

Podcast Series: Holistic Nature of Us

Episode #39: Janet Pagan, Ayurvedic Nutrition and Health Coach

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Hi I'm Judith Dreyer,

Thank you for joining me for this pod cast series "The Holistic Nature of Us".

My intent is to take us, you and I, into a better understanding of the concepts behind our holistic nature and how that ties directly to the holistic nature of the world around us. How can we connect the dots in practical ways that we are nature and nature is in us?

I will be featuring authors and educators, practitioners and others whose passion for this earth helps us create bridges. We'll see what's trending, what's relevant to our world today, not just for land use, but to connect the dots between nature and ourselves. It's time for practical action and profound inner change so our natural world is valued once again.

Today I'd like to introduce you again Janet Pagan. Janet is an Ayurvedic nutritionist, a Reiki Master and a certified health coach. She has also worked in the field of child welfare serving children and families for over 15 years. Janet, as you might remember, was a podcast guest a few weeks ago and I invited her back so that we could focus on a little bit of Ayurvedic point of view for the holidays, specifically Thanksgiving and Christmas which are just around the corner.

Hi Janet, welcome back!

JANET: Hi Judith! Thank you for having me back.

JUDITH: Oh, you're welcome. Let's talk about, just to give a little overview of Ayurvedic again so that we have that fresh in our minds and then we can go into the holidays.

JANET: Yes, so very quickly Ayurveda is a life science. It is a science. I focus on Ayurvedic nutrition and healing with the five senses. Each person is made up of Ayurvedic doshas, primarily Pitta, Kapha and Vata. And any

individual can be any combination of those doshas, or even tri-dosha. And today, as you mentioned, what we will focus on are the doshas and eating during the holidays which is important because we are moving into and have moved into a change of seasons. We're going to be talking about that today.

JUDITH: Great. Let's just do a brief overview of the dosha types again. You mentioned Vata, Pitta, Kapha and maybe a couple of characteristics of each, especially from a seasonal point of view and then tell us how that relates to our physical body.

JANET: Ayurveda focuses on five elements; earth, air, fire, water and space or ether which are all of the elements that exist within ourselves. The earth is represented by our bones, our cells, our tissue. The water is represented by our saliva, our blood, our sweat. The fire is transformative, which is represented by our metabolism, how we convert food; how we convert fat into muscle. How we convert food into nutrition and waste. And it is also representative of our emotions. And air, of course, is represented by the oxygen, the air that we breathe, that we need to live, that we need for energy transfer. The ether is our matter. It's the vibration sound, space we occupy.

The vata dosha people are individuals with vata dosha have a lot of air and space. And kapha dosha is represented by earth and water. And pita dosha is represented by fire and water. And as we move into the seasons it's important to be mindful of the doshas and what those imbalances look like, because right now in the Northeast we are in autumn and as we move toward Christmas we're going to be entering into winter. So those are the things that we need to be mindful of as individuals. If you are a kapha approaching the winter season, which is the kapha season, we want to look out for having our kapha balanced. We want to make sure that our kapha is not too high and not too low going into the winter blues as some would say that they experience. That's an indication of a kapha imbalance.

Pita is fire and water. Pita season is summer. For pitas they really might be loving this right now. The air is not as hot. They have opportunities to cool down.

Vata, who is now in autumn, and vata is air. So now we are in vata season. So, vitas who are in vata season now also need to be mindful of their vata being in balance. Making sure they are more mindful of being a little bit more organized so that they're not flying in the wind. They're not all over

the place. Vatas may feel like as fast as the wind is blowing the leaves is as fast as life is blowing them. They may need some grounding during this time. And that's what we're looking at with the different characteristics and the different doshas in these up-coming seasons as we approach the holidays.

JUDITH: That's great. So, the system of Ayurvedic, actually the medical model of Ayurveda, really looks at the elements of the earth and how they play out in the physical body. From that we get the dosha types, which we all have and then we can figure out if we have awareness of our physical body on some level, what might be the best approach as the seasons change. I really like that. I like the fact that our body is really affected by the seasons, but the seasons are in our body too. So that's a great point that you've made for Ayurvedic medicine.

