"I love this book! It's a very nourishing read and the recipes are most enticing."
—Christiane Northrup, MD, author of *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom* and other works

LIFELONG BOOKS

YUAN WANG,
WARREN SHEIR,
and MIKA ONO

ANCIENT WISDOM, MODERN KITCHEN

Recipes from the East for Health, Healing, and Long Life

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饮食保健

PREFACE

THREE PATHS TO THE HEALING POWER OF FOOD

Although we have dramatically different backgrounds, the three authors of this book have all come to embrace the potential of food to promote health and healing. Here are our stories.

YUAN'S STORY

I LEARNED TO COOK from my mother, who came from a large and ancient family in southern China. She was in charge of cooking for the family, and, as the oldest daughter, I would help by peeling the garlic, cleaning the vegetables, and keeping her company while she worked. We enjoyed preparing meals together for the whole family—often dozens of people.

My mother was also a Chinese medical doctor. When I was a teenager I developed skin problems that Western medicine couldn't diagnose. I suffered until I started taking a traditional herbal preparation that completely cleared up the condition. When it was time to pursue my education, my mother told me, "Chinese medicine makes a lot of good sense. You will be able to help people." It was easy to take her advice, because I was fascinated by traditional Chinese medicine and had seen for myself what kind of relief it could bring.

I studied at Chengdu College of Traditional Chinese Medicine for a bachelor's degree, then at the Tianjin Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine for a master's. Mao's Cultural Revolution meant that all high school students were required to spend time in the countryside. For me, this part worked out well, and I spent four years learning about local plants and herbal medicine, which supplemented my textbook and clinical work.

I went on to become a lecturer, researcher, and physician-in-charge for the Departments of Medicine, Kidney Diseases, Digestive Diseases, and the Research Institute of Blood Diseases at the Chengdu Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital. I also participated on research teams investigating stroke, cancer, diabetes, and menstrual disorders. I helped design course curricula and textbooks for the Chengdu College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, was on the editorial board of Great China Encyclopedia Column of Medicine, and published a number of academic articles.

In 1995, I moved to the United States, although I still go back to China to visit my mother (who is still cooking fabulous meals). After teaching at the International Institute of Chinese Medicine in Santa Fe for five years, I moved to San Diego, California, where I now teach at the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine and see patients in my private practice, The Source, in Poway.

Many of my patients suffer from one of the "high three": high blood pressure, high glucose levels, or high cholesterol. These conditions, so widespread in the West, are all related to diet, and eating right can pave the way to better health. One of the questions I hear most frequently in my practice is, "What should I eat?" We have written this book to help answer that question.

WARREN'S STORY

I AM THE CULINARY REBEL IN MY FAMILY (okay, my family calls me a "picky eater," especially given my long-standing intolerance of dairy). As soon as I left for college, I realized the world of food was at my fingertips—I could eat whatever I wanted! When I was a kid, I used to sneak jelly doughnuts from the bakery, a dozen at a time, when my mother wasn't looking. But in college I found something much better—macrobiotics, an approach toward food developed by Japanese educator George Ohsawa (1893–1966).

I became fascinated by the connection between heath and diet. To me, it made complete sense that what you put in your body would affect how you felt. I took workshops from macrobiotic leaders Michio Kushi, Herman Aihara, and Noburo Muramoto, who spoke on the benefits of a traditional Japanese diet of whole grains, seaweed, and vegetables, as well as the medicinal effects of various foods. My commitment to whole foods and fresh produce was enhanced by my involvement in the very early days of Eden Foods (back when it was just two rooms upstairs from a bicycle shop) and my work in a number of high-end restaurants, including that of renowned chef Rick Bayless, whose artistry and respect for fresh ingredients has remained an inspiration.

During those many years as a "starving" student at the Cleveland Institute of Music/Case Western Reserve University, then as a "starving" musician, I ate extraordinarily well! I found that contrary to common opinion (and the insinuations of ads for packaged foods) it is not expensive or time consuming to eat fresh, healthy food. Over the years, I have come to apply macrobiotics much less strictly, but still embrace its principles of a largely plant-based and whole-grain diet. I don't think it's any accident that the Japanese have one of the longest life spans in the world, and I worry about the effects on health of the unprecedented consumption of refined and processed foods in the West.

As a student and then faculty member at the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine in San Diego, I gained a Chinese perspective on food and healing, including the theoretical constructs behind Chinese medicine (also influential in other parts of Asia) and a broader knowledge of medicinal herbs and their applications.

I still eat better than almost anyone I know. The recipes in this book are some of my favorites, drawing on the Chinese tradition of healing herbs, a Japanese aesthetic of simplicity, and an American sense of convenience, practicality, and fun. Bon appétit!

MIKA'S STORY

IT TOOK SOME THIRTY-FIVE YEARS for the world to catch up with my father. In 1970, he moved the family from a gray suburb to a semirural area outside of Toronto, Canada (Laskey Village, between King City and Nobleton, for those who know that part of the world), where he set up a garden—not just any garden but a front fence to back fence ¾-acre plot with different varieties of tomatoes, beans, pumpkin, squash, lettuce, chard, potatoes, corn, strawberries, dill, mint, basil, mizuna, burdock, and whatever caught his fancy in the seed catalog.

Every spring, when he wasn't teaching or working in his vision research lab at York University or on sabbatical in Japan, he would rototill, plant, compost, and weed, and the garden would return the favor by producing its bounty—a little different every year depending on what my father had been inspired to plant, the weather, and who had the upper hand for the moment in the long-running battle between ingenious squirrels and ingenious gardeners. We kept Rhode Island Red hens, which would loudly proclaim their accomplishment to the world every time they laid another fresh, brown egg, and a pony would sometimes help "mow" the lawn. My mother was very much part of this scene as well, cooking, freezing, and pickling the harvest, and embracing the virtues of organic whole foods at a time when the idea was considered controversial.

Of course, as a kid with fresh produce and whole foods flowing into the family kitchen, I took them completely for granted and the big city seemed more appealing. There was little in the general culture to convince me otherwise.

But the tide has now turned, and, in this age that has become ever more dominated by processed foods and supermarkets, a connection to the earth and to fresh produce has become a rarity. Some young people are taking up natural food production as a cause and a number of popular books are exploring just how far we have drifted from our food sources, the negative effects of this divide on our body and our planet, and what we should do to remedy this condition.

Here, the Asian tradition has something to say. Because balance in our body and with the seasons has been a central tenet of Asian thought for millennia, I believe this is a fruitful direction to look for transplants to grow a more wholesome, healthful, and fulfilling Western lifestyle. Yoga, meditation, and acupuncture have already become commonplace in the West. The kitchen is the next frontier.

医食同源

INTRODUCTION:
DELICIOUS RECIPES, HEALTHY LIFE

EASTERN TRADITIONS are now part of the Western lifestyle. We go to yoga classes after work to relax, use feng shui to create a welcoming space in our living room, and consult an acupuncturist to relieve our lingering shoulder pain. Yet parts of the Eastern tradition are still to be discovered in the West. One of these is the potential of Chinese herbs and other natural foods to promote health and longevity through everyday cooking.

The recipes in this book are simple and easy to prepare. They comprise healthy East Asian dishes such as egg-drop herbal soup—still largely unknown in the West, but begging to cross the cultural divide—as well as recipes that might seem familiar, but that have an unexpected twist, such as oatmeal with walnuts and goji berries or chicken soup with ginseng. Drawing on family recipes, years of study of traditional Chinese medicine at institutions in China and in the United States, and experience in treating patients in a traditional Chinese medical clinic, we want to put healthy recipes at your fingertips to enhance your life, promote a sense of well-being, and increase your longevity.

ADD EAST AND WEST, STIR VIGOROUSLY

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, the Chinese have been seeking the secret to health and healing. Unlike in the West, traditional Chinese medicine makes no clear distinction between food and medicine. As the Chinese say, food and medicine are from same source (*yi shi tong yuan*). Respect for the healing properties of food is woven into the fabric of everyday cuisine. Although some herbs are particularly potent and used only for severe illnesses, many herbs and other beneficial ingredients are as common in Chinese cuisine as ketchup and mustard are in America.

The West has its own home remedies. We prepare chicken soup when we have a stuffy nose,

reach for a drink of ginger ale to sooth an upset stomach, warm up milk to lull us back to sleep in the middle of the night, and tell our children to eat their vegetables "because they are good for you." We marvel when the latest scientific study comes out supporting these remedies, and, in the meantime, savor these foods and beverages through sickness and health.

Recently, the idea of selecting foods for their specific healthful properties has become even more popular in the West, as "superfoods" or "functional foods"—which offer benefits beyond basic nutrition—have caught on. Already gracing the aisles of natural food stores are goji berries, soy products, and green tea—all part of the East Asian healing and culinary traditions.

Traditional Chinese medicine celebrates the relationship between food and health. Instead of a few simple home remedies, the tradition offers a highly developed system of using the intrinsic properties of different herbs and foods to maximize each individual's well-being in a changing environment, enhancing the body's own natural powers for health, healing, and rejuvenation. In this tradition, too, science is lending support to ancient notions of the healing properties of many traditional Chinese ingredients—cinnamon, curcumin, and ginger, to name only a few.

In China, a respect for the power of food seems to be everywhere. Whole restaurants—perhaps analogous to American juice bars or establishments offering California cuisine—specialize in preparing dishes for their healing properties. In one such restaurant in Sichuan Province, for example, big jars of herbs line the entranceway, while families of young and old alike gather around tables, ordering favorite dishes to heal their ills and enhance their well-being. In Japan, this tradition of cooking with healing foods and herbs is called *yakuzen*.

For specific ailments and more serious conditions, the system of traditional medicine is widespread and well accepted in many parts of Asia. Thousands of practitioners each year, mostly in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan, but now also in the United States, Canada, Europe, and other parts of the world, train in the use of herbs and acupuncture—the two major instruments in Chinese medicine's toolbox—in large schools of traditional medicine, research institutes, and teaching hospitals. Currently, some fifty schools of traditional Chinese medicine have been accredited or are in the process of accreditation in the United States and Canada.

In China, clinics specializing in traditional medicine coexist side-by-side with Western-style clinics, sometimes even in different wings of the same hospital. Patients feel free to take advantage of both traditions; for example, someone with cancer might undergo chemotherapy but also use traditional herbs to help manage side effects, such as nausea, and to increase the body's immunity to fight off disease.

Similarly, this book embraces a holistic approach in which a perspective from the East works hand-in-hand with Western medicine. Both traditions have much to learn from each other. Whereas Western medicine tends to treat the body like a machine, Eastern medicine approaches it more as a garden, to be tended rather than engineered. Eastern medicine shines in disease prevention; Western medicine's strengths lie in acute care. We believe that the best Chinese medicine is practiced with an awareness of what is going on

in Western medicine. Similarly, the best Western medicine draws on a more Eastern respect for the importance of prevention, the body's own healing powers, and the complexity of individuals acting in their environment.

None of the recipes in this book are intended as a substitute for consulting with a physician. Instead, this book offers a window into a different tradition of health and healing to support your efforts to remain vital and well.

BALANCE—THE MISSING INGREDIENT

WHAT UNDERLIES THE EAST ASIAN approach to herbal cooking?

Balance and interrelatedness rule. In this tradition, herbal healing and cooking seek to bring balance to our meals, and thus to our body and mind.

And in the West? Unfortunately, balance is often the first casualty in the single-minded pursuit of another goal, usually weight loss. Who hasn't tried the grapefruit diet, the cabbage soup diet, the carb-free diet, the fat-free diet, or another such diet that includes restrictions from entire food groups? Yes, you will probably lose weight (at least temporarily) if you eat nothing but grapefruit. But will you be healthier? Extend your life span? Increase your sense of well-being? Or in the end, will you simply shudder at the thought of facing another darned citrus?

Vitamins and other supplements are another popular form of "insurance" in the West for those concerned with health, and, depending on circumstances, these may have something to offer. However, it's easy to get lulled into a false sense of security. Taking a handful of supplements every morning doesn't mean you are getting what you need in the form your body needs it. You still face the challenge of eating well.

The East Asian tradition offers another way—one based on whole foods and herbs, in rich variety. All foods, flavors, colors, and temperatures have their time and place on the table. No single ingredient is vilified, nor consumed to excess. The key is that the pieces work together as part of a whole.

In addition, foods can bring the individual in harmony with natural cycles and other parts of the environment, as the act of eating is in itself a regular and profound interaction with one's surroundings. Certain seasonal dishes can bring a person in line with the time of year. Particular foods are thought to counteract an individual's own personal tendency toward, say, lethargy or restlessness. Different dishes are recommended for different phases of a woman's monthly cycle. And our best choices change as we age. The East Asian view of the body as an ever-changing ecosystem goes hand-in-hand with a dynamic approach to food and health.

DEEP ROOTS, FLOWERING BRANCHES

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE IS based on a coherent system of thought refined by critical thinking and clinical observation throughout the millennia, from contributions by Taoist hermits seeking the ultimate goal of immortality to modern-day scientists illuminating the effects of herbal substances. Traditional Chinese medicine originated in China, as the name would suggest, then spread through East Asia to countries that

include Korean, Japan, and Vietnam, where it not only influenced the approach to food and medicine in these regions, but was also enriched by local ingredients, preferences, and culture.

