

Daikon

Daikon (Japanese for "Big Root") is a member of the radish family and is the often enormous looking white vegetable that only the Japanese and the macrobiotically inclined know how to use. It is however, a potent home remedy that may be easily incorporated into the diet. The simplest way to consume Daikon is to grate it fresh and add a small amount of vinegar or lemon juice to produce a simple condiment that may be consumed with many foods. A pickle that was traditionally prepared in the autumn was the favourite form of preparation by the Japanese whom have since made it famous, although it is also used by Indians, Koreans, Bengalis and Chinese chefs.

Daikon has a pungent flavour like all radishes, and is therefore attributed a cleansing, antibacterial action by Oriental Medicine. The best time to consume such flavours is in the autumn, when the leaves naturally shed and the body is primed to let go of the waste products it accumulated over the prosperous summer. This is the season when the body's chi or energy begins to return to the deeper layers of our being, and is an important time to let go of summer habits and ways of being. The two organs most strongly effected by this flavour that Daikon encapsulates so well are the lungs and the large intestine. It is not surprising therefore to find that Daikon is traditionally used in a similar way to the European Horse Radish for persistent bronchitis and other respiratory tract infections. It also shares a common application for digestive disturbances, but excels at clearing out rotten stagnant matter from the colon. Macrobiotic chefs claim that it is a wonderful aid for dissolving fatty deposits throughout the body that have arisen from excessive animal protein intake.

The best way to experience the many healing benefits of this plant however, is to try out some of the Macrobiotic recipes I have collected below. A word of warning however: during my years as a Shiatsu practitioner before studying acupuncture I practised macrobotics quite strictly and therefore always had some Daikon in the fridge ready at hand. Both the clients whom I instructed to do the same, and my flatmates of the time all complained bitterly about the rather strong odour that emerges after a few days from such pickles that is somewhat similar to a wet dog on a humid day! My revised advice is therefore thus: prepare it fresh and eat it while it still smells like radish, avoid the wet-dog effect at all costs!

Macrobiotic Daikon Recipes

Drink No. 1 - Sweating Tea: May reduce a fever by inducing sweating. Mix 1/2 cup grated fresh daikon with 1 & 1/4 teaspoon grated ginger. Pour hot bancha tea over this mixture, stir, and drink while hot.

Drink No. 2 - Fluid Reduction Tea: To induce urination. Use a piece of cheesecloth to squeeze the juice from the grated daikon. Mix 2 tablespoons of this juice with 6 tablespoons of hot water to which a pinch of sea salt has been added. Boil this mixture

and drink only once a day. Do not use this preparation more than three consecutive days without proper supervision, and never use it without first boiling.

Drink No. 3 - Metabolic Tea : To help dissolve fat and mucus. In a teacup, place 1 tablespoon fresh grated daikon and a few drops of tamari soy sauce . Pour hot bancha tea over mixture and drink. It is most effective when taken just before sleeping. Do not use this drink longer than one week unless otherwise advised by an experienced macrobiotic counselor.

Drink No. 4 - Asthma Tea: (Daikon Juice with Ginger and Honey) To open the lungs and improve breathing. Combine the juices of 1 cup of daikon and 2 tbl spoons of ginger in a small saucepan and warm over medium heat (do not boil). Sweeten with honey. Drink, hot, once a day.

Daikon, when finely grated, yields a surprising amount of juice (the fresher the vegetable, the more juice it yields).

Drink No. 5 - Weight loss Tea: To eliminate excessive fats and help dissolve hardening accumulation in the intestines. Grate 1 tablespoon of raw daikon and carrot. Cook in 2 cups of water for 5-8 minutes with a pinch of sea salt or 7-10 drops of tamari soy sauce. 1/2 cup chopped wood-ear mushrooms may be added to this recipe to enhance its effect.

Cold Relief Soup (Daikon, Scallion and Ginger) To quickly assist in the symptoms of colds and flu relief.

1 medium daikon, coarsely chopped (about 2 cups)

6 scallions

1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger

Sea salt to taste

Place the daikon and 2 cups water in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, cover the pan and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove all but the white heads of the scallions (reserve the greens for another use) and finely slice them. Add the scallions and ginger to the daikon. Lightly season with sea salt and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes, or until the water has reduced by about one third. Serve hot.

Daikon leaf Hip Bath - Used to warm the body and treat various disorders of the skin and female reproductive organs. Also helpful in drawing odors and excessive oils from the body. Dry fresh daikon leaves in the shade, away from direct sunlight, until they turn brown and brittle. (If daikon leaves are unavailable, turnip greens may be substituted.) Boil 4-5 bunches of the leaves in 4-5 quarts water until the water turns brown. Stir in a handful of sea salt and use in one of the following ways:

1. Dip cotton linen into the hot liquid and wring lightly. Apply to the affected area repeatedly, until the skin becomes completely red.
2. Women experiencing problems in their sexual organs should sit in a hot bath to which

the daikon leaves liquid described above with the addition of 1 handful of sea salt has been added. The water should come to waist level, with the upper portion of the body covered with a towel. Remain in the water until the whole body becomes warm and sweating begins. This generally takes about 10 minutes. Repeat as needed, up to ten days. Following the bath, douche with warm bancha tea, a very small pinch of salt, and juice of half a lemon.

*Here are three methods to juice daikon:

1. Finely grate the daikon and place it in a shallow bowl. Using your fingertips, press out the juice into a second bowl.
2. Finely grate the daikon, place it in a thin cotton towel or cheesecloth and squeeze out the juice.
3. Run the daikon through a juicing machine.

** To make ginger juice, place finely grated fresh ginger in the palm of your hand and squeeze to extract the juice. (The fresher the ginger, the more juice it yields. If the ginger is old and withered, you can plump it in water for 1 hour before grating.)

Thanks to all the Macrobiotic Chefs whose recipes are included.

- The Barefoot Doctor