Let's talk about Thanksgiving in particular. How do you approach Thanksgiving with the dosha types and foods and that kind of thing?

JANET: So as far as Thanksgiving goes, I'll start with the most obvious, which is the turkey.

JUDITH: Okay.

JANET: Turkey is very big in American Thanksgiving. It's one of the main dishes that's served in virtually every household. And with the turkey, it's nice to make sure that the seasonings that are used are balanced out. As I stated, we're in vata season. We want to use a mix of light and oil and heavy and light, oily and dry, a mix of different kinds of seasonings and spices to balance out the dish, which can be tricky because we all know that if you're going to mom's house or grandma's house or auntie's house or even you're the one doing the cooking, everybody has their own trusted tried and true recipe that they follow. It's important to know and be mindful of how the food is being cooked, what seasonings, what spices are being used and then maybe even off-setting that with a side dish that you yourselves don't have control over the seasonings. If a turkey is cooked with, let's say, a lot of garlic and pepper and things of that nature it's going to be a very pita turkey. If we have too many light seasonings, you know bay leaf is a light seasoning, dill is a light seasoning, we want to balance those out with some heavy seasonings as well. It's going to be important to try to find a balance. The pitas, even though it's not pita season, we're in vata season we still want

to make sure that we're balancing our fire and our oil. So, if there is a lot of hot foods, maybe stay away, I think I mentioned this in the last pod cast, you know stay away from the turkey legs. Stay away from the crispy skin. Have something that's a little drier if there are going to be other oily fatty foods.

Vatas do well with more minced meat, smoothies, soups, things that are lighter. Pitas can handle proteins a little bit better than vatas can, and kaphas need to be mindful of the carbs. So, if there is a choice between the mashed potatoes and the mac and cheese and there's going to be the famous apple pie for dessert or sweet potato pie (begin by) making smart choices. Because kaphas are going to blow up. They are going to be bloated if it's too carb intense.

One of the other things, as far as even vegetables go, the leafy part of the vegetable would represent a vata type. The pita is represented by the stem, and kapha is represented by root vegetables. Somebody who is kapha may want to have some leafy vegetables or even part of the stem. Some people might cook broccoli, for example, and they say well I only use the floret's. Well Ayurveda says that we use the whole flower. We use the whole leaf. So even in making a salad, having a mix of spinach, let's say making a salad with the leaves and the stems and then having some root vegetables in there like beets and also having some of the stems of some of the other vegetables. So, you have your leaf, your roots, your stems which would make it a very tri-dosha dish and that could help balance out everybody which is good for everybody. And that's something that can be done around the holidays, is really paying attention to the part of the meat that you're eating, the part of the protein that's being eaten. It's important to have a balance of what's being eaten and even including the vegetables and which part of the vegetables and what choices are being made.

JUDITH: That's a very good suggestion because we do make various types of vegetable dishes and that includes potatoes, the sweet potatoes and the regular potatoes. I like the idea that something that's tri-doshic which means it's good for all dosha types, if you include the whole plant you've covered all bases. I think that's very practical information. Thank you for that.

JANET: Absolutely.

JUDITH: Alright, so let's move into the winter season with kaphas, which is the kapha season.

JANET: So, as we move into the winter season, which is kapha season, this is where kaphas really do need to be careful even more so about the carbs. Carbs are very heavy – all your breads, all your potatoes, your starches. Kaphas do well with gluten free products. Kaphas do well, everybody does well with all-natural products but especially kaphas need to be careful with any processed foods. And kaphas during this time of year really should also be staying away from dairy; cheeses and milks. If kaphas find themselves becoming congested (then know) one of the signs of kapha imbalance is congestion. That's where the sinus issues start. The phlegm in the throat. These are signs of kapha imbalances. Again, the winter blues is a sign of kapha imbalances. So, if somebody, if this sounds like you, then kapha in kapha season is not the time to be eating root vegetables. You don't want to have the sweet potatoes. You want to have some of those leafy greens, some of those oily foods. Kapha is very dry and we're in a dry season. So kaphas can have that chicken with the skin on it and salmon which is an oily fish. Those would benefit kapha. That will keep them warm. That will keep them hydrated, saturated and again if you are a pitta/kapha for example you still want to be careful about how much oil you're adding because you do have some oil already. And then maybe think about balancing that out with the leafy greens and some of the leaves because remember the leaves are the vata. The vata vegetables, the leafy part of the vegetable is vata. So kapha can do better with those leafy greens and if they find themselves too grounded that is what's going to support them getting up and moving around, having a little bit more energy so that they can support themselves in getting over those winter blues, as it were.