In the earliest times, in Asia (like most of the world) people believed that disease was caused by evil spirits or angry ancestors. However, like Hippocrates of ancient Greece, who rejected the idea that supernatural forces caused illness, early Chinese scholars began to consider the revolutionary idea that health and sickness could be explained by natural laws and observable phenomena.

By the time of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE) and the Three Kingdoms Period (220–280 CE), scholars were contributing important classics to the field of traditional Chinese medicine. These works include the *Divine Farmer's Materia Medica* (*Shen Nong Ben Cao*), which describes more than 365 medical substances, one for each day of the year, as well as the *Treatise on Cold Diseases* (*Shang Han Lun*), the first major prescription manual, and *The Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* (*Jin Gui Yao Lue*), both written by Zhang Zhong Jing. *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (*Huang Di Nei Jing*) laid out the philosophical foundations of traditional Chinese medicine. In later centuries, other key contributors, such as Sun Si Miao and Li Shi Zhen, followed.

The philosophy of Chinese medicine spread to neighboring Korea and Japan in the sixth and seventh centuries, as government envoys exchanged medicine as well as diplomacy. By 702 CE, the Japanese government was so taken with the Chinese approach, it issued an imperial order to copy the Tang Dynasty's medical educational system. Later, the Japanese standardized and simplified Chinese herbal therapies into a system known as *kampo* (occasionally *kanpo*; literally "Han (Chinese) people prescription"), which is currently integrated into the Japanese national health-care system. Chinese medical thought also had great influence on the area now known as Vietnam, and traditional medicine in that region (dubbed "Dong Y" in the seventeenth century to distinguish it from Western medicine) coevolved with and contributed to Chinese practice.

China's exchange with surrounding regions was a two-way street. Many herbs in the Chinese herbal medicine cabinet can be traced to an origin outside the country, and the famed Silk Road brought fruits, vegetables, spices, and herbs to China—and to Chinese medicine—that are now an integral part of this tradition.

Today, throughout East Asia, herbal medicine accounts for more than one billion clinical visits a year, according to Tufts University School of Medicine's Evidence-Based Approach to Complementary and Alternative Medicine group, overshadowing other traditional approaches such as acupuncture and massage. Out of some ten thousand herbs officially described and classified, a few hundred have become first-line therapies, usually prescribed in specific combinations thought to create unique therapeutic effects.

Food therapy is often used to support herbal treatments, and to continue the treatment after the course of herbal therapy is done. Foods and dishes targeting a specific problem are often eaten regularly for a few days or a few weeks to support the body's healing process, then included in the diet occasionally to prevent future recurrences.

While herbal medical practice has been more or less standardized within some regions, therapeutic foods are another matter. Partly be-

cause East Asia—and China itself—covers such a vast area, healing dishes are influenced by local variation, family tradition, the availability of ingredients, and the whims of the cook. Nevertheless, this general approach expresses the principles of traditional East Asian medicine and a consistent underlying approach toward food.

CHINESE MEDICINE IN A NUTSHELL

THE BIG PICTURE of what East Asian herbal medicine has to offer us today is easy to grasp—a rich tradition of healing and clinical observation, a variety of herbs and foods, a philosophy of balance, an emphasis on context, and a respect for individual differences. While Eastern and Western systems both look for natural phenomena to explain illness, Western medicine today relies heavily on microscopic observations and biochemistry, whereas East Asian medicine depends on an approach based on context and examination of the patient as a whole.

Westerners who are curious about the particulars of an East Asian approach should get ready for a mind-opening experience. Some central concepts of Chinese medicine make sense according to our worldview, but others challenge us to see the world from a completely fresh perspective. In many ways, entering the world of traditional Chinese medicine is like learning a foreign language. When you learn a language, say, French, you also learn a whole new way of thinking. You may encounter phrases that are difficult to translate literally, such as "*Zut alors!*" or "*Vive la difference*." The same is true for the language of traditional Chinese medicine.

To learn to "speak" traditional Chinese medicine, it helps to know a few central concepts. These include: yin and yang, vital substances, the five elements, and the six evils. Sound intriguing?

Yin and Yang: Dynamic Harmony

You'll probably recognize the symbol of yin and yang, now commonplace in the West. The differing areas of the circle underline the importance of seeing parts in relation to the whole, and express the dynamic ebb and flow between complementary opposites. Keep in mind that yin and yang do not express a simple duality—instead, both yin and yang are rooted in each other and contain a piece of each other; there is no up without down, no man without woman, no back without front. A reference to yin and yang is found in the *I Ching* (*Book of Changes*) as early as 700 BCE.

Yin and yang reflect the natural world, as in the interplay between high tide and low tide or day and night. Yin—whose character originally meant the shady side of the slope—is associated with cold, interior, moisture, density, stillness, downward movement, and substance. Yang—whose character originally meant the sunny side of a slope—relates to heat, exterior, dryness, movement, upward motion, and function.

In Chinese medicine, yin and yang offer one of the most important touchstones for understanding health and disease. Health and well-being flourish when yin and yang are in balance. But if there's too much yin in the body, a person will come down with an illness that involves weakness, slowness, coldness, or lethargy. If there's too much yang, an individual is susceptible to illnesses expressed with quick, forceful movement, heat, or hyperactivity. Chinese medicine advises that an excess of yin should be countered with more yang,

and vice versa. Also, a deficiency of yin should be addressed by supplementing yin; a deficiency of yang should be addressed by supplementing yang.

In this tradition, one way to restore balance to the body is through diet. So, if you feel weak, yang dishes (such as Longevity Mushrooms with *He Shou Wu*) may be therapeutic; if you are tense or hyperactive, yin dishes (such as Breathe-Easy Fritillaria Pear) may help. The proper balance of yin and yang promotes and restores health, helping your body ward off disease.

Vital Substances: Wellsprings of Health

According to traditional Chinese medicine, several "vital substances"—qi, Blood, *jing*, and body fluid—are also wellsprings of health.

Qi (pronounced "chee") is another ancient and central concept in Chinese philosophy. While difficult to translate, qi can be understood as the life force or energy flowing through all things, the basic substance of the universe. Its ideograph can mean "vapor," "steam," or "uncooked rice"—tying this idea back to food, a major source of qi. Qi circulates in channels called meridians on the body's surface, as well as in pathways inside the body. According to the Chinese worldview, illnesses take hold when the flow of qi is disturbed, unbalanced, or blocked. To restore health, Chinese medical practitioners seek to free and realign the flow of qi, with acupuncture or with herbs and food.

Blood, which is propelled by qi, is also vital, circulating through the body to nourish organs, skin, muscles, tendons, and bones, as well as to support memory and mental activities. In the Chinese tradition, much importance is placed on replenishing Blood lost due to injury, menses, or childbirth. This is accomplished with appropriate food and herbs. Proper flow of Blood is also important.

Jing, or essence, refers to a refined and precious substance that forms the organic basis for all life. *Jing* influences our constitution, reproduction, growth, and development—and our longevity. *Jing* comes in (at least) two forms, prenatal *jing* and postnatal *jing*. Traditional Chinese medical practitioners advise you to conserve your prenatal *jing* as much as possible, as everyone is endowed with a fixed amount. You can use yours judiciously by approaching life's activities—including diet, work, and sexual activity—with balance and moderation to prolong your mental and physical health. Postnatal *jing* can be enhanced by eating the proper diet.

Last (and, in fact, probably least on the hierarchy of importance according to Chinese medicine) is a substance roughly translated as body fluid, which includes saliva, gastric fluid, joint cavity fluid, tears, sweat, urine, and so on. Derived from food and drink, body fluid serves to warm and nourish the muscles, moisten the skin, lubricate the joints, moisten the orifices, and surround the brain. One type of disharmony of the fluids is expressed by dryness of the skin and eyes.

Chinese medical practitioners will look to certain foods and herbs to help enhance and direct these vital substances, according to the needs of each individual. Dishes such as Classic Chinese Ginseng-Chicken Soup or Fish Dish for Vigor can help strengthen qi. Dishes such as Five-Spice Powder Chicken or Wasabi Fish Cooked in Sake will move the qi, countering qi stagnation. Other foods and herbs are considered especially effective for

nourishing or moving the Blood, for example those in Triple-Mushroom Mélange and Steadying Spinach Egg Drop Soup, respectively. If body fluids are depleted, preparations such as Five-Fruit Dessert Potage, Simple Peach Kanten, or watermelon juice can help.

The Five Organs: The Dance of Life

To help understand the body, traditional Chinese medical practitioners draw on a view of dynamic, interrelated systems that reflect other relationships found in nature. In the natural world, Chinese philosophers identified five elements (also known as "five phases")—wood, fire, earth, metal, and water—which support or restrain each other in continuous patterns.

As in the game of Rock-Paper-Scissors, each element has its strengths and weaknesses in relation to other elements. Water can put out Fire; Fire melts Metal; Metal (as in a saw) can cut Wood; Wood (as in a shovel) can overcome Earth; and Earth (as in a dam) can divert Water. Or, expressed in a different sequence, Water nurtures Wood (as in trees); Wood can be used to make Fire; Fire generates Earth (ashes); Earth brings forth Metal; and Metal, when heated, produces Water (steam). Many other aspects of the world are explained with similar dynamics, including the five tastes (sour, bitter, sweet, spicy, and salty), the five colors (blue-green, red, yellow, white, and black), and the five emotions (anger, joy, worry, grief, and fear).

In the body, five "organs"—the Liver, Heart, Spleen, Lung, and Kidney—also coexist and provide support or restraint for each other's functions. Even though similar words are used in Western medicine, keep in mind that in Chinese medicine these terms refer less to the physical organs themselves, and more to the nature they embody and their influence on the system as a whole. Here are some of the contributions of each organ:

CHART: THE IMPORTANCE OF FIVE

- THE LIVER ensures the smooth flow of qi throughout the body, controls and nourishes the tendons and ligaments, and stores and regulates the Blood. Symptoms such as muscle spasms, dry eyes, and blurry vision are associated with problems with the Liver.
- THE HEART governs the Blood and blood vessels, as well as the consciousness and spirit. Symptoms such as insomnia and dream-disturbed sleep as well as palpitations and poor circulation are associated with problems with the Heart.
- THE SPLEEN oversees digestion, controls the muscles and limbs, and houses the intellect. Symptoms such as lack of appetite, obesity, weakness, and fatigue are associated with dysfunction of the Spleen.
- THE LUNGS govern qi, control respiration, direct the passage of water, and relate to the hair, skin, and pores. Symptoms such as cough, nasal congestion, a hoarse voice, sweating irregularities, and skin rashes are associated with problems with the Lungs.
- THE KIDNEYS store essence, govern human reproduction, growth, and development, control water metabolism, and produce bone marrow. Symptoms such as brittle bones, poor hearing, urinary problems, and premature aging are associated with malfunctions of the Kidneys.

When these systems work well individually and are in balance with one another, health and vitality flourish.

In Chinese medicine, the five elements and their relationships can help guide food choices for your health and well-being. The tastes, colors, and properties of foods and herbs can support their counterparts in the body. For example, in the Wood sphere, leafy green vegetables can support the influence of the Liver, and its domain of the eyes, tendons, and ligaments. In the Metal sphere, foods such as pears can support and soothe the functions of the Lungs. In the Fire domain, meat and other foods can strengthen the Heart and enhance its influence in the body. In the Earth domain, foods such as buckwheat can support the Spleen and its functions regulating energy. And in the Water sphere, foods such as seaweed can influence the Kidneys and their connections to the bladder, bones, and ears, and to longevity.

The Six Evils: Trouble at Your Door

No, the six evils aren't your relatives from New Jersey (at least not in this book). In Chinese medicine, the six evils, also sometimes translated as the "six pernicious influences" or the "six pathogenic factors," are environmental forces that can spring from inside or outside the body to play a part in disease. If your body is weakened by imbalance, you become susceptible to the harmful effects of one of these influences.

The six evils are:

- WIND. Analogous to wind in nature, the concept of Wind in Chinese medicine embodies movement and change. Diseases caused by Wind often have migratory symptoms, sudden onset, and rapid progression, or other features associated with movement such as spasms, tremors, twitching, or dizziness. These diseases tend to affect the upper and outer parts of the body. Wind, prominent in the spring but appear-

ing in any season, is the one evil that rarely appears by itself. Instead, it promotes the invasion of the body by one of the other influences.

