

Porridge

A Healthy Breakfast, and cheap too!

by Sambodhi Prem

www.SambodhiPrem.com

por·ridge /'porij/

noun - a dish consisting of oatmeal boiled in water.

Origin mid-16th century, denoting soup thickened with barley:
alteration of 'pottage'.

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Introduction

This e-book is about smooth oat porridge – soaked long and cooked slow.

As a kid I never liked porridge, I thought it tasted funny with little lumps amongst a saucy kind of brew. But then I learned how to prepare it slowly so it becomes extremely smooth – I became a convert and have since been eating porridge every day, winter and summer.

When oats are long soaked and cooked slowly (and for a long time), they become very digestible – pre-digested really, and readily available to give great energy to your body.

That's important for us humans, and strangely, it has something to do with the amount of stomachs we have... Unlike ruminants like cattle, goats and sheep, who have four stomachs, we only have one stomach.

Cattle, goats and sheep use their stomachs as fermentation tanks, so to speak. They break down their food through fermentation. And chickens use a crop to grind and ferment their grain that way.

We humans lack this ability, so in order to get the optimum value from our grains, we need to pre-digest them through fermentation by soaking and cooking them for a long time.

The other reason why I started preparing my porridge cooked slow and soaked long has to do with the oat (*Avena Sativa*) itself.

What is an oat before it is de-husked and rolled? It's a seed – a way for the plant to propagate itself. When the seed is ripening on the mother plant it dries and readies itself for its journey into life. It will need to endure the challenges of winter in order to sprout again in spring (although it can remain dormant for years). This wonderous preservation takes place with the help of so called 'enzyme inhibitors', substances that are contained within the grain.

One day the oat grain will fall in the soil. If the soil is dry it will not sprout – its life-giving energy will only awaken when it is given water. When the oat falls in wet soil, a change happens. The enzyme inhibitors that supported it to remain indefinitely as a dormant seed, reverse, and when they reverse the oat's nucleus comes alive, and with the warmth of the sun it starts its journey into life.

When the grain becomes wet the enzyme inhibitors give way to a great burst of 'enzyme activity' which brings alive the new sprout.

Understanding this process makes all the difference to great porridge. Two hours after eating a bowl of quickly prepared porridge you're hungry again.

What's going on?

Well, the body is having to take on the burden of processing all these enzyme inhibitors, which are also termed 'anti-nutrients'.

Instead of getting energy directly from the food, the body starts asking for more food to get some energy to process the 'anti-nutrients'. You want to be giving the body an energy producing food, not an energy consuming one.

When the grain is soaked for a long time the anti-nutrients get released into the soak water which you largely pour off before cooking. This is an essential part of good porridge, to allow this enzyme changing of the guard so to speak, as anti-nutrients, which are acidic and gas producing, are not something you want to burden your body with. We don't want to use our one stomach as a fermentation tank, and this process has got to happen somewhere, so as I see it, it's better it happens beforehand on the kitchen bench, or in the fridge.

So, I long-soak my oats to emulate this natural phenomena, to ready the oats to start growing again, this releases the dormant energy and makes the oats much more digestible, and at the same time delicious and sweet smelling.

This concept of soaking can be applied to any seed, be that grains or beans.

I would like to acknowledge Sally Fallon of the Weston A. Price Foundation for inspiring me to look at the traditions of cooking. Her books 'Nourishing Traditions' and 'Eat Fat, Lose Fat' are excellent and so is her work to promote raw milk.

And I also acknowledge Clive Lawler for his book 'Whole don't mean Wholesome - A Love of Fermentation and all Things Sloooow'.

But first, before I share my way of making a super-smooth porridge, a little bit about why it has been Northern Europe's favorite breakfast for hundreds of years.

A Little History

Long before the Scots, Neolithic farmers cultivated oats and prepared porridge. Porridges were an easy way to cook the grains. The grain only had to be cracked, not completely ground into flour. Evidence of these porridges suggests it was a very dense food.

The traditional way of serving porridge in Scotland is to have it in one bowl with cold milk in another. Each spoonful of porridge is dipped into the milk before it is eaten – but on no account should sugar be added. I find that interesting that the old people naturally understood this.

In days gone by, people had salt in their porridge and they would get a little extra pinch on their birthday...

In this e-book I'd like to show you how to cook a porridge where most of the oats are dissolved and the goodness of this wonderful grain is made available to the body in an easily digestible way.

Pre-soaking the oats and cooking them slow is the secret. Here are some of the benefits of porridge.

Porridge is good because

- It's low on the glycaemic index (slow energy releasing)
- It's full of complex carbohydrates (so helps to balance blood sugar levels)
- It's rich in soluble fibre
- It can reduce high blood pressure
- It's low in calories and fat
- It's rich in fibre and protein
- 47 million gallons of porridge are eaten in the UK every winter and oat sales grew by 81 per cent between 2000 and 2005 - it must be good if so many people are re-discovering their 'breakfast roots'...
- Oats have an excellent protein composition and a high nutritional value compared with other cereals.
- Oats contain high amounts of vitamin E and unsaturated fatty acids, coupled with other vitamins and nutrients.

