



“I always feel very connected to the earth in fall. I like that time of year when things start to fall away and we become gatherers.”

- Surya Little

**A PASSION FOR FOOD
BY MELISSA A. GOODWIN**

Petite Surya Little may not look like a revolutionary but she is one. Her revolution is food and she is a passionate though peaceful warrior for her cause. That cause is to use her knowledge about the energetic effects of seasonal eating to help others make healthy food choices that also support the local environment.

Surya and her husband Tias are well-known locally as the former owners of YogaSource, the Santa Fe yoga studio they ran for more than 7 years. Held in high esteem throughout the international yoga community, the couple now travels the world presenting yoga workshops and training programs. They are always happy though, to return home to Santa Fe where they continue to teach at YogaSource whenever possible.

It would be easy to assume that Surya's yogic lifestyle led to her interest in healthy eating, but it was actually the other way around. "Even as a child I liked to eat healthfully. I've always been interested in how food makes us feel and how it nourishes our bodies and spirits. Food came first for me and yoga came later, but there is synergy between the two. I'm most interested in the energetics of choosing complementary foods to support our overall well-being."

Surya's interest in healthy eating catapulted forward in her 20s after reading *The Macrobiotic Way*. The book's message that food can play a role in living a simple and harmonious life resonated with her and she began to closely observe how changes in cooking and eating affected her energy levels.

When a close friend started a macrobiotic cooking school in New York and invited Surya to work there, she jumped at the chance. She moved from Berkeley, California, attended the Gulliver Living and Learning Center and became certified to teach nutrition.

This association led to an interesting turn in Surya's life, when the Saudi Royal family contacted the school looking for a private cook for Princess Hassah and her ailing mother. Surya became not only their cook but also their friend, traveling with them all over Europe.

At the same time that she was deepening her expertise and experience with food and cooking, Surya also devoted herself to deepening her yoga practice. Her yogic journey took her to Nepal for two years and to India, where she studied with K. Pattabhi Jois. Her two passions—food and yoga—began to merge as Surya became increasingly aware of how her food choices affected her yoga practice and her physical and emotional health.

Since becoming a mother 4 years ago to son Eno, Surya's convictions about the importance of eating energetically-balanced meals using locally-produced food has grown even stronger. "Eating seasonal local foods connects us to Mother Earth, who is truly like our collective mother. There is a natural order and harmony to what she provides. As a mother myself, I realize that there are consequences if I make chaotic food choices for our family. I think that if we would just trust the sustenance that Mother Earth gives us, we would feel better and our immune systems would be stronger."

The wisdom of choosing seasonal foods makes sense when we stop to consider that the foods we harvest at any given time of year actually support that season's energetic qualities. For example, in fall the air becomes cooler and damper, so our bodies need to increase internal warmth. If we eat too many cold energy foods (such as bananas) during fall, we are eating in a way that is counter to what our bodies actually need. The greens and root vegetables that are harvested in autumn are exactly what we need to begin warming up for the colder months.

The transition from late summer into early fall can be energetically challenging in New Mexico because it is more gradual than in colder, damper regions like New England or the Mid-West. Surya explains that, early in the season, we should eat foods that are sweet and pungent such as spinach, dikon radish and squash. As the temperature starts to drop, we need to prepare our bodies for the cold by choosing foods that create insulation from the inside out and cooking them more thoroughly. At this time it's also important to increase fats, making sure to use good quality oils. The idea is to gradually increase warmth so that it penetrates our systems more deeply to sustain us in winter.

The recipes Surya provided for *edible Santa Fe* illustrate her approach to combining energetically compatible and complementary fall foods. The legumes are high in proteins, fat and carbohydrates, which prepare the body for cold weather. Lentils, walnuts and the pungent flavors of garlic and onion are good for developing warmth in the lungs and digestive system. The warming flavor of curry mixes nicely

with the sweet and salty flavors of coconut milk and miso to create a balance of cooling and warming effects in the body.

Locally, Surya shops at Whole Foods and the Farmer's Market. Rather than adhering strictly to a shopping list, she lets her weekly menus evolve from what she finds there. Her favorite cookbooks are *Angelicas Kitchen* and *The Miso Cookbook*, which are often the starting point for adapting recipes based on what she finds at the market.

Surya's passion shines through when she expresses her views on eating seasonally and locally. "It's charitable eating, to want those who produce your food to earn a decent standard of living. It's Zen eating to be mindful about what we eat, to simplify and concentrate on what we consume. It's environmental eating that sets a good example about living harmoniously in our world. With revolutionary spirits, charitable hearts and sensitive action, we can take responsibility for sustaining our local environment by eating locally-produced seasonally-appropriate foods that improve our own well-being."