



THE MODERN
Pui Yuet

Your Personal
Postpartum Healing Guidebook

"When women are well, the world is well"

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The tradition of Chinese confinement postpartum practices are traced back to the first Qin Dynasty period, where it had been marked in an ancient collection of records that date back to over 2000 years, detailing the rules and foundations regarding a mother's seclusion after delivering.

Postpartum Confinement is often referred to as zuò yuè zi or sitting the month. The confinement practices were passed down verbally from one generation to the next. Some may say this is a whole lot of old wives tales but love, comforting and nurturing advice never hurt anyone. Traditionally, a **Pui Yuet** (*confinement nanny*) is an older/wiser lady who has experience in caring for a new mother using traditional Chinese confinement methods, including diet, wellbeing and other postnatal practices. They often live-in with you during the confinement period and cook special nutritional soups and brews to nurse mamas back to full fitness, they generally come from local backgrounds and may only speak Chinese.

Many of us are intrigued by the idea of having a **Pui Yuet** to guide us through our postpartum journey, however high costs, space, communication, language and other factors may make us hesitant in doing so. **The Modern Pui Yuet** was *born* to break those barriers and provide a hassle-free, inexpensive DIY experience that works for all **modernized mamas** to provide the nourishment without intimidation they need in the comfort of their own homes.

Confinement practices are common throughout Asia, although the cultures and beliefs (varying rules & guidelines – some far stricter than others) observed, definitely differ between regions. For example, confinement periods can last anywhere between 30 to 100 days depending on the cultural practice. Postpartum Confinement is not only practiced by the Chinese, in Korea it is known as '**samchilil**', in Japan as '**sango no hidachi**' and India as '**jaappa**'. In general, the common beliefs during this period are to *keep warm, eat well, rest a lot and stay hydrated* to benefit a new mother's physical, emotional, mental state and overall wellbeing. It's also **important** to avoid cold and raw foods as a lot of wind is considered to have entered the body during childbirth, it's best to avoid gas-producing foods like beans and cruciferous vegetables. *Think warm, easy-to-digest and nourishing!*



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Traditional Chinese confinement food takes its roots from *Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)* practices. We lose a lot of blood and **Qi** when giving birth and therefore, proper nourishment from food and diet is crucial for restoring vitality & energy during the recovery period after delivery.

During the confinement period, we are recommended to consume food that is *warming* to our bodies as it helps restore **Qi** whilst avoiding *cold* food.

Some of the most **common ingredients** found in confinement cooking are *black sesame oil, wine, ginger, vinegar and red bean* as they serve the purpose of *warming* our bodies.

To boost lactation and produce quality breastmilk, chicken, fish and pork are also **must-have** items on your confinement food list.

Ayurveda beliefs and practices are quite similar, it recommends that mothers eat well-balanced meals while also minimising particular foods that increase the **Vata** dosha as they can be harsh on their digestive systems. A typical *Ayurvedic* postpartum meal is served warm and fresh. It includes grounding and lubricating ingredients that are appropriately seasoned with digestive spices that help reduce **Vata**. These ingredients are often adjusted in the weeks following the birth when the mother's digestion becomes stronger. Some popular ingredients for postpartum in *Ayurveda* are **ghee** (or clarified butter), *cooked root vegetables such as carrot and beets* alongside warming digestive spices like *ginger, cumin and fenugreek*.

In the **West**, confinement practices are less common, however **postnatal nutrition** is highly regarded and also very important. *Western medicine* defines the postpartum period as the *first 6 weeks (or 42 days) after a baby is born*. A healthy balanced diet based on nutritional science is essential in providing the necessary macro and micronutrients to help us recover from pregnancy, childbirth and of course for breastmilk production. *Whole grains, lean protein, healthy fats, fibre, iron and calcium* all make up a wonderful diet foundation for us as new mothers.

Below are a collection of The Modern Pui Yuet's top 3 favourite confinement recipes that include both TCM and Ayurveda practices and tips. Hope you enjoy cooking & eating them as much as we do!

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Fragrant Turmeric Spiced Pork

Serves 4

500gm pork tenderloin
1 heaped tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp vegetable oil
2 red onions sliced
Small knob of ginger, julienned
2 stalks lemongrass, sliced and pounded
2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp sugar
Light soy sauce to taste
3-4 tbsp vegetable oil for cooking

Method

Cut the pork tenderloin into thin slices and *marinate* with **turmeric** powder and salt. Mix in 1 tbsp of vegetable oil and mix. Set aside for 15 minutes.

