



soul FOOD

We asked food-loving yogis
to share their most memorable
meals and the secret
ingredients that make them
truly satisfying.

What do yogis eat? If it's just green juice that comes to mind, think again. There's no doubt that yoga encourages you to look at what you eat in a new light. You might have noticed how different foods affect your energy level and your health. Practicing yoga also has a way of nurturing a broader awareness of the ethical and environmental implications of the foods you choose in the grocery store or off a restaurant menu.

But there are other, even less quantifiable, ingredients that go into the yoga diet—among them passion, nostalgia, and sheer sensual pleasure. The smell of a simmering red sauce, the crackling of a perfectly baked baguette, the melting of delicate cookies in your mouth, even the rituals of blessing a meal before it's served are all woven into a lifetime of eating.

We asked food-loving yoga teachers, kirtan artists, and chefs to recall the best food they ever ate. Their answers might surprise you: Yogis eat all across the spectrum, from caring carnivores and flexitarians to vegetarians and vegans to raw foodies and gluten-free eaters. The bottom line is there is no single “yoga diet,” and while guidelines are important, sometimes deviating from them results in a meal that feeds the soul.

as told to **LAUREN LADOCEOUR**
and **ROBIN RINALDI**
photography by **SHERI GIBLIN**

Seane Corn, *vinyasa flow yoga teacher + activist • Topanga, California*

Food philosophy Mostly raw vegetarian. The closer to nature my food is, the better, so I can experience *prana* (life force).

Compassion being a huge part of yoga, I stay away from dairy. When I'm on

the road, I might compromise, but there's a part of me that knows it's not right.

AWESOME BLOSSOM

Most memorable meal

I was around eight years old when I had my first artichoke. In our family, that was our treat. If it was a holiday or special occasion or there was extra money, there'd be artichokes. At least that's how it felt to me. It was very exotic because no one else in our town of Pompton Lakes, New Jersey, ate them. My mom boiled them and made a dipping sauce of mayonnaise and white vinegar, which I also thought was the most fabulous concoction ever. When I would come into the house and smell vinegar, I knew we were having something special. That vinegary tang takes me back to a really loving, supportive, sweet time. It's an emotional connection.



HOLY FEAST

Jai Uttal, *kirtan artist + bhakti yogi*
Fairfax, California

Food philosophy Vaishnava (a branch of Hinduism). I eat a not-so-strict vegetarian diet with no eggs, garlic, or onions; lots of spice, and rich and yummy on every level.

Most memorable meal I met my guru Neem Karoli Baba when I was 19. Every day at his ashram, we'd be fed massive meals of *prasad*, very beautiful, deep rituals where the food is offered to the deity, the deity is left alone with it for a little bit, and then the devotees eat it. There was always golden, crispy puri (a big puffed fried bread that's almost hollow). We'd have two or three vegetable dishes grown from the local gardens, a big pot of rice, a couple of chili peppers on the side, dahl, and some Indian sweets, like jalebis—hot,

pretzel-shaped syrupy treats dipped in freshly made yogurt. I'm starting to salivate just thinking about it. The whole while we're drinking cups and cups of hot, sweet Indian chai.

This would happen two or three times a day. We would leave those meals on a cloud, just completely euphoric and blissed out. Some yogis would come through and say, "How could you eat so much? It's not good for you." But for us, it felt like our guru was giving us transfusions of grace through the food he fed us.


Mollie Katzen, *hatha yoga and mindfulness practitioner + author of The Heart of the Plate: Vegetarian Recipes for a New Generation* • Berkeley

Food philosophy Sustainable omnivore. I eat primarily plants, with smaller amounts of sustainably raised, animal-based foods (cheese, yogurt, egg, fish, meat).

Most memorable meal I was sightseeing on the outskirts of Paris with my two then-school-aged kids. After traipsing around to museums and gardens all morning, we were hungry for lunch but didn't have the patience for a sit-down meal. We wandered into a small boulangerie that sold a few kinds of bread and one or two paper-wrapped sandwiches. We grabbed a few and sat down on the bench out in front to eat what turned out to be a just-baked baguette filled with small, thickly sliced tomatoes and heartbreakingly perfect halves of farm-fresh egg, whites firm and bright yellow yolks delicately soft, just this side of runny. I have never, before nor since, tasted anything better nor enjoyed anything more. It's a testament to the brilliance of the very simplest, purest, unadulterated, basic sustenance, to slowing down and enjoying each bite. The power of it brings me to tears sometimes.

PARISIAN PICNIC





Bo Forbes, *psychologist + yoga teacher* • Boston

Food philosophy Conscious carnivore. I'm gluten-, dairy-, soy-, and fairly sugar-free. While I practice *ahimsa* (nonharming), I also prioritize self-care. My body functions better with some animal protein, always from fish or buffalo.

