

Seasonal Guide  
Summer Edition

# Fire Element

Summer

Seasonal Rituals

Shen Space



# Exploring the *macrocosm* through the *microcosm*

The seasons have long been regarded as a compass for self-reflection, the unending cycles of nature a reminder that we are guided by a system of order and a natural rhythm that exists outside of ourselves. Each season is imbued with an invitation, an invitation to rest, to vision, to expand, or to retreat. Let us take these cues from nature, the ultimate surrender to the movements of the earth on its axis, a gentle guide back to our centre. Like the ebb and flow of the sun, we too can synchronise with the rhythm of the seasons.

We have long been aware of the connection between humans and nature – we share a relationship that is deeply interdependent and interconnected.

Chinese Medicine understands that we are intrinsically connected with the environment around us and foundational to this understanding is the five elements. Just as you see the elements of nature exist around us, so too do they exist within us.

Part of Chinese Medicine is understanding and honouring the cycles and rhythms of nature, reflected in the shifting of the seasons. Each season is connected to a specific element, embodying its unique qualities and natural movement of Qi.

When we harmonise our lives with these elements, we become attuned to both the Earth's and our body's natural rhythms.

The Fire element of Summer is birthed from Wood and the season of Spring. Summer is when Yang is in its fullest expression and we are given the opportunity to witness nature and ourselves expand into our fullest potential. Summer is a time of expansion, abundance, vitality, growth and connection. Everything is in full bloom after a slow and gentle unfurling of Spring.

Within Five Element theory of Chinese Medicine Summer is associated with the Fire Element and the energetics of the Heart and Small Intestine organs. These organs govern warmth, connection, passion and joy.

Through embodying the wisdom of Chinese Medicine during Summer through simple lifestyle practices we can bring into balance the Fire Element, calming the mind and spirit or 'Shen' It is through this constant observance and mirroring of nature, its cycles and seasons, that we are able to feel into our most aligned and vibrant selves.

FIRE  
EARTH  
METAL  
WATER  
WOOD

SEASON

Summer

ELEMENT

Fire

YIN  
ORGAN

Heart

YANG  
ORGAN

Pericardium

EMOTION

Joy

SPIRIT

Shen

CLIMATE

Heat

TASTE

Bitter

SENSE

Taste

COLOUR

Red

FEELING

Expansion

## THE FIRE ELEMENT - HEART & PERICARDIUM

In Summer we have the opportunity to live life to its fullest potential, drawing upon the energy of the Wood Element and the gentle unfurling of Spring, as we embrace the expansive warmth of the Fire Element. When in balance the Fire Element allows us to be open-hearted and give and receive love effortlessly with a peaceful and calm mind. Summer is the perfect time to heal the Heart by connecting with loved ones and moving on from old wounds.

According to Chinese Medicine the Fire element is associated with the Heart/Small Intestine meridian systems. The Heart is considered the Emperor of our body, sitting majestically in the centre of the chest and influencing all other organs by circulating blood as well as serving as the centre of consciousness, being home to the Shen. Shen is our Spirit or consciousness, the wisdom that we cultivate and express to the world. When we practice acceptance, non-attachment, love, compassion and kindness we consider this to be an expression of Shen. The Small Intestine is responsible for absorption of nutrients and discerning the pure from the impure, acting as the centre of our intuition.

During summer it is easy for excess Heat to affect the Heart and Small Intestine resulting in insomnia, irritability or other symptoms. If the Heart specifically is out of balance there may be emotional imbalances, low self-confidence, a disconnection to self and others, lack of self-awareness or disturbed sleep. This can also happen when we are not following our passions or listening to our intuition. If the Small intestine loses its ability to discern between what is good and what is not we may make poor decisions and allow things into our life that may be harmful to our Spirit.

When the Heart Shen is expressed harmoniously however we experience clear consciousness, self-awareness, a strong sense of self, balanced emotions and peaceful sleep. The emotion connected to the Heart is joy, experiencing this emotion in its purest form nourishes the Heart. Conversely when there is a lack of joy in our lives this directly impacts the Heart, whilst depletion of Heart Fire can also leave us feeling apathetic or depressed. Depletion of the Heart can affect sleep, dreams, memory, concentration and the ability to connect with others. When there is an excess of Heart Fire, which can occur in Summer that joy can expand beyond its capacity and feel agitated or restless.

Return is the movement of the Tao.

Yielding is the way of the Tao.

All things are born of being.

Being is born of non-being.

Tao Te Ching

## PRACTICES FOR SUMMER

Just as the fire element begins to extend its energy upwards and outward in Nature, we can nourish and support this energetic shift within ourselves.

