

Living Ancestrally

Seasonal Wisdom and Practices



WELLBYLARISSA

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Three ways to work with this book, depending on your week

This guide is built to meet you wherever you are, not to add one more thing you have to get perfectly right. However much time and energy you have this week, there is a way in.

THE 5-MINUTE VERSION *Choose one seasonal food + one outdoor habit.*

THE WEEKEND VERSION *Cook one recipe, visit a market, and practice one seasonal ritual.*

THE FULL SEASONAL RESET *Follow the shopping list, recipes, rhythms and traditions for a week.*

Start with whatever season you're in right now. Come back to this page any time you feel overwhelmed by everything else in the guide. One food. One habit. One recipe. That's enough to begin.

A NOTE BEFORE WE BEGIN

This guide was written for anyone who has ever felt like their body was trying to tell them something, but modern life was too loud to hear it.

Our ancestors didn't have wellness trends or supplement stacks. They had seasons. They had the land, the sun, the soil, the cold, the heat, the harvest. They organized their lives around natural rhythms that kept them strong, grounded, and deeply nourished.

Living ancestrally isn't about going back to a romanticized past. It's about reclaiming the wisdom our bodies still carry. It's about eating real food, moving your body outdoors, sleeping when it's dark, and letting each season shape your pace.

In this guide, you'll find seasonal recipes, drink recipes, lifestyle habits, cultural context, and actionable checklists to help you live more in alignment with the natural world, starting wherever you are, with whatever you have.

Start with whatever season you're in right now. This is your guide, use it however it serves you.

LIVING ANCESTRALLY · SEASON ONE



Cleansing, activating, and beginning.

01

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR BODY

The biology of the spring shift

As daylight increases in spring, the pineal gland begins scaling back melatonin production earlier each morning. This shift causes a cascade: cortisol rises more sharply at dawn, serotonin production increases, and your body temperature regulation shifts to prepare for more activity. You are biologically wired to wake earlier, move more, and eat lighter in spring.

The gut microbiome shifts in spring. Research on seasonal microbiome variation shows that spring is typically a time of increased microbial diversity as we transition to fresher, more varied foods.

Traditional peoples across many cultures instinctively supported this transition with bitter, fermented, and wild-foraged foods that fed a wider range of gut bacteria than the dense, preserved winter diet.

The liver is the primary organ of spring in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and this is one of those ancestral observations that holds up beautifully under modern scrutiny. The liver processes everything: hormones, toxins, excess fats, and metabolic waste accumulated over winter. It also governs bile production, which is critical for fat digestion. The ancestral answer was bitter foods and movement, not stimulants.

Many traditional spring food cultures, from Western Europe to Appalachia to Ayurvedic India, prioritized bitter flavors in early spring: dandelion, nettles, chicory, radicchio, sorrel, ramps, wild mustard greens. Bitter compounds stimulate bile production, activate liver enzymes, and signal the digestive system to wake up after a winter of richer, heavier foods. Modern palates have been trained away from bitter, and our livers are paying the price.

Hormones & the Spring Shift

Spring is when sex hormone production naturally begins to rise after the lower levels of winter. Longer days trigger increased testosterone in both men and women, which is why energy, motivation, libido, and physical drive all tend to improve naturally in March through May. For women specifically, spring often brings a noticeable shift in the menstrual cycle. If your cycle feels off or sluggish coming out of winter, it is often a sign that the liver is struggling to clear excess estrogen, which is exactly what the bitter spring greens and movement practices in this season are designed to support.

02

SEASONAL FOODS

What your body is asking for right now

What to Eat More Of

- Bitter greens: dandelion, arugula, radicchio, endive, nettles, sorrel, watercress
- Wild alliums: ramps, wild garlic, green onions, chives
- Pastured eggs: spring eggs from hens eating new grass are nutritionally superior with higher omega-3s and vitamin D
- Fermented foods that have been resting all winter: kraut, kefir, raw vinegars
- Fresh herbs: parsley, dill, tarragon, mint, lemon balm
- Light broths and soups rather than heavy stews

What to Eat Less Of

- Heavy winter fats in large quantities: the body is transitioning away from pure fuel-density mode
- Excess dairy, especially heavy cream and aged cheese, which can be mucus-forming as the body clears winter accumulation
- Cold, raw foods in large quantities too early in the season: wait until the weather is consistently warm

Spring Fasting: A 12 to 16 hour eating window two to three days per week aligns naturally with spring biology. This means finishing dinner by 7pm and breaking the fast at 7 to 11am. This window supports liver detoxification, promotes autophagy, and gently resets insulin sensitivity after winter's denser eating.

Ancestral Movement in Spring

In most traditional agrarian societies, spring did not involve exercise the way we think of it now. It involved work. Spring was planting season, weeks of physical labor involving digging, hauling, bending, walking, and carrying. The ancestral prescription for spring movement: go outside more, move your body in varied ways, and include some version of digging in soil if at all possible. Research on *Mycobacterium vaccae*, a soil bacteria inhaled through skin contact with garden soil, shows it increases serotonin levels similarly to antidepressant medication.

Spring movement principle: Increase duration before intensity. Spring is for long walks, gardening, foraging, and gentle rebuilding, not immediately returning to heavy training after winter. Give your

tendons, joints, and adrenals the same courtesy that many traditional societies gave themselves as the season warmed.

03

THE SPRING DAILY RHYTHM

Structuring your day around spring biology

Your daily schedule is not arbitrary. It is either aligned with your biology or working against it. Spring has a specific biological clock, and structuring your day around it is one of the most powerful things you can do for your energy, your hormones, and your mood throughout the season.

- **Wake:** Wake within 30 minutes of sunrise. In spring this gradually moves earlier. Your circadian rhythm is calibrated by light, not by your alarm. The first morning light is the signal your body has been waiting for all winter.
- **Morning light:** Get outside immediately. Not after coffee. Not after scrolling. Outside first. Even five minutes of morning light on your skin and in your eyes, without sunglasses, sets your cortisol curve, your serotonin production, and your melatonin timing for the entire day.
- **First drink:** Drink warm water before anything else. Lemon water, ACV tonic, or plain warm water. This wakes the liver and prepares digestion before it is asked to work. Hold coffee for 30 to 60 minutes after waking to allow cortisol to peak naturally first.
- **Breakfast:** Eat breakfast within 60 to 90 minutes of waking. A protein-forward breakfast, eggs, sardines, leftover meat, fermented dairy, sets your blood sugar for the day and prevents the afternoon crash that makes spring feel harder than it should.
- **Morning movement:** Move before noon. Walk, garden, forage, stretch outdoors. The morning hours are when cortisol is naturally elevated and physical output feels easiest.
- **Midday meal:** Eat lunch around midday. A moderate meal with plenty of bitter greens, fermented foods, and light protein. Your digestive fire is rebuilding. Give it something manageable.
- **Afternoon:** Afternoon is for focused work, creative projects, and social connection. Serotonin is naturally elevated in the extended spring light. Use this window for the work that requires mental clarity.
- **Dinner:** Eat dinner before 7pm and make it lighter than winter dinners. Soups, sauteed greens, eggs, fish. The body is transitioning away from the heavy stews of winter.
- **Evening:** Wind down as the light fades. Dim your artificial lights, close screens, and let your body follow the natural signal to slow down. Spring evenings are still cool and long. Use them for reading, gentle movement, and conversation.

04

TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

What traditional cultures did in spring

Across many traditional cultures with seasonal awareness, spring was marked by specific practices that went far beyond food. These were not random customs. They were biological intelligence encoded in ritual, passed down because they worked.

- **The Haudenosaunee and the Sugar Moon:** The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy held Maple Sugar Moon ceremonies in early spring as the first communal gathering after winter's isolation. Families moved to the sugar bush to tap maple trees together, working from dawn to dusk, eating maple syrup as one of their first sweet foods after winter's scarcity.
- **The Celtic Imbolc:** Celtic peoples celebrated Imbolc on February 1st as the first stirring of spring, even before anything was visibly growing. They made Brigid's crosses from rushes and hung them in their homes, cleaned their houses thoroughly, and left food and drink outside for the goddess Brigid as an invitation for abundance.
- **Japanese Hanami:** Japanese culture marks the arrival of cherry blossoms with hanami, flower viewing gatherings beneath the trees. The Japanese concept of mono no aware, the bittersweet awareness of transience, is activated in spring. Being present to what is blooming right now, knowing it will not last, is itself a medicine for the nervous system.
- **Roman Floralia:** Ancient Roman culture observed Floralia, a festival honoring Flora the goddess of flowers, in late April and early May. People wore bright colors, decorated with flowers, and moved their celebrations outdoors after months of indoor winter living.
- **Ayurvedic Vasanta Practices:** In Ayurvedic tradition, spring is the season of Vasanta, governed by Kapha dosha. Traditional spring practices include daily dry brushing (garshana) to stimulate lymph and circulation, nasya (nasal oil application) to clear the respiratory passages, tongue scraping each morning, and drinking warm water with ginger and honey to kindle the digestive fire.

ANCESTRAL SEASONAL WISDOM

Nowruz

Iran & Central Asia

Persian and Central Asian cultures celebrate Nowruz, the Persian New Year, at the exact moment of the spring equinox. For weeks beforehand, families undertake khaneh tekani, literally shaking the house, a thorough cleaning of every room and textile. They prepare samanū, a sprouted wheat pudding that takes days of slow cooking and stirring to make, and set a table with seven symbolic items beginning with the Persian letter S, the haft sin, each one standing for a wish for the year ahead: growth, health, prosperity, joy, patience, beauty, and rebirth.

Nowruz is not a single day of celebration. It is a full-body reset of home and self, practiced continuously for over 3,000 years and still observed by more than 300 million people today. The cleaning, the cooking, the gathering with extended family, all of it asks the same question spring asks everyone: what are you clearing out, and what are you making room for?

ANCESTRAL SEASONAL WISDOM

Maple Sugar Moon

Haudenosaunee Confederacy, North America



For the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, the first communal gathering after winter's isolation was not a festival of flowers. It was work: the Maple Sugar Moon, when families moved together to the sugar bush to tap maple trees and boil sap down into syrup over open fires that burned for days.

It was slow, cold, collective labor, and it was also the season's first sweetness after months of scarcity. The Sugar Moon Ceremony gave thanks to the maple as one of the first trees to offer itself again after winter, and the shared labor of the harvest, dawn to dusk, generation to generation, was itself understood as a renewal of community as much as of the body. It is one of the clearest ancestral examples of a truth spring keeps repeating: the return to outdoor, collective work is medicine in its own right.

05

BODY & HOME RITUALS

Clearing winter's stagnation

Spring Body Practices

- **Dry Brushing:** Using a natural bristle brush on dry skin before showering, always brushing toward the heart, stimulates lymphatic flow and removes dead skin cells that have accumulated over winter. Five minutes before your morning shower, every day in spring, makes a measurable difference.
- **Cold Water Rinse:** Ending your shower with 30 to 60 seconds of cold water activates the vagus nerve, increases norepinephrine, and wakes the body up at a cellular level. Do not start with ice cold. Start with cool and work colder over the weeks of spring.
- **Earthing:** Fifteen minutes of direct skin contact with natural ground, grass, soil, or sand, every day in spring, supports nervous system regulation and reduces inflammation. Do this in the morning while you are getting your sunlight. Two practices in one.
- **Tongue Scraping:** Used in Ayurvedic medicine for thousands of years, a copper tongue scraper removes the metabolic waste that accumulates on the tongue overnight. Do it before drinking anything.
- **Oil Practice:** Swishing a tablespoon of sesame or coconut oil in your mouth for five to ten minutes before brushing draws bacteria and toxins out of the gum tissue and oral mucosa. Alternatively, a small amount of sesame oil in each nostril (nasya) moistens and protects the nasal passages.
- **Environmental Clearing:** The traditional spring clean was not about tidiness. It was about clearing the physical environment so the body could relax its vigilance. When you clean a space in spring, you are giving your nervous system permission to settle.

The Spring Nervous System

Many people feel emotionally raw, irritable, or restless in early spring and then feel confused about it because spring is supposed to feel good. This is completely normal and deeply understood in traditional medicine. In Chinese medicine, the liver governs the emotion of frustration, the feeling of being constrained, stuck, or unable to move forward. As the liver clears through bitter foods, movement, and the longer light, the emotional congestion moves through too.

- If you feel irritable in early spring: increase bitter foods, reduce alcohol completely for two to four weeks, and add 20 minutes of outdoor walking daily. The liver is asking for help.
- If you feel anxious or ungrounded in early spring: barefoot time on the earth, deep breathing outdoors, and reducing caffeine will stabilize the nervous system faster than anything else.
- If you feel flat or unmotivated in early spring: this is often the last of winter's hormonal pattern. Give it two weeks of morning light exposure, protein at breakfast, and outdoor movement before assuming something is wrong.

