



News Spring 2016

Dear Practitioner,

2016, the year of the Fire Monkey, promises to be an exciting and dynamic year. We will be hanging on for the ride!

We have been getting a very enthusiastic response to our new line of essential oils, **Alchemica Botanica**, which are exclusively derived from common herbs in the Chinese *materia medica*. If you use essential oils and are trained in Chinese herbs, you will enjoy using these high quality oils.

Since this is our Spring newsletter we have an interesting paper on the gallbladder. It is both a *fu* (bowel) and a “curious organ.” There is a lot to digest when it comes to understanding the gallbladder!

Treating Children with Chinese Medicine is a big topic that we touch on in this newsletter. We hope that you will retain this summary of some of the special considerations to bear in mind when treating children. A pediatric practice can be rewarding. Supporting parents’ objective of providing the healthiest possible foundation for their children will really pay off as the children mature.

We are pleased to share more food wisdom from Andrew Serman. May it help you guide your patients to healthy food choices and using food as medicine.

It is great to see more and more positive articles in the media about acupuncture and herbal medicines. The healing that we offer as practitioners of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine has a fantastic potential to transform people’s lives in a positive way. Please be encouraged to send in and share articles to help spread the word about our medicine. Support your state professional AOM association and encourage your colleagues to be members. It is critical that we are engaged on all levels in order to help create a better future for our profession as well as the way our medicine in this country can affect future generations.

We greatly appreciate your business and support. We appreciate all of your communication, comments and feedback. We are committed to serving you and our profession.

John Scott, DOM and Lorena Monda, DOM

A “Curious Organ”

BY JAKE SCHMALZRIEDT, DOM

(An expanded version of this article with acupuncture point and dietary recommendations is available on our website, www.gfcherbs.com)

The gallbladder is a pear-shaped organ that is part of the biliary system. It is located in the upper right quadrant of the abdomen and sits directly beneath the right lobe of the liver. The gallbladder can appear, on average, 8 cm in length and 4 cm in diameter when filled with bile, and can store roughly 35-50ml of bile when full. The gallbladder stores bile produced by the liver. When the body senses the presence of fat in the digestive tract, a hormone called cholecystokinin is released from the small intestine and signals the gallbladder to discharge the bile into the duodenum in order to assist with fat digestion. Bile emulsifies fat, breaking it down

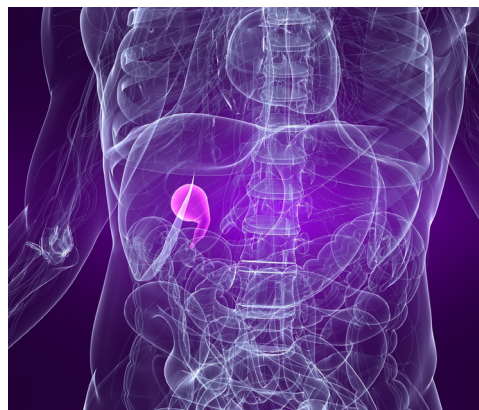
into smaller globules in order to increase surface area. This allows other enzymes, mainly from the pancreas, to digest the fat more easily.

According to Oriental Medicine (OM), the gallbladder is considered both a *fu* (yang / bowel) organ as well as an extraordinary or curious organ. It has characteristics of both a *zang* (yin) organ and a *fu* (yang) organ. Its hollow structure makes it resemble other yang organs. But unlike other *fu*, the gallbladder is never directly in contact with the exterior or with food or waste. Functionally, it resembles a yin organ, storing a pure fluid (bile); yet it is unlike the other *zang* in that it does not itself produce a pure fluid. The gallbladder is interiorly-exteriorly paired with the liver, and the logic of this pairing is as easy to see as with the kidney and the urinary bladder. But unlike the urinary bladder, which receives waste material from the kidney to be discharged to the exterior, the gallbladder receives only pure fluid from its yin

organ. Being the only yang organ that does not transport impure substances, it is thus also classified as a “curious organ.”

The gallbladder is also seen as a pivot, a turning point for new beginnings and new stages of life. This pivot, or hinge, is discussed in the *Su Wen*, chapter 9. The *shaoyang* stage is the turning place, alternating between heat and cold; and the hinge between the exterior of the body and the interior. The gallbladder is between *zang* and *fu*, between yin and yang. It is yin as it receives and stores the bile from the liver, and yang as it releases bile into the duodenum.

FUNCTIONS OF THE GALLBLADDER IN OM



The main function of the gallbladder is to store bile produced by the liver. This primary function is the same as defined by Western medicine and as previously discussed. Bile, known as the “central essence,” is important to the body. In the

Nan Jing, chapter 49, it states that bile is full of essences and when it leaves the gallbladder it does not leave the body. In fact, modern medicine has determined that 95% of the bile gets reabsorbed in the ileum.

The gallbladder has its own unique mental activities and emotional characteristics associated with it. It is commonly stated that the gallbladder is responsible for decision making, judgment, and courage. As stated in the *Su Wen*, chapter 8, “the gallbladder is responsible for what is exact and just; determination and decision stem from it.” This is more than just making good decisions. It is the behavior within your environment and making the just and appropriate decisions in relation. It is about an individual connecting to guiding principles that they can observe and live by, and about using those principles to make good life decisions. The gallbladder also provides courage and initiative in making decisions. When the gallbladder is deficient, a lack of courage, lack of initiative, and lack of assertiveness are seen. This is often accompanied with timidity and poor self-image. This lack of courage is not necessarily a form of cowardice; rather it is seen as not being forthcoming about feelings, opinions, and emotions. The gallbladder, as a pivot, can also be seen as the hesitation between courage and fear.

Being easily startled and a general feeling of fear, especially in regards to decision-making, are also emotions of the gallbladder and associated with gallbladder insufficiency; specifically, being fearful and prone to panic about choices or outcomes of choices. The gallbladder is an emotionally charged organ and can easily be affected by events or the surrounding environment. A quick return to normal after a sudden physical or emotional shock represents a strong gallbladder.

