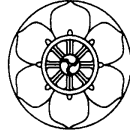


THE EASTERN GATE



Member Newsletter Fall 2017

The Cambridge Zen Center is part of the Kwan Um School of Zen

Nourishing the Whole World

Excerpt from a Dharma talk by Barry Briggs JDPSN on March 16, 2017

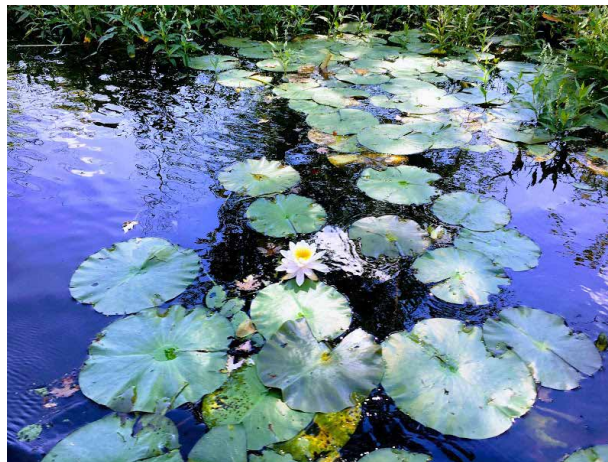
Question: What is the relationship between food and cooking when cooking for others or for yourself?

Barry Briggs JDPSN: In the early days, Buddhism did not offer specific teachings about diet. The historical Buddha lived as a monk, and as such depended solely on the support of other people. During the Buddha's lifetime, each member of the sangha (the community of monks and nuns) had only a single possession, a food bowl. As the sangha traveled around northern India, they would go every morning into the nearest village, where local people would put food in their bowls. Then the monks would eat everything that was offered—meat, vegetables, fish, birds, rice. They didn't check; they didn't cling to their preferences. They ate in gratitude for the food and the generosity of the local people.

Having choices doesn't necessarily help us become clear.

The Buddhist way is simply to eat what is given with gratitude.

Many beings have gone into your food. So it's important to see that you are intimately connected with all the beings that have produced every mouthful of food.



One of the interesting aspects of modern life, especially in American and European cultures, is that many of us are confronted daily with a huge array of food choices. As a result of this, many of us—myself included—sometimes can get totally absorbed with the types of foods we eat. Is it organic or not organic? Is it vegetarian or is it vegan? Is it raw? Does it have spirulina in it? On and on and on we go. Over time it can get just a little obsessive.

Does anyone like pizza? Let's say you are walking down Mass. Ave. in Cambridge, and you walk by a pizzeria and the smell of pizza appears in your consciousness. The smell of pizza doesn't appear by accident. The smell of pizza arises only because the owner of the business opened that day, the cook showed up for work, the gas company provided gas, and somewhere a farmer grew wheat. The farmer planted seeds many months before

the harvest and then someone else milled the wheat berries, and then another person delivered the wheat to the pizzeria, driving a truck running on gasoline derived from the remains of countless beings. As the wheat was growing, earthworms did their work in the soil underneath, without ever questioning or checking. And in every square centimeter of the soil under the wheat, countless organisms made nutrients available to help the wheat grow. The soil itself was produced by a volcanic eruption millennia ago; and the volcano erupted because tectonic plates of the Earth moved together. Tectonic plates move across the surface of the earth because of the forces that created the planet about 4.5 billion years ago. And sometime earlier, about 13 billion years ago, there was a [makes popping sound] small event that produced everything.

All of this goes into the smell of pizza—and a whole lot more. Why, I haven't even talked about the tomatoes and the cheese!

Actually, if we could perceive things in their entirety, we would see that the whole world, the entire universe, is profoundly interpenetrated with the smell of pizza. So the next time you have a piece of pizza, you are eating the entire world.

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A Dharma Talk by Craig Richards, Senior Dharma Teacher, Plymouth Zen Center, July 7, 2017

During the Ch'ing Dynasty in China, in Yang Chou, there was a person named Ch'eng Pai Lin. One day he had a dream in which Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva told him, "Tomorrow the Ch'ing army will arrive. Out of the seventeen people in your household, sixteen will survive. But you cannot escape your fate. Tomorrow Wang Ma Tze will kill you, because in a past life you stabbed him twenty-six times and killed him." Then Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva added, "There is still an expedient method that may work. Prepare a fine feast tomorrow, and when he comes, invite him to eat with you. Afterward, allow him to kill you. Perhaps that will change things."

