

Did you know that during the spring as temperatures rise, trees come out of their winter hibernation? I found that fascinating because we know that bears and some animals go into hibernation. We know that in TCM, it is a time to self-reflect, to stay inside more, to not do too many activities.

But I just found out recently that trees do this too. And there's a fascinating natural phenomenon called SAP Flow that occurs. SAP is the sugary liquid that circulates within the tree and it starts moving from the roots.

To the branches during the springtime because during the winter month when temperatures drop and daylight hours decrease, many trees hibernate, not all of them, but I'm in Canada and it gets pretty cold in winter, so it means their metabolic activities slows down significantly.

Just At this time, the sap flow is minimal and the tree conserves energy to withstand the cold. Isn't that cool? So what is sap? Sap is a sugary liquid that circulates, within the tree.

It's kind of like a flow of Qi, right?

Or a flow of blood. It is a vital part of a tree's physiology. It contains water, minerals, and sugars. The primary purpose of sap is to transport nutrients and water through the tree. This is like blood and the human body. It's so cool.

During the spring, as the temperature rises and the trees come out of their hibernation, the sap starts moving from the root. To the branches to nourish the tree. Now in Canada, we have a lot of maple trees that are harvested for their sap in the spring to make maple syrup. Have you ever had maple syrup?

I love it. When I go back to France, everyone always tells me, "*Can you bring back some maple syrup?*" Because it's not available all over the world. It is very much a North American food. The sap collected from the maple trees is not initially very sweet.

Typically, it contains about 2 to 3% sugar. So to make maple syrup, the SAP is boiled down to evaporate the water content, concentrating on the sugars

It takes approximately 40 liters of SAP to produce one liter of maple syrup. This is why real maple syrup is so expensive.

Now, maple syrup contains high levels of calcium, magnesium, potassium, iron, zinc, manganese, and B two. It also has antioxidants and probiotics for gut health.

So although we're not gonna eat a lot of sugar because it is high in sugar, it is really good for us.

In today's episode, I'm diving into TCM Nutrition.

This is why I was sharing this fascinating story. We're gonna focus on the liver because it is springtime right now for the northern atmosphere, and we'll see where maple syrup plays a role in some liver patterns.

I'm gonna look at the symptoms and food recommendations for the four most common TCM liver patterns, Liver Qi Stagnation, Liver Yang Rising, Liver Yin Deficiency, and Liver Blood Deficiency. Each pattern offers unique insights into how diet can either hinder or support the TCM liver. I'm gonna also share a special recipe that aligns with today's theme with some maple syrup.

I also have a [free PDF](#) I created especially for you that you can grab and you are going to love. It's very useful. I explain it at the end.

Plus, I have a personal story to share about my childhood. A time when I really tested my mom's patience and contributed to her liver yang rising

Welcome to Acupro, a show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I'm your host, Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students like you in changing the world one patient at a time. My goal is to share my passion for TCM and empower you to achieve superior patient care. I love to showcase the amazing benefits of acupuncture, because after all, acupuncture rocks!

Before we start talking about each TCM liver patterns and their food recommendation, I just wanted to remind ourselves that each individual is very unique and that's the key to healing in TCM. We treat the patient, not the disorder always, right?

We always treat the patient as a whole.

When it comes to TCM nutrition, it's always tailored to the patient's pattern, environment, and stage of life.

However, four principles apply to everyone. First, the importance of eating food that are in season. This aligns our diet with the natural rhythm of our environment. And this is very TCM, right? We are going to be in harmony with our environment. Which leads me to the second, which is the value of eating local foods because they're fresher and they are in our environment again.

Third, the practice of mindful eating. Everyone is eating so fast. My husband inhaled food like my golden retriever boomer. They just swallow. They do not chew. It is very important to educate patients on thoroughly chewing our food and avoiding distraction. Like working at a desk while eating, which so many people do. In France, we sit down and we take time to have lunch to eat.

I think I think mindful eating leads to avoiding a lot of digestive issues. And fourth, considering our genetic background in our diet choices. For instance, I have a lot of patients that are from

Korea or Japan, and a lot of them are lactose intolerant. They can not eat dairy, and the reason is in their original country or genetic background, dairy is not commonly consumed.

So when they move to North America, their body has a hard time digesting it because they're missing the enzyme. Does that make sense? So it's really important to eat in-season local food, mindful eating, and looking at the genetic background of our patients to tailor everything to who they are.

A story from my childhood

Before we talk about nurturing our liver and managing its temper, because it has tendency to be irritable, right?

