

# Food & Mood



Change your food to change your mood.

Food is your ally in your wellbeing, not just physically, but emotionally as well. Get to know the Six Tastes of Ayurveda and discover a path to empowered emotional balance.

# Meet the Six Tastes

Ayurveda holds a unique perspective on nutrition that requires shift in perception from our common western lens. Ayurveda looks to the qualities and properties of foods and the effects they have on our physiology as a whole, rather than looking at the chemical compounds or calories of a food. This view includes an understanding of the emotional effect of the food that we ingest.

According to Ayurveda, the sense of taste is a natural guide towards optimal nutrition and emotional balance. It was through the sense of taste that our human ancestors could discern healthy foods from poisons in nature. We can still access this natural gift. In fact, much of the wisdom of Ayurvedic nutrition can be found easily on the tip of your tongue!

Our taste buds do much more than simply identify tastes; they unlock the nutritive value of foods, provide the initial spark to the entire digestive process, and serve as a trusted to achieving emotional balance.

In Ayurveda, there are six tastes or *Rasas*: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent. Ayurveda recommends including each of the tastes in every meal. The premise here is that by incorporating all six tastes in your meals and adjusting the amounts to your personal constitution, you support balance in your physical, mental, and emotional being.

## The Six Tastes, their Qualities, and Balancing Effects:

Taste	Element	Qualities	Balances	Aggravates/Imbalances
Sweet	Earth & Water	Heavy, moist, cool	Vata & Pitta (VP-)	Kapha (K+)
Sour	Earth & Fire	Warm, moist, heavy	Vata (V-)	Kapha & Pitta (KP+)
Salty	Water & Fire	Heavy, moist, warm	Vata (V-)	Kapha & Pitta (KP+)
Pungent	Fire & Air	Hot, light, dry	Kapha (K-)	Vata & Pitta (VP+)
Bitter	Air & Ether/Space	Cold, light, dry	Kapha & Pitta (KP-)	Vata (V+)
Astringent	Air & Earth	Cool, light, dry	Kapha & Pitta (KP-)	Vata (V+)

## The Six Tastes and What They Do in the Body:

Taste	What it does in the Body
Sweet	<b>Nourishes:</b> Sweet rasa is warm and grounding. It builds the body, nourishes tissues, and increases fluid in the body. It has a nourishing and soothing effect and the body, mind, and emotions.
Sour	<b>Liquifies:</b> Sour rasa is both heating and tonifying and is best used in small quantities. It serves as an igniter for our digestive fire without generating too much heat. It also stimulates circulation and elimination, and supports mental acuity and sharpness.
Salty	<b>Clears or builds:</b> Salty rasa is warm, moist, heavy, and spreading. It increases the water element in the body, lubricates tissues, stimulates digestion, and calms the mind.
Pungent	<b>Expels:</b> Pungent rasa is hot, dry, and stimulating. It stimulates appetite and strengthens metabolism while helping support expectoration of phlegm. It clears the sinus passages. It can encourage ambition & motivation in the mind.
Bitter	<b>Excretes:</b> Bitter rasa is cold, light, dry, and active. It absorbs excess fluids, detoxifies the body, and helps remove excess heat. It helps support mental clarity and insight.
Astringent	<b>Removes &amp; constricts:</b> Astringent rasa is cool, light, and drying. It creates constriction, tones tissues, and pulls excess fluid from the body. It can encourage optimism in the mind.

# The Six Tastes and Your Emotions

It's no surprise that *rasa*, the word for taste in Sanskrit, is also the word for emotion. In Ayurveda, taste and emotion are inextricably linked. It's also interesting to note that when we trace the subtle digestion process of food, we find that it begins before the first with our sensory input: what we smell and what we see starts the digestion process! At the first scent of a meal the emotional centers of the brain are activated. This is reinforced when the food meets the tongue and begins the journey of digestion and assimilation in the body.

According to Ayurveda, we need each of the six tastes represented in each meal. If any one of these tastes is missing in the diet over an extended period, or is present in excess, it can cause emotional and physiological imbalances. Each taste carries a different emotional signature and manifests in our emotional body through the digestive process.

## The Six Tastes and their corresponding emotion expressions.

<b>Sweet</b>	K+/VP-	Contentment, fulfillment, satisfaction, love, compassion, joy, happiness
<b>Sour</b>	KP+/V-	Insight, discernment, heightened awareness, appreciation, understanding, comprehension
<b>Salty</b>	KP+/V-	Passion, desire, zest for life, courage, confidence, enthusiasm, interest
<b>Pungent</b>	VP+/K-	Drive, ambition, extroversion, excitement, curiosity, concentration, clarity, vitality, expansiveness, enthusiasm
<b>Bitter</b>	V+/KP-	Focus, dynamism, cool-headedness, clarity, introspection
<b>Astringent</b>	V+/KP-	Mental clarity, introspection, composed, stable, grounded, unified

