

## Lessons from Bitter Melon

Bitter melon's wrinkle face and bitter taste turn away most people in America. However, many Asian Americans know how to cook it into a delicious dish. A common recipe is stir-fry with chicken or pork, adding garlic and salted black beans. I prefer to cook it with eggs and dry scallop. Some like to rinse it in hot water to reduce the bitter taste. I never do that. I like it bitter.

People in Okinawa have the longest life expectancy in the world and they accredit their longevity to eating bitter melon. They also make bitter melon tea and bitter melon soft drinks. Bitter melon is good for our digestion system and can reduce blood pressure. It can also prevent cancer and counteract diabetes.

We cannot expect our life always as sweet as honeydew. When we are given a bitter melon, we have to turn it into a delicious cuisine. The Chinese words for hard work or suffering are (吃苦) "eating the bitterness." It is truly a profound wisdom.

The life of Jeremiah is a good example. He was called to be a prophet when he was just a little boy. How sweet! However, his message against the King of Judah and his insistence to appease with Babylon made him a nuisance and traitor to the nation. He was beaten, arrested, and threatened with death. Even his kinfolk plotted against his life. Jeremiah had a lot of bitter melon in his life, yet the Lord was always with him.

Let us learn from the bitter melon:

1. Be patient! Even the ugly bitter melon would be appreciated in due time not to mention we are God's children.
2. "Eating the bitterness" is good for our character and our soul.
3. When life throws us a bitter melon, cook it into a great dish.

Let us pray:

**Lord, you have chosen us to be your witnesses before we were born. Guide us and guard us when life is hard for us. See us through these difficult times and give us hope and peace. Amen**

## 向苦瓜學習

苦瓜又稱涼瓜，一般老美都敬而遠之，只有善於烹飪的亞裔人士才懂得用苦瓜炒豬肉或雞片，加上蒜頭豆豉，令人大快朵頤。若用苦瓜與浸軟的瑤柱炒蛋，更可帶出那清香的味道。有人喜歡先將苦瓜出水再炒，以減少苦瓜的苦味。我不喜歡這樣做，我就是喜歡那苦澀的味道。

沖繩島的居民是世界最長壽的，據說都是因為那兒的人常吃苦瓜的緣故。他們還喜歡喝苦瓜汁及苦瓜茶哩！苦瓜真有幫助消化，減低血壓的功效，更可以預防癌症及治療糖尿病。好處真多。以下一首詩正寫出苦瓜的特性：

**垂顏皺面綠身長，味苦無顏對曉霜，惟盼巧婦來一捻，去病延年齒留香。**

人生有甜亦有苦，我們若面臨苦難，無需怨天尤人，要勇敢地面對，將苦難當苦瓜，把它吃下去便罷了。吃得苦中苦，方為人上人啊！

耶利米先知未出娘胎便被神選召為先知，那是何等甘甜啊，但當他為神宣告，指出猶大國王背叛神的旨意時，他便被視為犯上不忠的叛國賊。從此他一生潦倒，曾被人毆打，又被囚下獄，連他的族人都要害他。唯有信實的主，仍不斷地保守他、搭救他。

我們從苦瓜學到什麼功課呢？

1. 凡事耐心等待，時候到了，醜陋的苦瓜也會被賞識，何況我們是神的兒女呢！
2. 吃得苦中苦，方為人上人，我們要堅持我們的信念及希望。
3. 若我們飽受痛苦的煎熬，咬緊牙根吧。正如我們能把苦瓜烹成美食一樣，我們也能改變我們的處境，將危機變成轉機。

請禱告：

主啊，在我們未出娘胎前，祢已揀選了我們作祢的見證人，求主鼓勵我們，使我們勇敢地克服一切的艱難。求主保守我們，讓我們在走人生死蔭的幽谷之時，因你的同在，心中有仍平安。阿們。