

CONGEEES

Winter is an excellent season to try the time-honoured tradition of congee. Congee, or rice water is a slow cooked rice porridge (or sometimes made with millet, spelt or oats) or gruel that is traditionally eaten for breakfast by many Chinese.

Other ingredients are added depending on the health needs of each person.

Here is what you do:

1 part rice (basmati, long grain, medium grain or brown rice or a mixture) is added to a heavy based pot to 5 parts water.

Plus another ingredient –depending on the type of congee you want.

Cook the rice and water for 4-6 hours on warm or the lowest flame possible. It is better to use too much water than too little, and it is said that the longer the congee cooks, the more ‘powerful’ it becomes.

You can use a ‘Crock Pot’ or even better is a SLOW COOKER as you can leave it to cook overnight or put it on in the morning and it will be ready when you get home at night.

Some common congee ingredients include:

Adzuki beans-removes damp and ease swelling

Brown Rice-thirst quenching, nourishing, good for nursing mothers

Carrot-eases digestion

Celery-calms the liver and treats high blood pressure due to cooling nature

Chestnut-strengthens the kidneys, lower back and knees

Chicken broth-wasting illnesses and injuries

Fennel-eases flatulence and removes clotting during menstruation, harmonises stomach

Ginger-warming and antiseptic, cold digestive illness, diarrhoea, vomiting and poor appetite

Kidney from sheep or pig-strengthens kidneys and benefits knees and lower back, impotence (use organic)

Leek-warms the body and counteracts chronic diarrhoea

Liver from sheep or chicken-nourishes and builds the blood, balances the liver (anger and irritability) only use organic organ meats

Mung beans- cools summer heat and reduces fever

Pine nuts-is moistening to the heart and lungs

Radish-cools heat from the digestive system

Sesame seeds-moisten the intestines and treats arthritis

Shepherd’s Purse-Brightens the eyes and benefits the liver

Spinach-acts as a sedative and eases burping and acid regurgitation

Shallot bulb-cures cold diarrhoea in the aged, assist any cold conditions

Taro Root-nutritious, aids the stomach, builds the blood

Yoghurt and Honey-Beneficial to heart and lungs