

RASA: TASTE

SWEET

FOODS: Milk (non-fermented dairy), butter, grains, meat, nuts, maple syrup, sugar and other sweeteners

ELEMENTS: Earth and Water

QUALITIES: Of the six tastes, sweet is the most nourishing. Typically oily, cool and heavy, it's a good choice if your Vata dosha is high. Eaten in moderation, sweet foods enhance strength, longevity, and stability. But overindulging in them damages the pancreas and the spleen, leading to diabetes mellitus, obesity and *ama* (toxin) formation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT: Represents the first taste we had as infants and is related to love and nurturing. It creates a feeling of satisfaction in the mind and assists the mind in developing endurance against stress. It reduces judgment, anger and anxiety. A person with a sugar addiction seeks love, nurturance and contentment from food where she is not getting it in relationships. Too much sugar causes complacency, dullness and over-satisfaction. Too little causes dissatisfaction with life and an inability to withstand stress

BALANCE: Counters bitter and astringent tastes. Increases Kapha dosha; decreases Pitta and Vata doshas

SOUR

FOODS: Citrus, sour cream, yogurt, vinegar, cheese, sour tomatoes and green grapes, pickles

ELEMENTS: Earth and Fire

QUALITIES: Sour is light, heating, and oily, as well as nourishing, energizing, and enlightening. Sour gooses the appetite by revving up salivation and easing digestion—but an excess may result in indigestion.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT: Increases Tejas (psychological and spiritual fire). Too much sour can cause one to be hypercritical/discriminate and obsessive. People who are leaders of cults have eaten too much of this taste. Too little causes one to be passive and gullible. These are people likely to follow leaders of cults.

BALANCE: Counters bitter. Increases Pitta and Kapha; decreases Vata. People (both the man and the woman) who are having difficulties conceiving should avoid sour foods as they decrease the production of reproductive tissues.

SALTY

FOODS: Sea salt, rock salt, seaweed, soy sauce, cheese

ELEMENTS: Water and Fire

QUALITIES: With hot and moist qualities, salty whets the appetite, maintains electrolytes, and aids digestion. The strong water element acts as a laxative. A surplus can result in premature aging of the skin.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT: Increase courage and reduces fear. Too little salt produces a person like the cowardly lion from the Wizard of Oz.

BALANCE: Counters the bitter and astringent tastes and increases Pitta and Kapha. Decreases Vata.

PUNGENT

FOODS: Hot peppers, raw onions, radishes, raw garlic, mustard greens, ginger

ELEMENTS: Fire and Air

QUALITIES: Eases digestion, clears the sinuses, improves circulation, and brings clarity and perception. Overdo this rasa and you may suffer insomnia, giddiness, and muscle cramps.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT: Ignites passion. Too much pungent results in excessive passion and fire in the personality and causes one to be self-righteous. Too little causes one to become bored/disinterested in life.

BALANCE: Counters sweet. Increase Vata and Pitta; decreases Kapha.

ASTRINGENT

FOODS: Green bananas, chickpeas, green beans, okra, alfalfa sprouts, pomegranates, beans, lentil, black tea, potatoes, unripe persimmon, uncooked eggplant, cranberries, apples and pears (foods that make your mouth feel dry when you eat them).

ELEMENTS: Air and Earth

QUALITIES: Typically cool, dry and stable, astringent is thought to soothe ulcers and improve clotting. It has a drying effect on the cells/tissues of the body (it draws water out of the cells).

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT: This tempers the growth of the spirit—keeping it paced in an appropriate way. When there is too much astringency it dries up inspiration and when there is too little a person has too much fluid and is overemotional and sentimental.

BALANCE: Counters salty. Increases Vata, decreases Pitta and Kapha

BITTER

FOODS: Greens—Swiss chard, collard greens, kale, spinach, millet, coffee

ELEMENTS: Air and Space

QUALITIES: Of the six tastes, bitter is most absent from the typical Western diet. Naturally cool, light, and dry, bitter tones the skin and purifies/cleans the blood. It alleviates interstitial cystitis and any pitta disorders like burning migraines. It is balancing helps to regulate blood sugar levels in diabetics (it lowers blood sugar levels). It is a strong detoxifier of the body, acting as an antidote to many poisons and it is also antimicrobial. It strengthens the purifying functions of the liver. It's rarely savored on its own, yet it enhances the flavors of other foods. A glut of bitter will leave you underweight and malnourished.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT: This has to do with spiritual growth and reduces judgment and critical nature (great for an imbalanced Pitta), Too much can cause bitterness and negativity in one's personality. Too little results in a loss of motivation.

BALANCE: It is aggravating to Vata because the elements (air and ether) are predominant in both. Coffee combined with a cold salad will send Vata shooting upward.

Effect of the Six Tastes on the Three Doshas

	Increase (Aggravate)	Decrease (Pacify)
Vata	Pungent, bitter and astringent	Sweet, sour and salty
Pitta	Pungent, sour and salty	Sweet, bitter and astringent

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Kapha

Sweet, Sour and Salty

Pungent, bitter and
astringent

Additional commentary:

The Three Digestive Effects of Food

Virya: Potency. A food's heating or cooling effect. Warm substances pacify Vata and Kapha and Cool substances pacify Pitta. The sweet, bitter and astringent rasas have a cool virya. The pungent, sour and salty rasas have a warm virya.

Vipaka: Post-digestive effect. A sweet vipaka nourishes the body. It increases Kapha and pacifies Vata and Pitta. A sour vipaka increases the acidity of the body and improves the function of the digestive enzymes and generally aids digestion. A sour vipaka increases Pitta and Kapha and pacifies Vata. A pungent vipaka purifies and reduces the tissues of the body and dries them out. In the colon, they are likely to increase gas. The pungent vipaka increases Vata and Pitta and pacifies Kapha.

Prabhava: Special action. This is an action that is not easily explained by its qualities and is unique to a substance. This action is likely to have a Western pharmaceutical, chemical explanation. The ancient Ayurvedists noted that some substances had strong effects that they could not explain. Example: limes are citrus (sour), but they do not aggravate Pitta in the same way that lemons or other citrus may.

99% of food choices are due to unconscious behavior. A Vata will be attracted to raw salad and a raw foods diet because he or she likes the feeling of being light and airy. This is ego-driven behavior and the ego does not care if we live or die—it just wants to perpetuate itself. A Kapha may be drawn toward... A Pitta may be drawn toward...

Food cravings: Cravings can come from the body's higher consciousness and be beneficial. Example: Someone with low blood pressure may be drawn to salty foods. Dis-ease promoting cravings often come when a person is in a state of imbalance or has high levels of toxicity in the body and mind. This toxicity blocks higher intelligent and begins to be the driving force behind eating/lifestyle choices. When a person has non-beneficial food cravings, he or she would do well to take a deep breath and ask for help from his or her higher consciousness. It is a yoga practice to be able to resist negative cravings and change unwanted behaviors. It is also helpful to seek the support of an Ayurvedic practitioner.

***Coffee is astringent (and bitter). It is "the devil's brew." It stimulates the Central Nervous System and in this way it is similar to having a cocaine addiction. It is hard on the digestive system: it dries out the colon and makes a person dependent on it for bowel movements (it compromises the body's natural intelligence that creates peristalsis). Especially Vatas and Pittas should not have coffee. Coffee causes people to lose control of their personalities and moods. Drinking coffee is like pouring more fire onto Pitta and can cause a Pitta type to think

that nothing in the world is right (it heightens pitta's tendency toward hyper- discrimination, being critical and angry).