- **COLD.** Like cold in nature, Cold in Chinese medicine is associated with contraction, obstruction, slower movement, and underactivity. An individual influenced by Cold will feel cold and will typically seek warmth with sweaters or blankets. To the observer, this person's body may appear pale and feel cold to the touch. Cold, which often appears in the winter but is not limited to this season, is associated with symptoms such as chills, headache, and body aches. Cold can lead to pain, which tends to be sharp or cramping.
- **HEAT.** Most closely associated with summer, Heat (also known as Fire) can take hold and produce symptoms such as high fever, a red face, red eyes, thirst, dark urine, inflammation, and reddish eruptions of the skin. Heat is often associated with problems of the upper body, such as headaches. Like Wind, Heat causes movement, but Heat's movement has a sudden and abrupt quality, associated with states like delirium and irritability.
- **DAMPNESS.** Like damp weather and sometimes associated with it, in Chinese medicine Damp is heavy, wet, and turbid. Diseases caused by Damp tend to linger and be difficult to cure. Like Cold, Dampness can cause pain, but Damp pain is heavy and protracted, rather than sharp and cramping. Damp is associated with sticky secretions and tends to attack lower portions of the body. Damp disorders can include water retention (edema), especially in the legs or abdomen, as well as indigestion and diarrhea.
- **DRYNESS.** Sometimes appearing with Heat or Cold, dryness is associated with dehydration and scant body fluids. Its symptoms can include dry nostrils, lips, and skin. Dryness can affect the Lung, for example as a dry cough, asthma, or chest pain.
- **SUMMER HEAT.** Summer Heat occurs only in summer with exposure to extreme heat. Its symptoms may include sudden high fever, heavy sweating, exhaustion, dry mouth, and thirst.

How can you ward off these evils? Food and herbs provide some help.

Promote Healing, Avoid Harm

In contrast to Western medicine, which tends to view food through the lens of protein, fat, carbohydrate, and vitamin content, traditional Chinese medicine looks at food according to properties that include temperature, taste, and function. These qualities can help guide the selection of the best foods and herbs to eat depending on your condition, your constitution, and your environment, as well as which are best to avoid.

Temperature is front and center. This includes both the physical temperature of the food (piping hot or ice cold) and the thermal effects on the body (increasing metabolism until you break a sweat or cooling until you feel the tingle of chills). On the warmer end of the spectrum are foods and herbs such as ginger, chili peppers, cinnamon, turmeric, nutmeg, green onions, and walnuts. On the cooler end of the spectrum are foods

and herbs such as peppermint, citrus, tofu, milk, lettuce, celery, cucumber, and tomato. (While across East Asia there is general agreement on the temperature classification of most ingredients, there also can be regional differences. For example, peach is sometimes classified as cool and sometimes as warm.) Cooking methods can influence the nature of the end product. Blanching, steaming, pickling, and boiling have a cooling influence, whereas grilling, frying, roasting, smoking, searing, simmering, and cooking with alcohol make a dish more warm.

Hot and warm foods dispel Cold, warm the interior, and fortify yang. Cold and cool foods clear Heat, relieve toxicity, and enrich yin. Neutral foods moderate the effects of either. To restore balance, someone experiencing an attack of Cold would want to choose warm and warming dishes, such as a steaming bowl of chicken ginger soup, and avoid foods that generate more Cold, such as chilled lettuce, ice water, and frozen desserts. Likewise, someone experiencing too much Heat would want to restore balance by choosing cooling foods, such as a cucumber salad, and by avoiding those that are warming.

An individual's constitution can also guide food choices in this regard. Some people tend to run warm, rarely needing a sweater and generally feeling energetic and active. These individuals benefit by gravitating toward cooler foods to balance these characteristics (and avoiding overconsumption of warmer foods so as not to exacerbate any imbalance). People with a cool constitution, who tend to feel cold and have a propensity toward fatigue, benefit from selecting more warming foods and avoiding meals with too many foods that are cooling.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, another important feature of a food or herb is taste, which can include sour, bitter, sweet, spicy, salty, bland, and/or fragrant. Each taste is linked to a general type of therapeutic effect:

- SOUR, which is associated with the Liver, tends to constrict and consolidate. Sour foods and herbs are used to counteract symptoms such as diarrhea and excessive sweating. Too many sour foods should be avoided, however, in cases when there is already too much contraction, such as when there is cold weather or a person is suffering from arthritis. The astringent taste acts similarly to the sour taste.
- BITTER, which is associated with the Heart, tend to improve appetite, move qi downward, and dry Dampness. Bitter foods are used to treat fever, constipation, and some types of cough, as well as addressing conditions such as arthritis. Too many bitter foods, however, are thought to cause diarrhea and to damage fluids.
- SWEET, which is associated with the Spleen, strengthens, improves, moistens, and harmonizes many systems of the body. Some sweet foods are used to address conditions involving weakness, dry cough, and thirst. Too many sweet foods, however, can cause conditions such as fatigue, recurrent bronchitis,
and obesity.
- SPICY/PUNGENT, which is associated with the Lung, tends to disperse and circulate qi and invigorate Blood. Some spicy foods and herbs are used to treat a type of common

cold. Too many spicy foods, however, can cause skin problems, restlessness, and sleep disorders.

- SALTY, which is associated with the Kidneys, tends to soften firm masses. Some salty foods are used to address cysts, inflammatory masses, or connective tissue accumulation. Too many salty foods, however, damage fluids, muscles, and the vascular system.
- BLAND can play a role in regulating fluids. Bland foods may be used to help counteract swelling and puffiness.
- FRAGRANT can revive the Spleen and transform Dampness, so fragrant foods are used to help with digestive problems. Too many fragrant foods, however, can have a drying effect.

Foods and herbs are also known for additional functions, for example, acting on certain parts of the body (Upper, Lower, Interior, Outer Surface), and promoting certain types of movement (Ascending, Descending, Floating, and Sinking).

Meals for All Seasons

In East Asia, much attention is placed on eating according to the season, to help bring the body into harmony with the environment. Of course, all seasons call for a balanced diet. In China, a balanced diet is thought to consist of *fan*—the more fundamental, main, or primary food, necessary to any meal such as rice, wheat, or other grain—and *cai*—meats, fruits, and vegetables that make the meal more tasty and balanced. In general, though, the East Asian approach suggests that people can optimize health with meals that support yang in the spring, clear Heat and generate body fluids in the summer, nourish yin in the autumn, and warm the body in the winter. In the spring and summer, yang rises to the surface of the body and needs to be replenished. In the fall and winter, cold, dry weather provides extra challenges for the body to stay warm and moist.

In the spring, a season of birth and new growth, people want to support the natural tendencies of their bodies by strengthening the Liver and its regulation of qi, as well as fortifying against external attacks of Wind, common in the spring, which can lead to irritability, insomnia, headaches, and dizziness. Good spring foods include onions, leeks, Chinese yam, wheat, cilantro, mushrooms, sprouts, and spinach and other leafy green vegetables.

In the summer, a season in which qi and Blood tend to be vigorous throughout the body and external Heat can be a problem leading to diarrhea and sunstroke, food can support the Heart and help cool and moisten the body. Foods with sour and salty flavors can help to ease irritability and insomnia from excess sweating. Fruits and vegetables help provide sufficient fluids and promote digestion. Other summer foods that help keep the body cool and balanced include watermelon, tomatoes, mung beans, cucumber, lotus root, coix, bean sprouts, and ocean fish.

In the late summer or in hot and rainy areas, Dampness can also be a problem that leads to gastrointestinal disorders, skin problems, and joint pain, and you can help your body stay healthy by eating more bland foods that help regulate fluid balance, such as coix, soy milk, and pine

nut porridge. Some soups, such as mung bean seaweed soup, are thought to be especially good at counteracting Summer Heat.

In the fall, the body turns inward to prepare for winter and Dryness often dominates in the environment, which can prompt a dry cough, dry eyes, and dry skin. You can support your body by supplementing the Lung and promoting the production of body fluids with foods such as lily bulb, white wood ear, pear, pumpkin, nuts and seeds, honey, and soy milk. Sour foods, such as apple and lemon, can also be helpful in preventing the loss of body fluids.

In the winter, the body slows down and Cold appears in the environment, which can result in fatigue and sexual dysfunction. You can help build strength and counteract Cold by adding foods in moderation that support the Kidney and warm the body. Good winter foods include lamb, beef, Chinese yam, sesame, chestnuts, mushrooms, leeks, and nuts.

A Tale of Two Medicines

Let's take a look at how Chinese and Western medicine would provide different perspectives on a single patient.

Tammy, who lives in Malibu, California, and loves the outdoors, decides one fall day that she will drive out to the desert for some camping and mountain biking. For a while, she enjoys the wide-open spaces and the broad horizon, but she notices that the hot, dry Santa Ana winds are picking up from the East. The next morning, Tammy comes down with a fever and chills, then soon after, a dry cough. A few days later, she feels better and goes back to work, but the dry cough lingers for weeks.

A Western medical perspective would tell us that Tammy came down with the pesky common cold, caused by a virus. Since antibiotics won't kill viruses, Tammy might be encouraged to reach for some over-the-counter cough syrup as well as some aspirin or Tylenol to control her fever. Typically, a doctor would recommend drinking lots of fluids and getting some rest. As for the lingering cough, the doctor would assure Tammy that it was just a matter of time before she managed to shake it.

A Chinese medical perspective would give us a different story. Because of internal imbalance, Tammy was susceptible to an attack of external Warm-Dryness, which she encountered in the desert. Her fever and chills reflect her body's reaction to these external evils, and the cough resulted from the Warm Dry pathogen depleting the yin fluids of her Lung. A Chinese medical practitioner would initially prescribe a cool, moistening herbal beverage made from mulberry leaf, apricot kernel, and other herbs. After the fever and chills subside, the practitioner would recommend replenishing the yin fluids of the Lung with foods such as pear and herbs such as fritillaria.

And Tammy might be interested in taking advantage of both points of view, using aspirin for the fever and chills, then addressing the lingering cough by adding ripe pears to her diet.

If you are interested in learning more about the many intricacies of Chinese medicine and philosophy, you may want to look to the bibliography in the back of this book for additional sources, as here we only skim the surface of this deep art. In the United States and Canada today, graduate schools in Chinese medicine typically require four rigorous years of study. Luckily, producing excellent and healthy results in the kitchen

isn't nearly so hard! And we've provided tips at the bottom of each recipe about each dish's special qualities according to Chinese medicine, so you don't have to study for that degree unless you really want to.

What About Science?

The modern scientific method is a wonderful thing and has led to new insights into some elements of traditional Chinese medicine.

Chinese wormwood (*Artemisia annua* or *qing hao*), for example, has been used by Chinese medical practitioners for more than a thousand years as a treatment for fever and certain skin conditions. In 1971, scientists found that extracts from the leaves had antimalarial activity in primate models. In 1972, Chinese scientist Tu Youyou isolated the active ingredient, artemisinin, and described its chemical structure. Artemisinin was fashioned into a therapy known as ACT (artemisinin-based combination therapy), which the World Health Organization currently recommends as the antimalarial treatment of choice in areas where multi–drug resistant strains of an organism *Plasmodium falciparum* that causes malaria, are common. Artemisinin is also under investigation as an anticancer agent.

Although not all results will be as positive, the panoply of herbs used in Chinese medicine contain a rich source of potential discoveries for the future. Remember, many drugs in our medicine cabinet today originally came from natural sources—aspirin originated from the bark of a willow tree, penicillin was discovered by accident from a mold growing in a petri dish, and the expectorant guaifenesin (a key ingredient in cough syrup) was derived from the guaiac tree.

The scientific method has provided evidence that other herbs used in traditional Chinese medicine offer promise. The U.S. National Institutes of Health's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) assesses and comments on a number of these, including:

- ASIAN GINSENG, which "may lower blood glucose" and provide "possible beneficial effects on immune function"
- ASTRAGALUS, for which preliminary studies suggest "may benefit heart function and help the immune system fight infections"
- GARLIC, which "may slow the development of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries)"
- GINGER, which "can safely relieve pregnancy-related nausea and vomiting"
- GINKGO LEAF, which has yielded "some promising results" in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, tinnitus, and other conditions
- GREEN TEA, which has produced laboratory studies suggesting it "may help protect against or slow the growth of certain cancers"
- LICORICE ROOT, which "might reduce complications from hepatitis C in some patients"
- PEPPERMINT OIL, which "may improve symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome"
- SOY, which with daily intake "may slightly lower levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol" and which some studies suggest "may reduce hot flashes in women after menopause"
- TURMERIC, which preliminary findings from animal and laboratory studies suggest contains a chemical—called curcumin that "may have anti-inflammatory and anticancer properties."

As NCCAM points out, in most cases more research is needed to establish a scientific consensus. At the same time, funding for such studies is tight and variables in the diet are notoriously difficult to control. Many studies have offered suggestive rather than conclusive evidence, for example, showing effectiveness of a compound in the test tube or in animal models without extensive and expensive human trials. But even human trials have their limitations.

With interrelated factors of genetics, behavior, and society, it is difficult to tease apart the contribution of one dietary element on a complex condition such as heart disease, diabetes, or cancer. The phytochemicals plants have to offer vary according to season, variety, and growing conditions. An heirloom plant grown in rich soil and picked in the late summer won't be the same as a plant variety bred for mass production harvested from poor soil in the spring. That's not to mention what happens to the produce after harvest—a strawberry eaten fresh simply is not the same as one consumed after being shipped across the country, then sitting a few days in a supermarket aisle.