The Spring Weekly Rhythm

- **Batch day:** Monday or Sunday: batch cook for the week. Make bone broth if you are out. Soak grains for the week. Prepare a fermented food if yours needs replenishing.

- Outdoor mornings: Two to three mornings per week: spend at least 30 minutes outdoors in the morning doing something physical. Walk, garden, forage if you have access.
- Seasonal connection: Once per week: do something that connects you to the season directly. Visit a farmers market. Plant something. Forage even one wild green.
- One space: Once per week: a deep clean of one area of your home. One area per week through spring is the modern equivalent of the weeks-long ancestral spring clean.
- Outdoor meal: One evening per week: eat outside or by an open window. The act of eating in natural air with natural light, even once a week, reconnects the nervous system to the season.

Seasonal Mindset

Spring is not the time for more research or more planning. It's the time to begin. Plant something. Start a habit you've been sitting with all winter. Clean out one space that's been accumulating stagnation. Every seed planted was an act of faith in the future. Every field cleared was a claim on the coming abundance. You can access this same energy through small, deliberate beginnings. The size of the beginning does not matter. The act of beginning does.

One spring practice worth trying: before you start any new habit or project this season, write it down, speak it aloud, or share it with one person. The practice of witnessing and naming intentions, present in cultures from the Haudenosaunee to the Celts to the Persian Nowruz tradition, is not superstition. It is accountability made ritual.

06

SPRING RECIPES

Ten dishes built around the season's first foods

01. Spring Nettles & Egg Frittata



Ingredients

- 2 cups fresh stinging nettles, blanched, drained, and roughly chopped (gloves required for raw handling)
- 6 pasture-raised eggs, 1 small yellow onion thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp tallow, lard, or butter, 3 cloves garlic minced
- 1/4 cup raw full-fat cheese shredded (optional), sea salt and black pepper

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375F. In a cast-iron skillet over medium heat, melt the fat and saute onion until soft and translucent, about 7 minutes.
2. Add garlic and cook 1 minute more. Add the blanched nettles and stir to combine.
3. Whisk eggs with salt and pepper. Pour over the skillet mixture. Top with cheese if using.
4. Transfer to oven and bake 15 to 18 minutes until set in the center. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Nettles were one of the most prized spring foods in European and Indigenous traditions alike, rich in iron, magnesium, and vitamin C.

02. Wild Ramp & Bone Broth Soup

Ingredients

- 4 cups homemade bone broth (beef or chicken), 1 bunch wild ramps (leaves and bulbs) roughly chopped
- 2 medium potatoes or turnips diced small, 1 tbsp butter or lard
- 1 tsp apple cider vinegar, fresh parsley to finish, sea salt to taste

Instructions

1. Melt fat in a heavy pot. Sauté ramp bulbs 3 to 4 minutes until softened. Add potatoes and stir to coat.
2. Pour in bone broth and bring to a gentle simmer. Cook 15 minutes until potatoes are fork-tender.
3. Add ramp leaves in the last 2 minutes, just enough to wilt. Add apple cider vinegar and salt.
4. Ladle into bowls and top with fresh parsley. Serve with sourdough.

03. Dandelion Green & Bacon Salad (Old World Style)

Ingredients

- 4 cups young dandelion greens washed and dried, 4 strips pasture-raised bacon cut into lardons
- 2 tbsp raw apple cider vinegar, 1 tsp raw honey, 1 shallot thinly sliced
- 2 soft-boiled or fried eggs for topping, sea salt and pepper

Instructions

1. Cook bacon in a skillet over medium heat until crispy. Remove bacon and set aside, leaving fat in pan.
2. Add shallot to the hot fat and cook 2 minutes. Whisk in vinegar and honey directly in the pan.
3. Pour warm dressing over dandelion greens immediately (they should just barely wilt). Toss with bacon.
4. Top with a soft egg and serve right away. Season generously.

This style of warm bitter green salad was traditional across France, Germany, and Appalachia as a spring tonic meal.

04. Ancient Grain Porridge with Honey and Pollen

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup organic cream of wheat, einkorn farina, millet, or teff
- 2 cups whole milk or raw milk (or water for a lighter version)
- 1 tbsp grass-fed butter or ghee, 1 tbsp raw local honey, 1 tsp bee pollen
- Pinch of sea salt and cinnamon, fresh spring berries or sliced banana to serve

Instructions

1. Bring milk or water to a gentle simmer in a small saucepan with a pinch of salt.
2. Whisk in grain slowly to avoid lumps. Cook over low heat, stirring often, until thick and creamy. About 5 minutes for cream of wheat, 15 to 20 for millet or teff.

3. Remove from heat and stir in butter. Pour into a bowl and top with honey, bee pollen, cinnamon, and fruit.

Einkorn and emmer are among the oldest cultivated wheats on earth, eaten for thousands of years. They contain a simpler gluten structure than modern wheat. Millet and teff are naturally gluten free.

05. Lemon Balm & Nettle Fermented Kvass

Ingredients

- 1 quart filtered water, 1 cup fresh nettles or strongly brewed nettle tea
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon balm leaves, 2 tbsp raw honey or sucanat
- 1/4 tsp sea salt, 2 tbsp whey or a small piece of sourdough starter

Instructions

1. Combine water, nettle tea, lemon balm, sweetener, and salt in a quart jar. Stir until sweetener dissolves.
2. Add whey or sourdough starter. Cover with a cloth secured with a rubber band.
3. Leave at room temperature 2 to 3 days, tasting daily. It will become slightly tart and bubbly.
4. Strain into sealed bottles and refrigerate. Drink 4 to 6 oz daily as a digestive tonic.

06. Spring Herb Butter (Compound Butter)

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup good butter softened to room temperature
- 2 tbsp fresh chives minced, 1 tbsp fresh tarragon or parsley minced
- 1 small garlic clove grated, zest of half a lemon, pinch of fine sea salt

Instructions

1. Mix all ingredients into softened butter until well combined.
2. Spoon onto a sheet of parchment, roll into a log, and twist the ends. Refrigerate 1 hour to firm.
3. Slice and serve on bread, eggs, grilled meat, or roasted spring vegetables. Keeps 2 weeks refrigerated.

07. Pickled Ramps (Preserved Spring Alliums)

Ingredients

- 1 bunch ramps (bulbs only), 1 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 cup filtered water, 1 tbsp honey or raw sugar, 1 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tsp black peppercorns, 1 bay leaf

Instructions

1. Clean ramp bulbs and trim roots. Pack tightly into a sterilized pint jar with peppercorns and bay leaf.
2. Combine vinegar, water, honey, and salt in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer and stir until dissolved.
3. Pour hot brine over ramps. Seal and allow to cool before refrigerating.

4. Allow to pickle at least 3 days before eating. Keeps refrigerated for 3 months.

08. Seared Chicken Thighs with Mint Gremolata

Ingredients

- 4 bone-in skin-on chicken thighs from a pastured bird, 2 tbsp tallow or butter
- Sea salt and black pepper
- For the gremolata: 1/2 cup fresh mint leaves, 1/4 cup fresh parsley, zest of 1 lemon, 2 garlic cloves, 3 tbsp good olive oil, pinch of salt

Instructions

1. Pat chicken thighs completely dry and season generously with salt and pepper on both sides.
2. Heat tallow in a cast iron skillet over medium high heat until shimmering. Place thighs skin side down and do not move them for 8 to 10 minutes until the skin is deeply golden and releases naturally.
3. Flip and cook another 10 to 12 minutes until cooked through. Rest on a board for 5 minutes.
4. While chicken rests, finely chop mint, parsley, and garlic. Combine with lemon zest, olive oil, and salt. Spoon gremolata generously over rested chicken.

Gremolata is a traditional Italian spring condiment, always made with the first herbs of the season.

09. Spring Salmon with Herb Butter and Asparagus



Ingredients

- 4 wild caught salmon fillets skin on, 1 bunch asparagus tough ends snapped off
- 2 tbsp butter plus 2 tbsp for finishing, 1 lemon zested and sliced

- Fresh dill and chives, sea salt and cracked pepper

Instructions

1. Season salmon with salt and pepper. Heat butter in a cast iron or stainless skillet over medium high heat.
2. Place salmon skin side down. Press gently with a spatula for the first 30 seconds. Cook 4 to 5 minutes until skin is crispy and the flesh is opaque about two thirds of the way up.
3. Flip and cook 1 to 2 minutes more. Remove and rest on a warm plate.
4. In the same pan add asparagus with a splash of water. Cook 3 to 4 minutes until bright green and just tender. Finish with a knob of cold butter, lemon zest, dill, and chives.

Wild salmon returning to rivers in spring was a significant food event for Indigenous peoples across the Pacific Northwest and northern Europe alike.

10. Spring Chicken and Vegetable Broth with Egg Drop

Ingredients

- 6 cups homemade chicken bone broth, 2 boneless chicken thighs thinly sliced
- 3 eggs lightly beaten, 2 cups spring greens: spinach, nettles, or watercress
- 3 spring onions sliced thin, 1 tbsp fresh ginger grated, 1 tsp apple cider vinegar
- Sea salt and white pepper, fresh dill or parsley to finish

Instructions

1. Bring bone broth to a gentle simmer with ginger. Add sliced chicken and poach 5 to 6 minutes until just cooked through.
2. Increase heat slightly. While stirring the broth in a slow circular motion, pour beaten eggs in a thin steady stream. They will cook immediately into silky ribbons.
3. Reduce heat and add spring greens. Stir just until wilted, about 1 minute.
4. Finish with apple cider vinegar, spring onions, and fresh herbs. Season with salt and white pepper. Serve immediately.

Egg drop soup is one of the oldest recorded recipes in Chinese culinary history. It is a spring tonic in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

07

SPRING DRINK RECIPES

Tonics for the season of renewal

01. Nettle Infusion (Ancestral Mineral Tonic)

1 oz (28g) dried nettle leaf, 1 quart boiling water. Place dried nettles in a quart jar. Pour boiling water over. Cover and steep 4 to 8 hours or overnight. Strain well. Drink 2 to 4 cups daily. Long-infused nettles contain substantially more minerals than a quick tea. This was a traditional spring practice in Ireland, Scotland, and across Appalachia.

02. Raw Apple Cider Vinegar Morning Tonic

1 tbsp raw unfiltered apple cider vinegar with the mother, 8 oz warm water, 1 tsp raw honey, squeeze of lemon. Combine all in a glass. Stir and drink first thing in the morning before eating. This morning tonic stimulates stomach acid and supports liver bile flow, and was a common folk remedy across Europe and colonial America for spring digestive support.

03. Dandelion Root Coffee

2 tsp roasted dandelion root, 2 cups filtered water, optional splash of raw milk or cream and raw honey. Simmer dandelion root in water for 10 to 15 minutes. Strain and pour into a mug. Add cream and honey to taste. Dandelion root is a traditional liver and gallbladder tonic.

04. Lemon Balm & Mint Sun Tea

Small handful fresh lemon balm leaves, small handful fresh mint leaves, 1 quart cold filtered water, thin slices of lemon. Combine all ingredients in a clear glass jar. Set in the sun for 3 to 4 hours. Strain, refrigerate, and sip throughout the day. Serve over ice with a sprig of mint.