When the gallbladder is in balance, it is able to provide an

anchor, a base, for the process of deliberation. Decisions made with a strong gallbladder are clear and decisive, thought is acute and focused, and action is accurate and resolute. The gallbladder is able to maintain sound judgment when confronted with adverse situations or conditions. When the gallbladder is deficient, indecision, procrastination, hesitation, and timidity will prevail. When the gallbladder is in excess, anger and impulsiveness will be manifest. Other characteristics of excess gallbladder include holding on to resentment and making rash decisions. The gallbladder also shares similar emotional characteristics/disharmonies as the liver, such as irritability or being easily angered. Anger is impulsive, like an initial first movement, which is associated with the gallbladder. Anger is about the need to create space quickly. When we feel a loss of control, we need some space to be able to evaluate the situation in order to make a decision.

The gallbladder usually involves short-term decisions, but with a clear understanding of the impact the immediate decision will have upon the long-term plan. When there is imbalance, an individual can become overly concerned with small details and lose sight of the big picture.

The gallbladder has close relationships with the other organs. All organs follow the gallbladder. The *Su Wen* states in chapter 9 that “the eleven depots (*zang-fu*) receive decisions from the gallbladder” If the gallbladder qi is correct and righteous at the beginning of all moments of decision, the other organs follow its directional movement forward.

Liver and gallbladder are closely related, so much so that it can be difficult to separate their functions and disharmonies, like the commonly seen OM pattern of liver/gallbladder damp-heat. The liver, known as “the general,” creates thoughts and ideas; it plans and strategizes. The gallbladder, “the general’s advisor,” implements the liver’s plans and oversees their execution. If the gallbladder is in disharmony it affects the liver and vice versa. This internal/external pairing shares a close physical proximity and their interactions are easily viewed by the movement of bile through the body. The bile that the liver produces is a powerful antioxidant that helps to detoxify the liver. The liver then releases the bile, which goes to the gallbladder for storage to be used later in the digestion process. The gallbladder is the link between the liver and digestion (spleen/stomach). When the liver qi flows smoothly and easily, bile is produced and excreted regularly, ensuring optimal digestion. When the liver stagnates, bile production is impaired, resulting in middle burner disharmonies like acid reflux, abdominal distention and bloating, belching, bad breath, flatulence, indigestion, constipation, vomiting, etcetera.

The gallbladder and heart share a close connection. The gallbladder’s decisiveness helps the heart to control the mind. It helps guide the *shen* and provides direction for it. The *shen* resides in the blood; and during the day the heart is where most of the blood activity resides, but at night, the blood comes to the liver and to the *hun*. The gallbladder helps lead the *shen* in this process. There are several different ways of looking at the connection between the heart and gallbladder in Oriental

Medicine. From a five element, mother-son perspective, the gallbladder (wood) supports heart (fire). The gallbladder divergent channel travels to the heart. The heart and gallbladder are also clock opposites with gallbladder being the weakest at 11am-1pm during heart time, and vice versa. They also share common OM patterns like heart gallbladder qi deficiency and heart gallbladder phlegm-heat. Along with these patterns are shared pathological symptoms like bitter taste, which is often associated with heart fire, but is also a sign of a gallbladder disorder, and may be an indicator of a gallbladder and heart interrelated pattern. All these principles and theories can be used in treatment, whether you are supplementing the heart to treat gallbladder deficiency (presenting with timidity and fear,) or treating the gallbladder to address *shen* issues manifesting as phlegm misting the orifices with the classical gallbladder formula, **Poria and Bamboo Formula** (*Wen Dan Tang*).

The kidney controls will and determination. A decisive gallbladder with its initiative and movement to push forward helps the kidney to create action. The kidney produces marrow and rules the bones, but in the *Ling Shu*, chapter 10, it states: “In cases of bone disease, we must needle points on the gallbladder.”

Another function of the gallbladder is to control the sinews. This function works in conjunction with the liver. The liver’s role in sinew management is to nourish them with liver blood. It is the gallbladder’s qi that supports the sinews with the energy for proper movement and control.

The gallbladder also helps with muscular strength and vitality. This is seen by the gallbladder’s ability to work with the liver to clear toxins from the body. These toxins are just physiological byproducts of the sinews and organs that build up in the body throughout the day and are deposited in the blood. At night, the gallbladder pulls blood away from the sinews and into the liver. If the gallbladder is not relaxed by 11 p.m., it cannot perform this function efficiently and the liver will be unable to properly detoxify and cleanse the blood during liver time (from 1 am- 3 am). If sleep is poor, then muscle aches, pains, and fatigue will set in. For full functioning of this process one should go to sleep by around 10 pm.

Pain and disease associated with gallbladder pathology in the body will often have associated signs and symptoms along the trajectory of the gallbladder meridian, the longest meridian in the body running along the side of the head, down the side of the body, ribcage, legs, and ending at the fourth toe. Common symptoms include eye problems like painful, itchy, red eyes, blurry vision, or yellow eyes, headaches, dizziness or vertigo, ear problems like poor hearing or pain, chest and lateral rib pain or flank pain, hip pain, pain or rigidity on sides of legs, etcetera. Pain can be more common on the right side of the body.

The gallbladder is the connection between the *zang-fu* and the curious organs. The gallbladder meridian allows us to access the other curious organs. It is the only yang organ to wrap around the genitalia, connecting with the uterus. It connects with the brain via GB20 and connects with the bone and marrow at GB39.

GALLBLADDER PATTERNS AND PATHOLOGIES

Gallbladder disharmonies are often included and/or overlap with liver disharmonies. Patterns of disharmony for the gallbladder include gallbladder qi deficiency, gallbladder excess heat, gallbladder damp-heat, and gallbladder stagnation with phlegm accumulation.

Gallbladder qi deficiency is sometimes referred to as gallbladder deficiency cold. Its chief symptom is the inability to make decisions. It may also present as fearfulness or being easily startled, blurry vision, floaters, dizziness, frequent sighing, restless sleep, irritability, poor hearing or tinnitus, flank pain, lassitude, and diarrhea. The tongue will be pale with a thin, white coat. The pulse will be weak or thin and slow. For gallbladder qi deficiency herbal support, use general qi tonics as well as herbs that calm *shen* and nourish kidney. Formula suggestions include using **Ginseng Nourishing Formula** (*Ren Shen Yang Ying Wan*) as the chief formula combined with **Poria and Bamboo Formula** (*Wen Dan Tang*) as the assistant.