We know that. Or frustrated easily. Let me share a little personal story from my childhood that is sure to bring a smile to your face. Growing up in France, we lived in a small one-bedroom rental apartment, and my mom was a single mother of three. She worked 12-hour days on minimum wage. Can you imagine the stress, right?

My mom was not to be argued with, she was strong-headed, and nobody messed with her. She had to be strong in order to survive and provide for her family. My mom also smoked two packs a day like French women do, and drank wine, and coffee on a daily basis. Plus she ate a lot of rich French foods.

Now picture this, I was a unique and adventurous 10-year-old, and one day I was bored and I had a plan. I looked at the kitchen. Keep in mind, that I always have the best intentions with my plans, but that day I decided our kitchen needed a makeover.

And because it was the eighties, what better color than me painting it? Bright turquoise.

Yep. I love that color.

At 10 years old, you could guess I had never painted before. I didn't know anything about priming or different coats. So I went to the store, bought a bucket of turquoise paint and a brush, and I went all out.

My mom was at work for 12 hours and I painted not just the walls of the kitchen, but I thought the fridge was too bland because it was white.

The windows were not fun to look at and the door, so I painted all the walls, the fridge, and the window. Even the door. Because I was too short, even standing on a chair, I couldn't reach the ceiling, so I painted the walls, but I never made it to the top. So it stopped at about two feet or 60 centimeters from the top.

Can you just imagine my mom's reaction when she came home to my art project or my great intention to remake the kitchen?

Her liver didn't just rise, it skyrocketed.

There I was a proud artist standing in my turquoise kitchen, facing the storm of my mom's fury. There she was seriously. Smoke came out of her ears. She was so mad. The kitchen stayed turquoise for over 30 years.

Can you imagine that? See, I had good intentions. Oh my gosh. A neighbor came and finished painting all the way to the ceiling, the landlord. I was not very happy. But, yep, this is what I did. So I share the story not only to bring a smile to your face but to relate the impact stress and nutrition have on our TCM liver.

Because my mom obviously had a lot of stress to deal with and she did not support her liver with nutrition. So when things happen, she really blew up like a volcano.

Liver Qi Stagnation

Of course, I am going to start with the most common one, which is Liver Qi Stagnation. Who does not experience it ever? Most of our patients have some kind of Liver Qi Stagnation, and with acupuncture like Liver 3 and Gallbladder 34. It's very easy to calm the person down.

Now, symptoms-wise with women, we have a lot of PMS with Liver Qi stagnation, like breast tenderness and constipation, bloating, moody, or mood swings. In general with liver stagnation, the person will have shoulder tension, maybe neck tension, and temporal headaches.

Every time they're stressed, they get more bloated. Specifically at the end of the day, you know, they start with the stomach flat, and as the day goes, it gets more bloated, and by the end of the day, we can't close our pants.

The pulse is wirey and usually the tongue doesn't change. It's pink. Now with emotion that relates to Liver Qi Stagnation, it's usually impatience, frustration, irritability, mood swings, and sometimes depression as well. When there is depression, there's always an underlying Liver Qi Stagnation because we feel stuck.

There are other patterns, but there's always a Liver Qi Stagnation with depression.

Great food to support Liver Qi Stagnation

All fruits and veggies are great, especially **watercress, rosemary, lemon basil, fennel beans, apple cider vinegar**, and there's much more. But I wanted to give you a few.

Now, one of the things that is important too, is to eat less or less bigger meal.

So smaller meals are better and **avoiding saturated fat, processed food, and alcohol**. That is key for Liver Qi Stagnation stagnation.

Now, when designing a meal plan for patients with TCM Liver Qi stagnation, it's essential to focus on food that helps to soothe the liver, improve digestion, and promote the free flow of Qi. When there is Liver Qi stagnation it over controls on spleen and stomach and there's always digestive system issues that are going to occur.

Tips for Liver Qi Stagnated Patients

Now, let me give you some ideas for liver stagnation that you can pass on to your patients. **Warm water with a squeeze of lemon juice** every morning is fantastic. Taking a tablespoon of **apple cider vinegar with every meal** is also very good for Liver Qi.

Ideas could be like three **beans and vegetable soup** with celery and onions. A side **watercress salad** with basil vinaigrette would be perfect, or a **chickpea salad** with mixed green diced celery and a lemon tahini dressing. Look at all the ideas I'm giving you. Now you can obviously, create recipes for your patients and I'm gonna have one I'm gonna share with you later on in this show.