Heat up the wok and put in vegetable oil. When the wok and oil is **very hot**, add the pork slices. Using a spatula, stir and allow to cook for a minute before tossing it. Continue to stir fry pork until the meat turns opaque.

Push the pork slices to the side of the wok and allow the juices and oil to gather in the centre, allow the oil to heat up for 10 seconds and then push the pork back into the oil, it will make a sizzling noise, continue to stir-fry. *Repeat this step three more times.*

Once again, push the pork to the side of the wok and place the ginger, lemon grass and onion onto the centre of the wok.

Cook until onions are translucent, add the Worcestershire sauce and give the onions a *good toss*.

Stir the pork back onto the top of the onions, stir-fry for a few more seconds and *sprinkle* sugar over.
Continue to toss.

Taste. If you prefer a saltier taste, add light soy sauce *until desired* saltiness is reached.

Continue to stir-fry until the pork slices are *dry and fragrant*.

Enjoy with a steaming hot bowl of rice.

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Here are 10 reasons why **turmeric** is a great herb to use postpartum, this bright kitchen spice has super powerful health benefits!

- 1. It fights inflammation.** *Highly regarded for its strong anti-inflammatory properties and high fatty acid content, turmeric can help prevent swollen breast tissue and clogged ducts, which can lead to a painful condition called Mastitis.*
- 2. It promotes digestion.** *Now that your beautiful baby is born, your body is readjusting and systems are once again finding their place. This often slows down digestion, but with a relatively high fibre content, turmeric can minimize gas and bloating.*
- 3. It boosts immunity.** *When you are fatigued from all those sleepless nights looking after your little one and anxiety levels are at their peak, our bodies go into fight or flight mode, allowing our immune systems to fend for themselves. Turmeric has super anti-viral and anti-bacterial properties that are rich in immune boosting magnesium that can help you fight off infections.*
- 4. It's a natural detoxifier.** *A wonder-spice for your liver, turmeric boosts enzyme production in the liver that helps our bodies get rid of toxins.*
- 5. It helps fight postpartum depression.** *There are many factors that can increase your risk for postpartum depression ranging from lack of sleep to anxiety to overall discomfort. Turmeric may be able to help as it boosts brain function, dopamine and hormone levels that act as a natural antidepressant.*
- 6. It can promote lactation.** *Whilst research is still ongoing for this, turmeric has historically been used in numerous cultures as a way to stimulate lactation, most likely due to its healing properties.*
- 7. It can diminish the appearance of stretch marks.** *This wonder spice has antioxidants that penetrate and improve the function of the skin membrane cells, which will help prevent and treat stretch marks. You can mix turmeric and an oil of your choice (coconut or olive are recommended) into a paste and apply on the areas where you have stretch marks. Leave it on for 15-20 minutes and wash off. Remember that turmeric stains easily and is not easy to remove from clothing or furniture so be extra careful about not getting it everywhere!*
- 8. It helps clear complexion.** *Pregnancy and postpartum can come with a whole lot of skin issues due to the hormonal changes in our bodies, anything from pigmentation to acne! Since turmeric is known for lightening up our complexion, try adding it to your skincare routine to help clear your skin.*
- 9. It's comforting.** *Much like our mama's chicken soup – like a big hug the soul, it can magically cure the common cold and other viruses, turmeric's warming effects and color can do wonders for the postpartum body and mind. Enjoy in warming soups, savoury recipes, teas or milk.*
- 10. It helps prevent “mom brain.”** *High in omega-6 fatty acids, turmeric helps to improve blood circulation, memory and brain function, so you are able to keep on top of things, your new mom to-do lists and all the feeding, napping and diaper change schedules!*

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Papaya Fish Soup

Serves 4

6 cups water

200 gm white fish of your choice (we suggest grouper, cod, sole or seabass)

5 slices fresh ginger

6 red dates

1 small green papaya peeled

Handful of goji berries

Salt to taste

Sesame oil

Method

Carefully cut the white fish into larger chunks. This is to **prevent breakage** when cooking.

Peel the **papaya**, de-seed and cut into medium chunks.

Bring the water to a boil on the stovetop. Add all the ingredients and bring the water back to boil and lower the heat to allow it to *simmer gently for 30 minutes*. **Do not** stir the soup too much to avoid breaking the fish into small pieces.

Remove from heat, add washed *goji berries* and allow them to sit for 5 minutes.

Season with salt to taste and add a *few drops of sesame oil*.