The main symptoms for **gallbladder heat** include dizziness, tinnitus, headache on the sides of the head, dry throat, bitter taste, eye pain, hypochondriac pain, irritability, insomnia, and red face. The tongue will be red with a yellow coat and the pulse will be rapid and wiry. The treatment protocol is to regulate qi and clear heat from the gallbladder using **Gentiana Drain Fire Formula** (*Long Dan Xie Gan Tang*).

Gallbladder damp-heat often starts with qi stagnation, or an emotional upset leading to qi stagnation; this stagnation will develop heat, which can eventually harm the gallbladder. Gallbladder damp-heat has clinical manifestations of hypochondriac pain fullness and/or distention, jaundice, bitter taste, poor appetite, heavy feeling in the head, dark scanty urine, fever, thirst without the desire to drink, dizziness, tinnitus, irritability, heavy limbs, alternating chills and fever, and sensation of heat. The tongue will be red with a thick yellow coat and the pulse will be wiry, rapid, and possibly slippery. Primary treatment when addressing gallbladder damp-heat is to clear heat and disinhibit gallbladder damp. **Lysimachia GB Formula** (*Xiao Chai Hu Jia Jian Qian Cao Pian*) is a formula that can effectively address gallbladder damp-heat.

Gallbladder stagnation with phlegm accumulation generally has either stomach and/or head involvement. The presence of phlegm is key. With stomach involvement, digestive disorders will be predominant, especially nausea and vomiting. Phlegm accumulation causes or exacerbates gallbladder qi stagnation, inhibiting middle burner transportation and transformation function, and gives rise to rebellious qi. This obstruction can also give rise to qi stagnation in the chest, causing tightness in the chest and flanks with frequent sighing. With head involvement, dizziness and vertigo will be the chief complaint. Phlegm obstructs qi, causing heat, which rises into the head. Phlegm compromises the gallbladder’s ability to bring clear yang energy to the head, causing dizziness. Accompanying signs and symptoms include hypochondriac distention, bitter taste, nausea, vomiting, irritability, insomnia, chest distress, and excessive dreaming. Identifying

meridian involvement can be an important diagnostic tool with numbness or heaviness along the meridian being a chief identifying factor, especially in the head region. The tongue will be yellow or white and greasy; and the pulse will be wiry or slippery. The treatment principle is to clear the gallbladder, transform phlegm, stop dizziness, and calm *shen*. Use the classical **Poria and Bamboo Formula** (*Wen Dan Tang*) to address gallbladder stagnation with phlegm accumulation.

OTHER GALLBLADDER-RELATED PROBLEMS

Dreams and Sleep

The gallbladder affects the quality and length of sleep. When the gallbladder qi is deficient, it will manifest with symptoms like frequently and easily waking, unable to return to sleep, a feeling of insecurity, timidity, easily frightened, spontaneous sweating, and palpitations. In this presentation, it is important to address both gallbladder and heart, as deficiency of both these organs cause the *shen* to wander, resulting in poor sleep. Use **An Mien Formula** (*An Mien Pian*) with **Bupleurum and Tang Kuei Formula** (*Xiao Yao San*).

When the gallbladder is excess, it will present as dream-disturbed sleep accompanied by erratic or restless sleep, frequent waking, and the inability to fall back to sleep. Other symptoms include irritability, bitter taste in the mouth, acid reflux, belching, nausea, vomiting, and dizziness or vertigo. The pulse will be rapid and wiry, and the tongue will have a greasy, yellow coat. This is diagnosed as gallbladder phlegm-heat attacking the heart. Use **Poria and Bamboo Formula** (*Wen Dan Tang*) or **Bupleurum D Formula** (*Chai Hu Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang*). Occasionally, you may see a presentation of somnolence associated with gallbladder heat. This presentation is characterized by long periods of sleep often accompanied by cloudy thoughts, heaviness in the head, a sense of being confused, tight or congested chest, and bitter taste in the mouth. The treatment principle is to clear the gallbladder, dispel heat, and transform phlegm. **Poria and Bamboo Formula** (*Wen Dan Tang*) is a suitable treatment for this presentation.

Gallstones (Cholelithiasis)

Gallbladder bile is bitter in taste and yellow in color. Many symptoms associated with gallbladder organ disharmonies and disease mimic these signs: nausea and vomiting (with bitter taste or vomiting of actual bile), bitter taste in the mouth without vomiting, jaundice, etcetera. Gallstones are the most common problem associated with the gallbladder and could be potentially dangerous if left untreated. Gallstones, also known as cholelithiasis, are the formation of hard deposits of digestive fluids, cholesterol, and pigments in the gallbladder. Cholesterol stones account for approximately 80% of stones. Pigment stones are composed of calcium bilirubinate. Stones begin to form when there is insufficient bile flow. When the gallstones are in the gallbladder, they are often asymptomatic and usually only diagnosed via ultrasound. Problems occur when the gallstones move from the gallbladder into the bile duct, neck of the gallbladder, or cystic duct. This causes a rapid onset of inflammation and pain. The pain is usually localized in the right hypochondriac region, but may radiate to

other regions of the abdomen, back, and shoulder. Cholecystitis, inflammation of the gallbladder wall, is often present with gallstones and will exacerbate the condition. Accompanying signs and symptoms include jaundice, fever, nausea, vomiting, bitter taste in the mouth, fever/chills, and headaches.

Predisposing risk factors include: being female, over age 60, American Indian or Mexican American descent, obesity, pregnancy, rapid weight loss, diet high in fat and/or cholesterol and low in fiber, family history of gallstones, sedentary lifestyle, diabetes, cholesterol-lowering medications (such as statins), hormone replacement medication, arid climate and dehydration.

From a OM perspective gallstones are considered gallbladder qi stagnation with phlegm-heat accumulation. Normal bile flow depends on the smooth flow of liver qi. When liver qi stagnates, bile flow becomes interrupted and erratic. Low levels of bile contribute to stone formation. Qi stagnation will eventually turn to heat and when combined with dampness from spleen qi deficiency, gallbladder damp-heat develop, complicating the condition. The presence of stones in the gallbladder that presents asymptotically is generally defined as qi stagnation or *shaoyang* syndrome. An acute attack or recurrent attacks are generally associated with gallbladder damp-heat.