Spring Lifestyle Habits

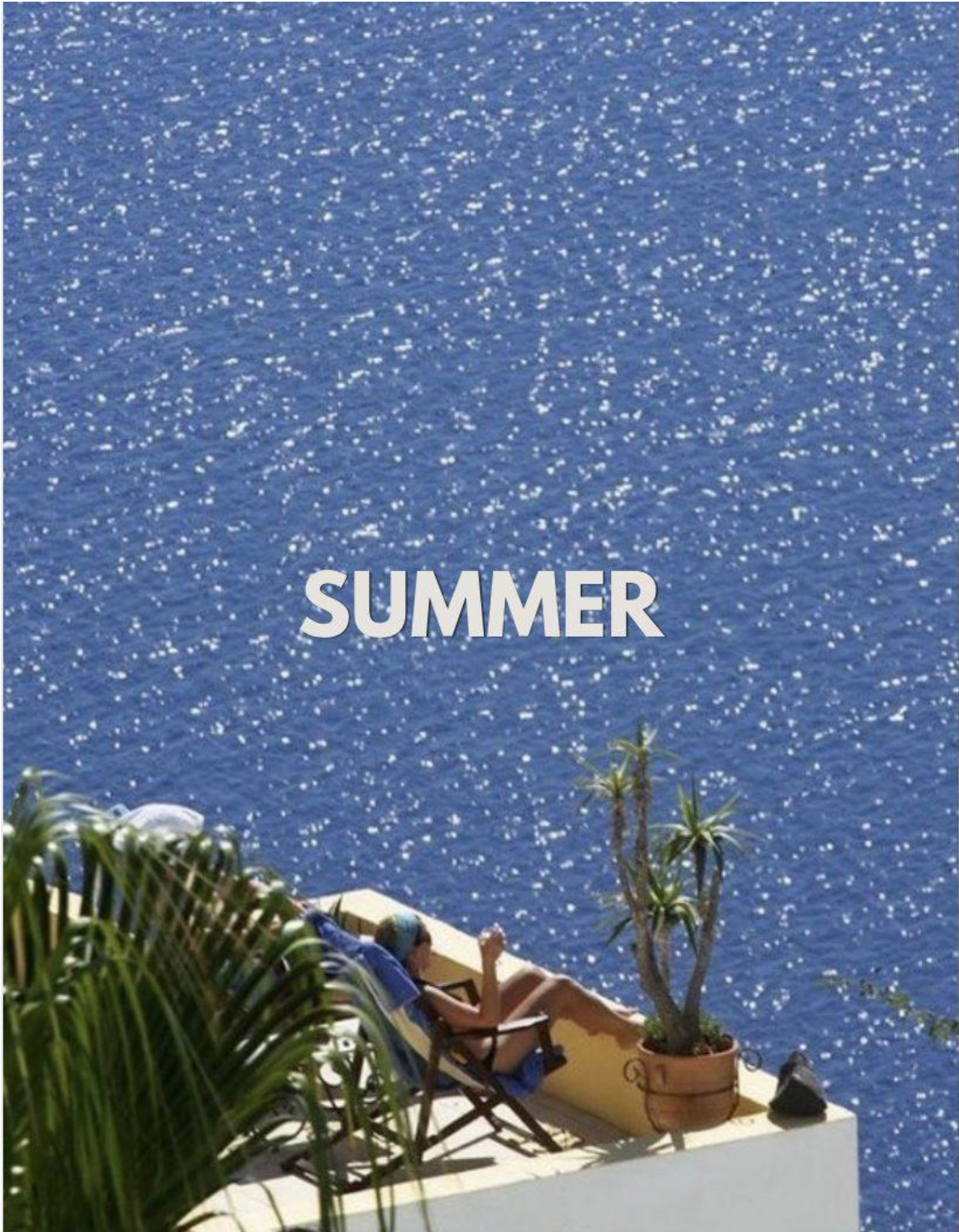
- Wake earlier as light increases. Align your wake time with sunrise within 30-minute windows.
- Get direct morning sunlight within 30 minutes of waking, even 5 minutes outside signals your circadian rhythm.
- Eat a protein-forward breakfast with eggs, meat, or fermented dairy. Avoid starting the day with sugar.
- Begin or restart a garden, even small containers of herbs count as a form of reconnection to the season.
- Incorporate a 12 to 16 hour eating window 2 to 3 days per week.
- Spend at least one hour each week outdoors doing a grounding activity: foraging, gardening, or simply sitting outside.

Earthing: Many traditional cultures practiced deliberate barefoot contact with the earth in spring, after months of cold and coverings. Modern research on grounding supports that direct contact with the earth reduces inflammation and regulates cortisol rhythms.

Spring Shopping List

- Produce: dandelion greens, arugula or watercress, ramps or wild garlic, nettles, asparagus, radishes, spring onions and chives, fresh parsley, dill, tarragon, and mint, lemons
- Proteins: pastured eggs, grass-fed beef bones for broth, chicken livers, wild caught fish especially lighter varieties like cod or sole, pastured bacon
- Pantry and Ferments: raw unfiltered apple cider vinegar, good quality sauerkraut (refrigerated), whole milk kefir or plain whole milk yogurt, raw local honey, bee pollen, dried nettle leaf, dried lemon balm, roasted dandelion root
- Fats: grass-fed butter or ghee, good quality olive oil, tallow or lard for cooking

LIVING ANCESTRALLY · SEASON TWO



Expansion, connection, abundance, and celebration.

01

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR BODY

The biology of peak light

Summer is peak circadian season. With the longest days of the year, your brain's master body clock is receiving more light input than at any other time. This drives everything: your sleep-wake cycle, cortisol rhythm, appetite timing, and even immune function. The ancestral body in summer was primed for productivity, physical intensity, social connection, and reproduction.

Vitamin D synthesis is at its annual peak in summer. Traditional peoples who lived in temperate climates built their entire annual vitamin D reserve during summer months. Building a slow solar callus, gradually increasing unprotected sun time starting in spring, is the ancestral approach. Gut bacteria diversity also shifts in summer toward species that help metabolize the higher-carbohydrate, higher-fiber foods naturally available: fresh fruits, cucumbers, tomatoes, corn, green beans.

Summer is the season most modern people abuse nutritionally, eating ice cream, drinking alcohol, and grazing constantly on processed convenience foods. Ancestral summer eating was actually quite disciplined: real food, eaten at mealtimes, with plenty of fermented and mineral-rich foods to balance the heat. Abundance does not mean excess.

Sunlight as Ancestral Medicine

The skin is not just a barrier, it is an endocrine organ. When UVB radiation hits cholesterol in the skin, it converts to previtamin D3, which then becomes active vitamin D. This process cannot happen through glass, is blocked by most sunscreen, and requires direct skin contact with sunlight. In the middle latitudes, peak vitamin D synthesis happens between roughly 10am and 2pm. Beyond vitamin D, morning sunlight, specifically the low-angle, red and near-infrared light of the first hour after sunrise, has dramatic effects on mitochondrial function, cortisol calibration, and eye health.

Hormones & the Summer Peak

Testosterone peaks in summer, in both men and women, driven by sunlight, physical activity, and abundant nutrition. This hormonal environment supports muscle building, motivation, confidence, and libido. The heart, in Traditional Chinese Medicine, is the organ of summer. It governs joy, circulation, and the quality of connection, both to others and to oneself.

02

SEASONAL FOODS

Eating with the abundance of the season

What to Eat More Of

- Peak-season produce: tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, zucchini, corn, green beans, stone fruits, berries
- Fermented and soured foods: yogurt, kefir, lacto-fermented salsas and pickles, kvass, all naturally cooling and probiotic-rich
- Mineral-rich foods: pastured meats, eggs, fish and shellfish, leafy greens, to replace electrolytes lost in sweat
- Fresh herbs in abundance: basil, cilantro, mint, parsley, dill, all peak in summer
- High-quality animal fats with meals to support fat-soluble vitamin absorption from the summer vegetable abundance

What to Eat Less Of

- Excessive alcohol, the liver's primary summer burden: dehydrating, inflammatory, and sleep-disrupting
- Heavy braised meats and thick stews, better suited to fall and winter when the body needs dense warmth
- Excessive refined sugar, summer abundance can tip into blood sugar instability with constant sweet snacking

Summer eating rhythm: Break the fast at 8 to 10am with a moderate protein-forward meal, eat the largest meal at noon or early afternoon, and finish dinner by 7pm. The long summer light makes this feel natural, and it is, because this is exactly what summer biology is designed for.

Ancestral Movement in Summer

Cold water immersion is one of the oldest ancestral summer practices. Many cultures near water used cold water immersion not just for cooling but for invigoration, health maintenance, and ritual. The Scandinavians swam in cold fjords. Indigenous peoples across the Americas bathed in rivers and used sweat lodges followed by cold plunges. Modern research confirms cold water immersion reduces inflammation, increases norepinephrine, and dramatically improves mood and recovery.

Summer movement principle: Move early, move often, move outside. Summer is for swimming, hiking long distances, farm work, and evening walks. The ancestral summer body moved all day at moderate intensity, not just one hour at high intensity. Match the season.

03

THE SUMMER DAILY RHYTHM

The most generous and unforgiving light of the year

Summer has the most generous and most unforgiving daily rhythm of any season. The long light gives you more hours to work with. The heat requires you to use them strategically. Traditional peoples in temperate climates had this figured out long before anyone named it chronobiology.

- **Wake:** Wake at or before sunrise. In summer this means early, sometimes very early. The red and near-infrared light of the first 30 to 60 minutes after sunrise sets your mitochondrial function, your cortisol curve, and your dopamine production for the entire day.
- **Morning light:** Get outside before you do anything else. Stand in the morning light for at least 10 minutes with skin exposed. No sunglasses. No screens. The ancestral summer body was calibrated by this light morning after morning.
- **Morning work:** Do your most physically demanding work or exercise in the morning before the heat peaks. In many agrarian societies, people worked the fields from dawn to mid-morning and then rested or did lighter tasks through the heat of the day.
- **Breakfast timing:** Eat breakfast after you have been outside, not before. Allow your body to run on overnight fasting hormones for the first hour of the day while you get your light and begin movement.
- **Midday meal:** Eat your largest meal at midday. Digestive fire is strongest between 12 and 2pm. This is supported by Ayurvedic medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and modern chronobiology.
- **Afternoon rest:** Rest after the midday meal. Even 20 minutes horizontal is the ancestral midday practice. The siesta was not a cultural quirk. It was a physiological response to the natural cortisol dip that occurs in early afternoon.
- **Dinner:** Eat dinner early, by 6 or 7pm, and make it lighter than lunch. A simple evening meal, grilled fish, salad, fermented vegetables, eggs, allows the digestive system to complete its work well before sleep.
- **Evening:** Protect the night. Dim artificial lights. Move outside to watch the sky change. The worst summer mistake is staying up until midnight under bright artificial light and then wondering why you feel depleted by August.

04

TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

What traditional cultures did in summer

Summer was the most socially outward season across many traditional cultures. The long days, the abundance of food, and the warmth created the conditions for communal gathering, celebration, and the kind of outdoor living that modern people do not experience enough of.

- **Norse Midsommar:** The Norse celebrated Midsommar at the summer solstice with bonfires, communal feasting, dancing, and flower crowns. Communities gathered around fire as the sun barely set and rose again almost immediately, a collective marking of the sun at its peak.
- **Greek Symposia:** Greek culture organized symposia, communal outdoor gatherings for philosophy, music, wine, and conversation, through the summer months. These were structured communal experiences of shared thought and shared food.
- **The Sun Dance:** Plains Indigenous peoples held the Sun Dance ceremony in midsummer, a multi-day communal gathering of prayer, fasting, dance, and offerings to the sun at its peak, held outdoors over several days by participants who had prepared for months.
- **Mediterranean Outdoor Eating:** Mediterranean cultures across Italy, Greece, Spain, and the Levant organized their entire summer calendar around outdoor eating. Dinner was served late, after the heat of the day had passed, and it was always communal.
- **Celtic Lughnasadh:** Celtic cultures held Lughnasadh on August 1st as the first harvest festival of summer, named for the god Lugh. Communities gathered for games, competitions, communal harvesting, and feasting.

ANCESTRAL SEASONAL WISDOM

Obon

Japan

Japanese culture practices Obon in midsummer, a Buddhist festival honoring the spirits of ancestors who are believed to return to visit their families. Families clean and decorate graves, light lanterns to guide spirits home, and gather in town squares each evening to dance the Bon Odori together, a simple circular dance anyone can join regardless of skill.

It has been observed for over 500 years, and what makes it remarkable is how it braids grief and celebration into a single practice. There is no separating the mourning from the joy. The dead are welcomed back with light and movement and food, not silence. Obon is a reminder that summer's outward, communal energy has room for remembrance too, and that connecting with those who came before you can be an act of festivity rather than sorrow alone.

ANCESTRAL SEASONAL WISDOM

Midsommar

Scandinavia

At the summer solstice, Norse and Scandinavian communities gathered around bonfires for Midsommar, the longest day of the year, when in the far north the sun barely sets before it rises again. People wove flower crowns, danced, feasted communally, and stayed outside for as much of the endless light as they possibly could.

This was not idle celebration. It was a collective act of gratitude for the sun at its peak, held with the full knowledge that the days would soon begin shortening again. Midsommar asks you to notice abundance while you are inside it, not after it has passed. The modern descendant of this practice is simple: on the longest days of your own summer, put down the indoor obligations and actually go outside with the people you love.

05

BODY & HOME RITUALS

Full engagement with the season

Summer Body Practices

- Sun exposure: Build your sun tolerance gradually through spring so that by summer you can spend meaningful time outdoors without burning. The goal is a natural tan that develops over weeks, not a sunburn that happens in an afternoon.
- Cold water: Swimming in natural water, a lake, river, creek, or ocean, is one of the most ancestral summer body practices available. Even wading in cool water for 10 minutes lowers cortisol, reduces inflammation, and activates the vagus nerve.
- Barefoot movement: Summer is when going barefoot feels natural and right. Walking barefoot on grass, sand, or soil is earthing in its purest form.
- Deliberate sweating: Traditional cultures across the world used sweat lodges, saunas, hammams, and temazcals as summer practices of purification and community. Deliberate sweating through exercise, sauna, or hot baths followed by cool water is one of the oldest wellness practices on earth.
- Seasonal eating: Visit a farmers market at least twice per month in summer. Eat what is actually ripe right now in your region. The tomato picked this morning and the tomato that traveled 1,500 miles last week are not the same food.