JUDITH: Hmm. That's very nice. Let's go back to vata for a minute for winter because I think of vata as being thin, on the thinner side, maybe a little bit more wiry, maybe a little more squirrely in some ways and then they tend to get cold, don't they? We're going into winter, what would be a good recommendation for them?

JANET: Soup.

JUDITH: Okay.

JANET: Because remember vata does better with mince meats, smoothie type foods. Vatas need something that's easier on the digestive system because also, as we stated in the beginning, our body, our whole body, is made up of all of the doshas. Although all of the organs are connected and

depend on one another each of our organs and our functions in our body are also represented by the doshas. So, digestion and our respiratory system, our lungs, that's all vata in our body. Although the pitta dosha is responsible for the transformation of the nutrients, the vata is responsible for the actual digestion. So, if you think about the windpipe, the trachea that's where the food has to go through to get to where it needs to go. So, somebody who is vata dosha they digest more easily with softer foods and things in the winter like soups, vegetable soups, broths, that is very good for vatas in the wintertime and vatas, because they are airy, vata can have let's say butternut squash soup which is more along the root vegetable, not specifically a root vegetable by a heavier vegetable type. Whereas kapha needs more softer vegetables.

JUDITH: Nice. Okay, so I know wanted to talk also about some more universal tips for good health, good nutrition for the holidays. Tell us more.

JANET: So universal tips for the holidays: everybody celebrates the holidays differently. Some people may have a let's say a Christmas brunch. Some people may have Thanksgiving dinner. The key is to eat the way you would normally eat. If you know that once a year on Thanksgiving that's when your favorite aunt is going to make their once a year favorite apple pie, save your calories for that favorite apple pie. You don't have to have every dish that's there. You don't have to have all of the side; the mac and cheese and the potato and the pie and the glass of wine. It's about making smart choices. It's important to give thanks for the food that we're eating, give thanks to the people and animals and earth who helped to grow and provide the food for us. Giving thanks and having a moment before sitting down and eating helps us be present to what is about to happen in our bodies in terms of the nutrition, and also chewing our food. Americans, we're very on-the-go type of people, rush, rush. If we take a spoon, a fork and we chew our food 20-30 times, and this is, also as far as Ayurveda goes, it's really being present to the food that you're eating. Chewing your food 20-30 times, letting it marinate, letting it digest, taking a break in between those long bites and making the holidays, the season, what it's really about which is the camaraderie, which is the opportunity to see people that you may not see all year round. It's the opportunity for people to come and gather. And if we put the focus on the communion and the gathering together and the focus is not on the food, that makes things a lot easier also.

So those are some real tips and tricks, focusing on the conversation. Maybe not sitting at the table where all the food is laid out. Walking around, socializing with people, playing games. Sometimes some families might have a family game that they play, or you know card games or board games, whatever it is, charades. Having some type of entertainment that can be a distraction away from the food because again it really is about coming together, honoring one and another, honoring the emotion of the season, the sentiment of the season and making it about that as opposed to the food. And that would make things a lot easier also.

JUDITH: Well it's also a very holistic viewpoint too, in terms of looking at our holiday to holistically to take into account it isn't just the food. It is the mind, body, spirit connection that we have with each other and to celebrate that as well, which puts us in a more mindful frame of mind so to speak. I like that, any other tips for us?

JANET: Like I said, mainly some people if they tend to have, let's say their dinner gathering at 6 in the evening. Some people are saying, oh I'm not going to eat that much today because I want to save my appetite for later on, don't do that. **Eat breakfast, eat lunch, go** and enjoy and be with the family.