In addition, in traditional Chinese medicine, herbs are rarely recommended in isolation. Instead, they are prescribed as part of herbal formulas, sometimes with as many as a dozen or more herbs. This type of polypharmacy, although sometimes studied in China, has rarely been tackled by investigators in the West. To complicate matters further, a central tenet in Chinese medicine is to tailor herbal formulas according to each individual's age, constitution, and symptoms. Only a few studies have tried to evaluate Chinese herbalism as practiced with this kind of rich variety.

It's worth noting, though, that a provocative November 2007 study in the American Chemical Society's *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling* has lent support to the idea that East Asian herbalism has a chemical basis. Analyzing a database of chemical compounds, the study found that herbs in categories of traditional Chinese medicine (say, to strengthen qi, drain Dampness, or eliminate Wind Heat) do in fact demonstrate distinct patterns of association based on their chemistry. The authors also suggest how each of the categories might be translated into the language of Western medicine—herbs that strengthen qi, for example, are comparable with modern endocrine agents and immunostimulants. A number of ongoing projects, including a fifteen-year Chinese effort dubbed the Herbalome Project, aim to build bridges between biochemistry and traditional East Asian herbalism.

But it's easy to get lost among the myriad details. Keep in mind the most powerful and consistent message that the body of Western scientific evidence has to offer about diet—you increase your chances for a long life by eating a diet rich in a variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, limiting your consumption of saturated fats, and avoiding junk food (and don't forget to exercise). We embrace this message wholeheartedly and find it marvelously compatible with East Asian kitchen therapy and the recipes in this book.

Keeping this big picture in mind, we encourage you to try the tasty dishes we offer, using your common sense, best instincts, and personal observations about your own health and well being as your guide.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

IN THIS BOOK, we present recipes from China, Japan, and Korea that use healthful ingredients from the East Asian tradition. We have tried to bring a delicious sampling of dishes to your table, selecting recipes that represent the East Asian approach, while recognizing that not all traditions easily cross the cultural divide (we are happy to offer recipes that call for tofu, lotus root, or ginseng, for example, but have avoided those with jellyfish or chicken feet). While we often provide a "slow cook" approach, we also offer tips to help make cooking easy and variations that can save time—just because the ancients didn't have a food processor or rice cooker doesn't mean you can't use one.

We encourage you to experiment with the recipes to adapt them to your tastes and circumstances. Some people prefer red miso to white, shiitake mushrooms to enokis, fresh thyme to dried, or less soy sauce to more. Find out what works for you. The substitution and conversion charts in the back of this book can help in this regard.

Similarly, we encourage you to use the recipes in a way that makes sense with your lifestyle. In general, traditional Chinese medicine discourages abrupt changes, so ideally new dishes supporting your specific health concerns and goals will be gradually integrated into your everyday diet (which is already basically healthy, right?). Occasionally, more sudden and comprehensive dietary changes are called for, but these cases are largely outside the scope of this book and are best accomplished under the guidance of a qualified health professional.

To help you make the most out of this book and to help bridge the gap between Western and Eastern medicine, after each recipe we have provided a list of heath conditions and concerns that the dish could address, using both Western terms and the language of traditional Chinese medicine. In the back section of this book, we have also provided a list of recipes grouped by health concerns. When using these tools, it is important to remember that Western diagnoses do not match Chinese medical diagnoses on a one-to-one basis. What is thought of as a single condition in the West can correspond to multiple patterns in traditional Chinese medicine. For example, the Western concept of insomnia can correspond in traditional Chinese medicine to sleep difficulties due to Heart Blood deficiency, Heart and Kidney yin deficiency, Heart or Liver fire, and so on, each calling for a different treatment. Those who want to take full advantage of the traditional Chinese medical approach should seek an individual diagnosis based on their own unique signs, symptoms, and constitution.

While our recipes are written to support health, not all ingredients are appropriate for all people. Pregnant and nursing women will want to avoid *dang gui* (angelica sinensis root) for example, and patients on blood thinners will want to consume wood ear in moderation. The perspective of traditional Chinese medicine also advises caution in certain circumstances; if you are afflicted with a condition involving Cold, for example, consuming large quantities of cold food and herbs will be counterproductive. As common sense would dictate, if you suffer from food allergies or intolerances, continue to avoid the offending ingredient. (Happily, one common source of food allergies and intolerances, dairy, is rarely used in East Asian cooking, and you can steer clear of

wheat with relative ease, if necessary.) It's always a good idea to touch base with your physician about any questions regarding your own situation.

We recommend following the dosage guidelines in the recipes for herbs—for almost anything there is a point at which too much becomes harmful. (One of us vividly remembers a news story about a man in Great Britain who fell ill after eating nothing but carrots.) The herbs used in cooking—ginger, garlic, sesame seeds, green onions, and the other ingredients in this book (yes, including carrots)—are usually benign when used with even a dash of common sense. (Can the same be said of Twinkies and diet soda?) Of course, follow all the standard food preparation guidelines on refrigeration and washing. We're also advocates of buying organically grown produce and organically raised meat whenever possible to avoid the hazards of pesticides and other chemicals (and you'll help preserve the planet, too).

To help you shopping for and cooking with Chinese herbs and other Asian ingredients that might not be familiar to you, the "One Hundred Healthful Asian Ingredients" section provides details about foods and herbs that appear throughout this book. Also look to the color photographs to help you identify unfamiliar ingredients. Before we delve into some offerings for your table, here are a few additional practical notes on cooking with and shopping for East Asian herbs.

The How of Herbs

When the recipes in this book call for Chinese herbs, they often refer to dried herbs, which are typically rinsed and then soaked before cooking (although if you're making a soup, you can skip the soaking). In many dishes, the herbs are cooked with other ingredients and then removed before serving, as you would use a bay leaf. If several herbs are used this way in a dish, you can put them together in an empty tea bag or tie them in a piece of cheesecloth for easy removal before serving. This method can be used for herbal beverages as well, although it is often easier to simply strain out the herbs, as you would tea leaves.

Similar to herbs used in Western cooking, the cooking times for Chinese herbs vary—some herbs need to be cooked a long time, others are added toward the end of cooking to preserve their delicate character (think garlic versus basil).

In China, many people use earthenware herb cookers to prepare herbal mixtures. This piece of cookware has a spout to let out some steam while the liquid boils. Although an herb cooker is nice if you have it, you can simulate the process by covering a pot and leaving the lid open a crack, as we recommend in many of the recipes in this book. It is traditional to avoid using metal cookware with many of the herbs, but in a modern kitchen this is often difficult. If you need to use metal cookware, we recommend stainless-steel or enameled pots.

Over the past decade, concentrated herbal granules have become popular as a substitution for the dried form of herbs in therapeutic formulas. Granules are prepared with modern equipment that distills the herbs into a convenient and concentrated preparation that dissolves in warm water. However, granules need to be prescribed by a licensed Chinese herbalist; in this book we call for the herbs in a more natural state.

Don't confuse granules with herb powders, though—powders are simply dried herbs put

through a grinder. In many cases, we recommend whole or sliced dried herbs over powders for cooking, as powders have a tendency to clump. However, powders can be useful when an herb is used as a thickener or flour, or when an inconveniently long cooking time would be required for larger pieces.

The same basic herb can come in many shapes—not only powdered, but also cubed, sliced, and in pieces of varying sizes. We have done our best to make measuring the herbs easy, by including the volume (such as tablespoons or number of pieces), as well as their weight. However, a kitchen scale will come in handy, especially for some of the more irregularly shaped herbs, such as wood ear. We have included grams as well as ounces for the herbs, as they are often sold in grams.

For other ingredients, such as vegetables, in this book we include approximate amounts to guide you. But when you're poised above a steaming pot, keep in mind that measurements are a modern addition to most East Asian cooking, so don't let unnecessary precision impede your creativity. Ancient recipes advise "a little bit of this" and "a little bit of that." Water isn't usually measured, but added until it is an inch or two over the solid ingredients. Don't the dishes come out a little different each time this way? Yes, but that makes it more interesting!

Shopping Tips

To help you while shopping, within each recipe we have included the Chinese name in pinyin (and sometimes the Japanese name) for herbs. Other names—often including alternative English names, the Chinese character, and its Latin, Japanese, and Korean designations, are found in the "One Hundred Healthful Asian Ingredients" section. These may come in handy. Goji berries, for example, are also known as wolfberries and lycium fruit, and can be found in some Asian food stores and herb shops under their Chinese name, *gou qi zi*, or 枸杞子. Don't be shy about bringing along this book so you can show the shopkeeper or herbalist what you are looking for.

Hundreds of herbs are used in traditional Chinese medicine (and thousands discussed in the literature). In this book we focus on those easiest to find in the West, so shopping for them shouldn't require round-trip airfare to China, Japan, or Korea.

Pan-Asian food stores are a good bet to find many herbs and East Asian ingredients. Also, don't forget the smaller Asian food stores, which often have the advantage of having approachable help who can assist you in locating the ingredients. Almost anywhere there's a Chinatown, there's a well-stocked herb shop (worth stopping into even if you aren't shopping for herbs, for the sight of the rows of wooden drawers and the tantalizing smells of herbs wafting through the air). If you live in a major metropolitan center such as New York, San Francisco, or Chicago, locating an herb shop is probably as easy as looking up "Herbs" in the Yellow Pages or online.

Another local source for herbs is your neighborhood acupuncturist. Many acupuncturists are also trained in Chinese herbal medicine, as both healing arts are based on a common tradition. Even if your acupuncturist is not an expert in this field, he or she will most likely be able to direct you to a good source of herbs and East Asian

foods. In fact, many acupuncturists are certified herbalists and run their own mini-herb shops.

In this electronic age, ordering online may be your choice—especially if you live far away from a center with a large Asian population. However, our experience is that there are more import-export companies that ship in bulk to traditional Chinese medicine practitioners, than outlets that sell small amounts to the individual consumer. So, pay attention to quantities when you order, or you may find you have inadvertently purchased a three-year supply! Look to the appendix for a list of online sources.

And for those with a green thumb, some herbs will grow in your garden or in a pot on your patio. Goji berries, for one, have become so popular that there's a nursery in Utah that specializes in distributing these seeds and plants. Another nursery in Athens, Ohio, specializes in Chinese medicinal plants in general—live plants as well as fresh and dried herbs—offering more than 130 species. Growing your own also gives you an appreciation for what goes into the herbs you buy at the market, where each herb has been harvested and preserved according to a method unique to each plant. In China, specialists train for years to identify the herbs, the best specimens, the optimal time of year to harvest them, as well as the best methods for preserving them.

Top Ten Herbs for Your Kitchen

You may want to keep the most delicious, nutritious, and commonly used Chinese herbs on hand—and you may be surprised to find you already have many of these in your refrigerator or cupboard. Here are some of our favorites, which happily appear frequently throughout the pages of this book:

- Garlic
- Ginger
- Green onion
- Mushrooms
- Seaweed
- Goji berries
- Ginseng
- Chinese red dates
- Coix (Job's tears)
- Cinnamon

Look to the next section for more information on these—and many other—healthy ingredients.

百味治百病

ONE HUNDRED
HEALTHFUL ASIAN INGREDIENTS

From almonds to winter melon, this section will help guide you through the ingredients that have noteworthy therapeutic properties according to traditional Chinese medicine and culture, as well as a few items that are ubiquitous in East Asian cooking. Some of these ingredients you know. Others will be more of an adventure. We've included alternative names when we think they will be helpful. These include the Chinese, Japanese, and/or Korean names for specialized ingredients you might be asking for in Asian grocery stores or herb shops (and the Chinese characters you can show shopkeepers) as well as alternative English names and the pharmaceutical Latin designations (or, if not available, then the botanical Latin) for ordering online and distinguishing among herbs.

Agar-Agar
See "seaweed."

Almonds
OTHER NAMES: *Prunus dulcis,* sweet almonds, *bian tao* 扁桃 or *xing ren zi* 杏仁子 in Chinese

Almonds are native to the Middle East and today are cultivated extensively in California, the Mediterranean, Australia, and South Africa. Rich in nutrients, they provide protein, fiber, B vitamins, vitamin E, calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, and zinc, among other vitamins and minerals. Some scientific studies have suggested almonds can help lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol and increase HDL ("good") cholesterol. In Ayurvedic medicine, a system of traditional medicine practiced in India, almonds are used to promote a healthy brain and nervous system, as well as to increase longevity. In China, almonds are also considered a food with therapeutic properties, which can be used to counter a cough, especially with wheezing and dry throat (dryness with Lung deficiency), constipation (dryness in the Large Intestine), and lack of energy or appetite (Spleen deficiency). In the Chinese system, almonds are classified as sweet in taste and neutral in temperature. Try not to confuse almonds, the seeds from the fruit of the almond tree, with apricot kernels, sometimes called "bitter almonds" (see below).

Angelica Sinensis Root
See "dang gui."