The Summer Nervous System

Summer is the most sympathetically activating season of the year. More light, more social activity, more physical output, more heat, more stimulation. This is by design. The ancestral summer body was meant to run on high. But it was also meant to rest genuinely, which modern summer life often prevents. Serotonin, the neurotransmitter most closely linked to wellbeing, confidence, and social ease, is produced in response to sunlight and positive social interaction. Both are abundant in summer.

- If you feel overstimulated or burned out in summer: you are experiencing the cost of ignoring the midday rest and the early bedtime. Add one genuine rest practice per day and reduce your evening commitments by one per week.
- If you feel anxious or unable to slow down in summer: reduce alcohol completely for two weeks, eat dinner before 6pm, and protect two evenings per week as genuinely unscheduled.
- If you feel disconnected or flat in summer despite the light and warmth: get your feet in natural water or on natural earth every single day for one week. This is not metaphorical advice. It is a physiological intervention.

The Summer Weekly Rhythm

- Outdoor mornings: Two to three mornings per week: be outside doing something physical for at least 45 minutes before 10am. Walk, swim, garden, hike.
- Communal outdoor meal: Once per week: eat a meal outside with other people. A real meal, cooked at home, eaten outdoors.

- Preservation: Once per week: do one preservation or fermentation project. Make a lacto-fermented salsa. Start a batch of water kefir. Put up a jar of pickles.
- Cold water: Once per week: swim or wade in natural water if at all possible. If not, end every shower with cold.
- Evening outside: Three to four evenings per week: be outside as the sun goes down. Watch the sky change. Let the diminishing light signal your nervous system to begin its wind-down.

Seasonal Mindset

Summer calls for extroversion, celebration, and generosity. It was the season of fairs, festivals, and communal feasts in traditional cultures worldwide, from the Greek symposium to the Plains Indian Sun Dance to the Norse Midsommar celebration to the Japanese Obon festival. Eat with people. Cook for people. Be generous with what you have. The ancestral rule is simple: when it is light, be active. When it is dark, rest.

One summer practice worth trying: cook a meal outside with fire at least once this season. Open fire cooking is one of the oldest human food practices, older than agriculture, older than pottery, older than almost everything we think of as civilization. Even a simple campfire with a grate changes the experience of food.

06

SUMMER RECIPES

Ten dishes built around peak abundance

01. Grilled Bone-In Chicken Thighs with Chimichurri

Ingredients

- 4 to 6 bone-in skin-on chicken thighs from pastured birds, sea salt, black pepper, smoked paprika
- For chimichurri: 1 cup fresh parsley, 1/4 cup fresh oregano, 4 garlic cloves, 1/3 cup olive oil, 2 tbsp red wine vinegar, 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes, salt

Instructions

1. Season thighs generously with salt, pepper, and paprika. Let sit at room temperature 30 minutes.
2. Grill over medium-high heat, skin side down, 8 to 10 minutes until skin is crispy. Flip and cook 10 to 12 minutes more.
3. Blend chimichurri ingredients in a food processor or chop finely by hand. Taste and adjust.
4. Rest chicken 5 minutes before serving. Spoon chimichurri liberally over everything.

Open-fire cooking is one of the oldest human activities. It adds ancestral flavors through the Maillard reaction and creates community around the act of cooking.

02. Stone Fruit & Cultured Cream Breakfast Bowl

Ingredients

- 2 ripe peaches or nectarines sliced, 1/2 cup whole-milk creme fraiche or labneh
- 1 tbsp raw honey, 1/4 cup toasted walnuts or pecans, fresh basil or mint to garnish

Instructions

1. Spoon cultured cream into a bowl. Lay sliced fruit on top.
2. Drizzle with honey, scatter nuts, and finish with a few herb leaves. Eat immediately.

Cultured dairy with fresh fruit was a common summer breakfast from the Middle East to Eastern Europe. The fat and probiotics buffer the natural sugar spike from ripe fruit.

03. Heirloom Tomato Panzanella with Anchovies



Ingredients

- 4 large heirloom tomatoes roughly chopped, 4 thick slices sourdough bread torn and toasted or grilled
- 1/4 red onion thinly sliced and soaked in cold water 10 minutes, 6 to 8 oil-packed anchovy fillets
- 1/4 cup good olive oil, 2 tbsp red wine vinegar, salt and pepper, fresh basil leaves

Instructions

1. Combine tomatoes with salt in a large bowl. Let sit 10 minutes to release juices.
2. Add torn bread, drained onion, anchovies, olive oil, and vinegar. Toss gently.
3. Rest 15 minutes before serving so bread absorbs the dressing. Top with basil.

Panzanella originated as a Tuscan peasant dish, built to use stale bread and peak summer tomatoes together.

04. Chilled Cucumber Mint Soup (Traditional Yogurt-Based)

Ingredients

- 2 large cucumbers peeled and roughly chopped, 2 cups whole-milk yogurt or kefir
- 1 small garlic clove, 2 tbsp fresh dill or mint, 1 tbsp lemon juice, sea salt, olive oil to finish

Instructions

1. Blend cucumber, yogurt, garlic, herb, lemon, and salt until very smooth. Taste and adjust.
2. Refrigerate at least 1 hour or until very cold. Serve in bowls with a drizzle of olive oil.

Variations of this chilled yogurt soup appear in Persian, Greek, Turkish, and Indian traditions.

05. Lacto-Fermented Salsa (Living Summer Condiment)

Ingredients

- 4 ripe tomatoes diced small, 1 jalapeno minced (seeds removed for less heat)
- 1/2 red onion finely diced, 3 cloves garlic minced, juice of 1 lime
- 1 tbsp fresh cilantro chopped, 1 tsp sea salt (non-iodized) per cup of vegetables

Instructions

1. Mix all ingredients and pack tightly into a clean pint jar. Press down until juices rise to cover.
2. Cover with a cloth and leave at room temperature 1 to 2 days. Taste daily, it should become lightly bubbly and tangy.
3. Seal with a lid and refrigerate. Use within 3 weeks.

06. Slow-Roasted Chicken with Summer Herbs and White Wine

Ingredients

- 1 whole pastured chicken or 6 bone-in skin-on chicken pieces, 6 garlic cloves slivered
- 2 tbsp olive oil or tallow, fresh rosemary, thyme, and oregano generous handfuls
- 1 cup white wine or chicken bone broth, 1 lemon sliced, sea salt and black pepper

Instructions

1. Score the chicken pieces and press slivered garlic into the cuts. Season all over with salt and pepper.
2. Sear all sides in a heavy oven-safe pot with fat until deeply golden. Remove and deglaze pan with wine, scraping up all the browned bits.
3. Return chicken to the pot. Tuck fresh herbs and lemon slices around and under the pieces. Cover and cook at 300F for 1.5 to 2 hours until deeply tender.
4. Uncover for the final 20 minutes to re-crisp the skin. Rest 10 minutes before serving with roasted summer vegetables and the pan juices.

07. Watermelon & Feta Salad with Honey-Lime Dressing



Ingredients

- 4 cups cubed watermelon, 1/2 cup good sheep's milk feta crumbled, fresh mint leaves
- Dressing: 2 tbsp raw honey, juice of 1 lime, pinch of salt, 1 tsp olive oil

Instructions

1. Arrange watermelon on a platter. Scatter feta and mint.
2. Whisk dressing and drizzle over. Serve immediately.

This combination of sweet, salty, and acidic echoes summer foods from Morocco to the Eastern Mediterranean.

08. Herb Roasted Whole Chicken with Summer Vegetables

Ingredients

- 1 whole pastured chicken 3 to 4 lbs, 2 tbsp butter or tallow softened
- 1 head of garlic halved crosswise, 1 lemon halved, fresh rosemary, thyme, and tarragon
- 2 zucchini, 2 summer squash, 1 red onion, 1 cup cherry tomatoes all roughly chopped
- Olive oil, sea salt, black pepper

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 425F. Pat chicken completely dry inside and out. Rub all over with softened butter and season generously with salt and pepper.
2. Stuff the cavity with garlic, lemon halves, and a generous bundle of fresh herbs.
3. Toss vegetables with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Spread in a roasting pan and set the chicken directly on top.

4. Roast 60 to 75 minutes until the skin is deeply golden and the thigh juices run clear. Rest 15 minutes before carving. Save the carcass for broth.

Whole roasted chicken is one of the most universally loved ancestral meals, appearing across countless food cultures. Nothing from the bird is wasted.

09. Grilled Sardines with Lemon and Salsa Verde

Ingredients

- 8 to 12 fresh sardines cleaned and gutted, good olive oil, sea salt, cracked pepper, lemon for serving
- For salsa verde: 1 cup flat leaf parsley, 2 tbsp capers, 2 anchovy fillets, 1 garlic clove, 1 tsp red wine vinegar, 1/2 cup good olive oil, salt

Instructions

1. Rinse sardines and pat dry. Rub with olive oil and season generously inside and out with salt and pepper.
2. Grill over high heat 3 to 4 minutes per side until skin is charred and crispy. They cook fast. Watch them closely.
3. Make salsa verde by finely chopping parsley, capers, anchovy, and garlic together. Stir in vinegar and olive oil until combined.
4. Serve sardines immediately with a generous spoonful of salsa verde and lemon wedges.

Sardines are among the most sustainably fished and nutrient-dense seafood available. Mediterranean cultures have grilled them over open fire for thousands of years.

10. Stuffed Zucchini with Spiced Ground Beef and Herbs

Ingredients

- 4 large zucchini halved lengthwise, 1 lb grass-fed ground beef
- 1 small onion finely diced, 3 garlic cloves minced, 1 tsp each: cumin, coriander, cinnamon, smoked paprika
- 1/2 cup crushed tomatoes or 2 fresh summer tomatoes chopped, fresh parsley and mint, olive oil

Instructions

1. Scoop flesh from zucchini halves leaving a 1/4 inch shell. Chop the scooped flesh and set aside.
2. Saute onion in olive oil until soft. Add garlic and spices and cook 1 minute. Add ground beef and brown well.
3. Add chopped zucchini flesh and tomatoes. Cook 5 minutes until most liquid has evaporated. Season generously.
4. Fill zucchini shells with the beef mixture. Bake at 375F for 25 to 30 minutes until zucchini is tender.

Stuffed vegetables with spiced ground meat is one of the oldest recipes in Middle Eastern, Greek, and North African cuisine.

07

SUMMER DRINK RECIPES

Cooling tonics for the season of heat

01. Homemade Switchel (Farmer's Haymaker Drink)

1 quart cold filtered water, 3 tbsp raw apple cider vinegar, 3 tbsp raw honey or maple syrup, 1/2 tsp fresh grated ginger, pinch of sea salt. Combine all ingredients and stir or shake well. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Serve over ice with a slice of lemon. Switchel was the Gatorade of 18th and 19th century American farm life.

02. Water Kefir Soda (Summer Probiotic Tonic)

2 tbsp water kefir grains, 1/4 cup cane sugar or rapadura, 1 quart filtered water, 1 dried fig or apricot, 1 slice lemon. Dissolve sugar in a small amount of warm water. Add to filtered water in a quart jar. Let cool to room temperature. Add kefir grains, dried fruit, and lemon. Cover with a cloth and ferment 24 to 48 hours. Strain, bottle, and allow a second ferment for 12 to 24 hours for carbonation. Refrigerate.

03. Hibiscus & Ginger Iced Infusion

1/4 cup dried hibiscus flowers, 1-inch knob of fresh ginger sliced, 1 quart boiling water, raw honey to sweeten, lemon to finish. Steep hibiscus and ginger in boiling water for 15 minutes. Strain and sweeten with honey while warm. Refrigerate until cold. Hibiscus tea is consumed widely across Mexico, West Africa, and the Caribbean as a cooling summer drink.

04. Coconut Water & Sea Salt Electrolyte Drink

1 cup real coconut water (fresh or minimally processed), 1 cup filtered water, pinch sea salt, squeeze of lime. Combine and stir. Drink slowly after outdoor work or exercise. Coconut water has been used as an oral rehydration solution across tropical cultures for centuries.

Summer Lifestyle Habits

- Maximize direct sunlight from 7 to 11am when UVB is available and UV index is tolerable. Build a solar callus gradually.
- Stay hydrated with mineral-rich water. Add a pinch of sea salt and a squeeze of lemon to water throughout the day.
- Eat your largest meal at midday when digestive fire is strongest, a principle shared by Ayurveda and many European traditions.
- Swim in natural water at least once weekly: lake, creek, river, or ocean.
- Begin preserving: make jam, lacto-fermented vegetables, or pickles from the season's peak produce.

The ancestral midday rest (the siesta) was not laziness. It was a structured nervous system reset during peak heat of the day. Even 20 minutes of horizontal rest after the midday meal significantly reduces cortisol burden and supports afternoon performance.