Herbal treatment strategies consist of two parts. First, to shrink and break apart the stones using stone-dissolving herbs. The second part is to expel the stones. There is an important caution when expelling stones: do not try to expel stones that are larger than 1cm in diameter. In the general acupuncture clinical setting, it is suggested not to induce expulsion of stones greater than 7mm to 8mm. If a stone gets stuck in the bile duct or the Oddi sphincter, emergency surgery is generally required. There is also a good chance of pain associated with biliary colic, fever, and jaundice, due to gallbladder stones temporarily blocking the duct, even when treatment is going well. A two to three month treatment protocol is usually required.

Lysimachia GB Formula (*Xiao Chai Hu Jia Jin Qian Cao Pian*) aids in dissolving the gallstones and promoting the movement of gallstones out through the intestines. This is done by clearing damp-heat in the gallbladder, and moving constrained gallbladder qi. For further aid in expelling stones, add in **Major Rhubarb Combination** (*Da Cheng Qi Tang*, KPC 0350) as an assistant formula. This formula will aid in the relaxation of the Oddi sphincter and promote the purgative effect of the stones. This formula is especially beneficial if heat is predominant over dampness.

Jaundice

Jaundice is defined as the yellowing of the skin, sclera, and mucous membranes resulting from excess bilirubin. The gallbladder is one of the primary organs associated with jaundice. There may also be spleen and liver involvement. The gallbladder may not always be the primary organ in jaundice, but many of the herbs that have been discussed in this paper are used for the varying treatments of jaundice and as such have been included. From a OM perspective, damp accumulation

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ENERGETICS OF KITCHEN HERBS & SPICES

By Andrew Stermán

Spices are a very special part of the diet, and understanding their energetics is important for enjoyable and healthful eating. Because they are used in such small amounts, spices and kitchen herbs are very useful in studying the energetics of food. It is not their nutritional content or their use as traditional preservatives as much as the potent responses they elicit within us that make kitchen herbs and spices so useful. Because they are powerful in small amounts, they are also frequently misunderstood and misused.

Seen on a continuum, kitchen herbs and spices lie somewhere between foods and medicinal herbs, often overlapping into both categories. Used wisely, spices and kitchen herbs help us to digest meals, get back on track from common ailments, and open our senses. Used incorrectly, they easily become habitual dietary indiscretions, interfering with our attempts to move forward. Spices, as a very dynamic part of diet, either help or hinder our efforts at healing, including cultivation practices, herbal or acupuncture strategies, and Western drugs or procedures.

Further, spices have been moving forces in world history, central to the meeting of civilizations and the discovery of continents. All over the world, kitchen herbs and spices have been used for cuisine, food preservation, and as medicines. They were expensive, rare, and highly prized. Today, spices are cheap and readily available, and through a kind of inflation of taste, spices are often over-emphasized in cuisine, leading to problems of overuse.

A cook is always thinking about what makes a meal work well. The macro and micronutrients necessary for complete nutrition are provided through grains, vegetables, fruits and protein foods (beans, nuts, seeds, dairy, fish or meats). Spices and herbs support three other distinct functions: they stimulate appetite, aid digestion, and provide directionality. Further, like medicinal herbs, spices can be used to support specific organ energetics.

When cooking for someone elderly or weakened by stress or illness, it is essential to tend appetite and support digestion. If very weak, food should be bland and long-cooked to increase digestibility, but as recovery progresses, very soon the diet needs to bring more nourishment, sometimes leading the recovery with gentle challenges to raise appetite and strengthen digestion. Salt and the use of personal comfort foods can be important to make food appealing, but also very important are the gently warming spices, such as rosemary, oregano, marjoram, fresh ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, or clove. Warming spices and kitchen

herbs are also very important for long-time vegetarians whose digestive tracts can tend to cool down (meat requires—and therefore calls up—more stomach fire). From this perspective, it's easy to see that the energetics of food are equally or more important than the material substances they contain.

Many traditional dishes are built around a deep understanding of how spices and kitchen herbs help to digest the food they accompany. Seeds like caraway or poppy help digest carbohydrates; they are often baked into breads, especially heavy breads such as rye or bagels. Cumin helps digest meats and beans; it is standard in meat stews from Morocco and chili from Texas. Oregano aids digestion of carbs and fats and is standard on pizza. There are countless examples of traditional dietary wisdom in classic dishes.



For this reason, spices and kitchen herbs are usually classified by cooks according to the cuisines where they are prominent or foods they traditionally accompany: rosemary with lamb or cinnamon in apple pie. This is useful for cooking clarity and for both traditional continuity and cuisine fusions. Without dismissing this cuisine-only viewpoint, understanding the energetics of spices as assessed in Chinese medicine can add tremendous depth to our spice use,

including many new possibilities for creative cooking. Chinese medicine dietary tradition treats spices and kitchen herbs with the same methodical systematizing it uses for medicinal herbs: assessing by taste, qi (thermostatic influence), law of signature based on part of plant, directionality, humor effected, *zang-fu* and channel affinity or influence.

Beyond aiding digestion, spices and kitchen herbs provide directionality (vegetables are also important for directionality in the diet). While meats, grains and tubers mostly support the center, nearly all spices and kitchen herbs stimulate movement from the center to the exterior. It's easy to see how spices can help a heavy diet be more balanced, but overuse of spices—especially hot spices (garlic, onions, hot peppers)—can be a cause of dehydration (moving fluids too much from the center and drying the body in the process) or irritability and sleeping difficulties (unsettling the *shen*).

All spices move qi and fluids, but differentiation is important. Some are strongly ascending (e.g., rosemary or garlic), some focus more internally (e.g., ginger, turmeric), while some are descending. (As expected, these would be relatively rarer, mostly seed spices). This is very important to consider. The use of rosemary, for example, is excellent in the morning to uplift

2 THE ENERGETICS OF KITCHEN HERBS & SPICES

qi—perhaps with a pinch of tarragon on eggs with three spears of asparagus—but inappropriate in the evening if aiming for a restful sleep. Similarly, if trying to use garlic to cleanse digestion, it is necessary to counteract its strong ascending quality with a dietary envoy—as in herbal medicine practice—such as carrots and sesame seeds. Using this knowledge, it's easy to create a therapeutic side dish. Add other descending ingredients if you like, such as mushrooms, a seaweed or even walnuts, included at each meal for several days for a moderate cleanse.

