Easy Alkalinity:
Classic Macrobiotic Recipes for Healthy Minerals

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Alkaline blood is essential for enduring health. Our body doesn’t produce its own alkalinity. To maintain healthy, alkaline blood we need to provide minerals through whole foods on a daily basis. Minerals are used up and must be replaced through our diet or else the body will have to strip them from the reserves in our bones. This will cause osteoporosis over time. We can keep our blood naturally alkaline by daily eating plant foods that are rich in minerals. The following simple macrobiotic recipes support blood alkalinity when used on a regular basis.

Vegetables
Vegetables are a treasure-trove of minerals. Many people feel that eating vegetables raw is best, but when we cook them, their volume is condensed, and their mineral content becomes more concentrated. We will get more minerals per serving from cooked vegetables than from raw.

Quickly Boiled Leafy Greens
This classic “dark leafy greens” dish is a powerhouse of minerals and chlorophyll.

Kale, collards, watercress, mustard greens, dandelion greens, carrot tops, Chinese cabbage, etc.

Wash and slice any of the above vegetables. Place vegetables in a small amount of rapidly boiling water, about one-half inch. Boil uncovered for two to three minutes, depending on the texture of the vegetables. Transfer quickly to a bamboo basket or colander and spread out so that the steam escapes and the vegetables don’t over cook.

The vegetables should be a bright green color and crispy. Wait until the water is fully boiling before you put in the vegetables. Do not cover the pot with a lid or the greens will lose their bright green color. You may lightly sprinkle shoyu/soy sauce over the greens after they have cooled. Serve them plain or add a few drops of umeboshi vinegar.

Cooked Salad
Properly boiled vegetables in blanched salads have a crispy, sweet taste that is delicious, appetizing and
refreshing. For those who find raw vegetables hard to digest or too cooling, a boiled salad is a great way to take lightly prepared vegetables. There are countless vegetable combinations possible. Here is one of them:

1/4 head green cabbage, cut in thin slices
1/2 carrot cut in thin diagonal matchsticks
1 stalk broccoli, cut into bite-size florets
3 to 4 slices red onion, cut in 1/4" rounds (separate the rings)
Umeboshi vinegar
1 to 2 quarts water

Bring water to a rolling boil over high heat. Add one to two handfuls of cabbage. Do not add too much cabbage at once or the water temperature will drop too much to cook quickly. Cook over high heat until the cabbage becomes brightly colored and just tender. Remove with a skimmer and spread out in a thin layer on a serving plate to cool. As the water draining off, tilt the plate and pour the water back into the cooking pot. Cook the carrots the same as the cabbage, then the broccoli. Arrange them attractively on top of the cabbage. Cook the red onion until tender and place in a small bowl. Sprinkle with umeboshi vinegar and allow to "rest" until a pink color returns. Arrange on the plate with the other vegetables. Serve immediately.

doesn't take heaping bowls of them to get lots of minerals. Even one tablespoon of cooked sea vegetables is packed with minerals.

Arame and Onions

2 cups dry arame
2 medium or 1 large yellow onion, sliced into half moons
1 teaspoon light sesame oil
pinch sea salt
2 to 3 tablespoons shoyu (natural soy sauce)

Rinse the arame, drain, and allow to sit until soft. Do not let the arame soak in water. Cut yellow onions into thin half moons. Heat sesame oil in a large skillet. Sauté onions for 5 to 10 minutes, or until transparent. Layer the softened arame on top of the onions. Add enough water to cover the onions and arame. Bring to a boil, reduce flame, and simmer for 30 to 40 minutes. Add shoyu. Cover and continue cooking for another 10 minutes or until all liquid is absorbed. Mix arame and onions together. Serve.

Variation: A few minutes before the cooking is finished add 2 teaspoons of ginger juice from freshly grated ginger, and 1/2 teaspoon of lemon zest (grated lemon peel). Cover pot and continue to cook for a few more minutes or until all liquid has cooked away.

