



# Go ginger

J.M. Hirsch explores the lesser known but widely available ginger in his Off the Beaten Aisle column



**PEOPLE HAVE BEEN** eating it for thousands of years, yet still no one can tell me why it should be peeled. So I don't, and neither should you.

"It" being fresh ginger, the gnarly brown root that lives amongst the grocer's Asian produce. And the flavour is so much better than dried, you must get to know it.

Most of us think of ginger as the powder in the spice cabinet and use it mostly for baking. In Asia, where ginger originated, it's more a savoury ingredient. That's because fresh ginger packs tons of warm, pungent, peppery flavor that works so well with meats and vegetables.

Though they can be used interchangeably, the flavour of fresh ginger is more pronounced than dried, sporting heavy citrus, even acidic notes. In Asia, fresh ginger is an essential part of numerous classic dishes, including stir-fries, soups, sauces and marinades, as well as Indian curries.

When cooking with fresh ginger, keep in mind a couple of things.

First, cooking mellows the flavour. So if you want to really taste it, add some ginger at the



**Fresh ginger adds flavour to this recipe for breaded ginger-orange baked chicken cutlets served on a plate**

beginning of cooking, and a bit more at the end.

Second, the strength of the ginger can vary widely by the piece. So if you're looking for a serious hit of ginger, taste it before you add it.

Now, about that peeling. Watch cooking shows and read recipes, and you'll be told again and again to peel your ginger

before chopping, slicing or grating it. I have no idea why. The skin is entirely edible and doesn't change the flavour. So save yourself the time and effort, and just use your ginger as is.

And the best tool for the job is a wand-style grater, such as a Microplane. These graters quickly reduce ginger root to

fine shavings or pulp ideal for cooking.

When shopping for fresh ginger, look for firm, tan roots with no signs of mold or shriveling. It can be stored in the refrigerator for several weeks. But I prefer to freeze my fresh ginger. Frozen ginger lasts for months and is easier to grate than fresh. AP

## ALIGN YOUR LIFE

### Reinventing The Wheel

**SO MUCH HAS** been written about chakras, but very few know the importance and benefits of balancing them. So what exactly is chakra? Chakras are believed to be centres of the body from which a person can collect energy. The meaning of the word 'chakra' is 'wheel of light' or 'spinning wheel of energy' in Sanskrit. They are connected to major organs or glands that govern other body parts. They have been part of many wellbeing practices for centuries. All of your senses, perceptions, possible states of awareness, everything that you experience, can be divided into seven categories. Each category can be associated with a particular chakra. Thus, the chakras represent not only particular parts of your physical body, but also parts of your consciousness. Within our physical body, resides an energy body which houses the seven chakras. These seven centres of energy are vertically aligned in the centre of the body close to the spine. Chakras function like valves that regulate the flow of energy through our energy system. A proper balance in the Chakras is essential for our good health. If there is any blockage or imbalance in the chakras it can result in ill health. Each chakra has a specific location, radiates a particular colour, is connected to a specific body part, and governs one area of life.

The first one is known as Root Chakra. It is situated at the base of the spine and is red in colour. The second one is the Sacral Chakra. It's situated in the lower abdomen, below the belly button and is orange in colour. The Third one is the Naval Chakra and is yellow in colour. The fourth power centre is the Heart Chakra and is located at the centre of the chest. It is green in colour. The fifth chakra is Throat Chakra and is situated in the centre of the neck. It is blue in colour. The sixth one is the Third Eye Chakra - located at the center of the forehead between your eyebrows and is Indigo in colour. The seventh one is the Crown Chakra, which is situated just above the head, and is violet.

So how do we go about balancing these chakras and experience peace and good health? There are many ways to balance them, from visualisations and meditations to simply wearing colours that correspond to a specific chakra. Any and all of these may be valid and effective ways to balance them, but practicing yoga is also extremely effective in balancing the chakras.

Today, most people are forced to handle a lot of stress. Therefore it is important to do everything one can, to maintain a sense of harmony and inner calm. Healthy chakras keep the body young and vital. It helps to maintain a state of balance at all times, and when you feel out of sorts, re-energise yourself or seek help. A healthy diet, regular exercise and quiet alone time are all essential ingredients for a happy life. If you are able to practice the above you will be a great asset, not only to yourself, but also to your loved ones. Be happy, and radiate positivity by keeping your chakras balanced.

**Shivani Adalja is an Abu Dhabi-based well-being expert. She runs the Alignment Institute which offers effective solutions that focus on stress management and overall wellbeing**



## STRESS CAN SHRINK BRAIN

**DON'T TAKE STRESS** or depression lightly, they can actually shrink the brain and contribute to both emotional and mental degradation, according to a US study.

Now researchers have discovered one reason why this occurs - a single genetic switch that triggers loss of brain connections in humans and depression in animal models.

The findings show that the genetic switch known as a transcription factor represses the expression of several genes that are necessary for the formation of synaptic connections between brain cells, which in turn could contribute to loss of brain mass, the journal *Nature Medicine* reports.

"We wanted to test the idea that stress causes a loss of brain synapses (junctions of nerve cells) in humans," said senior study author Ronald Duman, professor of psychiatry, neurobiology and pharmacology at Yale University. "We show that circuits normally involved in emotion, as well as cognition, are disrupted when this single transcription factor is activated," he added. *IANS*



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