

FREE

HEALTHY LIVING HEALTHY PLANET

natural awakenings

Beyond Factory Farms

'Big Meat' Carries
High Cost

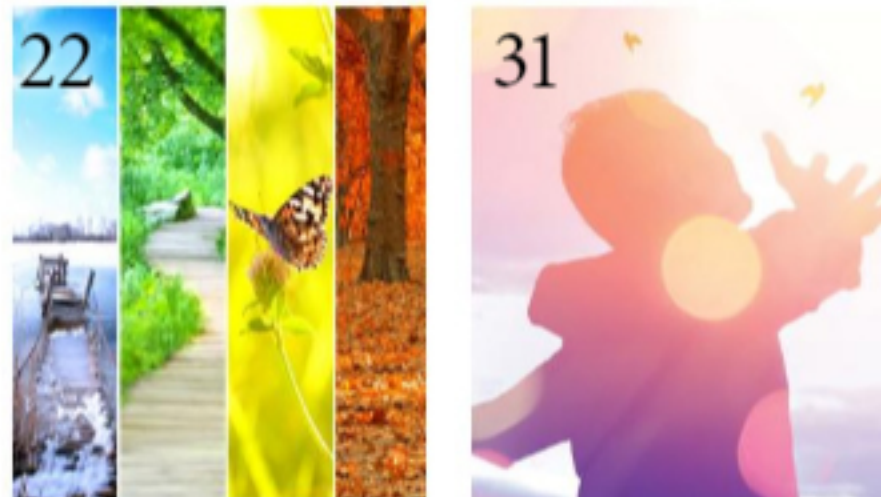
GUT TALK

Building a Healthy
Microbiome

Empowerment as Medicine

Use the Keys to
Your Wellness

Natural Awakenings is a family of nearly 70 healthy living magazines celebrating 26 years of providing the communities we serve with the tools and resources we all need to lead healthier lives on a healthy planet.



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Submit articles, news items and ideas to Editor@NAHRT.com or call 860-507-6392. The due date for editorial is the 8th of the month prior to publication.

CALENDAR SUBMISSIONS

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Following Nature's Cues Eat Seasonally for Better Health

by Brielle Kelly

The natural world is always changing, and the key to living in good health lies in our ability to adapt to this change and go with the flow. Plants and animals instinctively know how to thrive – growing and flourishing in the warmer months, then storing up and settling in for the cold of winter—by living in alignment with the seasons. Living seasonally means to go as nature goes and follow the cues and solutions it prescribes. The foods we eat, the exercise and activities we do and even our daily thoughts and intentions all play a role in harmonizing our health with the seasons.

Spring

The season of spring calls for letting go of the old and welcoming in the new. The primary health focus is to keep things moving and promote the flow of *qi*, the energetic force present in all living things.

In the spring, we should eat seasonally available foods like leafy green vegetables, herbs and members of the garlic and onion family. Physical activities like stretching and massage can help to remove any points where *qi* is blocked and keep our muscles loose and limber. Staying flexible and open-minded in our emotional lives is also important.

Summer

Summer is characterized by heat, motion

and activity. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) calls this type of energy *yang*, and summer represents the peak of yang in the cycle of seasons. Fueled by abundant sunshine and warmth, plants and trees grow and flourish rapidly.

To balance the pace and yang of the season, eat *yin* foods like juicy tomatoes, cucumbers and watermelon to cool and refresh the body. Consuming light meals and more raw fruits and vegetables is also important. Doing activities like yoga, meditation and progressive relaxation can help to calm the mind and improve emotional balance.

Indian Summer

In the middle of the seasonal cycle lies Indian summer, when temperate weather and long days of sunlight give way to still and peaceful nights. TCM considers this season to be the balance point between the warm yang of spring and summer to the cool yin of fall and winter.

The focus of Indian summer is to build energetic *qi* and a grounded connection to the Earth. Eating whole grains, complex carbohydrates, and naturally sweet foods like corn and sweet potatoes is ideal. Fresh air and sunshine are also natural sources of *qi*, and spending time outdoors is a good way to connect to that energy from the Earth.

Fall

As fall begins, the air turns crisp and cool and nature starts its move toward yin. The harvest season is a time for taking stock of the year's gains and gathering and storing for the upcoming winter. For fall, the health focus is to keep the body warm and dry and strengthen and bolster immunity.

The best foods for this time of year include seasonal squashes, pumpkins and mushrooms, along with warming spices like cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves. Slow-cooked dishes and baked casseroles are especially beneficial. It is also important to engage in yang activities like aerobic exercise and group activities in the community.

Winter

The last season of the year, winter is a period for peace, reflection and rest. The pace of life slows, signaling a quiet decline and Nature's withdrawal into yin. In this season, the main focus is to keep the body warm and protected from the elements by developing and nourishing yang. Eat warming meals like simmered soups and hearty stews that include rich meats and seasonal root vegetables. As winter draws to a close, we slow down and wait for the arrival of spring, and the rebirth and renewal that comes with a new cycle of seasons.

Everything has its season. When our health is aligned with nature, our bodies are a direct reflection of our surrounding environment, and we follow its seasonal patterns and rhythms. Our health needs change throughout our lifetimes, from year to year, and even on a daily basis. The most sustainable approach to optimal health is one informed by Nature's seasons. By changing, adapting and going with the flow, just as the natural world does, we can align ourselves with the seasons for optimal health.

Brielle Kelly, L.Ac., Dipl.O.M., is an acupuncturist, herbalist and co-author of What's Your Season? Healing Principles and Recipes for Your Body Type. For more information, visit WhatsYourSeason.com

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