest evolution of the mineral kingdom was metal or gold; the highest evolution of the plant kingdom was rice (here representing their cultural version of whole grains); the highest evolution of the animal kingdom was the dragon (an "energetic" animal associated with the emperor and Spirit); while in the human realm, the highest evolution was the Sage, or True Man, one who has completed the evolution of his Destiny in the complete spiritualization of the material realm.

In each of these kingdoms, evolution was determined by the degree that Heaven was able to completely "penetrate" Earth and that Earth was able to completely "envelop" Heaven. This process takes place through the alternating *Yin-Yang* stages, and culminates in the fifth stage of completion. In the first stage material forces become receptive to the spirit of Heaven. Here, gold represents the highest evolution of the mineral kingdom because its property, indestructible malleability, represents the infinite and enduring qualities of Heaven on Earth. The second stage is characterized in the vegetable kingdom by the first penetration of Heaven into Earth. This can be seen in the energy of the root with its downward, centripetal motion. The third stage continues with the envelopment of spirit through the evolution of the animal kingdom. Here, the creation of the "head" rotates 90° from the downward vertical root and changes the vertical Heaven-and-Earth pole to the horizontal. Human beings complete this rotation 180° to the upright vertical with their unique ability to stand erect, and thereby represent the fourth stage where the spiritualization of matter *begins* its return to its Heavenly source.

In order to support his Destiny and spiritual evolution, Man should eat from the most evolved representatives of these categories. Whereas the emperors of old obtained their gold from their eating and drinking vessels, it is more practical to obtain food quality gold from the highest grade of unrefined sea salt (an *AES* article on sea salt is under preparation). The highest quality vegetable food is, of course, whole grain (see below). It may seem whimsical to suggest eating dragons as our choice of animal food, but if we bear in mind what the dragon *symbolized* to the ancient Chinese, it becomes more palatable.

The foremost qualities of the Chinese dragon are its ability to change form and its representation of the emperor who is, himself, the symbol of the human spirit. With these qualities, the dragon is able to synthesize all the various animal qualities and powers into one, while taking command over them. This ancient viewpoint suggests that we should not repress our animal origins, nor should we try to rise above them. Harmonious, integrated evolution is the approach they seem to suggest. Through mastery of our animal instincts we will be able to perceive the higher Destiny bequeathed to us from our Heavenly source. Therefore, animal food, though useful for building strength and bulk, should not be considered as a primary staple food.

There is an alternating *Yin-Yang* polarity of the food kingdoms that suggests more of an affinity between human beings and vegetables than it does to animal or mineral food. The mineral and animal kingdoms represent the two developing "material" stages, whereas the vegetable and human kingdoms represent the two developing "spiritual" stages. True Man is a completion and synthesis of these first four cycles. Because human beings are matter and spirit combined, their evolution is best supported through the vegetable kingdom and whole grains. Animal food should be mostly reserved for strengthening connections to the earth, when the passion for life has become weak. Too much passion, however, will cloud perception and our spiritual path. As a result, the *Tao*, as well as our True Nature (see *AES* 5) will be lost.

Alternating Stages of Spiritual and Material Development

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Heaven		Vegetable	↔	Human
Earth	Mineral	↔	Animal	

Beginning and End

Whole cereal grains are the highest evolution of the vegetable kingdom and the perfect staple food for humanity because, as beginning and end in one, they represent infinity and the entire evolutionary process. As mentioned in *AES* #6, all foods, with the exception of Blue Green algae, are only Generally Whole Foods. This means that all other foods, as only parts of the whole, are "concentrations" of different *Yin-Yang* aspects of the whole and not the harmonious nature of the whole itself.

In emphasizing these parts energetically, different foods tend to nourish and support widely different aspects of our development. For example, the downward tendency of roots, eg. carrots, is associated in Chinese energetic dietary practice with the Water phase (see *AES* #4), the Kidneys in particular, the lower body in general, reproduction, etc. The expanding nature of leafy greens tends to resonate with the Wood phase, the Liver, self-assertion and the muscles. The ripening nature of flowers and fruits tends to stimulate the Fire phase, the Heart, inspiration of the spirit, and the smooth flow of the blood. Because stemmy foods, such as bok choy, Chinese cabbage, celery etc., as well as round foods, such as pumpkins and squash, represent the neutral, harmonizing zone of food plants, they tend to correspond to the Soil phase, the Stomach and Spleen, and even distribution of nutrients throughout the digestive system. Each of these parts represents a separate and distinct aspect of plant and, therefore, human development as well.

Cereal grains, however, represent the Metal phase, which is both the beginning and end of the cycle. Through its associated season, Fall, the Metal phase "harvests" the "essential nature" of things into its most basic and concentrated form. The fruit is the end of this cycle, and the seed is the beginning. Edible fruits demonstrate *yin-yang* extreme in that the fruit part is *yin*, watery, soft, easily perishable, and at the most expanded part of the plant. In contrast, the seed is *yang*, dry, hard, concentrated at the center, stores for long periods of time, and is mostly inedible.

The same is true inversely for edible seeds and nuts. In this case the outside part, which would correspond to the fruit, is a *yang*, hard, inedible shell, while the inside is comprised mostly of protein and oil (*yin*) and is somewhat difficult to digest. Fruits and seed contain both extreme *yin* and *yang* in their energetic composition.

On the other hand, whole grains are the fruit and seed, beginning and end of the plant's life cycle all in one. Like the circle, they symbolize in their actuality the cyclic movement of Heaven and Earth, spirit and matter in their infinite dance. They contain within them all other stages in potential and are capable of being stored throughout the year with no technological intervention such as refrigeration.

In addition, this balance is accentuated in whole grains because they are the seeds and fruits of *grasses*. Grasses embody the most balance in the plant kingdom because their "stages" (leaf, stem, grain and root) tend to blend into one another, are the least differentiated, and, therefore, embody the least extreme.

Whole Grains Equal Whole Foods

Whole grains are the most energetically balanced and evolved food known to mankind and have been intuitively regarded as the staple food of almost all traditional cultures. As staple foods, they have been, and should basically continue to be eaten with the most frequency in any given meal. They should also be included in at least one meal per day (every meal is ideal), throughout the seasonal cycle.

Varieties of whole cereal grains available in the United States today are: long, medium and short grain brown rice; red rice; brown and black sweet rice; whole wheat; spelt (an ancient high-protein variety of wheat); rye; oats; barley; buckwheat; millet; corn (not corn-on-the-cob, but cereal corn like the kind used for baking bread); amaranth; quinoa; and teff.

Whole Grains and the Seven Levels of Judgement

Whole grains develop Judgment because, as seeds, they represent the corresponding virtue of the Metal Phase (see *AES* #5). Reinstating a diet of whole foods is one of the first steps toward eating beyond nutrition, and eating to fulfill Destiny through the development of Judgment. Eating whole grains completes this biological connection.

Of all foods, only whole grains express all of the requirements in order to classify them as principle and staple foods, and only whole grains are capable of leading one biologically to the highest level of Judgment.