The dream was vivid, and when Ch'eng Pai Lin awoke the following morning, he went out and bought wine and vegetables, brought them back, and had a feast prepared. Then noontime came, someone knocked at the door. He opened the door and said, "Are you Wang Ma Tze?" "How strange," said the man at the door, "I'm from the north, how did you know my name?" His host invited him in and said, "You are welcome in my house. I've prepared a feast for you. Please join me." Then he related the dream he'd had the night before. "Last life I killed you with twenty-six stabs of a knife, and so this life you have come to kill me. After we've finished this meal, you can do it." Wang Ma Tze pondered over this and said, "But if you killed me last life, and I kill you this life, won't you kill me again next life? It will just go on and on. No, I won't kill you." Then he took his knife and scratched twenty-six marks on his host's back to represent that the debt had been repaid. Not only did Wang Ma Tze not kill his host, but afterward they

became very good friends. Wang said to his host, "The Ch'ing army is approaching. They are not reasonable, so the best course would be for you and your family to go to Su Chou. It's safe there." So that is what Ch'eng Pai Lin did. This is a case of turning grievance into friendship and reversing the retribution that is due one.

This story works on a lot of levels. On a basic level, the idea that acts of violence create a cycle of violence (note that acts of love and compassion create their own cycle as well), and that

invite my feelings in and give them my attention, I can make friends with them. I have the choice to make friends with my feelings instead of fighting them. But this isn't always easy to do—the story indicates that this will only work if I allow them to kill me! How many of us are willing to let ourselves die in order to make friends with our feelings? What if, instead of our physical death, we only have to let go of the idea of who we are? How much pain and suffering are we willing to put up with in order to hold on to our identity, the stories we tell ourselves about who we are?



New altar built by Eric Espinosa May 2017.

there's a way out of this cycle, is a wonderful way to look at this story. However, all great stories can work on multiple levels, so I'd like to look at this story from a different angle, from an inner perspective.

I often have states of mind such as frustration, anger, or sadness that I don't want to experience, and I can make these into enemies in my own mind. I can stab them in many ways, such as distraction, blame, or ignorance, to avoid paying attention to, or feeling, my feelings. Yet they never completely go away, and sometimes they show up with a knock at my front door, perhaps with a whole army behind them. The story of Ch'eng Pai Lin shows if I am able to

Ken McLeod is a Buddhist teacher who teaches that an enemy is someone (or something) that causes us to have a state of mind that we are unwilling or unable to experience. Think about the different enemies you've had in your life. Can you find any truth in this teaching? Is it possible that, instead of opening up to all of your experience, you create an enemy? What states of mind have you banished from your consciousness, and what enemies have been created by doing so? If you are able

to make this connection between enemies and your states of mind that you are unable to experience, then you will be able to take responsibility for the enemies in your life. Instead of blaming others for bad things happening, you are able to open up to all of your experiences, without needing to label them good and bad. You are also able to respond to situations without the need to push away your own reactions, which gives you a wider range of possibilities, and allows you to stay open instead of closed. If our inability to open to all of our experiences is what creates enemies, then not only are we responsible for creating our

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Abbot Tom Johnson's Farewell Note

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as abbot of the Cambridge Zen Center for more than seven years. Those seven years have been rich and full. There have been many changes to the physical plant such as a new heating system, new air conditioner for the dharma room; many bathrooms were remodeled, as were apartments. CZC has many new windows and floors. We have a beautiful new ADA compliant bathroom next to the dharma room. We have a new website and have generated more than 200 video clips of our teaching which are hosted on our YouTube Channel.

Many people have come and many people have gone, taking a little piece of CZC with them, hopefully to spread around the globe. The Cambridge Zen Center is a wonderful place to live the dharma. Residents in our training program truly bump up against each other like potatoes in a barrel, and in so doing learn to put down their opinions—and we all have them. I can tell you that living in a community is a truly amazing experience. If any of you get a chance to live in community, even for a while, you owe it to yourself to try it. The community, the sangha, is one of the three jewels of Buddhism, along with Buddha and dharma.

The Cambridge Zen Center provides meditation instruction to the public free of charge. We offer a quiet place for people to practice meditation in a safe environment. We never ask “What is your belief?” You will often be asked “What is your experience?” We bring people to the place where they are encouraged to look inside and experience their being before thinking arises. The teaching CZC provides is clear and simple and follows a lineage back to the Buddha. As abbot I have tried to keep us on this clear and simple track. There are many people and many organizations that provide a wonderful service to the community. Many organizations provide food, clothing, and shelter. Some provide counseling services. Some provide education. The service that CZC provides is no less important. If there is one thing this suffering world needs at this time it is more meditative people.