### [01] RISE EARLY

Wake earlier in the morning and embrace the sun for warmth and nourishment – this is a perfect time to get outside and get some movement in before the heat of the day sets in.

### [02] NATURE

Seek out bodies of water to keep cool and balance the Fire element. Ocean and fresh water swims are the perfect way to refresh.

### [03] CONNECTION

Honour your heart with activities that bring you joy, connection and a feeling of expansiveness.

### [04] MOVEMENT

Keep your body moving in ways that feel good for you - whether that's keeping up with your regular exercise routine or incorporating some slower mindful practices such as restorative yoga or Qigong

### [05] ACUPUNCTURE

Stay in flow with regular acupuncture. This can be a perfect opportunity to rest during a time that is so often busy and difficult to take time for yourself.

### [06] REST

Rest at midday when Yang energy is at its peak. From 11am - 1pm is the time of the Heart, so perfect to rest and restore. It's also a nice reminder to slow down and take some time for yourself during a season of constant connection and activity.

### [07] HYDRATION

Stay hydrated with plenty of spring water and hydrating foods. Excess Fire and Heat can impact body fluids so it's important to replenish fluids. Adding some lemon, cucumber or mint to your water can help you to drink more water and herbal teas such as peppermint, green and chrysanthemum have cooling properties.

## SUMMER FOOD ENERGETICS

Chinese medicine nutrition doesn't just think about macro and micronutrients but rather the energetics of food, meaning that each food carries unique qualities and thermal natures. With this knowledge we can eat in a way that is specific to our individual constitution as well as the seasonal shifts. It's important to note that this is a general guide and understanding your own dietary needs and constitution should also be considered.

As general guidance I recommend to simply eat what it in season around you, as you will notice that nature perfectly provides what is most beneficial for us at the time. Heading to the farmers market or your local organic grocer is the easiest way to tap into what is growing locally around you.

It is important to note the process of gently transitioning through the seasons. so these recommendations can be slowly integrated into your daily routine or as small additions to your diet whilst still focusing on a base of grounding and nourishing meals.

As we move from the cleansing energy of Spring to the expansive energy of summer consuming foods that protect the Yin and Fluids, support digestion and calm the mind is the most beneficial. These are some foods and dietary practice that energetically align with the season of Spring.

## SUMMER FOODS

### {01} COOLING, YIN FOODS

the heat of summer can impact the Body Fluids and Yin, so by incorporating cooling and moistening Yin foods we can help to disperse Heat and replenish body fluids. Foods such as lettuce, cucumber, fresh herbs and seafood are cooling and hydrating in nature.

### {02} BITTER, PUNGENT FOODS

In Chinese Medicine theory each flavour impacts specific organ systems. Incorporating more bitter foods can have a harmonising effect on the Heart & Small Intestine. Bitter foods such as rocket, dandelion and radish are perfect additions to meals to balance the Fire Element.

### {03} COOKING METHODS

As we transition into summer you can begin to incorporate more fresh foods and use cooking methods such as lightly steaming, sautéing or grilling. Whilst you may be inclined to eat more raw foods during summer too much raw or cold food can still be damaging to the digestion and as coldness causes contraction and stagnation. Its still important to limit ice cold drinks or foods to protect the digestive Fire of the Spleen and Stomach, and incorporate some raw foods as a side to your meal rather than the main component.

### {04} FOODS TO AVOID

Summer is an important time to avoid excessively heating foods such as greasy, fried foods, spicy foods as well as excess coffee and alcohol. Heavy meals can also cause sluggishness so focus on eating regular, light meals.

## VEGETABLES

Bok Choy  
Cucumber  
Mushrooms  
Snow Peas  
Seaweed  
Lettuce  
Rocket  
Dandelion  
Mung Beans  
Lotus Root  
Bitter melon  
Celery

## FRUIT

Berries  
Stone fruit  
Melon  
Papaya  
Lemon

## GRAINS

Quinoa  
Brown rice  
Buckwheat  
Millet  
Oats

## PROTEIN

Fish/Seafood  
Chicken  
Duck  
Eggs  
Tofu

## HEALTHY FATS

Butter  
Olive oil  
Sesame oil

## FERMENTED FOODS

Sauerkraut  
Miso  
Kvass  
Kombucha

## TEA/HERBS

Matcha  
Green Tea  
Nettle  
Peppermint  
Goji  
Schisandra  
Chlorella  
Dill  
Coriander  
Parsley  
Chrysanthemum  
Chamomile