It's cheap

5 cups of oats is about 2 lbs (32 ounce, 900 grams), it can provide breakfast for 2 people for 8 days. That is 2 ounces (56 grams) of oats per day per person.

Rolled oats in the US sells for about \$3.99 per 2 lbs, that comes out to about \$0.25 per day/pp.*

**Buy your oats in bulk and this price drops further. Groats (unrolled oats) are even cheaper and keep better than rolled oats, because they stay fresher. Rolled oats have been pre-heated in processing, which means they spoil much quicker. You can grind the groats in a blender before soaking and cooking them, but they can have quite a few hard husks. It depends on the skill of the person who has de-husked them and which variety of oats they used.*

How to cook it – soaking long and cooking slow

Start with five cups of rolled oats (1.9 lb = 850 gram). Jumbo oats if possible, the least processed the better. This would be enough for a week's supply for two people. Put them in a very large bowl and fill the bowl with water. The oats soak up a lot of water, so the bowl needs to be big enough for it to have about 2/3 of water and 1/3 of oats. The bowl I use has a diameter of 11 inches.

Add a couple of teaspoons of cider vinegar and leave for 24 – 36 hours. The cider vinegar changes the pH of the water and prevents the oats from going off. They need to be kept cool, so depending where you live, or the season, keep them in the fridge, or in a cool room.

After two days: Pour off any surface water and foam from the top of the bowl.

Fill a large pot, I'm using one with a diameter of 10" (25 cm) and a height of 7" (18 cm), with about 1/3 of water and bring it to a boil. Add a flat teaspoon of sea salt.

By the way, if you don't have a large pot: the water - oats ratio is roughly 1 liter of water to one cup of dry oats.

Put a full kettle of water on as well and bring that to a boil too (used later).

When the water boils, carefully scoop the oats into the boiling water, using an egg slice stops it splattering so much. Make sure to stir the oats continually. Keep the heat on high so they are brought to boil quickly. Stirring with the egg slice, or a flat wooden spoon prevents them from sticking to the bottom. When left unattended they will easily burn.

Keep stirring until they get a little thicker and start to boil. This might take a while, about 10 minutes.

When the porridge has come to a boil it expands somewhat due to the bubbles of steam that are rising from the bottom. At this point I add the kettle of boiling water, this should fill the whole pot to about 2 inches from the top. Carefully bring the whole pot to a boil again, then turn the heat down to as low as it goes on the smallest element of your stove. Leave for about an hour. Check occasionally that it's not sticking on the bottom.

Experiment – the low-heat settings on some stoves can be regulated better than others. You want the porridge to cook very gently without too much getting stuck on the bottom. You get a feel for what is the best settings on your stove to cook the porridge very gently.

Occasionally stir and scrape the bottom, to make sure it does not get burned there, if it does, reduce heat or use a metal plate to spread the flame.

After an hour of gently boiling, wrap the pot in a big towel and put it in a hot box, or wrap it in a duvet and put it in your spare bed! Or in an arm chair with cushions around it. Any place where it is well insulated. Leave it there for about 8 hours.

I usually cook the porridge at night. I have a ‘hot box’, a wooden box insulated with straw, with a lid, especially made for long and slowly cooking of porridge, beans, potatoes etc, an ultra-modern device...

Breakfast Time

After 8 hours open up your still hot pot of beautifully cooked porridge. Empty the cooked porridge in a large bowl or two, cover it, let it cool a little and keep it in the fridge.

Take the amount of porridge that you require each day and heat it on the stove.

Voilà, cheap and easy breakfast that can be made each morning quickly, and keeps very well in the fridge.

Use a whisk when you reheat the porridge to make it extra smooth and fluffy. I sometimes add a little water – slightly runny is always better than thick and heavy with porridge.

Serve with you favorite topping – I like a little organic butter, some raw organic cream and some plant-based enzymes like [N-zymes that work from Avena](#).

About

Sambodhi Prem is a simple guy: he loves playing guitar, meditating & listening to the enlightened mystic Osho, recording music in his Mac based studio, working in the garden and eating slowly cooked porridge in the morning.

He lives with Sandipa who paints beautiful paintings.

Check out our music & art at: www.SambodhiPrem.com, on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).



photo by Sandipa, Waiheke Island, New Zealand

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Porridge links

- [Porridge wikipedia](#)
- '[Porridge](#)' the TV series...
- Keep up-to-date with [porridge](#) & [raw milk](#) on Twitter.
- The [Golden Spurtle World Championship Porridge Making](#) in Scotland (no joke). They're also on [Twitter](#).
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