The more I do Zen practice the more I realize how important it is. This looks like a casual thing that we do here. It looks like we are all chilling out and being quite peaceful. The truth is this work that we do is the great work of life and death. It is serious business. It is not unattainable. You can do it. You can attain your true self—and not your idea of

yourself or your thinking about yourself. This is very important. I want everyone to know the promise of Zen practice is available to you and completely attainable. It is for everyday people like you and I.

When I first became abbot people were calling me “The Bathroom Abbot” because I began by renovating the bathrooms. Then I became “Dear Abbot” because of the advice column I wrote for our website. I preferred the handle Abbot Tom because I thought it sounded less formal. It really doesn't matter what I'm called. What matters is that I tried to keep a clear direction and that really is all one can do no matter what role you happen to be playing at the moment. I will try to keep that same clear direction in my new role as “retired guy.” My hope is that the Cambridge Zen Center is better off now, as I leave, then when it was entrusted to my care. Thank you to the board of directors for the opportunity. I wish all the best to our new abbot, whoever that may be. The Great Way is right in front of you!



Cambridge Zen Center garden in August.



September canoe trip down the Ipswich River.

SANGHADHARMA

Nourishing the Whole World

Continued from page 1

Having told this nice story, I want to point out that there are serious ethical and social concerns associated with food, and how it is grown, processed, cooked, consumed, and disposed. Like everything else in the universe, food has significance and impact.

I began practicing in the Kwan Um School tradition in 1990. In January 1991, I went to Providence Zen Center to sit several weeks of retreat. I arrived late on a Friday and went downstairs to the big industrial kitchen; the only person in the kitchen was a Korean monk who lived there at the time. He was

cleaning a big pot in which rice had been cooked, traditional white sticky rice. If you've ever cooked sticky rice, you know that a lot of rice gets stuck on the inside of the pot. This monk had a pair of chopsticks and was picking out every grain of rice and putting each grain into a container.

I will never forget his action—my mind's jaw dropped. I had never seen food treated with this care. My family certainly didn't treat food in this way—anything left over just went into the garbage disposal! At that moment, as I watched this monk meticulously preserve every grain of rice, my life changed. Today, if I have no choice but to

waste food, an ache appears in my heart. It doesn't feel right. It feels out of harmony, out of alignment with the universe.

So through our practice effort and clear direction, we can foster this kind of relationship with cooking and eating food. Actually, we can develop this kind of meticulous, loving relationship with everything in our lives.

And that's what changes the world.

The good news about human life is that each life matters; each life makes a difference. How each of us engages with food, its cooking and consumption, makes a difference. Our love and attention nourishes the whole world.



A Dharma Talk by Craig Richards

Continued from page 2

own enemies, but we also have the power to stop creating them.

How do we do this? How can we increase our ability to stay present during unpleasant states of mind? In my own life, Zen practice has helped me cultivate this ability. Meditation and other practices have strengthened my inner

abilities to pay attention. In the same way that lifting weights builds my strength, or practicing an activity such as a sport has increased my abilities in that area, Zen practice has increased my ability to stay present through all mental states. One of the wonderful aspects of this is that it's not necessary to understand how it all works, just that it does work. In some ways, it's like magic, in that practice improves my ability to stop negative cycles in my mind, so I can be

more open to the mysterious unfolding of life as it takes place. I encourage everyone to engage in some sort of daily practice to discover these abilities for yourselves. Take advantage of places like the Cambridge Zen Center, where we can find encouragement to practice, instruction for when we get stuck, and a sangha to help us realize that we're all in this together.

By becoming a member of the Cambridge Zen Center, you help support its ongoing practice and programs. You'll also automatically become a member of the international Kwan Um School of Zen and part of its effort to bring this teaching to new students and to other parts of the world.

If you are participating in kong-an interviews and other Zen Center programs, we encourage you to become a member. As a member you will receive reduced fees for retreats and programs at your Zen Center and at other Zen Centers of the Kwan Um School of Zen. You'll also receive the School's journal, *Primary Point*, and its newsletter.

Membership rates:

- Individual Membership – \$300/year
- Family Membership – \$420/year
- Student/Senior Membership – \$180/year

For your convenience, dues and donations can be paid by check, money order, Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, or PayPal. Membership fees and contributions are tax-deductible.

Please go to this link for application: <http://www.kwanumzen.org/members/become-a-member>

Or you can find envelopes in the Zen Center's reception room that can be mailed to the KUSZ.

Payments can be made quarterly.