Summer Shopping List

- Produce: heirloom tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini and summer squash, sweet corn, bell peppers and hot peppers, green beans, fresh basil, cilantro, mint, parsley, dill, stone fruits, berries, watermelon, fresh garlic and ginger
- Proteins: bone-in skin-on chicken thighs from pastured birds, grass-fed ground beef, fresh fish and shellfish especially oysters, sardines, and wild salmon, pastured eggs, oil-packed anchovy fillets
- Fermented and Cultured Foods: whole milk kefir or drinking yogurt, creme fraiche or labneh, good quality feta, raw sauerkraut or kimchi, water kefir grains
- Pantry: dried hibiscus flowers, real coconut water, raw apple cider vinegar, raw honey, good quality olive oil, sea salt with minerals

LIVING ANCESTRALLY · SEASON THREE



Preparation, reflection, and deep nourishment.

01

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR BODY

The biology of the shortening light

As daylight shortens in fall, melatonin production begins earlier in the evening and extends longer into the morning. Appetite changes dramatically in fall, and this is one of the most important, and most misunderstood, seasonal shifts. The hunger hormone ghrelin naturally increases as days shorten. Your body wants more calories, denser food, and especially more fat and carbohydrate. This is not a willpower failure or emotional eating. This is the mammalian body preparing for the metabolic demands of cold weather.

Serotonin levels begin to dip as sunlight decreases, the same mechanism behind Seasonal Affective Disorder in its more severe forms. The ancestral response was twofold: eat more fermented foods (which support serotonin production in the gut) and increase communal connection through harvest gatherings and festivals. The isolation that makes fall and winter so difficult for many modern people was not the ancestral norm.

Across many traditional cultures, fall was understood as an urgent season. Not stressful, purposeful. The work of fall was harvesting, preserving, storing, and preparing the home for winter. This urgency was healthy. It produced the fermented foods, the preserved meats, the root cellars full of vegetables that made winter survival not just possible but nourishing.

The Lungs: Fall's Governing Organ

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the lungs are the organs of fall. As temperatures drop, air dries out, and the first cold and respiratory viruses of the season circulate, lung health becomes both more fragile and more central to overall wellbeing. The lungs in TCM also govern the skin, which is why fall is the season when skin suddenly feels dry, tight, and dull. The ancestral response was to oil the skin from the outside with animal fats and plant oils and nourish the lungs from the inside with warming, moist, cooked foods.

Emotionally, the lungs govern grief and the ability to let go. Fall is the season of endings, and many traditional cultures honored this honestly. The thinning veil between the living and the dead, honored in Celtic Samhain, Mexican Dia de los Muertos, and Japanese Obon, reflects a shared understanding that fall is the time to grieve what has passed, release what no longer serves, and create space for the new cycle.

02

SEASONAL FOODS

*Eating for the transition to cold***What to Eat More Of**

- Root vegetables: sweet potatoes, parsnips, turnips, beets, carrots, rutabaga, celeriac, all peak in fall
- Winter squash: butternut, delicata, kabocha, acorn, rich in beta-carotene and complex carbohydrate
- Animal fats: tallow, lard, butter, fatty cuts of meat, the body genuinely needs more fat as insulation and fuel demands rise
- Fermented foods: sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, miso, critical gut support as serotonin-producing gut bacteria need feeding through the darker months
- Organ meats: liver is peak fall food, traditionally one of the first cuts eaten after a fall hunt, dense with fat-soluble vitamins A, D, K2, and B12
- Warming spices: ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, black pepper, turmeric, cloves
- Bone broth: transition from summer sipping to daily cooking and drinking

What to Eat Less Of

- Raw, cold foods in large quantities, the shift to cooked food is biological support for digestion as metabolic fire adjusts to cooler temperatures
- Excessive summer fruits and raw juices, their season has passed
- Iced beverages and cold smoothies, warming the digestive system in fall is a consistent principle across Ayurveda, TCM, and European herbal traditions

Ancestral Movement in Fall

Fall was one of the most physically intensive seasons after summer for traditional peoples, not in terms of aerobic intensity, but in terms of sheer duration and weight-bearing load. Harvesting crops, hauling wood, hunting, butchering, and preparing the home for winter all required sustained physical effort over long days. As temperatures cool, outdoor movement becomes more energizing and less taxing than summer exertion.

Fall movement principle: Move with purpose and load. Fall is for carrying wood, harvesting, hiking with a pack, hunting, and preparing the physical space of your home. Let your outdoor movement produce something, even a long walk that gathers herbs or mushrooms is ancestrally richer than a walk that goes nowhere.

03

THE FALL DAILY RHYTHM

The most structured light of the year

Fall's daily rhythm is the most structured of the four seasons. The shortening days create a natural urgency that many traditional societies responded to with purposeful early rising, productive daylight hours, and early evenings. This is the season where your daily structure matters most because the light window is shrinking every day and the body is trying to shift its entire hormonal and circadian pattern.

- **Wake:** Move your wake time earlier as darkness increases. Each week of fall, try moving your alarm 10 to 15 minutes earlier. By late fall you should be rising close to or with the sun. In many agrarian societies, people could not afford to sleep through fall's short days when there was harvest work to be done.
- **First drink:** Drink something warm immediately upon waking. No cold water, no cold anything in fall. A mug of warm bone broth, golden milk, ginger tea, or warm water with lemon signals warmth to the digestive system before asking it to process food.
- **Breakfast:** Eat a substantial protein and fat forward breakfast within an hour of waking. Fall is not a fasting season. Eggs with animal fat, liver pate on sourdough, sardines, leftover stew.
- **Morning:** Do your most demanding physical work in the morning. By midday in fall the light is already declining and temperatures are cooling.
- **Afternoon:** Eat a satisfying midday meal and then spend the afternoon on creative, relational, or reflective work. In many traditional societies, people who were not in active harvest would spend fall afternoons on handwork, preservation, and preparation for winter.
- **Dinner:** Eat dinner before dark. As evenings come earlier in fall, this means eating by 5:30 or 6pm in many regions by November. A warm, cooked dinner of braised meats, root vegetables, and soups.
- **Evening:** Wind down immediately as the sun sets. Dim all lights to candlelight or amber lamps. Reduce screens significantly. Honoring the earlier melatonin signal rather than overriding it with bright artificial light is one of the most impactful fall practices for sleep quality.

04

TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

What traditional cultures did in fall

Fall was the season of the harvest across food-producing cultures worldwide. But it was much more than the physical act of harvesting. It was a season of communal gratitude, preservation, preparation, and the kind of deliberate transition between the outward energy of summer and the inward quiet of winter.

- Celtic Samhain: Celtic Samhain, held on October 31st and November 1st, marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter. It was understood as the time when the boundary between the living and the dead was thinnest, and ancestral spirits could visit. This tradition of honoring the dead at the threshold of winter appears in some form across many traditional cultures worldwide.
- Dia de los Muertos: Observed across Mexico and Latin America on November 1st and 2nd, Dia de los Muertos is a tradition of building ofrendas (altars) for deceased loved ones, decorated with marigolds, photographs, and the foods and objects the departed enjoyed in life.
- Japanese Tsukimi: Japanese Tsukimi, moon viewing, is observed at the harvest moon in September or October. Families gather to view the moon, arrange autumn grasses and seasonal produce as decorations, and eat tsukimi dango (moon-viewing rice dumplings) together.

ANCESTRAL SEASONAL WISDOM

Chuseok

Korea

Chuseok is one of the most important traditional holidays in Korean culture, held at the full moon of the eighth lunar month, typically in September or October. Families travel from across the country back to their ancestral hometowns. At dawn, they perform charye, preparing and offering traditional foods to their ancestors, then share that same food together in a communal meal. They visit and clean ancestral graves, and in the evening play traditional games including ssireum, Korean wrestling, and ganggangsullae, a circle dance performed by women under the full moon.

Chuseok is a full expression of ancestral connection, communal gratitude, and seasonal celebration, all built around the same harvest-moon logic that shows up in so many fall traditions worldwide: gather the people, offer the first food back to those who came before you, and let the moon mark the turning of the year.

ANCESTRAL SEASONAL WISDOM

Kimjang

Korea



Kimjang is the traditional Korean practice of communal kimchi-making in late fall, so significant it was inscribed by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage in 2013. Communities gather to make hundreds of pounds of kimchi together, enough to last an entire winter. The preparation involves massive quantities of napa cabbage, garlic, ginger, and chili paste, all worked by hand in large batches, neighbors and generations side by side.

Kimjang is fermentation as community event: preservation as celebration, and food wisdom passed hand to hand in a single afternoon rather than read off a page. It is one of the clearest living examples of what this entire season asks of us. Preserve deliberately. Do it together. Let the work itself be the gathering.

05

BODY & HOME RITUALS

Transitioning the body into the cooler months

Fall Body Practices

- Daily skin oiling: As the air dries in fall, the skin becomes dry, tight, and depleted faster than in any other season. Tallow balm, jojoba oil, raw shea butter, and sesame oil all protect the skin barrier. Apply after bathing while skin is still slightly damp.
- Protect the kidneys: Keep the lower back and kidneys warm. In Chinese medicine the kidneys are the organs of fall and winter and are particularly vulnerable to cold. Wearing a layer that covers the lower back is a traditional cold-climate practice across East Asia, Eastern Europe, and many Indigenous cultures.
- Castor oil packs: Applying a cloth soaked in castor oil to the liver area for 45 to 60 minutes several times per week is a traditional naturopathic liver support practice.
- Dry brushing: Dry brush more vigorously in fall, particularly on the legs and arms, to stimulate lymph flow and support immune preparation for the cold and flu season ahead.
- Elderberry: Begin the elderberry protocol now. Elderberry syrup taken daily from September through March is one of the most consistently documented traditional immune practices in European herbal medicine.
- Warm feet: Soaking feet in warm water with Epsom salt and a few drops of ginger essential oil for 15 minutes before bed supports circulation and eases the transition to sleep.

The Fall Nervous System

The nervous system in fall is managing a significant transition: from the high-output, socially activated summer pattern to the more inward, restorative fall-winter pattern. Many people resist it, trying to maintain summer-level social activity and productivity, and they pay for it with increased anxiety, adrenal depletion, and illness. The emotional invitation of fall is to let things complete. What have you grown this year that is ready to be brought in?

- If you feel anxious or edgy in early fall: this is often adrenal hypersensitivity to the shortening light. Reduce caffeine, add magnesium-rich foods (pumpkin seeds, dark leafy greens, cacao), and move your bedtime 30 minutes earlier for one week.
- If you feel sad or emotionally tender in fall: this is the seasonal invitation to grieve what has passed. The lungs in TCM govern grief and fall is their season. Allow the emotion rather than suppressing it. Walk in fallen leaves. Make a small altar of your own.
- If you feel unmotivated or heavy in fall: you may be entering the seasonal shift too quickly. Add more outdoor light exposure in the morning, eat iron-rich foods daily, and begin a short daily movement practice outdoors.

The Fall Weekly Rhythm

- One preservation weekly: Each week, make one preservation. A batch of sauerkraut, a pot of bone broth for the freezer, a jar of pickled vegetables, dried herbs from the garden.

- Harvest connection: Each week, visit a farm, orchard, or farmers market specifically for fall harvest produce. Bring home something you have never cooked before.
- Social front-loading: Move your social commitments earlier in the week. Reserve your most social and active evenings for Monday through Wednesday and protect the end of the week for quieter, more domestic activity.
- Seasonal home transitions: Begin winding down your home environment each week: one drawer organized, one closet cleared, one seasonal transition made.
- Evening harvest practice: Each evening, write three things that came to harvest that day. What arrived, what completed, what you received today.

Seasonal Mindset

Fall asks for gratitude and completion. Many traditional harvest cultures had a festival of thanks, from Sukkot to Mabon to Thanksgiving to Korean Chuseok. The harvest feast was not just celebration; it was a communal reckoning with what had been grown, earned, and preserved. Fall is not the season to start many new things, it is the season to complete, consolidate, and give thanks for what is.

One fall practice worth trying: hold a harvest meal before the end of October. Invite the people who matter to you. Cook something from scratch from fall ingredients. Light candles. Before you eat, go around the table and have each person name one thing they are grateful for from the past year. This is one of the oldest human fall rituals and it works every time.

06

FALL RECIPES

Ten dishes built for the harvest table

01. Beef & Root Vegetable Stew



Ingredients

- 2 lbs beef chuck cut into 2-inch pieces, 4 medium carrots, 3 parsnips, 2 large turnips or rutabaga, 1 large yellow onion
- 4 garlic cloves smashed, 2 cups bone broth plus 1 cup water, 2 tbsp tallow or lard
- Fresh thyme, rosemary, 2 bay leaves, sea salt, black pepper

Instructions

1. Season beef well with salt and pepper. Sear in batches in a heavy Dutch oven with fat until deeply browned on all sides. Remove.
2. Sauté onion until softened, add garlic 1 minute. Deglaze with a splash of broth, scraping up all the browned bits.
3. Return beef. Add all vegetables, herbs, broth, and water. Cover and cook at 300F for 3 to 4 hours, or low and slow on the stovetop.
4. Remove bay leaves and adjust salt. Serve in deep bowls with crusty sourdough.