## Emotional experiences due to *lack* of The Six Tastes

<b>Sweet</b>	K+/VP-	Unsatisfied, discontent, disconnection, sadness
<b>Sour</b>	KP+/V-	Impulsiveness, carelessness, indiscretion, scattered focus, dispersed energy
<b>Salty</b>	KP+/V-	Indifference, procrastination, low motivation, dullness, depression, lack of creativity
<b>Pungent</b>	VP+/K-	Passivity, avoidance, timidity, low confidence
<b>Bitter</b>	V+/KP-	Grief, disappointment, resentment
<b>Astringent</b>	V+/KP-	Dull, listless mind and body, brain fog

## Emotional experiences due to *excess* of The Six Tastes

<b>Sweet</b>	K+/VP-	Complacency, apathy, indifference, laziness, attachment, greed, possessiveness
<b>Sour</b>	KP+/V-	Critical, judgmental, jealousy, rejection, hate, selfishness, agitation, hyperactivity
<b>Salty</b>	KP+/V-	Hedonistic, driven by sensory desire, addiction, attachment, possessiveness, irritability
<b>Pungent</b>	VP+/K-	Anger, aggression, irritability, anger, rage, competitiveness, envy
<b>Bitter</b>	V+/KP-	Bitter, pessimistic, cynicism, rejection, boredom, isolation, loneliness, separation
<b>Astringent</b>	V+/KP-	Fearful, anxious, overly sensitive, hypervigilant, nervousness, resentment, depression, fixation, rigidity

# Eating the Six Tastes

Eating a balanced diet in Ayurveda follows a few simple principles:

- Eat seasonally in alignment with your constitution
- Eat in a calm state with minimal distractions
- Eat until satisfied
- Incorporate the Six Tastes

## Include the Six Tastes in Your Meals

The Six Tastes offer us a friendly, easy guide for how to nourish ourselves. Rather than looking at nutritional labels for varying rations of protein or carbohydrates, the Six Tastes naturally guide us towards our body's nutritional needs at any given time.

From a modern nutritional perspective, the Six Tastes align with each of the major dietary building blocks found in the western view. For example:

- The Sweet Taste foods are rich in fats, proteins, carbohydrates, and water
- The Bitter and Astringent Taste foods are high in vitamins and minerals

Each taste feeds our body, emotions, mind, and spirit in its own unique way.

The body and the brain are always in communication with one another. The brain sends the body signals when it requires energy in the form of food. When we incorporate all Six Tastes into each meal, we ensure that these signals are met. When the signals and requests for energy are met, we can avoid food cravings or the over-consumption of certain foods.

While this may seem initially overwhelming, including the Six Tastes in each meal can be quite simple. For example:

- Add leafy greens to your meal to fulfill the Bitter and Astringent tastes
- Add a dash of black pepper to fulfill the Pungent taste
- Include rice with your meal or a roasted root vegetable to satisfy the Sweet taste
- A dash of mineral salt, or a strip of kombu will easily satisfy the salty taste
- Add a squeeze of lemon or lime to cooked dishes to quickly satisfy the Sour taste

Typically, most meals will be dominant in the sweet taste, followed by reducing quantities of sour and salty, then bitter and astringent, with pungent being represented in the smallest quantity. (See *Six Tastes Pyramid* on page 5)

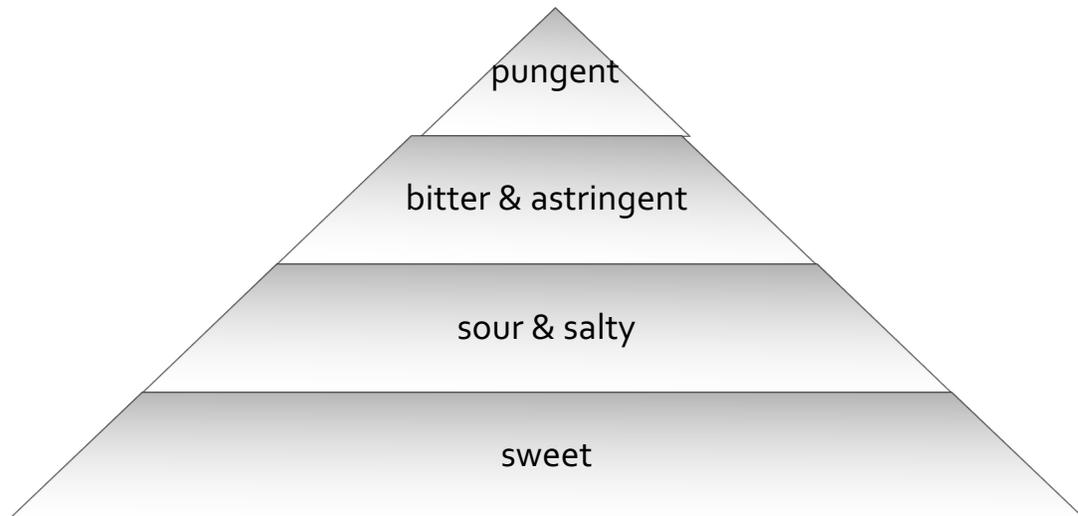
As with all things in Ayurveda, begin with where you are. Notice how you feel. Following the guiding principle of *like increased like*, select foods that embody the opposite qualities of what you are feeling in excess to restore balance. Let how you feel be a guide for which tastes to emphasize and decrease in your diet.