CAMBRIDGE ZEN CENTER

Experience the joy and growth that comes from residential training at one of the oldest and largest Zen centers in North America.

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SANGHANOTES

Colors appearing on tree leaves around Cambridge and a sudden crisp quality in the air are signaling the end of the summer season and the start of a new autumn cycle. We appreciate our practice and our center more than usual in these turbulent times. Noticeable changes are visible around CZC, starting with the physical plant. Under our abbot's direction a basement apartment has been renovated: we've removed the kitchen, installed a new hardwood floor, and given it a fresh coat of paint, making it a choice spot for a resident to live. An apartment in the River Street building received a much-needed new kitchen, cabinets, and bathroom. Many projects such as painting and washing the mat covers were accomplished at a work retreat in late September, organized by our housemaster, Paul Laurey. One of our guiding teachers, Barry Briggs, generously did interviews during it. We enjoyed the koi fish swimming in the Su Bong Memorial Pond in our garden this summer. Soon the fish will return to their permanent home at Open Meadow Zen in Lexington. Our large garden rewarded us with its thriving beauty after it received much love and attention from residents, particularly our housemaster, Paul.

In May our gorgeous new altar was unveiled with a short Eye Opening Ceremony prepared by Barry PSN. Eric Espinosa, our resident wood craftsman, was thanked for building a true work of art. Here are Eric's own words about the project: *"To build the new altar we wanted to use a light colored wood, something that would brighten up the dharma room. At the shop where I work there are different*



Zen Master Wu Kwang leads the May YMJJ.



Zen Master Bon Shim leads the February YMJJ.



Martin Klesak receiving sixteen precepts.

Jody Blackwell taking sixteen precepts.

stacks of wood that have been waiting for a special project. Birdseye maple and some lovely curly sycamore fit our needs perfectly, and my boss kindly donated it. So it was a pleasure to design and build the altar knowing that there was a good use for this beautiful wood." Its glowing light-filled color uplifts the room, changing the energy dramatically. The traditional Korean altar painting behind it was restretched, and the overall effect with our still new Kwan Seum Bosal statue and altar implements is truly a healing sight for sore eyes! Recently Eric completed a lovely matching bookcase that now holds our chanting books.

Our residential population of over 30 continues to grow with many new practitioners coming and some going, and some returning again! Peter Thornton, Austin Ritter, Katherine Foo, Sam Judelson, and Shea Reister have returned to try residency for a second time. Ian Maher arrives in October after a 14-year hiatus. We welcome Neil Connors, Linh Nguyen, Erin Kennedy, Susie Yeo, Jordan Colman, Eric Hertz, and Jina Kim. The summer saw extended visits from Heather Gray, Michael Moseman, Jonathan Griffiths, and Thomas Ponniah. Thomas was recently married in Toronto. We wish Thomas and his new wife, Afsoon, great happiness in their marriage. Andrew Wood left to live in Vermont with his partner, Liz, after a 12-year residency. During his time here he was always ready to lend a helping hand to anyone who needed it, and he made Buddhism fun for hundreds of children. He also encouraged us all to appreciate nature in all its glory through enthusiastically

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SANGHANOTES

Continued from page 5

organizing and leading hikes, camping, canoeing, and garden work, and he helped us be more attentive to energy conservation. Myungjin Chung returned to her New York sangha, and we miss her help with our health and wish her very well there.

The 2017 year witnessed Jody Blackwell and Martin Klasek becoming senior dharma teachers in April, and Sergey Kostenko took five precepts in August. Thank you for helping to strengthen and care for our sangha!

Our Community Cooks volunteer service continues to provide a delicious meal for a woman's day center once a month under the direction of Jennie Ullrich. We appreciate the beautiful floral arrangements that Janice Stenger has given us, as well as the very creative birthday cards for each resident.

In August a group of 49 students from Tufts University attended a day of service and receive an introduction to Zen, led by Barry PSN, Woody Wood, and Paul Laurey. A high-school summer group from Harvard was introduced to Zen by Francisco Irby. Our regular Brookline adult ed class was taught by Tad Bailey and Billy Bialecki.

Woody hosted a potluck outdoor Labor Day dinner for us to enjoy the end of the summer together. Much effort went into creating a pleasant space to relax and enjoy the 206 Auburn side garden.

A new program attracting newcomers called Millennial Zen meets for an hour each week on Sunday. It began



Boston University dharma talk with Zen Master Bon Yeon in Marsh Chapel.



Andy and Liz's moving day.



