

Ghee - An Ayurvedic Perspective:

The milk of cows is considered to possess the essence or sap of all plants and Ghee is the essence of milk... When we consider Ghee we are in the company of superlatives. In India, Ghee has been so highly regarded for so many things, for so long, that one is slightly embarrassed to enter into this crowded river of praise. This is what I have heard:

The ingestion of Ghee is like offering the finest of fuels into the fires of digestion-Agni. In accord with this, Ghee builds the aura, makes all the organs soft, builds up the internal juices of the body-Rasa, which are destroyed by aging and increases the most refined element of digestion-Shukra or Ojas, the underlying basis of all immunity and the "essence of all bodily tissues". Maya Tiwari calls Ghee the "single most ojas producing food on earth". Ghee is known to increase intelligence--Dhi, refine the intellect-Buddhi and improve the memory-Smrti.

Although Ghee kindles or increases the digestive fire- Agni, on which all nutrition depends, it does so without aggravating Pitta- the elemental functioning of fire within the body. In fact, Ghee cools the body, essential in much of today's world in which everything is overheating.

Ghee causes secretions and liquification in the dhatus-bodily tissues that dissolve wastes allowing the functional intelligences of the body-doshas to carry away toxins-ama (also known as aam). The ingestion of Ghee is used in Panchakarma specifically to first penetrate into and then dissolve ama in the dhatus, allowing the wastes to be then carried to the intestinal tract and then expelled.

It is traditionally considered, that the older Ghee, the better its healing qualities. 100-year-old Ghee is highly valued in India and fetches a very high price. Such Ghee was often kept in Temples in large vats and families often pass on aged Ghee to their next generation to be used as medicine.

Qualities of Ghee

Ghee is known as a substance that gives longevity... This is because it has opposite qualities (heavy, slow, oily, liquid, dense, soft), and thus pacifying effects, to the light, dry and rough qualities of Vata dosha. It is the increase of the qualities of Vata that are synonymous with aging. Ghee, in a very sure and steady way, slows the aging process by balancing the living one.

Ghee has the quality of snigdha, oiliness, and unctuousness. It is smooth, lubricated and nurturing. Ghee is thought to make the voice soft and melodious.

Ghee is Guru, heavy. It increases the qualities of Kapha and decreases Pitta and Vata, which are both light.

Healing Properties of Ghee

Used on the skin, ghee softens and strengthens, protects and nourishes. Up until the last generation in India, there used to be men who gave Ghee massages on the street. It was always the preferred substance for the skin, but since it was more expensive than oil it has come to be used only for internal purposes. For generations, Indians have used Ghee for cooking and as an added measure on top of their food and as a medicine. In India, medicinal ghee is passed on from one generation to the next. It was used for old and young, for new babies (Mothers in India will massage their children with Ghee) and for those in the last days of their life. I massaged my Father's body with it before he died- He loved it. Sometimes, when he could not sleep, I rubbed it on his feet and temples and it soothed his agitation. It is considered it one of the best substances for self-massage-Abhyanga.

Many Uses of Ghee

- 1 For Body Massage-Abhyanga. Apply ghee all over the body, rubbing into head, chest, limbs, joints and orifices. This will bypass the digestive system and allow the qualities of Ghee to penetrate directly into the deeper tissues. It is said that 60% of what is placed on the skin is absorbed into the body. We literally "eat" what we put on our skin. Western science has discovered that massaging the skin creates endorphins or peptides, which enhance the body's immune system. Peptides are thought to be the vehicle that the mind and body use to communicate with each other, a literal chemistry of emotion. According to the Charak Samhita, regular Abhyanga slows the aging process.
- 2 Ghee is used in Purvakarma, (early Panchakarma) where a small amount of Ghee is taken first thing in the morning by the practitioner to oleate the internal organs and "dissolve" the ama or toxic wastes in the tissues, allowing them to be carried to the digestive tract for elimination.
- 3 Ghee is used as a carrier or "yogavahi" for herbs and bhasmas because of its supreme penetrating qualities and thus ability to carry these substances deep into the dhatus or tissues.
- 4 One or two teaspoons first thing in the morning followed immediately with hot water will promptly produce a bowel movement. It will also warm the body quickly. Two spoonfuls of Ghee in warm (non-homogenized) milk before bedtime is soothing to the nerves and lubricates the intestines and facilitates a bowel movement in the morning.
- 5 Ghee is excellent for cooking and sautéing or stir-frying. Ghee has one of the highest flash points of all oils and is very difficult to burn. In India, it is said that food is incomplete without the use of Ghee.
- 6 Ghee is excellent for a gargle-gandush, to improve the health of the teeth and gums.
- 7 Ghee can be used as a bath oil. Take two tablespoons of Ghee and mix with several drops of an essential oil of your choice.
- 8 Ghee is excellent for scrapes and both chemical and heat or fire burns. Ghee can be used in the eyes for tiredness or fatigue.
- 9 Ghee is an exquisite facial moisturizer.
- 10 In India it is said that if a few drops of ghee are placed in the nostrils then nosebleed can be checked. If this is done twice in a day, then headache can be relieved.

