

## Cooking and Eating with a Spiritual Touch

Nowadays, we are continuously bombarded with details about the physical aspects of what we eat and the effects that different ingredients may or may not have on us, and naturally this is important. But in this heap of information, we tend to overlook one crucial factor: the consciousness (state of mind) of the person cooking and the effect that this will have upon the food, and thus also on those who eat it. A cook not only prepares food in a physical place, but also in a spiritual or inner space. And just as the physical surroundings are best kept clean and in order, so should be the state of mind of those in the kitchen. A simple and familiar example of this concept at work can be seen in the way that home cooking, especially that of one's mother, holds a special place in our hearts. The love and care with which it is prepared sometimes gives us more joy than perhaps food eaten in a restaurant setting where food may be prepared with greater cooking and technical skills but where negative emotions related like anxiety, arrogance, stress, and greed (in the business like restaurant environment) may affect the energy of the food cooked over there, on a subtle or vibrational (non-physical) level.

When the subtle, spiritual aspect of cooking is taken into consideration, the role of the cook extends from simply creating tasty, nourishing meals with fresh ingredients, to including a spiritual connection with those who will be eating that food. The aim will be to touch and fill the heart as well as the stomach. The love of the cook, and his or her motivation to offer sustenance, will nourish as much as the physical components of each dish. Food cooked by a person who is angry, depressed or full of arrogance or hatred will have a different effect from food cooked with feelings of love, peace and the pure desire to serve. In other words, we are what we eat but also the thoughts, feelings and attitudes that go into what we are eating. Even in today's hectic lifestyle, when there sometimes seems to be hardly enough time to cook, let alone do so peacefully and caringly, it is therefore definitely beneficial to develop a positive attitude towards cooking. Before undertaking any food preparation, remind yourself that the task at hand can and should be an enjoyable and creative activity or experience, rather than an unpleasant, time-consuming activity. A good practice, then, is to meditate before cooking and then to let preparing the meal itself be a creative, meditative experience which yields a balanced, health-promoting diet for the body

as a temple for the soul deity. Food always tastes better when it has been flavored or with love and happiness.

Having prepared food with attention (which we have explained over the last two days), the Brahma Kumaris' practice is then to offer the freshly-prepared meal to the Supreme Soul. We call it offering bhog (or commonly called prasad) to the Supreme Father. As a part of this practice, positive energy or vibrations of love, bliss and peace taken from the Supreme via meditation for 5-10 minutes, is given to the food prepared, by keeping a small portion of the food in a clean vessel kept aside for this purpose only, on a table in front of you. This practice can be followed every day for one main meal at least, or more, depending on how much time you have at hand. It is good to do this exercise in a special corner in the house or even a separate small room kept aside for the purpose of meditation or basically a place where the atmosphere is spiritually empowering as compared to the rest of the house. Charging the food with positive spiritual energy and expressing gratitude to the Supreme in this way serves to increase the spiritual quality of the food and deepen the individual's personal relationship with the Supreme, while also creating a powerful, shared divine experience. On a very practical level, it will also help the body to prepare itself to receive and digest food. Of course, the last step is to eat, and this, too, is best done in a peaceful, unhurried and harmonious state of mind and environment: ***we are what we eat and also how we eat.*** It's good to avoid eating along with the television or newspaper. Eating with the family in a positive setting is a good practice. But talking excessively and sharing negative information at that time with each other should be avoided. Talking quite less, talking very slowly, softly and sweetly and talking about positive and constructive aspects of life, with the rest of the family members, should be the norm for meal eating time.

Whether you are a new, aspiring or trained cook, we hope that the information in this and the last two days' messages, with its emphasis on the soul as well as the body, will bring an added dimension to your kitchen and dining table. Cooking, and eating, should be a joyful and significant experience. So cook and enjoy!