Once you are familiar with the tastes, you can easily incorporate them into any meal and of any type of cuisine. Have fun experimenting with these.

## Examples of The Six Tastes

Sweet	Sour	Salty	Pungent	Bitter	Astringent
Earth & Water <i>Cooling</i>	Earth & Fire <i>Heating</i>	Water & Fire <i>Mildly Heating</i>	Fire & Air <i>Most Heating</i>	Air & Ether <i>Most Cooling</i>	Air & Earth <i>Mildly Cooling</i>
Dates, figs, mangoes, juicy fruits, beets, carrots (cooked), sweet potatoes, root vegetables, all squash, corn, rice, starches, wheat, meat, almonds, cashews, pumpkin seeds, basil, bay leaf, caraway, cardamom, cinnamon, coriander, fennel, nutmeg, saffron, tarragon, vanilla, sugar, milk	Grapefruit, lemon, lime, raisins, tamarind, pickles, tomatoes, dough breads, butter, cheese, sour cream, yogurt, alcohol, vinegar, fermented foods, garlic	Celery, seaweed, kombu, zucchini, bok choy, cottage cheese, tuna, gamasio, soy sauce, tamari, high quality mineral-rich salts such as: Lima Salts, Himalayan Pink Salts, Celtic Sea Salt, Real Salt	Chilies, garlic, leeks, onions, kohlrabi, mustard greens, radishes, turnips, raw spinach, buckwheat, spelt, mustard seeds, basil, black pepper, cardamom, cayenne, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, ginger, hing, paprika, turmeric	Burdock root, leafy greens (kale, collards, beet greens, dandelion greens, nettles), eggplant, Jerusalem artichokes), rose, sesame seeds, cilantro, cumin, dill, fenugreek, saffron, turmeric, aloe vera, liquid chlorophyll	Cranberries, apples, pomegranate, alfalfa sprouts, avocado, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots (raw), cauliflower, chickpeas, green beans, lettuce, parsley, peas, potatoes, most raw vegetables, rye, basil, bay leaf, caraway, chamomile, coriander, dill, fennel, marjoram, nutmeg, oregano, parsley, poppy seeds, rosemary, saffron, turmeric

## Pyramid of The Six Tastes



# THE 6 TASTES

## A GUIDE FOR OPTIMAL NUTRITION AND DIGESTION

Incorporating all 6 tastes in your meals and adjusting the amounts to your personal constitution will help you maintain balanced nutrition and good health, and feel satisfied overall.

V = Vata (wind)  
P = Pitta (bile)  
K = Kapha (mucus)

(+) = increases this quality in body  
(-) = decreases this quality in body

### Sour V- PK+

Cleanses tissues, increases absorption of minerals

Citrus fruits, yogurt, miso, pickles, sauerkraut, kimchi, (fermented foods), tomato, rhubarb, spinach, saffras leaf, mayonnaise

warming

### Pungent V+ PK-

Stimulates digestion & metabolism

Chili peppers, garlic, ginger, onion, cayenne pepper, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, cumin, thyme, sage, turmeric, mustard seeds & greens, radishes, peppercorns, horseradish

### Salty V- PK+

Improves taste, lubricates tissues, stimulates digestion

Dulce, kelp, purslane, spinach, spirulina, stinging nettles, olives, sesame seeds, oysters, natural salts, feta cheese, parmesan cheese, soy sauce, tamari

warming

reducing

building

cooling

cooling

### Astringent V+ PK-

Absorbs water, tightens tissues, dries fats

Most legumes, alfalfa sprouts, aloe, artichoke, asparagus, okra, rhubarb, blackberry, cranberry, pomegranate, persimmon, collard & dandelion greens, spinach, watercress

### Bitter V+ PK-

Detoxifies and lightens tissues

Arugula, chard, collard & dandelion greens, kale, romaine, spirulina, beets, rutabaga, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cucumber, grapefruit, lemon, plum, basil, coriander seed, fenugreek, cumin, curry leaves

### Sweet VP- K+

Builds tissues, calms nerves

Squash, asparagus, fennel stalk, leeks, beets, carrots, garlic, jicama, parsnip, potato, milk, juicy fruits, bananas, melons, rice, quinoa, cinnamon, poppy seed

The outer world becomes our inner physiology through the 6 senses. Taste is the most obvious as your body is fed nutrients to build bodily tissue through food. Our tongue has 6 sections to absorb the 6 tastes. All 6 tastes are needed for optimal digestion. For example, if you leave out bitter, which refines and tightens the tissue, your cells will lack cohesion and tone.