Along with directionality, it is important to consider the qi or thermostatic quality of herbs and spices. At first, categorize herbs and spices broadly. Warming spices are the safest and most common, including most of the dried leafy herbs, seed spices and rhizomes such as ginger and turmeric. Cooling kitchen herbs are important because they are relatively less common, but do include mint, parsley, cilantro, and thyme. The hot spices are extremely popular today but are the ones that should be used with the most caution, including not only hot peppers, but also onions and garlic (sometimes also clove). Hot spices are best considered to be medicinal herbs for short term use (acute conditions). They strongly stimulate exocrine fluids (tearing as you slice them, salivating as you taste them and stimulating internal fluid secretion after you have eaten them). Moving internal fluids as they do, they can be useful for immune function (*wei qi*) if sufficient fluid is available. People with complaints of reflux or urgent hunger (excess stomach fire), signs of dehydration on their tongue or blood/fluid/hormonal deficiency in their pulses should avoid hot spices.

Although all spices are classified with the same taste in Chinese medicine source books (the term is *xin*/spicy), in my training that term is usefully differentiated into three types of spicy taste.

- **Spicy** refers mostly to the basic kitchen herbs (e.g., oregano, rosemary, basil), and classic spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, cumin, coriander seed, etc. These spices can be thought of as stimulating qi; most are warming.

- **Acrid** refers to leafy herbs that are minty or tingling (including mint, shiso, cilantro, lemongrass, etc.). These herbs are often cooling.

- **Pungent** refers to the sharper spices, including bulbs (scallions, onions, garlic), some roots (ginger, turmeric) and the hot peppers (capsicum type, black pepper and Szechuan pepper). The pungent spices are usually warming or hot and go to the blood level.

Salty is also a taste category in Chinese medicine, including not only salt itself (of various types) but also spices or vegetables that leave a mineral-like sensation on the tongue. In the context of kitchen use, salt can be thought of as representing minerals (one third of the *Shen Nong Ben Cao* is devoted to mineral use) and can be seen as cooling (minerals are generally cooling). The well-known property of salt to retain water can be used skillfully as in herbal medicine to provide hydration to soften hardnesses that resist clearing.

Furthermore, the part of the plant a spice comes from is a very early and important criterion for assessing function, either through the law of signature or when careful assessment shows a deviation from what may be expected. Seeds, for example, are the expression of the *jing* of a plant, and as seeds, usually have a descending directionality (seeds fall). Many seeds—such as sesame seeds—indeed have most of their influence in the lower abdomen, but others have a floating quality (e.g., poppy seeds). In any case, there are common spices from all the parts of plants, providing another method for classifying the kitchen herbs and spices.

Each spice can be known much more thoroughly, revealing properties and uses that can't be included in a simplified chart, but seeing things simply is important. In order not to feel overwhelmed by detail, begin by noting qi/thermostatic effect, pairing cooling herbs with warming foods, such as thyme and tarragon with chicken or eggs, or vice versa, pairing warming cinnamon, clove and nutmeg with cooling fruits. Rely on leafy herbs or seed spices to aid digestion and relieve any sense of bloating or stagnation. Differentiating which are the very best kitchen herbs in the moment is less important than beginning to explore them energetically and improving the enjoyment of food. There may be days when an emotional focus is foremost, for example, serving a hearty meal with rosemary and mustard seed to invigorate conversation at a dinner party, using cumin and saffron to encourage sharing of feelings in a smaller setting, or yogurt with vanilla and a splash of rosewater to calm the spirit after a period of high pressure or being too busy.

In today's dining culture, strong spices are often greatly overused. Too often, 'spicy' only means hot, and dishes stress our systems instead of making skillful use of the wide spectrum of spices (and their functions) available to us today. Even whole cultures are moving toward more extremes of spicy heat. Gradually, individuals will adapt to spice escalation, but the proof is in pulse and tongue diagnosis. For example, on a recent trip to South Korea, I was stunned by the constant use of raw garlic and meals covered in red spices—how much this is a fairly recent escalation was clear during a meal at an old-fashioned restaurant that served the same set-meal since it opened in 1970; this was country food that had well-balanced tastes with a few different hints of heat. Further confusion can arise as common Western health advice to reduce salt intake features recipes relying on overuse of kitchen herbs and spices to add flavor, resulting in dishes that are woefully unbalanced and ultimately do not support health.

Spices and kitchen herbs are potent players in the kitchen, often closer to medicinal herbs than to the grains, meats, fishes, fruits and vegetables that they enhance. It's here that we can fine tune the energetics of the meals we offer, using insights from the masters of Chinese medicine along with our awareness of our current needs, cultural backgrounds, and evolving skills.

Part of Plant	Example Herbs & Spices	Type of Spicy (Xin)	Thermostatic (Qi)	Select Properties	Common Food Functions
Rhizomes/ Roots	Ginger, Turmeric, Horseradish	Pungent	Warming (wasabi is hot)	Diffusing and harmonizing, Hotter ones stimulate fluids and clear sensory portals	Warm digestion, help resolve phlegm and abdominal discomfort
Bulbs (often with stems)	Chives, Scallions, Onions, Garlic	Pungent	Warming (onions and garlic are hot)	Invigorate digestion and circulation	The sharper onions and garlic strongly move fluids, are easily overused
Bark	Cinnamon	Spicy	Warming	Ascends, invigorates, helps stiffness, and certain headaches	Useful with fruits (warms their coolness), desserts (aids their digestion) and savory dishes (common in Indian, North African and Mexican cuisines)
Leaves	Basil, Oregano, Rosemary, Tarragon Cilantro, Dill, Marjoram, Mint, Parsley, Thyme	Spicy	Warming Cooling	Specific properties vary, but generally help move stagnation, aid digestion, and diffuse qi	Differentiate warming and cooling to balance foods, temperaments and specific needs of the day
Buds	Capers, Cloves	Spicy (capers in brine are Salty)	Cloves are warming or hot; capers cooling	Stimulates appetite, cloves warm digestion, capers mildly astringe	Capers can add a salty touch with fish or chicken, cloves aid digestion, resolve nausea, and support fertility impaired by cold
Flowers	Saffron, Vanilla, Rose (water)	Aromatic	Saffron is warming; vanilla is cooling	All spices are aromatic and moving, but the flower spices work most clearly with <i>shen</i> /spirit	Saffron invigorates circulation and self-expression, Vanilla calms the spirit, relieving overstimulation
Berries	Black Pepper, Allspice	Pungent	Hot, warming	Aids digestion of meats/protein, stimulates appetite	Use wisely with foods requiring support, careful not to overeat as a result of raising appetite
Seeds/ Fruits/Pods	Cardamom, Chili Peppers, Star Anise, Tamarind, Caraway, Coriander, Cumin, Fennel Seed, Mustard Seed, Nutmeg	Spicy (hot peppers are pungent)	Warming; hot peppers and mustard seed are hot: tamarind is cooling	Opening, spreading, releasing/relaxing, these spices help move emotions and aid digestion	Seed spices help digest grains (the hotter ones, e.g., mustard seed, aid with proteins including fatty meats)