One-pot cooking over wood fire or hearth was a common fall and winter cooking method. Nothing is wasted; every bit of gelatin from bones and cartilage enriches the broth.

02. Fermented Applesauce (Traditional Preservation)

Ingredients

- 6 medium apples (a mix of varieties), cored and quartered, do not peel
- 1/4 cup filtered water, 2 tbsp whey (or skip for wild ferment), 1 tsp cinnamon, 1 tbsp raw honey (added after fermentation)

Instructions

1. Cook apples with water over low heat until completely soft. Mash or blend to desired texture.
2. Cool to room temperature. Stir in whey if using. Pack into quart jars.
3. Cover with cloth and ferment at room temperature 1 to 2 days until slightly tangy. Seal and refrigerate.
4. Stir in honey before serving. Keeps refrigerated for 3 weeks.

03. Roasted Squash & Bone Broth Porridge

Ingredients

- 1 small butternut squash halved and roasted at 400F until caramelized
- 1 cup steel-cut oats soaked overnight, 2 cups bone broth (instead of water for cooking oats)
- Butter, maple syrup, cinnamon, nutmeg, sea salt

Instructions

1. Cook drained oats in bone broth over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until thick, about 20 minutes.
2. Scoop roasted squash flesh and mash into the oats. Season with butter, spices, salt, and a drizzle of maple syrup.

Cooking oats in broth rather than water adds protein, collagen, and a deeply savory, nourishing quality.

04. Hunter's Chicken Liver Pate

Ingredients

- 1 lb pastured chicken livers cleaned, 4 tbsp butter divided
- 1 shallot minced, 2 garlic cloves minced, 2 tbsp brandy or apple cider (optional)
- Fresh thyme, sea salt, black pepper, additional 2 tbsp butter melted on top to seal

Instructions

1. Saute shallot and garlic in 2 tbsp butter until soft. Add livers and cook over medium heat until just cooked through (slightly pink in center).

2. Add brandy and thyme. Cook 1 minute more. Let cool 10 minutes.
3. Blend liver mixture with remaining 2 tbsp butter until very smooth. Season generously.
4. Pour into ramekins. Melt extra butter and pour over top to seal. Refrigerate at least 2 hours. Serve with sourdough crackers.

Liver was prized by many traditional hunting cultures as one of the first foods eaten after a kill. It is one of the most nutrient-dense foods on earth.

05. Slow-Braised Beef Brisket with Sauerkraut & Apples

Ingredients

- 3 to 4 lb beef brisket, 2 cups raw sauerkraut with its brine, 2 apples cored and quartered
- 1 large onion sliced, 1 cup beef bone broth or apple cider
- Caraway seeds, juniper berries, 2 bay leaves, sea salt and black pepper, 2 tbsp tallow or butter for searing

Instructions

1. Season brisket generously with salt and pepper. Sear all sides in a heavy Dutch oven with fat until deeply golden and crusted, about 4 minutes per side.
2. Remove brisket and saute onion in the same pot for 5 minutes. Deglaze with broth or cider, scraping up every bit of fond from the bottom.
3. Return brisket to the pot. Layer sauerkraut, apples, and spices around it. The sauerkraut brine becomes part of the braising liquid.
4. Cover tightly and cook at 300F for 4 to 5 hours until the brisket is completely tender. Rest 20 minutes before slicing against the grain.

Braised beef with fermented cabbage is deeply rooted in Eastern European and Germanic traditions.

06. Sweet Potato & Egg Hash with Herbs

Ingredients

- 2 medium sweet potatoes cubed small, 4 eggs, 1/2 onion diced
- 2 tbsp lard or tallow, fresh rosemary, sage, sea salt, smoked paprika

Instructions

1. Cook sweet potato cubes in fat in a cast iron pan over medium heat until golden and crispy, 15 to 18 minutes. Don't stir too often; let them crust.
2. Add onion and herbs, cook 5 more minutes. Create wells and crack eggs in. Cover and cook until eggs are set to your liking.
3. Season with salt and paprika. Serve straight from the pan.

07. Homemade Sauerkraut (Traditional Lacto-Ferment)

Ingredients

- 1 medium head green cabbage approximately 2 lbs
- 1 tbsp non-iodized sea salt per pound of cabbage

Instructions

1. Shred cabbage finely and weigh it. Calculate salt needed (1 tbsp per pound).
2. Mix cabbage and salt in a large bowl. Massage vigorously for 5 to 10 minutes until brine pools generously.
3. Pack tightly into clean quart jars. Press down until cabbage is submerged under its own brine. Cover with cloth.
4. Ferment at room temperature 7 to 28 days, pressing down daily. Taste after 1 week. Seal and refrigerate when ready. Keeps 6 months.

Sauerkraut was a winter survival food across northern Europe, providing vitamin C through the months when fresh produce was unavailable.

08. Braised Beef Shanks with Root Vegetables

Ingredients

- 4 beef shanks about 1 inch thick, 2 parsnips, 2 carrots, 1 turnip all roughly chopped
- 1 large onion roughly chopped, 4 garlic cloves smashed, 2 cups beef bone broth, 1 cup red wine or additional broth
- 2 tbsp tomato paste, fresh thyme, rosemary, and 2 bay leaves, tallow or butter for searing, sea salt and black pepper

Instructions

1. Season shanks generously with salt and pepper. Sear in a very hot Dutch oven with fat until deeply browned on both sides, about 4 minutes per side. Work in batches.
2. Remove shanks. Saute onion and garlic in the same pot until golden. Add tomato paste and cook 2 minutes, then deglaze with wine or broth.
3. Return shanks to the pot. Add broth, vegetables, and herbs. The liquid should come about halfway up the shanks.
4. Cover and braise at 300F for 3 to 4 hours until the meat is falling from the bone. Spoon the marrow from the bone center directly into the braising sauce.

Beef shank contains the bone, the marrow, and connective tissue, all of which break down during the long braise into gelatin that supports joint health and gut lining integrity.

09. Slow-Roasted Chicken Thighs with Roasted Garlic and Root Vegetables

Ingredients

- 6 bone-in skin-on chicken thighs, 1 whole head of garlic top sliced off to expose cloves
- 3 medium parsnips, 2 large carrots, 1 large beet all cubed, 1 cup chicken bone broth
- 2 tbsps tallow or butter, fresh rosemary and thyme, sea salt, black pepper, smoked paprika

Instructions

1. Season chicken thighs generously with salt, pepper, and smoked paprika. Sear skin side down in tallow in a large oven-safe skillet for 8 minutes until skin is deeply golden. Remove.
2. Add root vegetables to the pan and toss in the rendered chicken fat. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Nestle chicken thighs back among the vegetables, skin side up. Tuck in garlic head, rosemary, and thyme. Pour broth around the edges.
4. Roast uncovered at 375F for 45 to 55 minutes until chicken skin is deeply crispy and vegetables are caramelized.

10. Stuffed Acorn Squash with Spiced Ground Beef and Wild Rice



Ingredients

- 2 acorn squash halved and seeds removed, 1 lb grass-fed ground beef
- 1/2 cup cooked wild rice or brown rice, 1 small onion finely diced, 3 garlic cloves minced
- 1 tsp each: cumin, cinnamon, smoked paprika, 1/2 cup beef bone broth
- Handful of toasted pecans or walnuts, fresh parsley and pomegranate seeds to finish, butter and sea salt for the squash

Instructions

1. Rub squash halves with butter and salt. Place cut side down on a baking sheet and roast at 400F for 35 to 40 minutes until completely tender.

2. Meanwhile, saute onion until golden. Add garlic and spices, cook 1 minute. Add ground beef and brown well.
3. Add cooked rice and broth. Simmer 5 minutes until liquid is mostly absorbed. Season generously with salt.
4. Fill roasted squash halves with the beef and rice mixture. Return to the oven for 10 minutes. Top with toasted nuts, parsley, and pomegranate seeds.

Wild rice is one of the oldest North American grain foods, harvested by Indigenous peoples of the Great Lakes region for thousands of years.

07

FALL DRINK RECIPES

Warming tonics for the season of transition

01. Spiced Bone Broth Morning Cup

8 oz warm bone broth (beef or chicken), 1/4 tsp turmeric, pinch of black pepper and ginger, 1 tsp butter or ghee, sea salt to taste. Heat broth gently, do not boil. Stir in spices and fat. Pour into a mug and sip slowly as a morning tonic.

02. Apple Cider Vinegar Hot Toddy (Non-Alcoholic)

8 oz hot water, 1 tbsp raw apple cider vinegar, 1 tbsp raw honey, juice of 1/2 lemon, 1/4 tsp cinnamon, pinch of cayenne. Combine all in a mug. Stir and drink warm.

03. Roasted Dandelion & Cinnamon Warming Tea

1 tsp roasted dandelion root, 1 cinnamon stick, 3 cardamom pods cracked, 2 cups water, milk or cream to finish. Simmer dandelion root and spices in water for 12 minutes. Strain and pour. Add cream if desired.

04. Raw Milk Golden Milk

8 oz raw whole milk or full-fat coconut milk, 1/2 tsp turmeric, 1/4 tsp cinnamon, pinch of black pepper and ginger, 1 tsp raw honey or coconut sugar, 1 tsp ghee or butter optional. Golden milk (haldi doodh) is a traditional Ayurvedic drink consumed throughout India for generations as an anti-inflammatory, sleep-supportive evening tonic.

Fall Lifestyle Habits

- Begin moving your sleep time 15 minutes earlier each week as darkness increases. Follow the light.
- Wear layers rather than forcing heat. Allow your body to adapt to cooler temperatures.
- Eat warming, cooked foods rather than raw and cold. The digestive system benefits from pre-softened, cooked food.
- Oil your skin and scalp with tallow balm, jojoba, or raw shea butter as air dries out.
- Spend one morning or afternoon in the harvest: visit a farm, orchard, or farmers market.
- Make one preservation each week: a batch of sauerkraut, pickled vegetables, bone broth for the freezer, or dried herbs.

The harvest festival: Most major food-producing civilizations had a fall harvest celebration, from the Hebrew Sukkot to the Celtic Samhain, Japanese Tsukimi, Korean Chuseok, and the American Thanksgiving. These were not arbitrary holidays; they were expressions of genuine communal gratitude for surviving another year.

Fall Shopping List

- Produce: sweet potatoes and yams, butternut squash, delicata, kabocha and acorn squash, parsnips, turnips and rutabaga, beets, celeriac, carrots, apples, pears, fresh ginger and turmeric root, garlic, kale, chard, cabbage for sauerkraut, mushrooms especially shiitake and maitake
- Proteins: beef chuck or short ribs for braising, beef brisket, oxtail, pastured chicken livers, beef bones for broth, pastured eggs, smoked or cured fish
- Pantry: non-iodized sea salt in bulk for fermentation, raw apple cider vinegar, dried beans and lentils, tomato paste, juniper berries and caraway seeds, cinnamon sticks, cardamom pods, whole cloves, dried elderberries, roasted dandelion root, dried rosehips
- Fats: beef tallow or lard in larger quantity than summer, grass-fed butter (stock up), ghee

LIVING ANCESTRALLY · SEASON FOUR



Restoration, depth, and sacred stillness.

01

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR BODY

The biology of the long dark

Winter triggers the most significant hormonal shift of the annual cycle. Melatonin production extends dramatically. In some latitudes, the body produces melatonin for 10 to 12 hours of the night in midwinter. This extended melatonin window is not just about sleep. Melatonin is a powerful antioxidant, an immune modulator, and a signal that drives cellular repair, DNA maintenance, and tissue regeneration. The long winter nights are the body's annual deep cleaning and rebuilding period, if you let them be.

Metabolism in winter does something counterintuitive: it actually increases slightly in cold temperatures as the body works to maintain core temperature through thermogenesis. Traditional peoples who lived in cold climates and ate fat-rich diets were not struggling through winter on inadequate fuel. They were running a beautifully calibrated metabolic system that used dietary fat and cold exposure together to maintain warmth, energy, and body composition.

The winter body's needs: Fat for fuel and warmth. Collagen-rich foods for tissue repair. Fermented foods for immune support and gut health. Long sleep for cellular regeneration. Darkness for melatonin and repair. Warmth for digestion and circulation. Quiet for nervous system restoration. Your body knows winter. It has been preparing for this season for your entire evolutionary history.

