

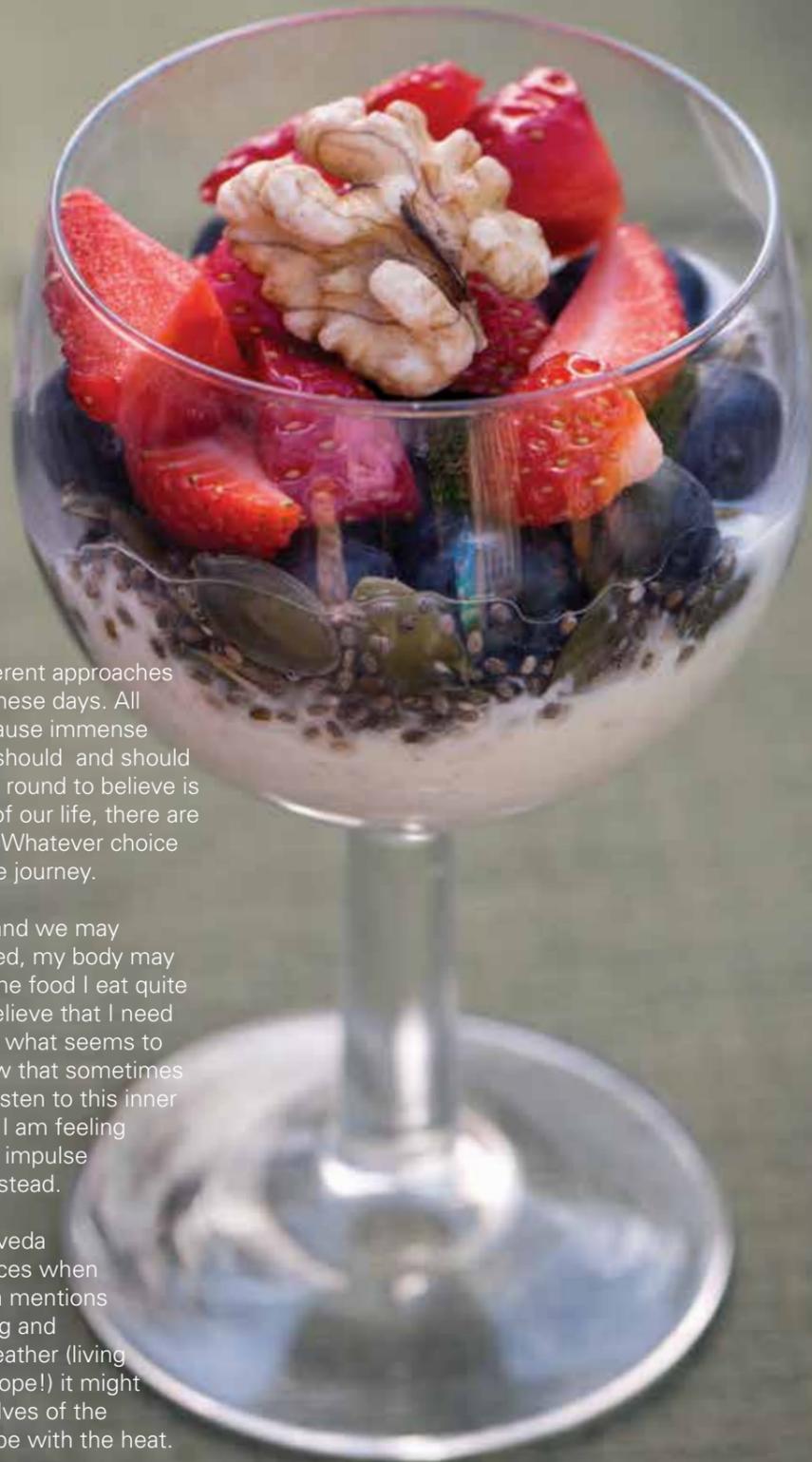
# Seasonal nutrition

Food groups and recipes from Mamta Nanda

There are so many different approaches to nutrition and food these days. All this information can cause immense confusion about what we should and should not eat. What I am coming round to believe is that just as in other areas of our life, there are no right or wrong choices. Whatever choice we make will shape our life journey.

Each one of us is unique, and we may need different foods. Indeed, my body may absorb the nutrition from the food I eat quite differently to yours. So I believe that I need to eat what I feel drawn to what seems to agree with my body. I know that sometimes it can be really difficult to listen to this inner guidance, especially when I am feeling stressed and give in to the impulse to satisfy my taste buds instead.

As I grew up in India, Ayurveda influences a lot of my choices when it comes to food. Ayurveda mentions two types of food: warming and cooling. With the warm weather (living in the UK we can always hope!) it might be helpful to remind ourselves of the cooling food choices to cope with the heat.



**Opposite page Left:**  
Breakfast berries with oats, seeds and yoghurt

**This page right:**  
Watermelon & watercress salad

**This page top right:**  
Indian Lassi

Some cooling foods are cucumber, mint and yogurt. I find eating cucumber or watermelon helps quench my thirst in the hot weather and I do not end up drinking so much water that I feel bloated. Any natural food with high water content helps. Eating raw foods can be good for us in summer.

I prefer to eat seasonal foods when possible. I love to make a simple salad: watermelon and watercress cut up and served together is delicious. I usually eat fruit first thing in the morning or before a meal as fruit needs to go through our system much more quickly than other foods.

Lassi is an Indian drink that can be nourishing and cooling in hot weather. The salted version is better than the sweet one as salt is needed by our body in the hot weather. To make a traditional Indian Lassi, blend ½ cup yogurt with some mint leaves, some salt, cumin seeds, and 1 cup water, then enjoy.

Apparently our digestive ability is at its peak around midday. So having the largest meal of the day at around this time makes it easier to digest. Food eaten late at night is not easy for the body to digest. It can affect the quality of our sleep.



Oats provide a good source of energy, and as a slow-releasing carbohydrate, they will benefit you for several hours after eating. With the berry season upon us, I am really looking forward to enjoying this recipe for breakfast:

Soak two tablespoons of rolled oats in some yogurt (I prefer natural live yogurt) or fresh fruit juice, nut milk or water – you can choose the liquid of your preference.



You can also use oat groats instead of rolled oats, but these need to be soaked in warm water to soften. Other grains will also work just as well, I've used wheat and might try quinoa too, so experiment as well - just make sure the grain can soften in liquid and doesn't need to be boiled before eating. In addition to the grain, soak some seeds in water – I like pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, chia or flax seeds.

I soak these ingredients the night before I want to eat them. In the morning I discard the water that they have been soaking in and combine the seeds with the soaked oats. I then add 1 chopped banana with other fruit – berries, peaches or nectarines. Indian alphonso mango – if you can get it from an Indian store – can taste divine in this dish!

Swiss muesli was traditionally made like this by soaking oats overnight. Soaking the dried food products helps increase the water content in these foods and helps make them easier to digest and absorb. Going back to the traditional ways of preparing food can be very helpful. When I was growing up I did not understand why things were done the way they were done at home by my mother. I started moving away from some of these practices, such as soaking beans, lentils or rice for a few hours before cooking them, letting the dough rest for a few hours before making bread. Indeed sometimes the demands of our modern lifestyle can get in the way of these traditional ways of preparing food. With a little bit of planning I find it easy to make healthier food choices that nourish my body. The thought of using my Reiki hands to prepare the food that I am going to eat, and the thought that I am providing for my friends and family is very motivating, I'm sure it adds an extra benefit to the meal! ■