RECIPES

Homemade Vanilla Extract

Vanilla extract is very expensive, but it's easy to make at home. Take one fresh vanilla bean (actually the stamen of the enormous vanilla orchid, native to Central America). With a finely sharpened knife on a cutting board, carefully split the bean lengthwise. Turning the knife sideways, gently scrape the little black seeds up to one end. Drop the vanilla bean and the seeds into a bottle of rum or brandy, label the date, and put it aside for about three months, shaking it occasionally. When a few months have passed, you will have very high quality vanilla essence, without mystery ingredients.

The use of alcohol may surprise people motivated for good health, but it needn't. My daughter recently asked me why the wine shop we were walking past had a sign for 'spirits' in its window. Reaching for a teaching moment, I explained that, "The 'spirits' in that shop are strong wines that come from bottling the vapors coming off grain as it rots and ferments. Everything gives up spirit when it dies, and some people like to taste the spirit of grapes, barley, rice or corn. Further, for grownups who sip it, it effects their spirit. So, a long time ago these strong wines became called 'spirits'. But if someone has too much, it damages their spirit." Medicinal wines are an ancient tradition in Chinese medicine, and alcohol itself is said to quicken the qi, invigorate the blood and effect the *shen* (which has very strong relationship with blood). Seen this way, extracting vanilla in alcohol is more than just cooking chemistry. The flower herb of vanilla is calming for the *shen* and the alcohol medium also speaks to the *shen* level. Once made, vanilla extract is used like a perfume, just a touch to lighten the spirit of a desert. Even when the alcohol is cooked out, a signature remains, resonating with blood and *shen* without the alcohol itself. And of course, the taste quality of homemade vanilla extract is wonderful.

Sautéed Mushrooms

Vegetarian cooking is not a specialty cuisine, rather it is what we all eat every day, while some people also add animal food to it. It is very important to be skilled at making vegetarian meals. Mushrooms add depth to any meal and contribute many beneficial functions. Mushrooms also pair nicely with a variety of spice/herb approaches. One approach that allows us to reach to a different area of our spice drawer is to cook mushrooms with a hint of nutmeg. Properly balanced, the nutmeg adds complexity and mystery without being easily identified as a solo player. The cook should have some fun, leaving everyone guessing while asking for more.

Nutmeg is a warming spice that aids digestion and scatters cold. It's not possible to say how much to use, or rather, how little. In a pan of sautéing mushrooms (your choice of type), add a shake or two of oregano, tarragon and rosemary, a bit of butter (or olive oil), a splash of tamari, and 2-3 scrapes of whole nutmeg on a grater. If using powdered nutmeg, just the tiniest bit will do—taste as you go, when you can barely notice it you have added enough.

Spice Rub for Lamb or Beef

It is not my interest to judge which diet is best—vegetarian, Paleo, and so forth. All dietary systems can have merit; the question always is what is good for an individual in the present moment. The role of spices and herbs (and cooking in general) is to balance and assist the chosen principal foods from the points of view of being appetizing and easily digested. A meal should be satisfying without throwing us off balance; we should be nicely energized after eating, not tired or in search of sugar or caffeine stimulants. For those who choose to eat meat, that often means using spices and herbs to help prevent food stagnation from the intensity of meat or overstimulation from its yang energy nature.

The spice rub here is simple, delicious and effective.

In a mortar and pestle (or spice grinder) grind the following:

- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 2 tablespoons coriander seed
- 1 tablespoon fenugreek (optional)
- 1 tablespoon grain of paradise seed (optional)
- 2 teaspoons brown mustard seed
- (The seeds above can be toasted in a dry, heavy pan for 2-3 minutes prior to grinding.)
- 3 green cardamom pods
- 1 tablespoon dried rosemary
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon kosher or coarse sea salt
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Once ground into a rough powder, massage directly onto a leg of lamb 4-5 lbs.), or use these spices to make a paste-type rub by adding olive oil and three slices mashed fresh ginger. Cook in a 325F oven until the center reads 135-145F on a meat thermometer. Allow to rest before slicing. The omission of garlic and hot spices makes sense because lamb is a very yang food (distinctly more warming even than beef).

In general, home cooks allow their spices and herbs to get too old. Consider replacing your dried herbs at least twice yearly. It will improve quality and refresh your attention on the ones you use less regularly. Kitchen herbs and spices are potent tuners of the energetics of life. As thinking of kitchen herbs and spices for their energetics becomes more familiar and more precise, it will become easy to adjust recipes to truly cook for the health and pleasure of yourself and others.

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is always present in jaundice. There are two primary categories of jaundice: yang jaundice and yin jaundice. Yang jaundice is generally acute. It presents as bright yellow in color and is diagnosed as either damp-heat or toxic-heat. This can be further broken down by damp-predominant yang jaundice and heat-predominant yang jaundice. Yin jaundice is more chronic, presenting as a dull and darker yellow, and is usually due to a cold-damp or spleen deficiency.

In all yang jaundice patterns, eliminating damp is the primary treatment principle. Further pattern differentiation is key for correct treatment. In the treatment for yang jaundice, excess damp-heat stagnates and impairs the liver and gallbladder function, forcing the bile out to the superficial layers of the skin and eyes. For heat predominant damp-heat pattern, use the classical formula **Capillaris Combination** (*Yin Chen Hao Tang*, KPC 2500). This formula can be combined with **Gentiana Drain Fire Formula** (*Long Dan Xie Gan Tang*) for severe heat. For damp predominant damp-heat pattern, use **Capillaris and Poria Five Formula** (*Yin Chen Wu Ling San*, KPC 2510). Because this pattern will often be seen with digestive problems, this formula supports the middle burner, addressing spleen function that is encumbered by excessive damp.