The Kidneys: Winter's Governing Organ

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, winter belongs to the kidneys and the element of Water. The kidneys are understood to house our most fundamental reserves, what TCM calls jing or essence, the deep constitutional energy we draw upon when everything else is depleted. Every season you push through exhaustion, deprive yourself of sleep, eat poorly, or run on stimulants instead of rest, you make a withdrawal from this account. Winter is the season designed for making deposits.

The kidneys also govern bone strength, reproductive vitality, and the depth of the lower back and adrenals. The kidneys' call in winter is simple: rest deeply, eat warming and nourishing foods, keep the lower back warm, and stop spending energy you do not have. Fear is the emotion associated with the kidneys in TCM, and winter is the season when existential fears and financial anxiety tend to surface. Many traditional cultures addressed this not through avoidance but through story, ritual, and communal gathering around fire.

Hormones & the Winter Restoration

Testosterone reaches its annual low in winter, and this is entirely normal and healthy. The body is in restoration mode, not expansion mode. Growth hormone peaks in deep slow-wave sleep, and winter's extended darkness creates the longest possible sleep windows for this repair hormone to do its work.

Thyroid function can become more sluggish in winter. Ancestral support for thyroid health in winter includes iodine-rich foods (fish, seaweed, dairy), selenium from meats and eggs, adequate dietary fat, and, critically, enough calories to tell the body it is not in a famine.

02

SEASONAL FOODS

Eating for warmth and repair

What to Eat More Of

- Animal fats: tallow, lard, butter, ghee, fatty fish, the body's primary fuel source in winter and critical for fat-soluble vitamin transport
- Collagen-rich foods: bone broth, oxtail, short ribs, whole stewed chickens, feet and joints, winter is the prime season for gelatinous cuts that repair gut lining and joints
- Organ meats: liver, heart, kidney, providing the B12, vitamin A, CoQ10, and iron the body needs through low-sunlight months
- Fermented foods: sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, kefir, immune-supportive and serotonin-supporting
- Root vegetables and winter squash: slow-burning carbohydrates that support serotonin production
- Warming spices: ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, black pepper, star anise
- Eggs from pastured hens: still provide one of the most complete nutritional packages of any single food

What to Eat Less Of

- Cold, raw foods: smoothies, cold salads, raw vegetables in quantity. The digestive system contracts in cold weather and functions best with warm, cooked food.
- Excess sugar: winter cravings for sweetness are real, but excessive refined sugar suppresses immune function
- Alcohol: suppresses melatonin, disrupts deep sleep, depletes B vitamins, and compromises liver function during the season when the liver is working hard
- Processed, industrial foods: winter is when nutrient density matters most, every meal should count

Winter eating rhythm: Two substantial meals per day, eaten during daylight hours, and nothing after dark. This natural 12 to 14 hour overnight fast happened automatically for many ancestral peoples because there was nothing to eat in the dark and no refrigerator to raid at midnight. If you find yourself constantly hungry in winter, this is not a problem to override. It is a signal to eat more fat and protein.

Ancestral Movement in Winter

Traditional peoples in cold climates did not stop moving in winter, but they moved very differently. Heavy agricultural and building labor ceased. Movement shifted to shorter, purposeful activities: hauling wood, checking traps, tending animals, fetching water, maintaining the home. Cold exposure as movement-adjacent practice was common across traditional cold-climate cultures: the Scandinavian sauna followed by snow rolling or cold plunge, the Russian banya, the Native American sweat lodge followed by cold river immersion.

Winter movement principle: Move briefly, move gently, move with purpose, and include cold. Short walks outside every day, even in cold and dark, are more ancestrally appropriate than an intense indoor workout. Save the intensity for spring.

03

THE WINTER DAILY RHYTHM

The most forgiving and demanding light of the year

Winter has the most forgiving and the most demanding daily rhythm of any season. Forgiving because less is asked of you physically and socially. Demanding because the darkness requires you to be intentional about light, warmth, nourishment, and rest in ways that other seasons do not. Left to the pressures of modern life, most people get winter exactly backwards: staying up late, eating lightly, moving intensely, and ignoring the darkness. The ancestral winter body needs the opposite of all of that.

- **Wake:** Allow yourself to wake later than summer and fall. Winter is the one season where the body genuinely needs more sleep and later rising is biologically appropriate.
- **Morning light:** Get outside within an hour of waking, every single day, even in cold and dark. Ten to fifteen minutes of winter daylight, even on a cloudy day, still resets your cortisol rhythm and serotonin production better than staying inside under artificial light.
- **First drink:** Drink something warm before eating. Spiced bone broth, golden milk, ginger tea, or hot water with lemon. In winter the digestive fire needs priming before it is efficient.
- **Two meals:** Eat two substantial, warm, cooked meals per day rather than grazing. Ancestral winter eating was feast-based, not snacking-based.
- **Midday movement:** Move outdoors in the morning or at midday when light is brightest. Even a 20 minute walk in winter light is enough to maintain circadian health and the mental clarity that winter darkness can erode.
- **Early dinner:** Eat dinner by 5:30 to 6pm. This allows digestion to complete before sleep and gives the body the dark evening hours it needs for melatonin production and cellular repair.
- **Dim the lights:** Begin dimming lights at 6 or 7pm. Switch to lamps and candlelight. Turn off overhead lighting. This is one of the single most impactful winter sleep practices available and it costs nothing.
- **Early to bed:** Be in bed by 9 to 10pm. Not necessarily asleep but in bed, in a dark room, with no screens, allowing the body to enter the deep sleep cycles that winter nights were designed to provide.

04

TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

What traditional cultures did in winter

Winter was the season of story, craft, philosophy, and the interior life across many traditional cultures. When the fields were frozen and the harvest was in, human attention turned inward, toward the community, the fire, and the long dark hours that invited a different kind of living.

- **Norse Yule:** Norse Yule was celebrated at the winter solstice over 12 days, the longest nights of the year. Families burned a large Yule log meant to burn for the full twelve days, its fire representing the returning light. The concept of hygge, cozy, warm, present togetherness, is the modern descendant of this ancient winter practice.
- **Inuit Winter Living:** The Inuit and many Arctic peoples developed one of the most nutritionally sophisticated winter food cultures in human history, entirely fat and protein-based, featuring raw or fermented fish, seal, whale, caribou, and organ meats. Their traditional knowledge of how to fuel through months of darkness and extreme cold is one of the most complete ancestral winter protocols available to study.
- **Scandinavian Sauna:** Scandinavian cultures built much of their winter wellness culture around preservation and the sauna. Families went to the sauna together, sweated vigorously, rolled in snow or plunged in cold water, and returned to warmth. The sauna is still one of the most evidence-supported hydrotherapy practices in existence.
- **Advent and Candlelight:** In the Western European Christian tradition, Advent was a season of preparation and quiet before the celebration of Christmas. Families lit candles progressively through the dark weeks of December, an Advent wreath adding one flame each week as the darkness deepened before the solstice.

ANCESTRAL SEASONAL WISDOM

Yalda Night

Iran & Persian communities worldwide



Persian Yalda Night, observed on December 21st, the winter solstice, is one of the oldest celebrations in the world, with roots going back over 2,000 years. Families gather in the home of the oldest family member and stay up together through the longest night of the year, eating pomegranates, watermelon, nuts, and dried fruits, and reading poetry aloud, especially the verses of Hafez.

The practice is explicitly about defeating the darkness through togetherness, warmth, and light rather than waiting it out alone. Staying up through the solstice night and welcoming the first moments of the returning sun together is an ancestral antidote to winter isolation that modern life, with its instinct to hide from the dark months indoors and alone, has largely lost.

ANCESTRAL SEASONAL WISDOM

Toji

Japan

Japanese Toji, the winter solstice, is marked through the practice of the yuzu bath: soaking in hot water scattered with whole yuzu citrus fruits, whose rinds release fragrant oils into the steam. The practice is understood to ward off illness, warm the body from the inside out, and mark the turning point of the year. Many public bathhouses across Japan still offer yuzu baths on the solstice.

What makes Toji worth borrowing is how completely sensory it is. It doesn't ask you to believe anything or perform a ritual with hidden meaning. It asks you to get warm, breathe in citrus oil, and notice that the darkest day of the year has a scent and a temperature you can actually feel turning toward spring.



05

BODY & HOME RITUALS

Warmth, fat, collagen, darkness, stillness

Winter Body Practices

- Weekly heat exposure: Sauna or hot bath with intention. Weekly heat exposure followed by cold is one of the most powerful winter body practices available. Add Epsom salt, ginger, or eucalyptus to your bath. Make it a ritual.
- Daily cold exposure: A cold shower or even a brief cold rinse is the most accessible form of the ancestral cold practice. Start with 20 seconds. Build to 60. Do it every day.
- Daily skin nourishment: Apply tallow balm or rich oil to face, hands, feet, and lips every morning and every evening. Winter air is the most desiccating of any season and the skin barrier degrades without consistent lipid support.
- Warm feet always: Wear wool socks. Put on slippers when you get home. Soak your feet in warm water with Epsom salt two to three evenings per week.
- Morning breathing: Five to ten minutes of deep diaphragmatic breathing upon waking activates the vagus nerve and reduces cortisol. This is an ancestral morning practice of winter found across many cultures that documented it.
- Permission to rest: Rest without guilt. This is the hardest practice for modern people in winter and the most necessary one. Giving yourself permission to sit by a fire, read a book, take a nap on a Sunday afternoon, or go to bed at 9pm is alignment, not laziness.

The Winter Nervous System

The nervous system has perhaps its greatest unmet need of the modern era in winter: genuine, sanctioned rest. The parasympathetic nervous system, the rest-and-digest, tend-and-befriend system, is designed to be dominant in winter. But modern culture keeps the sympathetic nervous system engaged year-round through artificial light, constant connectivity, and the social pressure to perform at a consistent level regardless of season.

- If you feel depressed or flat in winter: prioritize morning outdoor light exposure above everything else. Add fermented foods to every meal for serotonin support. Eat more fat. Move your body gently outdoors daily. If symptoms are significant, seek professional support.
- If you feel anxious or cannot slow down in winter: dim your lights by 6pm. Take every screen out of your bedroom. Eat dinner at 5:30pm and do not eat again until morning.
- If you feel isolated in winter: this is the ancestral winter problem. The season is designed for smaller, more intimate social contact, not the large gatherings of summer. Cultivate one or two deep winter relationships.

The Winter Weekly Rhythm

- Broth day: One day per week, make bone broth and use it as the foundation of the week's eating. Cook your grains in it, make soup from it, drink it from a mug.

- Hot and cold: Once per week, heat exposure followed by cold. Sauna if you have access. Hot bath followed by cold shower if you do not.
- Candlelight evening: One evening per week, candles only, no overhead lights, no screens, from sunset to bedtime. Read, talk, make something with your hands, sit in the near-dark.
- Forward planning: Plan for spring every week. What do you want to grow, start, build, or change in the coming year? Write it down. Draw it. Map it.
- Handcraft: Two to three mornings per week, spend time doing something with your hands that is not screen-based. Knitting, woodworking, drawing, cooking from scratch, journaling.

Seasonal Mindset

Winter calls for introversion, depth, storytelling, and the kind of thinking that requires long uninterrupted hours. In pre-electric societies, the long winter nights were not empty time to be filled. They were the season of philosophy, mythology, music, handcraft, and the conversations that shaped culture. Give yourself the winter your nervous system has been asking for.

One winter practice worth trying: acknowledge the winter solstice. On December 21st, the longest night of the year, do something intentional with the darkness. Light every candle in your home. Gather with people you love. Stay up past midnight and acknowledge the turning point, the moment when the light begins its return. Many traditional cultures around the world marked this night as sacred. You do not have to belong to any tradition to recognize that the return of light after the longest dark is worth noticing.

06

WINTER RECIPES

Ten dishes built for warmth and repair

01. Slow-Simmered Bone Broth (The Foundation)



Ingredients

- 3 to 4 lbs grass-fed beef bones (knuckles, marrow, oxtail, or a mix)
- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar, 2 carrots, 2 celery stalks, 1 onion quartered
- Bay leaves, peppercorns, fresh thyme, filtered water to cover

Instructions

1. Roast bones at 400F for 30 to 40 minutes until deeply browned. Transfer to a large stockpot.
2. Add vinegar and cover with cold water. Bring to a near-boil, then reduce to the lowest possible simmer.
3. Add vegetables and herbs. Simmer uncovered or barely covered for 12 to 24 hours. The longer, the richer.
4. Strain through a fine sieve. Skim fat if desired (or leave it, it's good). Freeze in quart jars or ice cube trays.

Bone broth appears across many traditional food cultures on earth. It was often one of the first things offered to the sick, the elderly, the new mother, and anyone who needed deep restoration.