Community Cooks Jennifer Ullrich and Kimball Amram delivering a meal.

as an offshoot of the college retreat program as a way for young beginners to continue to develop a Zen practice. More individual attention and support can be given than in our open-to-the-public morning and night daily sessions can provide. Zen Master Bon Yeon, Tyler Morrill, and Billy Bialecki debuted it, and Andrew Wood has joined the team. The format includes check-in, conversation, teaching, and Zen practice for the 8 to 15 people who attend. Within a three-week period, 100 people joined our Millennial Meet-Up group online!

Of all the changes at CZC, perhaps the most impactful is that both our co-guiding teacher, Barry Briggs, and our abbot, Tom Johnson, will be leaving us in December. We are grateful for the countless actions performed for our benefit and the benefit of the successful continuation of CZC for posterity. During Barry's two years with us we were fortunate to have many kong-an interviews, inspiring dharma talks, well-attended informative workshops on the Heart Sutra, Zen iconography, the oxherding pictures, happiness, ethics, practice forms, and Zen's Chinese ancestors, in addition to monthly newcomers' teas.

Barry gave us much encouragement to practice, especially by his example of being a steady presence at morning and evening practice daily. We wish him well in his future endeavors and in his new home in Arizona.

During Tom's seven years as abbot, CZC has thrived and is more attractive and sturdier than ever. Some highlights were the new gas-burning heating system, innumerable new

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SANGHANOTES

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wood floors and windows, and four new bathrooms, including our new handi-capped-accessible bathroom. In a building 150 years old many aspects needed attention, and they received it. Tom also began recording and editing video of our dharma talks, and now our YouTube channel hosts 250 excerpts.

We will celebrate both Tom and Barry in a Thanksgiving dinner on November 16.

When Buddha was soon to entering parinirvana (that is, close to dying), it is said that his students lamented and asked, “Who will be our teacher?” Buddha responded, “The schedule is your teacher.” While CZC has many special events, the glue that holds us together is the steady daily practice morning and night, weekly dharma talks, biweekly interviews, monthly retreats, and together-action group breakfasts and dinners. Residents and

extended sangha volunteer to host the many programs we offer. Dharma teachers and dharma-teachers-in-training lead the weekly intro classes. The staff does a phenomenal job overseeing the smooth functioning of our many programs, including the guest program. The generosity of the sangha in practicing together and in working together is a great gift.



Harvard Summer Institute High School group visit. In July.



Walking meditation in the garden.



Kitchen group.



YMJJ led by Steve Cohen PSN in August.



Kitchen group with Barry Briggs PSN and Mark Uehling.



Dinner on the stove.

FALL 2017 SCHEDULE

- | | | | |
|-------------------|--|----------------|--|
| Oct. 5 | Dharma talk by Myong An Sunim, JDPS | Nov. 16 | Thanksgiving Celebration with dharma talks by Barry Briggs, JDPSN and Tom Johnson, SDT |
| Oct. 12 | Dharma talk by Martin Klesak, SDT | Nov. 23 | No Talk – Thanksgiving Holiday |
| Oct. 19 | Dharma talk by Myong Hae Sunim, JDPSN | Nov. 30 | Dharma talk by Zen Master Bon Yeon |
| Oct. 21–22 | Two-day YMJJ led by Myong Hae Sunim, JDPS | Dec. 7 | Dharma talk by Barry Briggs, JDPSN |
| Oct. 26 | Dharma talk by Zen Master Bon Shim | Dec. 9 | One-day retreat led by Barry Briggs, JDPSN |
| Nov. 2 | Dharma talk by Sung Lim Shin, SDT | Dec. 14 | Dharma talk by Zen Master Bon Yeon |
| Nov. 4 | College retreat led by Zen Master Bon Yeon | Dec. 21 | Dharma talk by Francisco Irby, SDT |
| Nov. 9 | Dharma talk by Zen Master Bon Shim | Dec. 28 | Dharma talk by Barbara Feldman, SDT |
| Nov. 11–12 | Two-day YMJJ led by Zen Master Bon Shim | | |



WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Introduction to Formal Practice
Thursday Evenings 7:00pm

Long Sitting & Kong-an Practice
Tuesday Evenings 6:30–9:30pm
Sunday Mornings 9:00–11:30pm

Midday Sitting
Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30–1:00pm

Public Dharma Talk with Q & A
Thursday Evenings 7:30–8:30pm



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DAILY SCHEDULE

Mornings:
(Except Tuesdays)
108 Bows 5:45am
Chanting 6:10am
Sitting 6:30am

Evenings:
(Except Thursdays)
Special Chanting 6:30pm
Chanting 7:00pm
Sitting 7:25pm



Labor Day dinner party.