**Ayurveda and Ayurvedic Cooking for Health and Wellbeing: Introduction**

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian science of health, vitality and longevity, has been practiced mostly in the Eastern part of the world for more than five thousand years. ‘Ayur’ means life and ‘veda’ means science or knowledge. This healing system for the body, mind and spirit connection is now being introduced to the West with its concepts and principles, which are universal and encompass all aspects of life.

The ancient science and art of Ayurveda is based on the study of the three Doshas: Vata, composed of ether and air; Pitta, composed of fire and water; and Kapha, composed of earth and water. These Doshas form our body’s constitution.

The human body and the entire planet, including organic and inorganic substances, are made out of five elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth. If an individual is healthy and full of vitality and vigor, these elements are in harmony within the body. Any imbalance of these elements in our body is experienced as pain and discomfort that can lead to a physical ailment.

Ayurveda with its tri-doshic theory of vata-pitta-kapha addresses the importance of proper diet with its seasonal and daily detoxifying practices. It provides insights on what kind of food will balance and nourish each individual according to his or her constitution, how to prepare meals properly and how to avoid combinations that create toxins in the body.

Food, such as grains, fruits, vegetables, seeds, beans, herbs and roots are vital carriers and balancers for the energy, called prana, the life force that manifests in the form of the five elements. Ayurveda as part of the science of Yoga teaches to eat primarily Sattvic food, which is defined as vegetarian, fresh, organic and cooked in the appropriate manner with spices and the right amount.

The art of using spices refers not only to the enhancement of the taste and flavor of the meal but also to the achievement of better digestion, absorption and assimilations of vital nutrients. According to Ayurveda, food is medicine when its ancient wisdom is applied into the preparation of meals, including cooking, which is regarded as sacred and healing.

Ayurvedic cooking is known for its wealth of spices, oils and cooking methods, such as cooking with the seasons. It offers a wide variety of food that is flavorful, tasteful, colorful and easily digestible. Ayurvedic cooking shows how to prepare vegetarian food that is nourishing and invigorating, providing the best nutritional

value. It teaches that food and diet can make a vital contribution to continuous good health.

**BIO**

Yana Kalai - Stellia has been studying Yoga philosophy with Ayurvedic cooking for 25 years.

Yana is a certified life coach and yoga instructor. She has a bachelor degree in psychology and received certifications in Ayurveda from the Wise Earth School of Ayurveda and The Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Yana’s training in ancient art and science of Yoga and Ayurveda provides a framework to assist people on their journeys to achieve optimum health and wellbeing and to expand their mind and uplift their hearts.