Sea Vegetables

You can’t get more mineral-rich plant food than sea vegetables! Now, there is such a variety available, and it

Hiziki with Sweet Corn

1/2 cup dried hiziki, soaked 20 to 30 minutes
2 teaspoons sesame oil
1 cup onions, sliced in half moons
spring water (you may use the hiziki soaking water if it doesn’t taste too salty)
1 to 2 tablespoons shoyu
2 cups fresh sweet corn

Oil a frying pan and heat it. Sauté the onions for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring to cook evenly. Add the hiziki and continue to sauté with onions. Add enough water to cover half way up the side of the hiziki and onions. Bring to a boil without a cover, then turn heat to medium-low, and simmer for 20 minutes. Add the corn on top and then add the shoyu to taste. Simmer for 15 to 20 minutes and then mix. Continue to cook until the liquid has evaporated.

Soups

Macrobiotic soups are alkaline-potent with minerals, especially when they include a small amount of seaweed like kombu or wakame. Minerals dissolved in water are easily assimilated, so soups are another great way to fortify the blood.

“Boom Broth” (Shiitake-Kombu Broth)

I call this popular recipe “boom broth” because it is rich with minerals and it is supportive of healthy kidney function. The kidneys maintain the mineral concentration of the blood.

3 shiitake mushrooms
1, 4-inch strip kombu, dusted off with a slightly moistened cloth
4 cups water
3 to 4 tablespoons shoyu (or to taste)

Soak kombu and shiitake in the 4 cups of water for 20 minutes. Gradually bring water to a boil, but before the water boils, remove the kombu. It can be saved to make a kombu condiment, Shio Kombu.

Let the water come to a boil with the shiitake. Reduce heat and simmer for

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15 minutes. Add shoyu and allow to simmer for 5 to 10 more minutes. Taste for seasoning. If too light, add more shoyu and continue to simmer for 5 more minutes. If too salty, dilute with water. Delicious poured over soba or udon noodles in a bowl. Garnish with chopped scallions, parsley, chives, or watercress.

**Vegetable-Wakame Soup Seasoned with Miso (Miso Soup)**

I have started to refer to miso soup as "vegetable-wakame soup seasoned with miso" after many people told me that their miso soup was basically a mug of hot water with a spoonful of miso stirred into it. Traditional miso soup contains vegetables plus a little wakame. There are countless combinations of vegetables and other ingredients that can be part of a miso soup. Here is an all-time favorite:

**Daikon-Wakame Miso Soup**

4-inch daikon, cut in half moons (or quarter moons for a larger daikon)
5-inch strip wakame
1 medium onion, diced
5 cups water
1 heaping tablespoon barley miso
1 green onion slice in thin rounds for garnish

Place wakame in a bowl and cover with water for about 5 minutes or until tender. Cut the "ruffle" from the spine of the wakame. Dice the "ruffle" into 1/2-inch pieces. Reserve. Mince the wakame spine into fine pieces.

Place the onion, daikon, and wakame spine in the soup pot. Cover with water. Cook until tender.

Add soaking water from wakame, wakame, and remaining water. Simmer together another 10 to 15 minutes.

Remove a little of the soup stock to a bowl and dilute the miso. Add back to soup. Cook an additional 5 to 7 minutes over low heat. The surface of the soup should not boil, but remain smooth. Garnish with chopped green onion after placing in each soup bowl.

**Condiments**

There are many different condiments that can be used in a macrobiotic meal. Some of them are salt-based like the famous "gomasio" sesame salt, so use them lightly to sprinkle rather than heap on whole grains. Here are some that don't use added salt, but still provide a treasure trove of minerals:

**Goma-Wakame (Sesame-Wakame) Powder**

4 to 5 strips of wakame, about 10 inches long (see note below)
1 cup white sesame seeds

Place unwashed wakame on the baking sheet and place in the oven. Set the oven at 350°F and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until the kombu becomes dark and crispy but not burned or charred. Remove the kombu and allow it to cool slightly. Crumble the roasted kombu in your fingers and let it drop into a suribachi (see next page). Slowly grind the kombu with a steady circular motion of the pestle until it becomes a fine powder. Pour into a jar or container. Sprinkle over cooked whole grains.