Apricot Kernels

OTHER NAMES: *Armeniacae Semen,* bitter almonds, apricot almonds, apricot seed, *xing ren* 杏仁 in Chinese, *kyōnin* in Japanese, *haengin* in Korean

Apricot kernels are found within the apricot seed, and in the West are sometimes used in recipes for apricot jam, marzipan, and amaretto cookies and liqueur. You'll probably recognize the flavor when you cook with this ingredient. In the Chinese tradition, apricot kernels are considered a bitter, slightly warm medicinal herb (as well as a food), and are often used for coughs (especially dry coughs) and bronchitis, as well as to moisten the Intestines. Caution: This herb should be used only in small quantities, as like many other fruit seeds it can be toxic in large doses (more than forty raw seeds for adults, or as few as ten for children). In small, cooked amounts, however, apricot kernels are safe and a popular flavoring in cuisines around the world.

Asparagus

OTHER NAMES: *Asparagus officinalis*, *lu sun* 芦笋 in Chinese

The young shoots of the asparagus plant, a hardy perennial that is a member of the lily family, have been used as a food and a medicine for centuries, notably in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, although probably a later introduction to East Asia. Asparagus, which is often harvested in the early spring, is high in vitamin K, folate, vitamin C, vitamin A, and fiber, among other nutrients. According to traditional Chinese medicine, asparagus, which is considered sweet, bitter, and cool, clears Heat and moistens the Lungs, addressing conditions such as chronic cough, high cholesterol, irritability, and depression.

Astragalus Root

OTHER NAMES: *Astragali Radix*, milk-vetch root, *huang qi* 黄芪 ("yellow leader") in Chinese, *ōgi* in Japanese, *hwanggwi* in Korean

Astragalus root comes from a plant native to northern China and the elevated regions of the Chinese provinces Yunnan and Sichuan, where it grows in dry, sunny locations. The root is usually harvested in the autumn when the plant is four to seven years old, and then dried. The roots are sliced before completely dry, producing a product that somewhat resembles tongue depressors. There are many types of astragalus (a member of the pea family)—more than two thousand, by some counts—but the Chinese version is distinctive. In addition to its use in cooking, astragalus root can be boiled in water and served as a tea; you might be able to find it packaged in the same section as herbal teas in a natural food store.

Astragalus root has been tested extensively for its healing properties. Some studies support the view that the herb stimulates the immune system, as well as lowering blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Shen Nong, the mythical founder of Chinese herbal medicine, gave astragalus the rank of "superior herb" in his classic *Divine Farmer's Materia Medica* (circa 100 CE). In fact, *huang qi* translates as "yellow leader," referring to the yellow color of the root and its status as one of the most important tonic herbs in traditional Chinese medicine. Astragalus root, which is considered sweet and slightly warm, is seen as acting on the Lung and Spleen channels to strengthen the immune system and improve digestion. The plant is often used in herbal formulas in combination with ingredients such as white atractylodes rhizome (a.k.a. *Atractylodes macrocephala* or *bai zhu* 白术) and Asian ginseng.

Azuki Beans

OTHER NAMES: *Phaseoli angularis Semen* or *Phaseoli calcarati Semen*, adzuki bean, rice bean, *chi xiao dou* 赤小豆 or *hong dou* ("red bean") in Chinese, *azuki* in Japanese, *pat* in Korean

Azuki beans are small, nutritious, russet-colored beans popular across East Asia, especially Japan where they are the second-most-common legume after the soybean. *Azuki* translates from the Japanese as "small bean," whereas soybean (*daizu*) translates as "large bean." Harvested from an annual vine, the beans are used in sweet red bean paste, dessert soups, and other dishes. Azuki bean sprouts are another popular option. Traditional Chinese medicine practitioners believe that azuki beans, which have a sweet and sour flavor and neutral temperature, enter the Heart and Small Intestine channels to drain Dampness and relieve toxicity; the beans are also considered useful in the management of diabetes.

Bamboo Shoots

OTHER NAMES: *Phyllostachys nigra* of *P. pubescens* of the grass family *Bambusoideae*, *zhu sun* 竹笋 in Chinese, *takenoko* in Japanese, *juksun* in Korean

Bamboo shoots are a popular vegetable in East Asia, eaten as a salad, in stir-fry dishes, or as part of a warm beverage. Available both fresh (from Asian markets) and canned (from almost any supermarket), bamboo shoots provide protein, fat, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, thiamine, riboflavin, and niacin. Fresh shoots are easiest to find in the spring; buy them only if they look firm and recently picked, and prepare them for cooking by cutting away the outer leaves (husk) and boiling them uncovered for 20 to 40 minutes to rid them of their bitter taste. From the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine, sweet, cooling bamboo shoots enter the Lungs, Stomach, and Large Intestine, clearing Heat and transforming phlegm and addressing such conditions as constipation, thirst, dry mouth, and certain types of cough.

Barley Malt

OTHER NAMES: *Maltosum*, maltose, barley malt sugar, *yi tang* 饴糖 in Chinese, *itō* in Japanese, *idang* in Korean

Barley malt is an ancient natural sweetener produced by the Chinese for at least two thousand years. The dark, thick, sweet liquid, which is sold in jars, is produced by a process that involves converting cereal starch to sugar ("malting"). Barley malt can be used to sweeten teas and other beverages and is one ingredient in Peking duck. Those thinking of using barley malt as a sugar substitute should note that the syrup has a distinctive flavor. In traditional Chinese medicine, barley malt, which is considered sweet and slightly warm, is thought to strengthen the Spleen and Stomach, helping to relieve digestive cramps, and moisten the Lungs, relieving coughs.

Bitter Melon

OTHER NAMES: *Momordica charantia*, bitter gourd, balsam pear, *ku gua* 苦瓜 in Chinese, *goya* in Japanese, *yeoja* in Korean

Bitter melon, a vegetable that often looks like a bumpy cucumber, appears in East Asian, Southeast Asian, and Indian cuisine. True to its name, this vegetable is bitter and it is often combined with ingredients (such as bean sauce, meat, onions, potatoes, or certain spices) that balance

this flavor. It is also prepared in ways to curb its bitterness, such as using it while still green, before it begins to yellow and ripen; salting, then washing it; or salting it, exposing it to the sun, then squeezing and rinsing it several times. You'll find bitter melon in most Asian grocery stores. It is also available as a supplement. Bitter melon is high in vitamin C, and also offers folate, potassium, zinc, and other nutrients. Scientific studies have suggested that bitter melon contains a compound that moderates blood sugar, helping to control type 2 diabetes. The plant has also been associated with antiviral, anticancer, and antimalarial properties. In traditional Chinese medicine, the bitter, cold vegetable goes to the Stomach, Heart, and Liver channels, where it clears Heat, addressing thirst from a warm disease or Summer Heat, and treating visual problems with redness or pain in the eyes. The plant's seeds are used topically to treat sores that are slow to heal and swelling from sprains and fractures. Bitter melon is also used in Ayurvedic medicine. Caution: Avoid eating bitter melon if you are trying to conceive.

Black Wood Ear

OTHER NAMES: *Auricularia auricula*, black fungus, tree ear, *hei mu er* 黑木耳 in Chinese, *kikurage* in Japanese, *mogi beoseot* in Korean

Black wood ear is a mushroomlike fungus whose neutral taste adds little flavor to a dish, but whose texture offers a pleasant crunch. Native to Asia and some humid Pacific Ocean islands, this ear-shaped vegetable grows on the trunks of decaying trees. Wood ear is sold dried in Asian grocery stores and is relatively inexpensive compared with other specialized varieties of fungus. Store the dried pieces in a tightly covered heavy plastic or glass container. When soaked in warm water, wood ear will expand to two to five times its original size, so a few pieces go a long way. Wood ear is frequently used in soups (such as hot and sour soup), stir-fried dishes, or salads, where it is cooked only briefly to maintain a crispy texture.

Wood ear contains fiber, and small amounts of the B vitamins thiamine, niacin, and riboflavin. Some scientific studies have suggested potential benefits of wood ear and other types of mushrooms in the diet, identifying a chemical that tends to inhibit blood clotting, which may help ward off vascular diseases such as strokes and heart attacks. In traditional Chinese medicine, the black wood ear, seen as sweet in taste and neutral in temperature, goes to the Lung and Stomach channels, nourishing the yin, moistening the Lungs, stopping bleeding, and generating fluids. Caution: People with hemorrhagic diseases or pregnant women should avoid overconsumption.

Bok Choy

OTHER NAMES: *Brassica chinensis*, *xiao bai cai* 小白菜 in Mandarin

Bok choy is one of the many members of the cabbage family, Cruciferae (including broccoli, Chinese cabbage, and mustards), that populate the Asian kitchen, where it offers up its long, crunchy white stems and dark green leaves for stir-fries, wonton fillings, pickling, and soups. There are dozens of varieties of bok choy (including baby bok choy) and the vegetable has become widely available in supermarkets, where it is usually found near red and traditional cabbage, and at gourmet, health, and specialty stores. If you are stir-frying, trim off the base of the vegetable and cook the leaves and stems separately, as the stems need more cooking

time. Bok choy offers vitamins A and C, calcium, and fiber, as well as indoles, phytochemicals associated with anticancer properties. From the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine, bok choy is cool and sweet, acting to clear Heat, lubricate the Intestines, quench thirst, and promote digestion.

Bonito Flakes

OTHER NAMES: *katsuobushi* in Japanese

Dried bonito flakes are a staple in Japanese cuisine. These shavings from dried, aged bonito fish, a type of tuna, provide a strong, salty flavor in Japanese soups, salads, and sauces. Look for packages of delicate pinkish-beige bonito flakes in Asian food stores. In the West, fatty fish have been receiving much positive press due to their omega-3 fatty acid content, which has been associated with heart and nervous system health. In terms of traditional East Asian medicine, tuna strengthens the qi and Blood.

Burdock Root

OTHER NAMES: *Arctii lappae Radix*, great burdock, beggar's button, *niu bang gen* 牛蒡根 in Chinese, *gobō* in Japanese, *wu-eong* in Korean

Burdock root is the long, thin root of a plant you may recognize as the abundant producer of the pesky burs that stick to your clothes and cling to your pet's fur. In Japan and other parts of Asia, the plant is cultivated as a food source. The fibrous root adds an earthy and delicate flavor and crunchy texture to stews and other dishes. When shopping for fresh burdock, choose firm and crisp roots (they can be hard to miss among the other vegetables, as these long, brown roots are often more than three feet long). Scrub and peel the roots if the skin looks tough. Some cooks soak the vegetable in water for 5 to15 minutes before cooking to eliminate a slightly bitter aftertaste. You may also want to tenderize the root by boiling it in water with baking soda (½ teaspoon to 2 cups of water), then draining before adding to your stew or soup. Burdock root is also sometimes sold dried.

In European herbalism, burdock root oil is applied to the scalp to strengthen and beautify hair, prevent hair loss, and combat dandruff. In the macrobiotic philosophy, burdock root is believed to increase vitality and is recommended as a tea. In China, the seed of the burdock plant (*niu bang zi* 牛蒡子 in Chinese) has been the focus in traditional herbal medicine, but the root, considered pungent, bitter, and cool, is now becoming more popular as a food therapy to clear toxic Heat, reduce inflammation, and promote urination.

Cassia Seeds

OTHER NAMES: *Cassiae Semen*, *jue ming zi* 决明子 in Chinese, *ketsumeishi* in Japanese, *gyeolmyeongja* in Korean

Cassia seeds have been used as a medicinal herb for centuries, first appearing in the *Divine Farmer's Materia Medica*. Ranging from greenish-brown to dark brown, the small seeds can be found in Asian markets and herb shops and are used raw or after being dry-fried. Some studies have suggested that cassia seeds may help prevent heart disease, by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels. In traditional Chinese medicine, cassia seeds, considered bitter, sweet, and cool, are used to clear the Liver and the eyes; calm the Liver and anchor yang (addressing symptoms such as headache and dizziness); and moisten the Intestines (treating constipation).

Celery

OTHER NAMES: *Apium graveolens*, *qin cai* 芹菜 in Chinese

Celery is used in cuisines around the world, including those of France, Spain, Greece, Persia, and Russia. The plant has also been used for medicinal purposes by the Romans (who used the seeds to relieve pain) and in homeopathy (where an extract from the seed is used as a diuretic). In China, celery is considered a cool, sweet, and slightly bitter medicinal plant, used to reduce blood pressure, promote urination, cool the Blood, stop bleeding, reduce headaches, and regulate menstruation. In the language of traditional Chinese medicine, celery clears Stomach Heat and Liver Heat, and treats qi stagnation.

Cellophane Noodles

OTHER NAMES: Chinese vermicelli, bean threads, bean thread noodles, glass noodles, *saifun* (from the Cantonese), *fen si* 粉丝 or *dong fen* 冬粉 in Chinese, *harusame* in Japanese, *dangmyeon* in Korean

Cellophane noodles are a noodle made of starch, often from mung beans (especially in China), but sometimes from sweet potatoes, potatoes, or cassava in other parts of Asia. In Asian cuisine, cellophane noodles, which become translucent when cooked, are used in soups, stir-fries, salads, and spring rolls. Cooking times and properties vary according to the starch used (the mung bean variety is easy to work with because it resists dissolving). You can find cellophane noodles, often sold in packages of thin threads wrapped into small bundles like yarn, in an Asian market or in the international section of a well-stocked traditional supermarket. (See also "mung beans," for more information on the properties of mung bean noodles.)