[AcuPro Made Easy Book Series](#)

Did you know I created three books to support your TCM journey? Often I'm asked, "Clara, what's the difference between all three?" Well, they all have fun, colorful visuals to make them much more easy to grasp and understand each concept. They're definitely not your TCM typical boring, dry books. They are available in hard copy and they ship all over the world.

But if you'd rather the digital version, they all come with video links to complement them. and can be downloaded on any device.

Three Books (so far!)

My first book, Acupoint Made Easy, which is the orange one, covers all acupuncture points function, location, depth, and angle of insertion, including special points, categories, extra point cupping moxa, and all my clinical pearls.

My second book, Chinese Medicine Made Easy, which is my green book, covers all TCM foundations. Diagnosis, yes, including tongue and pulse, but lots of colorful visuals to help you grasp. Specifically observation, right? Case studies and my digital fillable intake form for you to use with your patients. My third book Chinese Medicine Treatments Made Easy, that is my purple book, covers all TCM treatments for 160 syndromes, including acupuncture points, herbal formulas, diet, ear acupuncture, and many other TCM tools.

So you can have that book at your fingertips every day in the clinic. It is a must for all practitioners. I provide samples for each of my books that you can download to see if this is

really truly what you were looking for because I want you to be happy with what you're investing in when you invest in any of my products. You can check out the links to all my books in the show notes below or go to my website at acuproacademy.com and on the menu tab click the [shop tab](#) and get your copy today.

Liver Yang Rising

Let's look now at this second most common pattern, which often starts from Liver Qi stagnation. It's Liver Yang rising. That's the next stage, right? So now we have pretty much the same common symptoms we talked about with Liver Qi stagnation, plus temporal headaches that is worse with stress and at the end of the day, probably feels better with a cold compress.

Red face, maybe high blood pressure, insomnia. That is the one where we wake up between 1:00 and 3:00 AM. Constipation and the tongue would have red sides and the pulse will be wiry-rapid. Emotions would be more than irritable, anger, rage, violent, aggressive, arrogance. This is like a volcano, right? We explode.

Great food to Support Liver Yang Rising

So the best food now are going to be cooling. We wanna bring the Liver Yang down. We want to cool the person. However, we don't wanna make it too cold, so great food, or lemon again.

Asparagus, dandelion. Now dandelion is very cold, so we don't wanna overdo it. However, in the spring it's a really good food for the liver. Western and TCM liver. I know in North America people don't eat dandelion salad, but in France, we do this every spring we go pick up the weeds 'cause weeds are so good for you.

The dandelion weed and we make dandelion salad. So **celery, lettuce, cucumber, and tofu.** Now, tofu is interesting. If it's really hard, tofu, like the more firm one that is much more cold than the soft one. The soft one is more cool because they add up calcium to make it harder, and firmer, and that creates more cold.

Does that make sense? So with Liver Yang Rising, we wanna **avoid all meats** because meats are very warm. Specifically lamb. Lamb is very warm, at least during the spring and summertime, maybe not during the fall or winter. And we wanna **reduce alcohol**, obviously, or eliminate it all together, and **spicy food**.

Tips for Liver Yang Rising Patients

When designing a meal plan for patients with Liver Yang Rising or Liver Fire, (which is the next stage and is worse), it's important to focus on cooling and detoxifying food to help bring down that excess heat.

So we can recommend patients to have a **water bottle with lemon and cucumber slices**, and infused water, and they can sip on it all day long. Have a salad of **lettuce, cucumber**, and or

dandelion with a lemon dressing. Perfect for Liver Yang rising. We can also recommend **steamed fish** 'cause fish is not as warm as meat with a lemon and dill sauce.

That is fantastic. Also stir-fried or steamed asparagus with tofu. A green smoothie could be great in the summer and maybe in the spring depending on where the person lives. And the smoothies are very cold in general, we know that.

But if someone has a lot of heat, we wouldn't do it for a long time. But just to bring that liver yang rising. We would put a **green apple, cucumber, spinach**, and lemon juice. It's perfect for the Liver Yang Rising person or Liver Fire.

Liver Yin Deficiency

The third most common liver pattern in TCM is Liver Yin Deficiency. I see this a lot in the clinic because I see a lot of women in menopause and that's very common. So we have red cheeks, night sweats, and insomnia where we toss and turn all night.

