



Conscious Retreats

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What is conscious eating?

In a nutshell, mindful/conscious eating is the art of presence while you eat.

By paying attention to what you eat and focussing solely on the sensual awareness of the eating experience, you can savour the moment and be more present.

The whole arena of food and eating is potentially a psychologically delicate one. It is where people play out their addictive self-destructive patterns of behaviour. So many of us struggle with our relationship to our bodies and other habitual patterns and painful dynamics around food and eating that usually originates in childhood or early adolescence.

Food is an important facet of our retreat experience and Alix's cooking is a 'real treat'. Conscious eating begins with conscious cooking/preparation. Food with all its shapes, colours, textures, tastes, and flavours, invites us to be playful and adventurous and immerse ourselves in the present moment. When we cook we engage all of our senses, a practice that flows through to the eating process and ultimately to our lives. There is a need for continuity with our spiritual practice; we can't just be present when meditating, we need to be present and conscious of everything we do. Conscious eating is not a new radical concept; it is returning to an age not long ago when food was our integral connection with nature, our loved ones, and ourselves.

As our bodies change with the seasons, so do our nutritional needs, and mother nature supplies us with exactly what we need to supplement our bodies through these changes. Like citrus that grows in winter to supply us with vitamin C, to bolster us against colds and flu; following a seasonal diet supports the needs of the body during that time of the year. Embracing the change in the diet brought about by different ingredients allows for a more sustainable approach to nutrition and a greater sense of meaning and connection with our surroundings.

How to eat consciously

Conscious/mindful eating maintains an in-the-moment awareness of the food that goes into your mouth; how it looks, tastes (sweet, bitter, salty, sour, umami), feels when being licked/chewed/swallowed, how it sounds when being bitten into/chewed, how it smells and how it makes your body feel. In essence, it is simply



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acknowledging and accepting, rather than judging the feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations you observe.

For many of us, our busy lives require us to multitask, and eating ends up becoming something you do whilst doing something else that requires a bit more of your attention. We mindlessly shovel food down our throats regardless if we're still hungry or not and often we eat to satisfy our emotional needs to cope with stress, sadness, anxiety, boredom, loneliness, etc.

Conscious eating is not about adhering to a strict list of rules and being perfect all the time, it is about focusing all your senses and being present and aware as you shop for, prepare and eat your food.

Benefits

- Attunes you to your body
- Helps avoid overeating
- Makes it easier to change your dietary habits for the better
- Improved well being
- Promotes better digestion
- More satiating
- Eases stress and anxiety
- Creates awareness of emotional triggers to food
- More pleasurable meals
- Instils a greater sense of appreciation and gratitude
- Encourages healthier eating habits and food choices
- A greater understanding of where your food originated and how it got to your plate
- Weight loss