



Merrill Page

The Energetics of Winter Foods - Meat

“Thank you for my Stanford degree. Now can I go cook at the health food store?” It was my first summer out of college. And that’s about how it went. I was free.

‘A Market’ in Newport, RI was still in the corner of the shopping plaza just next to the old Tennis Hall of Fame and within walking distance from our house. They had a little kitchen upstairs, and each day served homemade muffins and soup. This summer their cook was on sabbatical, and they were looking for someone to fill her shoes. So for \$8.27/hr, I got to be Queen of the Kitchen. It was mine and mine alone. Of course, I would come to learn in little time that being a real queen is a humbling experience filled with great responsibility and tiring, detailed tasks. I would be the one who imagined, created, prepped, cooked, cleaned and served at least 2 kinds of muffins and soup every day. Work started at 6 am and ended at 1 pm.

In those days, I was vegan and made only vegetable broths. Now, I would call myself a carnivore and I default mostly to bone broth. After many years of living and breathing the vegan (then vegetarian) philosophy and lifestyle, I have come to call meat a superfood and feel graced by what it has done for my metabolism, digestion, energy levels, blood and fertility. I have learned to move in fluid and cyclical relationship to it, meat and bones,

meaning there are times when I don’t want animal products and will go without them for days, weeks, or months. But when I am approaching my monthly cycle, want to conceive a child, pregnant and preparing to give birth, recovering from giving birth, feeling deficient or cold, or in Winter, I find I want and benefit from bone broth and wild meat (venison, buffalo, organic cow, rabbit, salmon, etc).

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, for example, different meats nourish us differently. Foods are assessed according to their energetic influences, rather than nutritional content such as calories, carbohydrates or vitamin content. They look at the relationship of the food to an individual’s internal climate, and how the external climate or seasons play into one’s selection of food. Preparation too, makes a difference in the food’s energy and how the food will be received. Stewing and baking concentrate the potency and create more warmth, where raw food or sauté’s keep it light and cooler.

More specifically, pork, in this system, is harmonious with the spleen and stomach meridians and is used to nourish the entire “earth” system, from spiritual energy, down into the physical body. Red meat such as lamb and beef are warming and to be taken when cold, deficient symptoms are presenting. Chicken and rabbit, in contrast, are colder meats and more acceptable in warm conditions.

As someone who has so completely rejected certain types of food and filtered out so many options, I have come to appreciate the nuance, the art, and the science of systems such as Ayurveda and Chinese Medicine. They have taught me to embrace and understand how and why I feel good sometimes, when I eat meat. Or respond well to dairy from time to time. When we look at the holistic, energetic picture of food categories and specific foods, and include our internal ecology within it, we come to see how moving in sync with seasonal changes and choices really is a part of the Big Medicine.

*If eating meat feels spiritually or emotionally unaligned with where you are now, you might simply consider that this could shift if/when your physical needs shift (as in some of the examples named above). If you don’t have access to clean, organic, kosher options, and want meat, you might consider the healing power of prayer to help your body receive and process whatever it is you do have access to at the time. 🍷



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