Cherries

OTHER NAMES: several species of the genus *Prunus*, *ying tao* 樱桃 in Chinese

Cherries, which grow in Europe, Asia, and North America (especially California and Washington), are popular in both the East and West. In the West, cherries have become popular as one of the "superfruits," offering iron, antioxidants, and anthocyanins (responsible for the red pigment in berries). There is interest in using fresh cherries or cherry juice to reduce pain and inflammation, as well as to treat gout, a condition of painful inflammation of the big toe and foot. In traditional Chinese medicine, cherries—sometimes referred to as the "fruit of fire"—are seen as sweet and warm, warming the body and strengthening the Spleen-Stomach to counteract fatigue and generate fluids.

Chestnuts

OTHER NAMES: varieties of *Castanea*, *li zi* 栗子 in Chinese, *kuri* in Japanese, *bam* in Korean

Chestnut trees, which come in various varieties native to Korea and China as well as other temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere, including the United States and Europe, provide nuts used in many cuisines. Chestnuts are especially popular in Japan, where they are steamed, baked, grilled, cooked in rice, and used to make sweets. In northern China, chestnuts are also favored and used in casseroles and in a famous banquet dessert, Peking Dust, which combines pureed chestnuts, walnuts, brown sugar, and cream. To prepare fresh chestnuts, shell and skin them. To use peeled, dried chestnuts, soak them for 2 to 3 hours and simmer in water for 1 hour. Chestnuts provide vitamin C, thiamine, vitamin

B_6, magnesium, riboflavin, folate, iron, and phosphorus. In traditional Chinese medicine, chestnuts, considered sweet and warm, strengthen the Spleen and Stomach and supplement and warm the Kidney yang, increasing warmth and energy in the body and treating diarrhea.

Chili Peppers (and Related Species)

OTHER NAMES: varieties from the genus *Capsicum*, *la jiao* 辣椒 in Chinese, *tōgarashi* in Japanese, *gochu* in Korean

Peppers, including the spicy varieties, belong to the same nightshade family as two thousand other species, including tomato, potato, eggplant, tobacco, and petunia. Chili peppers, one of the most well known varieties of spicy peppers, originated in Central or South America, and chili peppers, chili paste, and chili oil are now an integral part of the cuisine in some regions of Asia. Hot peppers are not only delicious for those who like spicy food, they are also considered by Chinese traditional medical practitioners as having medicinal qualities. In the West, spicy food is often avoided in cases of stomach distress. But in traditional Chinese medicine, chili peppers, considered pungent and hot, are sometimes prescribed to alleviate abdominal pain or gastric upset if the diagnosis involves too much Cold (for example, in a case when a patient experiences stomach cramping); hot peppers should be avoided during digestive problems involving too much Heat. Scientific studies suggest that chili peppers possess antimicrobial and antiparasitic properties, and that they can relieve some types of stomach problems. (See also "Sichuan peppers.")

Chinese Cabbage

OTHER NAMES: *Brassica rapa*, *bai cai* 白菜 in Mandarin, *napa*, *nappa,* or *hakusai* in Japanese, *baechu* in Korean

Chinese cabbage, a member of the cabbage family that comes in many varieties, is tender, crisp, and mild. Like bok choy in the south of China, Chinese cabbage is one of the most important leafy vegetables in northern China, where it is called the "greater white vegetable" and has been eaten for thousands of years. This vegetable is also a staple in Japanese cooking, and is well known as the main ingredient in the Korean spicy pickle, kimchi. Today, the vegetable is cultivated in the United States as well as Asia, and can be found in many North American supermarkets and health food stores, usually near red and traditional cabbage. Look for tightly packed leaves with firm heads. Chinese cabbage should keep well for several weeks. Chinese cabbage is a good source of fiber, folic acid, vitamin A, potassium, and vitamin C. It also contains phytochemicals that have been associated with anticancer properties. From the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine, this sweet, cool vegetable is thought to strengthen the Stomach, clear Heat, lubricate the Intestines, quench thirst, assist digestion, and promote urination.

Chinese Dates

OTHER NAMES: *Jujubae Fructus*, jujubes, *hong zao* 紅枣 ("red date") or *da zao* 大枣 ("black date") in Chinese, *taisō* in Japanese, *daechu* in Korean, *annab* in Persian

Dried Chinese dates come in red, black, and wild varieties, and have been cultivated for four thousand years in Asia, India, and the Middle East. The taste of this fruit has been compared to that

of an apple. They can be eaten fresh or candied as a dessert. Don't be misled by the name—this is a different species than the fruit of the date palm that goes by the common name of "date" in many Western supermarkets. When selecting Chinese dates, look for smaller fruit with firm and deeply wrinkled skin. In Chinese medicine, sweet, warming red dates strengthen the Spleen and Stomach and supplement qi to counteract fatigue, lack of appetite, and shortness of breath; nourish the Blood to treat Blood deficiency (a pattern involving dizziness, blurred vision, pallor, and scanty or absent menstruation); calm the spirit; and harmonize other ingredients in an herbal formula.

Chinese Yam

OTHER NAMES: *Dioscoreae oppositae Rhizoma*, mountain yam, Japanese mountain yam, Korean yam, *shan yao* 山药 or *huai shan* 淮山 in Chinese, *nagaimo* or *yamaimo* in Japanese, *goguma* in Korean

Chinese yam is the starchy root of a plant native to China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan that is consumed as a food as well as an ancient traditional medicine. The plant consists of a climbing vine with heart-shaped leaves and small, white flowers that smell like cinnamon. The yams are harvested in the winter and can be eaten fresh or dried for later use, in which case the outer bark is removed, the root washed, dried, and stored, then later rehydrated in water and cut into slices. When shopping for fresh Chinese yams, look for relatively unblemished roots that are heavy for their size; be careful not to confuse this beige or light brown-colored vegetable with the darker, more orange or red sweet potato (also often referred to as a "yam"). In its dried, sliced form, Chinese yam is often sold in packages of chalky white slices about one inch wide and three to four inches long.

This vegetable is commonly used in Japanese cuisine, eaten as a side dish or used as an ingredient in noodles. The root can also be purchased as a powder, or can be ground on request when purchased at an Asian herb store. Scientific studies of Chinese yam have suggested it controls blood sugar and counters diabetes, as well as stimulating intestinal peristalsis. From the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine, the root, which is considered sweet in flavor and neutral in temperature, strengthens the qi and supplements the Spleen, Lungs, and Kidneys. It is often prescribed for diarrhea and is recommended for long-term use to increase vitality, as its effects gently accumulate for those recovering from illness or weakened by old age. Mountain yam also has an important role in traditional prescriptions to manage diabetes, a use supported by scientific studies showing decreased blood glucose levels in mice eating the vegetable.

Chrysanthemum Flower

OTHER NAMES: *Chrysanthemi Flos*, *ju hua* 菊花 in Chinese, *kikuka* in Japanese, *gukhwa* in Korean

Chrysanthemum flowers were cultivated in China as an herb as far back as the fifteenth century BCE, and appear in the name of an ancient Chinese city named Ju-Xian, "chrysanthemum city." In China, the chrysanthemum symbolizes long life. The flower also became important in Japan, where the emperor adopted it as his official seal, and where a Festival of Happiness celebrates the flower. Chrysanthemum tea made from flowers is popular across Asia. Leaves (from plants bred

for this purpose) are also part of the cuisine in Japan and China, often parboiled briefly before being served with a light dressing.

In addition to their ornamental uses in Europe and North America, chrysanthemum flowers also appear in Western herbal medicine, where they are boiled into an herbal tea or made into a compress to treat circulatory disorders such as varicose veins and atherosclerosis. In traditional Chinese medicine, the flowers, considered sweet and bitter in flavor and cool in temperature, are used to dispel Wind-Heat, treating some types of common cold; to clear the Liver, benefiting the eyes; to calm the Liver yang, treating hypertension, dizziness, vertigo, and swelling and pain in the head; and to clear Heat and eliminate toxicity, treating various skin disorders.

Cilantro

OTHER NAMES: *Coriandrum sativum*, coriander, Chinese parsley, Mexican parsley, *yan sui* 芫荽 in Chinese

Cilantro leaves are one of the most popular fresh herbs in the world, appearing in dishes and sauces in the Americas, the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia, and China, where the word for the herb means "fragrant plant." An ancient herb related to dill, the plant's seeds have been found in Egyptian tombs, and the Romans are said to have used the seed to help preserve meat. When you're shopping for cilantro, which you will find in the produce section of most supermarkets, look for fresh, leafy plants with thin stems. Cilantro is a good source of vitamins A and C. From the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine, cilantro is a pungent, bitter, and neutral to cooling herb that moves the qi, acting to remedy lack of appetite, nausea, and indigestion and to promote sweating in the treatment of the common cold.

Cinnamon

OTHER NAMES: *Cinnamomi cassiae Cortex*, *rou gui* 肉桂 in Chinese

Cinnamon, an ancient and aromatic herb from the inner bark of the small evergreen cinnamon tree, is used throughout the world, in dishes from Indian *biryani* to cinnamon-flavored applesauce. Some scientists suggest that this cinnamon can help control blood sugar making it potentially useful in the management of diabetes, and the spice may also have antibacterial activity. In traditional Chinese medicine, cinnamon is considered pungent, sweet, and hot, warming and strengthening the Kidney yang and affecting the Heart, Kidney, Liver, and Spleen channels. It is used to increase vitality, to treat some types of abdominal pain, reduced appetite, and diarrhea, and to alleviate pain.

Cinnamon Twig

OTHER NAMES: *Cinnamomi Ramulus*, *gui zhi* 桂枝 in Chinese, *keishi* in Japanese, *gyepi* ("cinnamon peel") in Korean

Cinnamon twig comes from the same plant that produces the cinnamon in your spice rack, but whereas the cinnamon common in the West comes from the bark of the tree, this herb is made from the tree's twigs. In traditional Chinese medicine, cinnamon twig, considered pungent, sweet, and warm, is used to address an exterior attack of Wind-Cold (a type of common cold that presents

with chills, fever, and body aches). The herb is also used to treat problems with the joints and to stimulate the digestive organs.

Clove

OTHER NAMES: *Caryophylli Flos*, *ding xiang* 丁香 in Chinese

The clove is a fragrant herb native to Indonesia now used in cuisines all over the world. The unopened bud of the flower of a tropical tree, in the West cloves are often used to flavor cider, soups, and sauces (such as Worcestershire sauce). Cloves also contribute flavor to many types of curries.

Studies have suggested that cloves promote digestion by increasing gastric acid and bile, inhibit microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi, counteract some toxins, and relieve pain when applied topically. With this in mind, it's no surprise that cloves appear in many herbal traditions: in Europe, cloves have been used as a treatment for gout and as a topical painkiller for dental work; in Ayurvedic medicine, they have targeted respiratory problems and stomach upset; in West Africa, they are infused in water to treat stomach upset, vomiting, and diarrhea. In the tradition of Chinese medicine, cloves, which are considered pungent and warming, can be used to alleviate Cold abdominal pain and gastric upset, as well as to treat conditions such as impotence and weakness associated with Kidney yang deficiency.

Coix

OTHER NAMES: *Coicis lacryma-jobi Semen*, coix seeds, Job's tears, adlay, *yi yi ren* 薏苡仁 in Chinese, *yokuinin* or *hato mugi* in Japanese, *yulmu* in Korean

Coix are sweet, bland seeds that taste similar to barley. Harvested from a tall tropical annual grass native to Asia, these oval, milky white seeds offer more protein than many other grains. In some parts of the world, such as Mexico, the hard, oval covering of the seed is used for jewelry and decoration, as the tear-shaped pods naturally have holes at each end. When shopping in an Asian market, ask for *yi yi ren* (Chinese) or *hato mugi* (Japanese). Coix is an ingredient in soups, and can be cooked together with rice. In traditional Chinese medicine, the sweet, bland, and slightly cold seeds have been used for millennia to promote urination in the treatment of edema (swelling); to resolve Dampness in the treatment of stiff joints associated with Wind-Damp painful obstruction; and to strengthen the Spleen in the treatment of diarrhea, fatigue, and other conditions. Coix also has a reputation for beautifying the complexion by helping to eliminate acne and other blemishes, both when eaten as part of a meal and when applied topically.

Cornsilk

OTHER NAMES: *Maydis Stigma*, *yu mi xu* 玉米须 (literally, "jade rice whiskers") in Chinese, *gyokumaishu* in Japanese, *oksusu teol* (literally, "corn fur") in Korean

Cornsilk, the silky threads that grow between the husk and the golden grains, is part of the Chinese medical pharmacopeia. The silk can be easily harvested from fresh ears of corn in the summer. If necessary, you can also buy dried cornsilk from a Chinese herb shop. In traditional Chinese medicine, cornsilk, which is considered sweet and bland in taste and neutral in temperature, drains Damp-

ness and clears Damp-Heat from the Liver and Gallbladder, reducing water retention and edema, easing painful urination, and counteracting such conditions as diabetes and high blood pressure.