Most memorable meal About 13 years ago, while I was living in Santa Fe, I drove up toward Taos with some friends for a hike. Afterward, we were dirty, full of dust, and hungry. We stopped for dinner at a restaurant on top of a hill and ordered margaritas and guacamole, which was made in front of us and served with warm, homemade blue corn chips.

HAPPY
HOUR

The guacamole is typically excellent in those parts, but this was achingly good. They made it with white onions, a touch of fresh tomato, jalapeños, a liberal dose of cilantro, and, of course, just-squeezed lime juice.

I still remember how it was so spicy it made my eyes water and my nose run. We continued to eat and drink, and conversation actually stopped for a long time. The silence intensified all of our sensations—the soft blanket of wind on our skin, long moments of eye contact, the tartness of our drinks—as we watched the sun set, a passionate blood red, over the Sangre de Cristo mountain range.

David Romanelli,

yoga + food retreat leader • New York City

FAMILY RECIPE

Food philosophy Gluten-free locavore.

Yoga heightens the senses and has influenced me toward a healthier, local, more inspired approach to food. Though there are moments when you'll catch me eating something that would cause a purist to excommunicate me, if not worse.

Most memorable meal My grandparents lived the first half of their lives in the Jewish ghetto of Venice, Italy. With the shadow of the Holocaust looming, they escaped Italy in the early 1940s and opened an Italian restaurant called Ca D'Oro in midtown Manhattan. One of my earliest memories is being pushed in a stroller to the restaurant and my Grandma Neda bringing me

my favorite dish: gnocchi pomodoro. The freshly made dough, rolled and boiled so each gnocchi was light and airy, a finishing of fresh tomato sauce, and a sprinkling of cheese—it was absolute perfection!

My grandparents are now in gnocchi heaven, but my wife and I carry on the tradition with Grandpa Bert's recipe (see page 87) with pesto. Whenever I eat them, I'm transported back to the dimmed lights of Ca D'Oro reflecting in his glasses as he grated fresh Parmesan over the best potato dumplings this side of Venezia. The recipe is not gluten-free, but I make it with the freshest ingredients and with my grandparents in my mind.





Grandpa Bert's Gnocchi

SERVES 6-8

- 4 large russet potatoes
- 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 eggs, beaten

- 1 Boil potatoes until they are soft, about 45 minutes. While the potatoes are still warm, peel them and pass them through a potato ricer.
- 2 On a floured surface, spread out potatoes, and sprinkle $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour over them. Pour eggs over potatoes. Knead dough, adding in as much of the remaining flour as needed to make it come together and no longer feel sticky. This takes approximately 4 minutes.
- 3 Roll dough into a long baguette shape, and cut it into 5 equal pieces. Roll each piece into a long, snakelike shape the thickness of your thumb. Cut into 1-inch pillowlike pieces. Optional: You can shape the gnocchi, carefully rolling each piece against the concave side of a fork to make a C-shape.
- 4 Working in batches, drop a handful of gnocchi into 8 quarts of boiling water. When they float to the surface, remove with a slotted spoon.
- 5 Serve with a favorite sauce, browned butter, or olive oil and Parmesan cheese. Refrigerate leftovers in an oiled container for up to 3 days.



Kathryn Budig, *vinyasa flow teacher • Deland, Florida*

Food philosophy Flexitarian. I'll try anything once, but overall I believe in balance and guilt-free eating.

If the energy you put out as you eat is "This will make me fat" or "This is against my morals," then it's negative. So if I eat something not good for me or outside my norm, I say, "Thank you. This is so special that you made this for me," and it's fine.

Most memorable meal A student of mine had just gotten back from France and brought me a beautiful box of macarons from Ladurée, the French patisserie. There was an assortment—caramel fleur de sel, pistachio, rose—and they were so gorgeous, a rainbow of colors. So I thought, "Well this is really pretty, but I don't know if I'm going to eat these." Green smoothies are my comfort food, and my big rule of thumb is to eat nonprocessed food. Obviously I didn't say that to her! I got into the car, opened them up, and ate one. I'm telling you, it

was the most profound experience because, honestly, I didn't think they'd be my thing. The rose

macaron in particular was a beautiful pink on the outside and this pale pink-white on the inside, a cream center. It was like biting into a cloud.

The macarons taught me that if you're a stickler for a specific diet, it limits your experience. Yes, there are certain foods I don't eat, but if someone puts it in front of me with love, I eat it. Sharing food is the ultimate way to say I love you. ❖

PETITE
SWEET