For yin jaundice: A weakness in spleen qi over time results in the spleen's inability to transform damp, leading to a sallow, dull, and lusterless complexion; for spleen deficiency pattern use **Astragalus Formula** (*Huang Qi Jian Zhong Tang*). Cold-

damp often arises and can be seen in conjunction with spleen deficiency. Clearing excess damp is still the primary treatment principle, but you must also warm and support the middle burner. For cold-damp pattern use **Capillaris and Poria Five Formula** (*Yin Chen Wu Ling San*, KPC 2510), plus **Ginseng and Ginger Combination** (*Li Zhong Tang*, KPC 2970), or for severe middle burner cold, use **Aconite, Ginseng, and Ginger Combination** (*Fu Zi Li Zhong Tang*, KPC 1760).

For jaundice due to gallstone obstruction, follow the appropriate treatment listed above to dissolve and dispel gallstones. Less commonly seen patterns in clinical practice include toxic-heat and blood stasis. Toxic heat is a severe damp-heat presentation usually seen in epidemics and liver failure. This is a yang-type jaundice. Treatment consists of combining **Coptis Relieve Toxicity** (*Huang Lian Jie Du Pian*) with **Capillaris Combination** (*Yin Chen Hao Tang*, KPC 2500) and **Dandelion and Wild Chrysanthemum Combination** (*Wu Wei Xiao Du Yin*, KPC 0740). The addition of **Rehmannia Cool Blood Formula** (*Tu Fu Ling Sheng Di Huang Wan*) may also be considered, if heat toxin has entered the blood level. Blood stasis is often seen in late stage liver disease and is usually a yin-type jaundice. An appropriate formula for treatment is **Tangkuei and Corydalis Combination** (*Ge Xia Zhu Yu Tang*, KPC 3830).



Treating Children with Chinese Herbs

JOHN SCOTT, DOM

As practitioners of acupuncture and herbal medicine we are often consulted by wary parents with sick children. A feverish child can be a source of parental panic. Many practitioners tend to think of children as miniature adults, but this is a mistake. We must keep in mind that there are some characteristics unique to children and it is important to keep these differences in mind when we create a treatment strategy. We also need to educate parents as to what they can do to prevent illness as well as optimal ways for caring for the sick child.

Parents whose children have been on course after course of antibiotics, I am sure, have visited us all. I believe Oriental Medicine to be one of the most effective tools that can be used in pediatric care. Acupuncture and herbs can make profound changes in the lives of many families. The family must be willing to learn to be sensitive to the unique energetics of their child. The rewards that parents report are healthier, happier children, fewer medical bills, and closer relationships to their children. Many parents are happy to become empowered to better monitor the signs of health and imbalance in their

children—and children can learn to monitor their own health. We got to witness our own daughter develop a greater wisdom about how to prevent illness, which has deepened as she has become an adult.

In his book *Turtle Tail And Other Tender Mercies*, Bob Flaws summarizes “The Idiosyncrasies of Pediatric Physiology & Pathology:”

- 1) Susceptibility to infection or invasion by exogenous pathogens.
- 2) Weak digestion or inherent deficiency of the middle burner.
- 3) Unstable *shen* or spirit/mind. (This “instability” is natural due to the rapid development that children undergo both mentally and physically in the first years of their lives.)
- 4) A natural tendency to over-produce mucus.
- 5) Due to the theory of similar transformation, children, when ill, tend to produce high fevers.
- 6) Due to their “weak meridians,” children easily become convulsive.

Learning about these idiosyncrasies has proven to be essential in effectively treating children, which I have found to be an extraordinarily rewarding part of my practice.

Because their energetic systems are still developing, children are more prone to invasion of exogenous pathogenic factors.

I have seen this especially during the changing of the seasons, but any shift in weather can trigger an onset. Children are naturally “hotter” and often reluctant to wear a sweater or a hat when the weather suddenly changes. (I believe this is also why children seem to be naturally attracted to cold substances.) Even if they are wearing appropriate clothing when they first go outside, if we don’t monitor them frequently during their play, layers of clothes can be shed pretty quickly.

Adequate sleep is essential for children to maintain health. Children who become exhausted or over-stimulated will weaken their defenses. Children, like adults, will lose themselves in an activity and not realize they are over-tired. This is especially true during holidays, birthday parties and other special events.

The commonly weak digestive function that children experience is a key factor in the development of illness. We know from OM theory that weak digestive function can lead to the development of phlegm and the persistence of this phlegm has a tendency to become phlegm-heat. When children develop phlegm-heat it can manifest as persistent or frequent ear infections, coughs, fever, runny nose or allergy symptoms, hyperactive behavior, insomnia, and more. Many younger children will form phlegm immediately after eating particular foods. This means that they may be allergic or sensitive to that food or at least unable to digest that particular food at that time. This is especially common after eating sweets, dairy products, or other “damp” foods. Avoiding those foods at least temporarily is a good practice. As they grow, children will usually be able to digest more complex and challenging foods. **Astragalus Formula** (*Huang Qi Jian Zhong Tang*) is a good formula to warm and tonify the middle burner and strengthen digestive function in children. It strengthens their immune response and warms and supplements their deficiency inherent in the middle burner.

The unstable *shen* in children also requires some special considerations. Their tendency to change quickly can cause them to bounce from one extreme to another. They require stimulation, but it should be measured and limited to what they are capable of processing at their particular stage of development. Children are also very impressionable and I personally recommend against exposing them to the violence and other extremes that are so ubiquitous in our media. Again, stimulation needs to be monitored to what each child is capable of processing. Young minds are very malleable and exposure to unhealthy media is harmful in the long run. What we are exposed to when we are young makes a very strong impression on us. Scary dreams are a sign that the child is unable to process something they have experienced or observed.