Also, the person is thirsty for a cold drink, but they sip. The cold drink, they don't gulp it right, so it's sipping cold drink all day. There's also poor night vision, tinnitus, dizziness, and a thin rapid pulse with a red tongue cracked with no coat. The emotion associated with Liver Yin deficiency is often irritability or nervous tension.

Great Food to Support Liver Yin Deficiency

Now, depression can also be part of Liver Yin deficiency. When there is Yin deficiency, that means body fluid is deficient. So we need to lubricate and we need to nourish the yin. We're gonna look at **flax oil, olive oil, tofu, seaweed, cucumber, mung beans, plum, and watercress**.

So we wanna cool but also nourish. And then we wanna **avoid alcohol again and spicy hot** food because we don't wanna bring more heat, right?

Tips for Liver Yin-Deficient Patients

So when designing a meal plan for a patient with TCM Liver Yin deficiency, we wanna have food, like I said, that nourishing cool the body, but supports the liver.

Starting the day by squeezing a whole **lemon into a glass of water** is perfect now because we wanna nourish the person. Having overnight oats. Now oats are very damp, so people that have Spleen Qi deficiency or are very damp, it's not gonna work for them.

But a yin deficiency person is usually more dry. So we can have overnight oats made with flaxseed. Chia seed almond milk, and topped with peaches. Peaches are a little bit cooling, so that's perfect. We can also recommend seaweed salads with tofu, mixed green, and sesame dressing. Sesame and seeds in general are very lubricating, and very good for yin deficiency.

Or a salad with avocado, sesame seeds, or pumpkin seeds, and a lemon and flax oil Vinaigrette. Aren't you hungry now? We can also encourage the patient to stay well hydrated with water herbal teas, and like I said, lemon-infused beverage throughout the day.

[Grab my FREE TCM Nutrition PDF](#)

Now, before we continue to the last TCM liver pattern in the show notes linked below, you can grab my [free TCM Nutrition PDF](#) I created just for you.

It is a comprehensive food recommendation for all five-year organ patterns. Not just the Liver, but also the Spleen, the Heart, the Kidney, and the Lung. **It's yours for free.**

Liver Blood Deficiency

Okay, let's look at the last most common pattern when it comes to the liver, which is Liver Blood Deficiency. And I have to say, I see a lot of women in practice who are liver blood deficient because I treat a lot of women's disorders.

The main symptoms of liver blood deficiency is pale and poor energy, memory, sleep. The poor sleep is cannot fall asleep or take a long time to fall asleep. And then pale face, pale lips, pale nails, brittle nails that break very easily. Also, muscle spasms, twitches, specifically eye twitches.

Problem with menstruation, maybe scan de menstruation, numbness, having the tendency to wake up with the hand or the arm numb in the morning. That is because there's not enough blood circulation, because there's not enough blood. Does that make sense?

Also, blurred vision or seeing spots emotionally. There could be depression, but also difficulty in focusing and very nervous or anxious.

Great Foods for Liver Blood Deficiency

When it comes to food for Liver Blood Deficiency, we wanna nourish the blood with dark red, purple, and red food. Like **beets, cherries, blackberries, black grape, purple, cabbage, raspberries**. And we wanna **avoid too hot or too cold food**. We want to really recommend more neutral food. Does that make sense?

Tips for Liver Blood-Deficient Patients

So when designing a meal plan for patients with Liver Blood Deficiency, it's important to focus on nourishing and supporting the liver and the blood.

Some of the things I like to recommend are **dried figs or dried dates** with a handful of nuts as a snack. Figs are high in iron and although we want to remember that Liver Blood Deficiency doesn't mean that someone is iron deficient or anemic, however often they are as well.

So it's a really good snack to have. **Pumpkin and sesame seed** snacks are really good as well. I recommend **Borsch soup**. If you don't know what borsch soup is, it has beets and purple cabbage. It is from Eastern Europe and Russia area. It is very nourishing to blood.

Recipe

And then when we first started, I talked about, I have a recipe for you. It is a baked salmon with fig and date glaze, and you can use either maple syrup or molasses because depending on where you are in the world, you may not have the availability of maple syrup. It is a great recipe and you can find the recipe above. I hope you try it because it's so delicious and it's very nourishing to blood-deficient patients.

Another one I would recommend would be bone broth with lentils or red kidney beans and purple cabbage soup. Bone broth is really good for blood deficient patients as well.

In summary

Remember, when it comes to TCM nutrition, we wanna tailor it to each individual patient.

Does that make sense? And remember your TCM journey, whether you're a practitioner or a student, doesn't have to be walked alone.

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