**Kombu Powder**

4 to 5 strips of kombu, about 10 to 12 inches long

Place unwashed kombu on the baking sheet and place in the oven. Set the oven at 350°F and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until the kombu becomes dark and crispy but not burned or charred. While the wakame is baking, wash and drain the sesame seeds. Place the sesame seeds in the skillet and roast over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with the rice paddle to prevent burning. Shake the skillet from time to time so that the seeds roast evenly. When the seeds give off a nutty fragrance, darken in color, and begin to pop, crush a seed between your thumb and index finger. If it crushes easily, the seeds are done. If not, continue to roast a little longer. When the seeds are done, pour them into the bowl.

Remove the wakame from the oven and use your fingers to crumble it into a suribachi (see next page). Then slowly grind the wakame with a steady circular motion of the pestle until it becomes a fine powder. Pour the roasted seeds into the suribachi and grind together with the powdered wakame until the seeds are half crushed. Allow to cool before pouring into a jar or container.

**Umeboshi: King of Alkaline-Forming Foods**

In Japan, umeboshi has long been regarded for its alkaline-forming factors. Theume plum is dried for awhile then mixed with sea salt and purple shiso leaves. It is then allowed to pickle under pressure for a long time. The purple shiso plant is the richest source of iron in the plant kingdom. It contains more iron than beef. Maybe this is why it is referred to as "beefsteak" leaf in English. Purple shiso can be easily grown for use in cooking and salads.
Using a Suribachi

A suribachi is a ceramic bowl with unglazed grooves. A suricogi is a wooden pestle. Together, they resemble a mortar and pestle and are used to blend food. Suribachi come in various sizes. Use a size large enough so the ingredients do not spill as you grind.

Placement of the bowl—Place the bowl in one of three places: On the floor in a corner of the room, kneel and sit on your heels and wedge the bowl firmly into the corner with your knees; on you lap as you sit in a chair; or on a table at a good working height, the suribachi placed on a towel to avoid slipping.

Holding the suricogi—Hole suricogi (pestle) with both hands, one near the bottom and one near the top. The one near the bottom guides the suricogi all around the bowl, crushing and blending ingredients. The one near the top holds the top of the suricogi as still as possible.

Grinding—Vary the strength of grinding depending on the food being ground, and the placement of the bowl. Grind lightly when crushing seeds or mixing ingredients. Grind strongly when grinding salt or when making a fine mixture. It is easy to grind strongly when the bowl is on the floor and wedged into a corner.

Cleaning—An easy way to clean all those grooves is to pour hot water or broth around bowl to loosen clinging ingredients. Remove and add to soup. Then wash bowl in clean water with a vegetable brush; avoid soap.

Umeboshi can be used in a variety of ways to add a delicious tang to salad dressings, sauces and other dishes. Be wise in your use of it, since it is salty and can be over-consumed. Umeboshi is famous as an ingredient in alkaline-forming special drinks such as the traditional Ume-Sho-Kuzu which is popular as a digestive aid.

Umeboshi Dressing

2 umeboshi plums
1/2 teaspoon minced yellow onion or 1 teaspoon chopped scallion
1/2 teaspoon sesame oil
1/2 cup sprinkle water

Puree the umeboshi and onion in a suribachi. Heat the oil for about 1 minute and add it to the other ingredients. Add the water and mix well.

Ume-Sho-Kuzu

2 tablespoons cold water
1 umeboshi plum
1-1/2 to 2 cups water
5 to 6 drops ginger juice
1 to 3 teaspoons shoyu

Dissolve a heaping teaspoon of kuzu into two tablespoons of cold water. Remove the pit from one umeboshi plum, then crush the meat. Add 1-1/2 to 2 cups of water to these ingredients and bring to a boil. Add 5 to 6 drops of ginger juice from freshly grated ginger. Boil the preparation gently until it is more or less transparent. Add 1 to 3 teaspoons of shoyu, and gently boil a little longer. Serve.

*Reprinted from Basic Macrobiotic Cooking by Julia Ferré

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