02. Braised Short Ribs with Root Vegetables

Ingredients

- 3 lbs bone-in short ribs, 2 cups bone broth, 1 cup red wine or pomegranate juice
- 2 parsnips, 2 carrots, 1 celery root all roughly chopped, 1 onion sliced, 6 garlic cloves
- Fresh thyme and rosemary, 2 bay leaves, tallow or lard for searing

Instructions

1. Salt short ribs well 1 hour in advance. Sear all sides in a very hot Dutch oven until deeply crusted.
2. Remove ribs. Saute onion until soft. Add garlic, then deglaze with wine and broth, scraping every bit off the bottom.
3. Return ribs, add vegetables and herbs. Cover and braise at 300F for 3 to 4 hours.
4. Skim fat off braising liquid and spoon over ribs to serve. The bones will slip out cleanly.

03. Traditional Congee with Bone Broth

Ingredients

- 1 cup white rice, 6 to 8 cups bone broth (chicken preferred)
- 1-inch knob fresh ginger grated, 2 green onions sliced thin
- Sea salt, sesame oil, soft-boiled egg and white fish for serving

Instructions

1. Combine rice and broth in a heavy pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce to the lowest simmer.
2. Cook uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 45 to 60 minutes until rice has completely broken down into thick porridge.
3. Season with salt and ginger. Serve with toppings: sliced egg, green onion, a drizzle of sesame oil, or flaked poached fish.

Congee has been a winter healing food across East Asian cultures for over 2,000 years, given to the sick, the elderly, and the recovering. Its medicine is simplicity.

04. Beef Tallow Roasted Potatoes with Herbs

Ingredients

- 2 lbs potatoes (Yukon Gold or red) halved, 3 tbsp beef tallow or lard
- Fresh rosemary, thyme, sea salt, cracked pepper, 4 garlic cloves unpeeled

Instructions

1. Parboil potato halves 7 minutes. Drain and let steam dry for 5 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, melt tallow in a roasting pan in the oven at 425F until shimmering.
3. Carefully add potatoes to hot fat (they'll sizzle dramatically). Roast 35 to 40 minutes, turning once, until deeply golden.
4. Add garlic and herbs in the last 10 minutes. Season generously with sea salt.

Potatoes roasted in animal fat, tallow, lard, or goose fat, was a traditional preparation across Europe from the British Isles to Eastern Europe.

05. Beet Kvass (Fermented Winter Tonic)

Ingredients

- 2 medium raw beets scrubbed and cut into 1-inch cubes (do not peel or grate)
- 1 tsp non-iodized sea salt, filtered water to fill a quart jar

Instructions

1. Place beet cubes in a clean quart jar. Add salt. Fill with filtered water, leaving 1 inch headspace.
2. Cover with cloth and ferment at room temperature 2 to 5 days until a deep ruby, slightly sour liquid forms.
3. Strain and refrigerate. Drink 2 to 4 oz daily as a blood-building, liver-supportive tonic. The beets can be used for a second batch.

Beet kvass is a traditional Eastern European and Russian fermented drink, valued for its blood-building iron content and liver-supportive compounds.

06. Savory Lentil Dal with Tallow & Spices

Ingredients

- 2 cups red lentils soaked 4 to 8 hours and rinsed, 4 cups water or broth
- 2 tbsp tallow, ghee, or lard, 1 yellow onion diced, 4 garlic cloves minced
- 1 tsp each: cumin, coriander, turmeric, 1/2 tsp ginger, pinch of cayenne
- 1 can crushed tomatoes or 2 fresh tomatoes, sea salt, lemon juice to finish

Instructions

1. In a heavy pot, bloom all spices in fat over medium heat 1 to 2 minutes. Add onion and cook until golden.
2. Add garlic, stir 1 minute. Add tomatoes and cook 5 minutes.
3. Add drained lentils and water or broth. Bring to a boil, then simmer 25 to 30 minutes until completely soft.
4. Season generously with salt and a squeeze of lemon. Serve with butter on top.

07. Spiced Beef & Marrow Bone Stew

Ingredients

- 2 lbs stew beef plus 4 marrow bones, 2 cups bone broth, 1 can crushed tomatoes

- 2 turnips, 2 parsnips, 1 onion all chopped
- 1/2 tsp each: cumin, smoked paprika, turmeric, cinnamon, sea salt, olive oil or tallow

Instructions

1. Sear beef and marrow bones until browned. Remove.
2. Saute onion and spices in fat. Add tomatoes, broth, vegetables, and all the meat.
3. Simmer covered 2 to 3 hours until beef is very tender and the marrow has melted into the broth.
4. Scoop marrow from bones and stir into the stew. Serve over white rice or with sourdough.

Marrow was called the 'butter of the hunt' by many Indigenous and early European cultures. It is rich in collagen precursors, fat-soluble vitamins, and alkylglycerols that support immune function.

08. Slow-Roasted Whole Chicken with Garlic and Rosemary

Ingredients

- 1 whole pastured chicken 4 to 5 lbs, 1 whole head of garlic cloves separated but unpeeled
- 4 sprigs each fresh rosemary and thyme, 3 tbsp butter or tallow softened
- 1 cup chicken bone broth, sea salt and black pepper, 1 lemon

Instructions

1. Take the chicken out of the refrigerator an hour before cooking. Pat completely dry inside and out.
2. Rub butter all over the chicken including under the skin over the breasts. Season generously with salt and pepper everywhere.
3. Stuff the cavity with half the garlic, the lemon halved, and half the herbs. Scatter remaining garlic and herbs in the roasting pan. Pour broth into the pan.
4. Roast at 325F for 2 to 2.5 hours, basting every 45 minutes. Rest 20 minutes before carving. Save the carcass for bone broth.

A slow-roasted whole chicken is one of the most economical and nourishing winter meals available. One bird provides dinner, leftover meat for two more meals, and a carcass for bone broth.

09. Oxtail and Root Vegetable Soup

Ingredients

- 3 lbs oxtail cut into segments, 3 parsnips, 3 carrots, 2 turnips all cubed
- 1 large onion roughly chopped, 4 garlic cloves smashed, 2 stalks celery sliced
- 2 cups crushed tomatoes, 4 cups beef bone broth, fresh thyme, rosemary, and 3 bay leaves
- Tallow for searing, sea salt and black pepper, fresh parsley to finish

Instructions

1. Season oxtail pieces generously with salt and pepper. Sear all sides in a very hot heavy pot with tallow until deeply browned. This will take 15 to 20 minutes total. Do not rush it.
2. Remove oxtail. Saute onion, celery, and garlic in the same pot for 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and cook 5 more minutes.
3. Return oxtail to the pot. Add broth and herbs. Bring to a simmer, cover, and cook at 300F for 3 hours.
4. Add root vegetables and cook another 45 minutes to 1 hour until vegetables are tender and the meat is falling from the bone. Remove oxtail, pull the meat from the bones, return meat to the soup, and finish with fresh parsley.

Oxtail soup appears in the culinary record of many beef-eating cultures around the world, from West African peppersoup to Korean gomtang to traditional British oxtail soup.

10. Slow-Braised Beef Short Ribs with Fermented Cabbage

Ingredients

- 4 lbs bone-in beef short ribs, 2 cups raw sauerkraut with its brine
- 1 large onion sliced, 4 garlic cloves smashed, 1 cup beef bone broth
- 2 tbsp tomato paste, 1 tsp caraway seeds, 2 bay leaves, tallow or butter for searing, sea salt and black pepper

Instructions

1. Salt short ribs generously and allow to sit at room temperature for 30 minutes. Pat dry before searing.
2. Sear all sides of the short ribs in a very hot Dutch oven with fat until a deep brown crust forms on every surface. Remove and set aside.
3. Saute onion and garlic in the same pot until deeply golden. Add tomato paste and cook 2 minutes until it darkens slightly. Deglaze with broth.
4. Return short ribs to the pot. Pile sauerkraut and its brine over and around the ribs. Add caraway seeds and bay leaves. Cover tightly and braise at 275F for 4 to 5 hours.

The combination of slow-braised beef and fermented cabbage is one of the oldest cold-climate meals on earth. The sauerkraut tenderizes the meat and provides live cultures that survive the low-temperature cooking process.

07

WINTER DRINK RECIPES

Deep tonics for the darkest months

01. Spiced Cacao & Tallow Hot Drink

1 tbsp raw cacao powder, 1 tsp beef tallow or ghee, 8 oz hot water or warm whole milk, 1 tsp raw honey or maple syrup, pinch of cayenne, cinnamon, and sea salt. Whisk cacao, fat, and spices together in a mug. Pour hot liquid over and whisk until frothy. The Aztec and Maya consumed cacao this way, as a fat-emulsified, spiced drink, not a sweet dessert.

02. Elderberry & Echinacea Immune Syrup

1/2 cup dried elderberries, 1/4 cup dried echinacea root or leaf, 2 cups water, 1 cinnamon stick, 4 cloves, 1-inch ginger, 1/4 cup raw honey (added off heat). Simmer elderberries, echinacea, and spices in water 30 to 40 minutes until reduced by half. Mash, strain, and cool to room temperature. Stir in honey. Store refrigerated. Take 1 tbsp daily as a preventive; at first sign of illness, take 1 tbsp every 2 to 3 hours. Elderberry has been used as a winter immune preparation across Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East for generations, and modern research supports antiviral properties against influenza and other respiratory viruses.

03. Traditional Wassail (Spiced Mulled Cider)

1 quart fresh apple cider, 1 orange sliced, 2 cinnamon sticks, 6 cloves, 4 allspice berries, 2 star anise, 1 tbsp raw honey or maple syrup, optional 1/4 tsp vanilla, pinch of cardamom. Combine all in a heavy pot. Warm over low heat 30 to 45 minutes, do not boil. Strain into mugs and serve with a fresh orange slice. Wassail is an Anglo-Saxon and English tradition dating to the early medieval period, a communal warm drink shared at winter gatherings as a blessing and a toast to health and abundance.

04. Pine Needle & Rosehip Vitamin C Tea

Small handful fresh young pine needles (white pine is safe; avoid yew, it is toxic), 2 tbsp dried rosehips, 2 cups boiling water, raw honey to taste. Steep pine needles and rosehips in boiling water for 10 to 15 minutes. Strain and sweeten. Indigenous peoples across North America made pine needle tea in winter as a vitamin C source, and rosehips contain more vitamin C per gram than oranges and were a primary winter vitamin C source in many European traditions before citrus imports.

Winter Lifestyle Habits

- Sleep 8 to 9 hours. Give yourself permission to sleep with the darkness. This is not laziness; it is ancestral restoration.
- Get outside briefly every day, even in cold. Fifteen minutes in winter daylight resets cortisol and serotonin rhythms.
- Eat one or two larger, cooked, warm meals rather than grazing throughout the day.
- Keep evenings dim after sunset. Use candles, salt lamps, or amber bulbs. This is one of the most impactful sleep-quality practices available.

- Designate one evening per week for storytelling, reading aloud, or communal handwork. This is the original winter evening.
- Take a cold-exposure practice: a cold shower, cold plunge, or even a brief outdoor walk in minimal layers.

Winter fasting rhythms: Ancestral populations naturally ate less in winter, not entirely by design, but often by availability. Modern research on caloric restriction, time-restricted eating, and autophagy points to a similar conclusion: periods of eating less can activate powerful repair mechanisms in the body.

Winter Shopping List

- Produce: sweet potatoes and potatoes in bulk, beets, carrots, parsnips, and turnips, winter squash, onions and garlic in large quantities, kale, collards, and other hearty winter greens, fresh ginger and turmeric, lemons, dried rosehips and elderberries, fresh or dried pine needles for vitamin C tea (white pine only)
- Proteins: beef short ribs, oxtail, or chuck for braising, beef bones in the largest quantity your freezer allows, marrow bones, whole chicken, chicken livers and hearts, fatty fish: sardines, mackerel, wild salmon, herring, pastured eggs, red lentils and dried beans
- Fats and Dairy: grass-fed butter in bulk, ghee, beef tallow for roasting, full-fat yogurt and kefir, raw whole milk if available, good quality aged cheese
- Pantry and Ferments: miso paste (a large container), raw sauerkraut and kimchi (keep stocked all winter), raw cacao powder, raw honey, warming spices in bulk: cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, star anise, ginger, black pepper, turmeric, dried elderberries for immune syrup, bone broth in the freezer always

A FINAL WORD

Living ancestrally is not a diet. It is not a program. It is not a set of rules to follow perfectly or abandon in guilt when you don't.

It is a direction to orient yourself toward. A question to ask, season by season: what does my body actually need right now? What is available, what is nourishing, what serves my long-term vitality?

The answers will shift with the seasons, as they always have. Your work is to pay attention. To the quality of light, the temperature of the air, the produce appearing at your market, the changes in your own energy levels and appetite.

Your ancestors did not have wellness content to guide them. They had seasons, and they listened. You can do the same.

Start where you are. Use what you have. Begin with one season, one recipe, one habit.

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