Again, keep in mind **all the different spices**. Try different flavors that you may not have tried before. If you've never had rosemary and thyme and sage, maybe you can convince somebody whose never used those seasonings to season their turkey with some of those. And it doesn't have to be about, you know, the Thanksgiving turkey or the Christmas ham or whatever the tradition is. You know some people have fish or even Cornish hens and different types of dishes that can be incorporated that maybe break with that tradition. Maybe if you say, you know what, for me personally, my family is all carbs and I don't do well with carbs. I have learned to, if we aren't doing like a potluck, I'll say, "oh look what I've made for everybody" and I'll bring a salad or I'll make some mushrooms stuffed with different types of vegetables and things like that. And it doesn't seem imposing. Make it as "this is what I'm contributing to the meal." I didn't want to come empty-handed. So at least there's something there that you know that you feel comfortable eating that you're willing to share with everyone. And maybe everyone will enjoy and start to see that there is something to having different flavors and it's like oh what is this? What did you put in there? Oh I put some beet root or I used some turmeric or holy basil and these are

things that can be done to get everybody included and involved and starting to look at things in a different way.

JUDITH: Hmm. I like that. We also know in Ayurveda that the digestive system is very important. It's actually the doorway and the gateway to good health for lots of reasons. It's the way we interface with the outside world too. I think we've lost our mindfulness with eating in the moment for the occasion rather than seeing the feast in front of us and saying oh I have to eat everything. And I think people are getting to a different mindset. Because there are a lot of allergies out there. A lot of folks are Vegan now. There seems to be one in every family. There seems to be somebody whose gluten-free, so I think it's a little easier to make these kinds of recipes. I know myself last year I used fava beans, the juice from a can of fava beans to make a banana bread for somebody who was not just vegetarian, but Vegan and it was delicious, and we all enjoyed it. Your tips, I think, are practical and timely for the holiday season.

Anything else you'd like to add?

JANET: Along with that Judith, as you mentioned about that for the fava beans, one of my favorite recipes is baked apples. Baked apples, really what I do is I bake the apples with all of the seasonings that I would use in an apple pie spice mix. It's a variety of apples, I use 2 or 3 different kinds of apples. Whatever are in season. And season them with nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger, cloves. I put them in the crock pot on low and I let it sit. I let it simmer. You can do it overnight. I do it before I go to bed and it's on. It cooks for the 8 hours while I'm asleep. I get up. I turn it off. I mix it together. And basically, you have apple pie filling without the crust, without the bread and I know what my kaphas are going to say, oh but the crust is the best part. But you can still, again, when fruit is cooked it brings out the sweetness, so it actually does raise that glycemic index. But what I'm going to say is for those of us who struggle with that sweet tooth, this is a way of satisfying that sweet tooth through natural means without having the processed food. Without having the flour. Without having the carb. You can do that, baked apples add a little bit of honey even if you want to, maybe a teaspoon or two of honey and bake those apples and you have your apple pie filling and just have that. And you know it's a wonderful dessert. It's something that everybody can enjoy, and it has a variety of seasonings in it and some spices. And you know, that's a big hit.

JUDITH: Great, great idea. Alright, well we're getting ready to close and what I'd love you to do again is to give everybody your contact information.

JANET: Absolutely. So I can be reached via e-mail at phoenixsolhp@gmail.com and my phone number is 646-408-0759 and you can find me on social media on Facebook, Pintrest and Instagram by searching Phoenix Sol HP or Phoenix Sol and my instagram, pintrest, Facebook I will be found.

JUDITH: That's great. Thank you for that. Well, I want to say thank you for coming back. I appreciate all your suggestions and tips. They're timely for the holidays because we all want to feel good ending the year and beginning the new one. I'm delighted to have you back again Janet and I hope you'll come back again.

I want to thank everyone here for joining us at the Holistic Nature of Us. I hope you feel as inspired as I do and by Janet's practical advice. There are some good recipes ideas here. And remember everything will be in the transcript.

This is Judith Dreyer. I'm the author of "At the Garden's Gate", book and blog. My book is available through my website <http://www.judithdreyer.com> as well as several distribution arms such as Amazon, Nook, Goodreads and more. I'd like to remind all of you that a transcript is available for each podcast. And please like and share these podcasts. Let's get the word out and support each other.

And remember, NOW is the time for practical action and profound inner change so we value our world again.

Enjoy your day.