The natural tendency of children to over-produce mucus also requires monitoring. This tendency, originating from weak digestion or poor diet, can lead to coughs, earaches, insomnia, fever, and assorted heat symptoms. Monitoring the intake of damp foods, like dairy, sweets, gluten, and cold foods like fruit and fruit juices will really help control mucus. Of course ice cream is a big contributor to mucus. **Minor Bupleurum Formula** (*Xiao Chai Hu Tang*) is a very good formula for resolving phlegm and pathogens that are half-interior and half-exterior. **Citrus & Pinellia Formula** (*Er Chen Tang*) is specific for resolving phlegm-damp. Sometimes you may have to crush tablets and mix the powder with something else to get the child to ingest it. Some children prefer to chew the tablets and chase them down with water or herb tea. **Children’s**

Jade Defense Formula (*Xiao Er Zi Yu Fang*) is an easy-to-administer liquid formula specifically designed to support and fortify immune function in children. Parents can give this to their children regularly to prevent illness.

It is also normal for children, when they do get ill, to quickly develop high fevers. Although it is common, it can be a very frightening experience for parents, no matter how trained they

may be. Any number of heat-clearing formulas can be useful: **Children’s Clear & Release Formula** (*Yin Qiao Gan Mao Fang*) combines herbs from *Yin Qiao San* and *Gan Mao Ling* to address wind heat patterns that children typically experience. **Children’s Clear Lung Formula** (*Xiao Er Zi Qing Fei Tang*) is specially formulated to treat lung-fire patterns when the heat has penetrated into the lungs. **Fritillaria & Pinellia Syrup** (*Chuan Bei Ban Xia Tang*) is excellent for treating cough with phlegm-heat, **Yin Chiao Formula** (*Yin Qiao San*), or **Viola Clear Fire Formula** (*Di Ding Qing Huo Pian*) can each be used to vent out and destroy external pathogens in their early stages of invasion, but children’s dosages must be reduced according to their age or weight.

Also, techniques such as putting ice on Lu11 (*Shaoshang*) or Ht9 (*Shaochong*) are useful for fevers or extreme heat. I have seen many parents get relief for their very young children with such simple techniques. Because their energetic systems are as impressionable as their *shen*, simple and gentle acupuncture treatments using needles, gold or silver pellets, or magnets can get very dramatic results in children rather quickly. I have found handheld microcurrent point stimulators to be very effective when treating children that are too young or are frightened of acupuncture needles.

It is said that children’s meridians and *yuan qi* are not fully formed until the age seven. By being aware of these principles we can support and cultivate strong *yuan qi*. Everything that we can do to support children’s health in these early years will better prepare them for adolescence and adulthood.

The Virtue of Wood— Transforming Anger to Constructiveness

BY THEA ELIJAH, LAC

(This is a short excerpt of a longer article. The full version is available on our website, www.gfcherbs.com)



What is anger? Anger is the trembling and starting of the Wood element. It's like when you first start the car. The

arousing tumult of Spring can be healthy, but also potentially pathological—physiologically damaging. There are many kinds of anger. There are many differentially diagnosable patterns of disharmony of anger, and the potential for the virtue is inherent within all of them.

One of the ways to understand an element is to understand what it's between. Wood is between Water and Fire, as Spring is between Winter and Summer. Think of it as the dormant potential of Winter not making it to Summer's manifestation fast enough. I'm trying to move from potential (Water) to manifestation (Fire) and "This is in my way!! Arrrrgh!!"

This "Arrrrgh!!" acknowledges an important insight. Anger acknowledges the possibility of progress. Anger requires a progressive eye. You've got to perceive that there's something not working before you can fix it. Anger is the gift of the people who notice that there is a problem here.

Wood is the element of heroes. The Earth element helps us take care of others while they are small and weak. By contrast, Wood 'helping' is more like: 'I'm big and strong. I can do it. Let's go!' It's a strong call to action. I'm going to move the log out of the road! When anger is healthy, it moves directly from arousal to the visionary and heroic virtue of **constructiveness**: from seeing a problem to taking action to solve it—for the good of all humanity.

How do we help someone move from anger to constructiveness? The 5 Element lore is that you give a Wood person direction. Just as with reassurance, there are real ways of doing this, as well as cheap symptomatic 'fixes.' What I often see people doing, instead of giving direction, is giving 'directions,' e.g. "Do this."

What's needed is the spirit of progressive movement. Telling somebody what to do next will work temporarily. What we're really wanting for a person is that they develop inside themselves a sense of direction. What does that mean: to have from within us a sense of direction? It means a number of different things.

Of the five elements, Wood has the distinction of being the only one that is alive. This is significant of the nature of the Wood element: it is the element of aliveness in us. One of the qualities of aliveness is the capacity for growth.

Anger and its potential virtue, constructiveness, are all about the call to action, to movement forward. It's not just any kind

of movement, though. It's growth. It's evolution. It's progress. Growth is a self-organized directional movement of potential coming out to manifest. This has direct bearing on the diagnostic discernment of whether or not a person's anger is healthy, and thus transforming into the virtue of constructiveness.

Wood is the movement from Water to Fire, from root to flower, from darkness to light. In this movement, plants demonstrate their unerring sense of direction. Plants always grow towards the light. That's what they do. They grow from the dark, as we do. We grow from the struggles, from the challenges, from the difficulties. Healthy Wood grows from the dark, but always towards the light.

Real plants in nature never lose their sense of direction. Those sunflowers, all day long, will follow the light. But we, in our anger, often lose our sense of direction. Are we moving toward the light, or toward the Heart (which is the 'sun' within ourselves)? One minute you're a nice guy; next minute, somebody takes your parking spot...Where'd that nice guy go?

This is what we are giving for helping anger to become constructiveness: Direction. Always grow towards the light. This is the transformation from minor tick-off to something that will benefit humanity. Why do we do this? Because of the profound resultant physiological shift in the angry person. It is our business to help people work with their anger in such a way that it will be physiologically beneficial to them rather than destructive to them. We do this by helping them create a sense of direction. Is this working towards the Heart? Or, is this actually turning your Heart into a dismal dark place? Are you growing toward the light?

Most people kind of think that growth is for plants, or kids. There's a whole lot of anger that wouldn't be happening in the first place if we greeted a hassle as a growth opportunity. The obstacles we meet make this arousal of Wood energy in us. Okay: life is signaling growth. Usually what happens is that when something out there gets our attention, we think it should change. It stinks. It's stupid. It should change, not me. This assumption that it's never about me growing sets a Wood Element up for a certain amount of indignation at most, if not all times.

In difficult Wood situations I'll ask verbally: "Are you willing to be constructive about this?" That will often stop angry people in their tracks a bit. It's a rare person who's angry that says 'No, I don't want to be constructive.'

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