Ghee is the most refined end product of milk.

Ghee is the elixir of life. It increase ojas in the body and makes the mind sattvic-tranquil and peaceful. A sacred food from Mpther Cow, ghee maintains the health of our maternal memory. Perform the Ghee-making sadhana as a mediation. Feed, feast and nut=rture body, mind and spirit with the aroma and sounds of this golden nourishment.

~ Maya Tiwari

How Ghee is Made

Buy 1-2 lbs of unsalted, organic butter. Heat it in a stainless steel or enamel pot on low, allowing it to melt. A heavy pot is best to distribute the heat of the fire more evenly. Real fire is best rather than an electric range. There is a quality of Agni that lends itself and pervades a substance cooked on flame that is not there when cooked on electricity.

It is most important to create and enjoy a beautiful and positive environment when you are making Ghee.

Once the Ghee begins to melt, keep it on low and watch it transform. As it boils, moisture evaporates off it and it will begin to "clarify" - the butter will turn from cloudy yellowish liquid to a more golden colour. Whitish cloudy milk solids will rise to the top and sink to the bottom. Do not stir it. After about an hour, depending on the amount and the size of the pot and the amount of Ghee compared to the flame, your Ghee will be ready. The moment Ghee is "ready" is very critical (could be close to an hour). If you cook the Ghee too little, you will be left with moisture in the Ghee and it will lack the exquisite taste and qualities that it can develop, also, it will tend to spoil or sour. If you cook it too much, it could burn.

When finished, there will be a light crust of whitish milk solids. These and the heavier ones at the bottom of the pot are traditionally used to make sweets. Children in India love them and always plead with their Mothers to have the leftovers when Ghee is made. The sediment at the bottom of the pan can be used for cooking or eaten as a snack as well.

Pour the golden, sweet-smelling liquid into a bottle, through layered cheesecloth, to catch any last impurities, leaving the slightly burned milk solids (caramelized lactose) on the bottom of the pot you cooked it in (Ghee has no lactose or milk sugars in it). Keep the lid off until the Ghee comes to room temperature as there should not be any moisture inside of the jar. Moisture will spoil Ghee, allowing a mold to grow and causing it to go bad. This is the reason that you always use a clean and dry spoon to take your Ghee out of its container. It is also a reason not to refrigerate your Ghee. One, because it is not necessary and two, it causes condensation to form inside the jar as you take it in and out of the refrigerator.

The making of Ghee is a very beautiful and peaceful experience. The sound of softly boiling butter, the pouring of the thick golden liquid into bottles; this wonderful smell permeates the space.

Ghee is nourishing and healing. Ghee is steady and dependable and always supportive of life and living. Ghee brings an excess of goodness wherever and whenever it is appreciated and used. I am thankful for a substance that of all the foods I know is most like a Mother.

Enjoy this wonderful nectar!

Ghee information taken from www.amritaveda.com/learning/articles/ghee.asp

Ghee-Making As A Meditation

Observe your ghee-making sadhana in silence and remain mindful of the aromas, sounds and presence of this delightful ceremony. Mind its progress by closing your eyes and listening to its sounds as it matures through various stages of production.

In its earliest stage, the ghee is quiet. Then suddenly, as it begins to foam, it awakens with the gentle sounds of raindrops falling on a tin roof. As the foam descends to the bottom of the pot, you may hear the sounds of a gurgling stream. Then it becomes quiet once again, filling the air with its rich, fragrant aroma. When the golden liquid of the ghee begins to bubble, it approximates the rhythmic sound of a water drum. Then each bubble disappears with an occasional 'pop' and dissolves into lasting silence.