Cucumber

OTHER NAMES: *Cucumis sativus*, *huang gua* 黄瓜 in Chinese

The cucumber, which probably originated in India, is an ancient vegetable that has been eaten for millennia, such as during the Roman Empire and ancient Mesopotamia. Belonging to the same family as watermelon, squash, and pumpkin, cucumbers offer a crisp, cool flesh commonly used for salads, soups, or pickles. Cucumbers, which are a natural diuretic, contain water, fiber (especially in the skin), vitamin C, and such minerals as silica, potassium, and magnesium. In some parts of the Middle East, cucumber juice is considered good at alleviating skin irritations and is an ingredient in soaps. In terms of traditional Chinese medicine, cucumbers, which are considered sweet and cool, go to the Stomach and Bladder channels to clear Heat, eliminate toxins, treat thirst, and promote urination to reduce edema (swelling). In addition, cucumbers can be applied externally to soothe red, swollen, and dry eyes, regenerate the skin, and heal sunburn.

Cuscuta Seeds

OTHER NAMES: *Cuscutae Semen*, Chinese dodder seeds, *tu si zi* 菟丝子 in Chinese, *toshishi* in Japanese, *tosaja* in Korean

Cuscuta seeds are small brown seeds that come from a vine. Although the vine is often considered a destructive weed because it grows on other plants, cuscuta seeds have been used in traditional Chinese medicine for thousands of years, often to restore balance, improve vision, or address problems such as impotence, back pain, and incontinence. In the language of Chinese medicine, this herb, which is pungent and sweet in taste and neutral in temperature, strengthens Kidney yin and yang, consolidates Kidney *jing*, and brightens the eyes, among other uses.

Daikon

OTHER NAMES: *Raphanus sativus*, Japanese radish, Chinese radish, Chinese turnip, Korean turnip, *luo bu* 萝卜 in Chinese, *daikon* in Japanese, and *mu* in Korean

Daikon is a light-colored root that has been eaten in Asia for thousands of years. Daikon comes in several varieties, the most common of which is two to three feet long and two to three inches wide. Others are shorter and squatter and can grow up to fifty pounds. Although usually white, the root can sometimes be tinged with green. Related to the more familiar red radish you commonly see in the supermarket, daikon adds a crisp texture and a light, spicy taste to your table. The fall and winter roots offer more flavor but less bite than the hotter, blander roots harvested in the spring. The Japanese serve daikon (literally, "large root") pickled as a side dish, grated as a condiment (often mixed with soy sauce), and raw or boiled as an ingredient for salads. Daikon sprouts and daikon leaves are also part of Japanese cuisine. The Chinese often use daikon root in stews, as potatoes or turnips are used in the West. Before cooking, scrub the skin or remove it with a peeler.

Daikon provides some vitamin C. In macrobiotic cooking, daikon is valued as an aid to digestion, especially of oily foods. In the language of traditional Chinese medicine, daikon, considered pungent in flavor and neutral to cooling in temperature, can address food stagnation and clear phlegm from the Lungs, aiding digestion and easing breathing difficulties.

Dang Gui

OTHER NAMES: *Angelicae sinensis Radix*, dong quai, tang kuei, Chinese angelica root, *dang gui* 当归 in Chinese, *tōki* in Japanese, *danggwi* in Korean

Dang gui (pronounced "dahng gway") is a major herb in traditional Chinese medicine, used for thousands of years and mentioned in the ancient *Divine Farmer's Materia Medica*. *Dang gui* translates literally from the Chinese as "state of return," indicating its central role as a woman's herb in the Chinese pharmacopeia for restoring regular menses. (Do not confuse it with *Angelica arcangelica*, sold in Western groceries, candied, for baking.) The herb, which is considered sweet, pungent, and warm, is also used to nourish the Blood, addressing a pattern of Blood deficiency, and to invigorate the Blood, treating pain or traumatic injury.

Eggplant

OTHER NAMES: *Solanum melongena*, aubergine, *qie zi* 茄子 in Chinese

Eggplant is truly an international vegetable, appearing in the cuisines of Europe, the Middle East, South and East Asia, and North America. Today, China and India are the world's top eggplant producers. Related to the potato, pepper, and tomato, it is part of the Solanaceae (nightshade) family, and grows in climates ranging from tropical to temperate. In addition to the pear-shaped dark purple varieties with which you are probably familiar, eggplants come in many sizes, colors, and shapes, ranging from small and white (more literally resembling an egg) to green and round, to long and lavender.

When shopping for eggplant, select specimens relatively heavy for their size and use them right away if possible. Cook eggplant thoroughly until soft; it is difficult to overcook. Because of its texture and bulk, eggplant can be useful to provide balance to a meal that is light or nonexistent in meat. Eggplant is a good source of fiber, potassium, manganese, copper, thiamine, vitamin B_6, folate, magnesium, and niacin. Some scientific studies have suggested eggplant might be useful in preventing atherosclerosis and heart disease. In the language of traditional Chinese medicine, this cool, sweet vegetable addresses the Large Intestine, Stomach, and Spleen, clears Heat, and invigorates and cools the Blood, addressing such conditions as swelling, pain, hemorrhoids, and breast inflammation (mastitis) or sores.

Enoki

See "mushrooms."

Fennel

OTHER NAMES: *Foeniculi Fructus*, fennel fruit, fennel seed, *xiao hui xiang* 小茴香 in Chinese, *shōuikyō* in Japanese, *sohoehyang* in Korean

Fennel grows wild in many parts of the world today, including North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. The fennel plant—known to the Greeks and Romans and still figuring promi-

nently in European cuisine—not only produces the seed used as a spice, but also edible roots, stalks, and leaves. The distinctive flavor of fennel comes from a compound known as anethole, which is also found in anise. Fennel has been used medicinally in Europe and the Middle East to address eye problems and to prevent intestinal symptoms such as gas and cramping. In terms of traditional Chinese medicine, the warm, pungent herb is used to disperse Cold, to promote the movement of Liver qi and warm the Kidneys (treating lower abdominal pain), and to regulate the qi and harmonize the Stomach (relieving indigestion).

Five-Spice Powder

OTHER NAMES: *wu xiang fen* 五香粉 in Chinese

Five-spice powder is a mixture of star anise, Sichuan pepper, fennel, cloves, and cinnamon (sometimes also star anise, licorice root, and/or ground ginger). Common in southern China and Vietnam, five-spice powder is often used for roasted meat and poultry. This warming mixture is sometimes put in a bag, and then dropped into a prepared dish for the flavors to blend; the herbs can be easily removed before serving. Five-spice powder is easy to find in the West, sold in most regular grocery stores in the spice section, although you may get a more authentic blend by buying from an Asian food store. Since five-spice powder contains each of the five flavors—sour, bitter, sweet, pungent, and salty—some people have speculated that the ancients were trying to put together a mixture representing all five elements in making the blend.

Fleeceflower

See "*he shou wu*."

Fox Nuts

OTHER NAMES: *Euryales Semen*, makhana, or gorgon nut, *qian shi* 芡实 in Chinese, *kenjitsu* in Japanese, *keomin* in Korean

Fox nuts are pale, oval seeds harvested from a shrub that has floating leaves, like a lotus plant, and a large, purple flower. Fox nuts have been cultivated for millennia in Asia. Try asking for *qian shi* when shopping in a Chinese market. In India, fox nuts are roasted or fried, causing them to pop like popcorn, then eaten seasoned with oil or spices. According to traditional Chinese medicine, fox nuts, which are sweet and astringent in flavor and neutral in temperature, strengthen qi and benefit the Kidneys and Spleen, addressing such conditions as indigestion, diarrhea, and poor bladder control. Fox nuts are also associated with increasing sexual prowess in older men and retarding the effects of aging.

Fritillaria

OTHER NAMES: *Fritillariae cirrhosae Bulbus*, *chuan bei mu* 川贝母 (which translates literally from the Chinese as "shell mother from Sichuan"), *senbaimo* in Japanese, *cheonpaemo* in Korean

Fritillaria grows in China and Nepal and produces a bittersweet white bulb. It is harvested in the summer or fall, and processed. When you buy fritillaria, ask the herb shop to grind it into a powder for you, or use a coffee grinder at home; if the shop only crushes it, you'll need to grind it. There's a wide range of grades (and prices) of this herb; medium-grade is fine for most purposes. In addition to fritillaria's use as a traditional herb to

clear Heat and transform phlegm in the Lungs to treat chronic cough, in China this bitter, sweet, and slightly cold herb has a tradition of use against breast and lung cancer. It is considered an especially good herb for the elderly and children. (Caution: If you happen to be in Asia and come upon the plant, note that the unprocessed herb is toxic and should not be ingested.)

Galangal

OTHER NAMES: *Alpiniae officinari Rhizoma*, galanga, *gao liang jiang* 高良姜 in Chinese, *kōryōkyō* in Japanese, *koryanggang* in Korean, *kencur* in Indonesian

Galangal is a member of the ginger family grown both as a spice and as a medicine. Galangal "root" (actually a rhizome resembling ginger) is used extensively in the cooking of Thailand, Indonesia, and other regions of Southeast Asia. It has a spicy, flowery flavor, and can be purchased as a whole root, sliced and frozen, or in powdered form. When buying fresh galangal, look for rock-hard rhizomes (you'll need a sharp knife to cut them) and store them in the refrigerator, wrapped in a paper towel. There are two varieties of galangal, lesser galangal and greater galangal. Lesser galangal (the variety used by traditional Chinese medical practitioners) is sweeter and stronger, and its flesh has a more reddish-brown (rather than yellow-white) hue than does its cousin. Galangal was popular in Europe in the Middle Ages, especially revered by famous herbalist Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) as a treatment for such ills as deafness, heart disease, and indigestion. Others in Europe and Asia used the herb as an appetite stimulant and aphrodisiac. The rhizome of lesser galangal, which is native to China, is a traditional herb in Chinese medicine, believed to be pungent and hot, warming the Stomach, dispersing Cold, alleviating pain, and directing qi downward.

Garlic

OTHER NAMES: *Allii sativi Bulbus*, *da suan* 大蒜 in Chinese, *taisan* in Japanese, *maneul* in Korean

Garlic appears in ancient writings of the Chinese, Egyptians, Babylonians, and Indians, as far back as five thousand years ago. In the West, garlic has captured the popular imagination throughout the ages and has been used to ward off threats from vampires to the plague. In Asia, garlic is a staple in many regions. Traditionally, the Chinese use garlic in cold dishes, both for taste and for health reasons, as it keeps food fresh by killing bacteria. Pickled garlic is especially popular in Korea.

When buying fresh garlic, look for plump, firm bulbs. When you get the garlic home, leave the bulb whole (do not detach cloves until necessary) and store in a cool, dark, and dry location, such as a ceramic jar or mesh bag. If you have a garden, garlic is easy to grow, and it has a reputation for helping to repel insects and other pests.

Today, scientific research supports a view of garlic as a powerful herb with antibacterial and immunity-enhancing properties; it may also help thin blood, dilate blood vessels, and inhibit fat and cholesterol synthesis. In traditional Chinese medicine, this pungent, warming herb is used to reduce swelling, relieve toxicity, kill parasites, and counteract food poisoning by warming the Stomach, strengthening the Spleen, and promoting the movement of qi.

Ginger

OTHER NAMES: *Zingiberis Rhizoma recens, sheng jiang* 生姜, *shōkyō* in Japanese, *saenggang* in Korean

Ginger, the tasty underground stem of the plant *Zingiber officinale,* is a mainstay in Asian cuisine and healing in the Chinese herbal tradition. This tropical plant with fragrant flowers originated in China and spread to Spain around the sixteenth century. Today, ginger is widely grown in the West Indies, Africa, India, and Southeast Asia, and contributes its warm pungent taste to many cuisines. If you have a green thumb, in the United States you can grow the ginger plant in the warm climates of Florida, Hawaii, Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Ginger is usually planted outdoors in autumn and the "root" (in fact a rhizome) is ready for harvest in the middle of the following summer after the leaves die down.

If you're shopping for fresh ginger, look for plump, firm specimens and avoid those that have begun to dry out around the edges. Most ginger you'll come upon at the market will be "mature" ginger, offering a deep, strong flavor perfect for soups and stews. Sometimes you'll come across "baby" ginger, a lighter, milder, and less fibrous selection that is well matched with seafood dishes or desserts. Don't make the mistake of trying to substitute the pickled variety when you are cooking—although pickled ginger is delightful, it is used primarily as a garnish for Japanese dishes such as sushi. Likewise, candied preserved ginger will be too sweet.

