



Keeping warm from the inside



Tipp von Esther Kern



Oranges and lemons are full of vitamin C. That's all well and good. But the dietary wisdom of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) would nevertheless tell us to handle with care! Because TCM believes these fruits to have a cooling effect when eaten raw. While we here in the Western world tend to think first and foremost of vitamins when it comes to healthy eating in winter, TCM has quite a different focus. There, foodstuffs are defined by their energetic properties - which are warming, which cooling? Naturally, we must all decide for ourselves which philosophy we prefer to adopt: would we rather be guided by the scientific research on vitamins, for example, or are we happy to listen to age-old wisdom about how different foods affect the body? Speaking from my own experience, I have to say that the little TCM knowledge I've amassed so far has paid off handsomely. Not that I'm so strict as to never eat a raw orange, for instance. However, as soon as I notice that I'm in need of an energy boost, or that I often have cold feet, I try to follow TCM practice more closely again. Starting off with breakfast, as a warm breakfast really sets us up for the day ahead. If I'm in a hurry, tsampa (available from health food stores) makes a great warm breakfast, for example. A staple in the Tibetan diet, this roasted barley flour is easy to prepare. It can simply be mixed with hot water or tea in the morning. You can then add dried fruit to taste or sweeten it with honey.



Another classic foodstuff that TCM considers warming is ginger. It too can easily be made part of your daily routine in the form of tea: add slices of ginger to a saucepan of water and bring to the boil. Let it steep briefly then strain. A real power drink that I couldn't manage without in winter. And isn't it great that this particular spice is now being produced right here in Switzerland? Organic farmer Stephan Müller grows ginger root in Steinmaur in the canton of Zurich. Müller also cultivates turmeric, another rhizome with magical properties. Turmeric is related to ginger, but its root is yellow not white. That's why it is used to impart a yellow colour to curry. Turmeric has generated a bit of hype in recent years. Especially in the form of "golden milk", a drink to which nothing short of miraculous qualities have been ascribed. Recipes vary, but generally require turmeric powder, ginger and pepper to be brought to the boil in water. The liquid is then strained and the spice mix whipped up with – preferably non-dairy – milk to make a latte. The drink is said to have anti-inflammatory and warming properties. And if you don't happen to have any turmeric in your store cupboard, a regular chai tea latte will have the same warming effect. Many of the spices it contains, such as cinnamon and cardamom, are classified by TCM as warming. What's more, if you prefer to use local ingredients that fall into the TCM 'warm' category, then fennel seeds are a good choice. I simply pour some boiling water over them and let them steep for a few minutes. And there you have it: a warming brew.

Tip: You can order locally grown organic fennel seeds from www.brunnereichhof.ch