In the West, scientific studies have shown that ginger can be dramatically effective in aiding digestion and helping to alleviate stomach upset in such conditions as motion sickness. In Chinese medicine, fresh ginger, considered pungent and warm, is used to warm the abdomen, treating stomach upset, diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, and suppressed appetite; to treat exterior Wind-Cold syndrome, counteracting some types of the common cold; to warm the Lungs, helping to stop coughing; and to eliminate toxicity, such as from seafood poisoning.

Ginkgo Nuts

OTHER NAMES: *Ginkgo Semen*, gingko seeds, *bai guo* 白果 in Chinese, *ginkyō* in Japanese, *eunhaeng* in Korean

Ginkgo nuts are harvested from the gingko tree (*yin xing* in Chinese), an ancient species of deciduous tree with fan-shaped leaves and yellow flowers. Considered somewhat of a delicacy in China and Japan, ginkgo nuts are eaten roasted or used in soups, stir-fries, and desserts, and can be purchased fresh, in their tan-colored shell, or canned. If you are starting with fresh ginkgo nuts, additional preparation is required, usually shelling, boiling, peeling, and coring. (If you are actually collecting them from a tree, you'll also have to remove the smelly fruit; use rubber gloves to avoid contact dermatitis).

Despite the fact that the memory supplement popular in the West is made from ginkgo biloba leaf, in East Asia the nut is seen as the medicinal part of this ancient plant. According to traditional Chinese medicine, ginkgo nuts, which are considered sweet, bitter, and astringent in taste and neutral in temperature, enter the Kidney and Lung channels to regulate pulmonary activity, ease asthma and wheezing, and help relieve frequent urination. Caution: Ginkgo nuts can be slightly toxic in large quantities (large quantities being more than forty kernels for adults, or seven for

children), so avoid overeating and make sure to cook them (ginkgo poisoning symptoms include headache, fever, seizures, and breathing difficulties). One rule of thumb is that you should only eat as many cooked ginkgo seeds as your age—but this only works for children. As a general rule, you need to avoid eating more than a dozen at a time or eating them frequently over the long term.

Ginseng

OTHER NAMES: *Ginseng Radix*, Korean ginseng, Chinese ginseng, Japanese ginseng, Asian ginseng, Oriental ginseng, and a number of other monikers in English, *ren shen* 人参 in Chinese, *ninjin* in Japanese, *insam* in Korean

Ginseng is one of the most well known therapeutic herbs, which you will find in some form—including in supplements, powders, liquid extracts, and teas, as well as the fresh and dried root—in natural food stores, herbal shops, and Asian markets everywhere.

Asian ginseng is the plant native to China and Korea that has been used in traditional East Asian medicine for thousands of years; it was mentioned in the two-thousand-year-old *Divine Farmer's Materia Medica*. The Chinese use Asian ginseng to strengthen the Lungs, Spleen, and Stomach, increasing energy and endurance, improving digestion, and assisting in recovery after an illness. In fact, many traditional Chinese medical practitioners consider the sweet, slightly bitter, slightly warm herb to be so potent that they advise the young and healthy to use it only sparingly, but those who are feeling the effects of illness or aging can draw on its energy-enhancing powers.

The quality of Asian ginseng, a slow growing root that takes six to seven years to reach maturity, is determined by the specimen's age, place of origin, whether wild or cultivated, length, girth, shape, and skin. If you shop for fresh ginseng, look for thick, long, intact roots with a thin body and long branches, and be aware the best specimens can be priced extravagantly.

Both red and white ginseng come from the same plant; the difference is in the preparation method. For red ginseng, the unpeeled root is steamed before it is dried, while for white ginseng the root is peeled and dried. The red variety is considered stronger and most Korean ginseng falls into this category. One trick to storing ginseng root is to keep the root in a jar of rice; the rice absorbs any moisture and keeps the ginseng fresh.

A related species is American ginseng (*Panacis quinquefolii Radix*, *xi yang shen* 西洋参 in Chinese, *seiyōjin* in Japanese, *seoyangsam* in Korean), a plant native to the northern United States and Canada that takes three to six years to mature. American ginseng is also a true ginseng—containing the signature chemical constituent ginsenosides. American ginseng has a history of medicinal use by Native Americans, and also has a place in traditional Chinese medicine—although the plant is used differently than Asian ginseng, so they cannot be used interchangeably.

You may also run across Siberian ginseng (*Acanthopanacis senticosi Radix et Caulis, ci wu jia* 刺五加). But beware. Although Siberian ginseng can be a useful herb, this is an entirely different species of plant, lacking ginsenosides and most likely dubbed "ginseng" for marketing purposes. Avoid roots or powders labeled "Siberian ginseng" when looking for true ginseng.

Goji Berries

OTHER NAMES: *Lycii Fructus*, lycium fruit, wolfberries, matrimony vine fruit, *gou qi zi* 枸杞子 in Chinese, *kukoshi* in Japanese, or *gugija* in Korean

Goji berries, used in Chinese cooking and herbal medicine for thousands of years, are sweet red berries that grow on a wild bush that blooms between April and October. Similar to raisins, goji berries can be cooked, eaten raw, or brewed into a tea. Goji berries are now widely available not only at Asian markets, but also at natural food stores and even the health food aisles of some regular supermarkets. When shopping, look for dried fruit that still looks plump and avoid any produce that is bright orange-red, which might be an indication of artificial coloring. The fruit is rich in nutrients, such as beta-carotene, thiamine, riboflavin, and vitamin C, as well as other vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and amino acids. Studies have suggested that an element of goji berries can prevent macular degeneration, deter tumors, enhance the immune system, and protect the liver. In traditional Chinese medicine, this herb, which is considered sweet in taste and neutral in temperature, nourishes the Blood and the yin, increases the essence, and improves vision.

Grapes (and Raisins)

OTHER NAMES: varieties of the genus *Vitus*, *pu tao* 葡萄 (fresh) or *pu tao gan* 葡萄干 (dried) in Chinese

Grapes have been consumed for millennia not only as fresh fruit, but also as raisins (dried grapes), juice, wine, vinegar, jams and jellies, and grape seed oil. Different varieties are cultivated around the world, from Italy to China, and the United States to Argentina. Grapes made the news in recent years as an excellent source of the phytochemical resveratrol, which has been linked to such beneficial health effects as increased resistance to cancer, heart disease, and inflammation. From the viewpoint of traditional Chinese medicine, raisins or grapes (considered sweet and slightly sour in flavor and neutral in temperature) enter the Liver, Kidney, and Stomach channels, supplementing the qi and Blood to address weakness. Grapes also generate fluids, counteracting dry mouth and thirst, and promote urination, reducing edema (swelling).

Green Onion

OTHER NAMES: *Allii fistulosi*, scallion, spring onion, bunching onion, Chinese onion, *cong* 葱 in Chinese, *sōhaku* or *negi* in Japanese, *pa* in Korean

The young shoot of a bulb onion, the green onion has been a popular remedy in Asian folk medicine for thousands of years, having been first described about two thousand years ago in the Chinese herbal classic *Divine Farmer's Materia Medica*. In Asian cooking, green onions are used both raw and cooked; they are widely available in most supermarkets. Although the green onion's fresh bulb, called *cong bai* 葱白 by Chinese herbalists, is used to treat the common cold and fight parasitic infections, the entire plant is believed to have medicinal properties. In traditional Chinese medicine, green onion, considered pungent and warming, is often used in conjunction with ginger (see page 33), to cause sweating in the treatment of an attack of exterior Wind-Cold.

Hawthorn Berries

OTHER NAMES: *Crataegi Fructus*, hawthorn fruit, *shan zha* 山楂 in Chinese, *sansa* in Japanese and Korean

Hawthorn berries, which are produced by a tree native to Europe, Asia, and North America, are a tart, bright red fruit used in sweets (such as haw flakes), jams, jellies, juices, and other products. In European herbalism, hawthorn berries have been associated with improving cardiovascular function, an effect supported by a number of scientific studies. In traditional Chinese medicine, hawthorn berries, which are considered sour, sweet, and slightly warm, are used to promote digestion, reduce food stagnation, invigorate Blood, and transform Blood stasis. Caution: If you are pregnant, large doses of this herb should be avoided; check with your doctor or health-care practitioner.

He Shou Wu

OTHER NAMES: *Polygoni multiflori Radix*, fleeceflower, Chinese knotweed, fo ti, *he shou wu* 何首乌 in Chinese, *kashuu* in Japanese, *hasuo* in Korean; we call the herb *he shou wu* here because "fleeceflower" and "knotweed" also refer to a variety of other plants, and its designation as "fo ti" is a misnomer

He shou wu (pronounced "huh show woo") is a root that comes from a perennial flowering vine native to southwestern China, Japan, and Taiwan. You can purchase this herb whole or sliced. Older, larger, and darker roots are considered the highest grade. You may also see the herb in tablet form. *He shou wu* contains lecithin, which aids in fat metabolism and helps lower cholesterol, and a flavonoid called catechin (also in green tea), which has been associated with lowering the risk for stroke, heart failure, cancer, and diabetes. Some studies have suggested that it has antitumor and antibacterial properties, lowers blood pressure, and increases circulation. In traditional Chinese medicine, *he shou wu*, considered bitter, sweet, and astringent in taste and slightly warm in temperature, nourishes the Blood and augments *jing* essence, counteracting some types of dizziness, blurred vision, gray hair, and other signs of aging; relieving sores and swellings; treating symptoms of malaria; relieving some types of constipation; and treating cardiovascular disorders.

Hijiki

See "seaweed."

Honey

OTHER NAMES: *Mel*, *feng mi* 蜂蜜 in Chinese

Honey is a familiar item in both the West and the East, adding a delicious sweetness to many a dish. This golden substance has been used in traditional folk medicine around the world for thousands of years. In traditional Chinese medicine, honey, which is considered neutral in temperature, moistens the Lungs to calm coughing, strengthens the Spleen and Stomach to aid digestion and alleviate pain, and moistens the Intestines to relieve constipation. Modern research supports the view that honey is an effective antiseptic (due to its low water activity), and a spoonful can effectively soothe coughs as effectively as many commercial cough remedies. Caution: Avoid feeding honey to infants, as it can be dangerous for immature intestinal tracts.

Honeysuckle Flowers

OTHER NAMES: *Lonicerae Flos, jin yin hua* 金银花 (literally, "golden silver flower") in Chinese, *kinginka* in Japanese, and *keumeunhwa* in Korean

Honeysuckle flowers come from a vine that blossoms with sweetly scented flowers in the summer and late fall, with petals that change color from white to yellow in a season. The largest number of honeysuckle varieties grow in China, but the plant also appears in Europe and North America. The flowers can be eaten by removing the blossom by hand to suck at the sweet nectar in the center. The flowers have also been used as an ingredient in homeopathic medicine for treating asthma and syphilis. In traditional Chinese medicine, the honeysuckle flower, considered sweet and cold, is used to treat an attack of Wind-Heat with sore throat, and to clear Heat and toxicity in disorders with fever, sores, or diarrhea.

Kiwi Fruit

OTHER NAMES: *Actinidia chinensis/Actinidia deliciosa*, formerly known in English as Chinese gooseberry, melonette, *yang tao* ("sunny peach") or *mihou tao* 猕猴桃 (also known as *qi yi guo* 奇异果 in Chinese) before it was renamed "kiwifruit" or "kiwi fruit" in the 1950s as a New Zealand export

Kiwi fruit is native to southern China, where it was virtually unknown to the West until the early twentieth century. Today, the egg-shaped fruit with a brown skin and sweet green interior is also grown in such countries as Italy, Japan, and the United States. Kiwis are a rich source of vitamins C, A, E, potassium, and fiber, as well as alpha-linoleic acid (an omega-3 essential fatty acid). In the West, kiwis have been linked to such health benefits as reducing the risk of blood clots, warding off asthma, protecting against cancer, and helping to prevent macular degeneration. In traditional Chinese medicine, kiwi fruit, which is considered sweet and sour in flavor and cold in temperature, clears Heat, generates body fluids, counteracts indigestion, and promotes urination.

Kombu

See "seaweed."

Kudzu Root

OTHER NAMES: *Puerariae Radix*, Japanese arrowroot, *ge gen* 葛根 in Chinese, *kakkon* or *kuzuko* (the powdered starch) in Japanese, *chilg* or *kalgeun* in Korean

Kudzu is a plant native to East Asia. A climbing perennial vine, it is noted for its rapid growth in particular climates, especially in the Southern United States, where it has become a monumental pest that can grow some twelve inches a day. Various parts of the plant are edible, including its leaves, flowers, and roots. The white root, which is sold in a powdered form in many Asian markets (try asking for "*kuzuko* powder") and natural food stores, is commonly used as a thickener for cooking. The root is also sold dried as an herb in Chinese herb shops. Studies in the West have suggested kudzu may evoke an aversion to alcohol that may be helpful in the treatment of alcohol addiction. Kudzu has also been linked to control of hypertension. In traditional Chinese medicine, the sweet, pungent, cooling root—mentioned as far back as the ancient text, *Divine Farmer's Materia Medica*—is thought to affect the Spleen and Stomach channels, and is used to treat such ailments as headache, fever, stiffness or pain in the neck and shoulders, certain types of diarrhea, and hypertension. In the language of traditional