Serve immediately and enjoy when **piping hot**.

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Top benefits of fish soup for confinement

In **Chinese confinement**, fish is one of the *most recommended* sources of protein, even more so than chicken and pork! It is **low in calories**, yet offer the same (*if not more!*) **health benefits** as several other proteins. As you've just exerted so much energy during childbirth, fish can assist in muscle-building by repairing, conditioning and strengthening them, as well as assisting you with weight loss. *Goodbye baby weight!*

Consuming soup increases your fluid intake which is extremely important during this period, *especially if breastfeeding!* Breastfeeding *can make us more prone to dehydration* and thirst so make sure to **stay hydrated**.

Below are some noteworthy benefits of this delicious soup recipe!

1. Reduces inflammation. *Papaya has been highly regarded for its ability to fight inflammation as it contains powerful antioxidant effects. Antioxidants prevent our bodies and cells from radical damage. As a new mother, you are more susceptible to inflammation around sensitive areas around the breast. When in doubt, make this delicious soup and you'll reap the benefits and relieve discomfort!*

2. Increases milk supply. *Probably the best thing about this concoction! It's known to be an amazing milk-booster! It's widely applauded and known as not only being delicious but also a power food for breastfeeding. The main ingredient, papaya, has excellent nutrients that improves lactation and eases nursing. Apart from promoting milk production, it helps to stimulate smooth muscles that work to express breast milk so you can produce more for your little one!*

3. Improves digestive health. *Green papaya is also a powerhouse fruit packed with essential nutrients and enzymes that promote digestive health. Having an optimal and healthy digestive system is especially crucial for a new mother like yourself as you want to protect your uterus and not put any strain on your womb. Constipation can lead to overexertion which you do not need during this healing period so therefore consuming food that can prevent this is highly necessary.*

4. Makes a sweet addition to your meal. *This soup provides a refreshing and delicious twist due to its sweetness. Aside from its numerous benefits, it is loved by many mamas for its flavours. Confinement meals do not have to be dull!*

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Jeeraka Kozhi Varattiyadhu (Medicinal chicken roast)

Serves 2

1 whole young chicken (you can also buy the cut up version)

2 tsp pepper

½ tsp cumin powder

¼ tsp turmeric

100g ginger

100g garlic

6 shallots

3 tbsp ghee

3 tbsp gingelly oil

Salt to taste

Method

Coarsely crush the garlic and ginger to *make a paste*.

Cut up the chicken into pieces and clean. Toss with **turmeric** and *poach the chicken* in a bit of water. Set aside.

Heat oil in a large, *deep cooking pan*. Add the chopped shallots and *sauté* until brown.

Toss in the *garlic ginger paste* and salt. Fry for 3 minutes.

Add in the cooked chicken with broth. Stir well with ghee, until crisp.

Serve immediately and enjoy!

This recipe is a modernized version. In the olden days, this dish was prepared by grinding the raw chicken (bones and everything) with turmeric in a large mortar. Once ground into a fine paste, it was added to the sautéed onions along with crushed ginger and garlic, and slow cooked in a traditional kadhai (large round pot from India similar to a wok) itself. This ensured that all the flavours, nutrients and goodness of the dish found its way into the mother's body. This postpartum delicacy originates from Kerala, India and is based on Ayurvedic practices.

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Why Ghee is the perfect postpartum food

Ghee, also known as *liquid gold* in the postpartum **Ayurvedic** world, is an important contributor to a strong and healthy recovery after birth. **Ayurveda** practices recommends **ghee** as the first thing a **new mother should consume** after giving birth! *Ingesting 2-3 tablespoons a day* for the first few weeks after giving birth is ideal to ensure a **strong postpartum rejuvenation**. *Sweet and digestive*, it is a *healing and nourishing medicinal food*. **Ayurveda** teaches that the first **42 days** following birth is a 'sacred window' of time, and how those weeks are spent impact the next **42 years** of life. *Our bodies take time to fully recover* after delivery and by *eating well-balanced meals* that include *healthy fats like ghee*, can assist in speeding up the *body's natural healing and recovery process*.

In **Ayurvedic** language, delivery and labour severely affect the **vata dosha**. The **agni** (*digestive strength*) lowers the body's capacity for digesting food, having frequent and healthy bowel movements and even increases the *nervous system's sensitivity*.

1. Nourishes & heals. *After giving birth, mother's need grounding, nourishing and juicy fats. Ghee nourishes depleted tissues and lubricates the body from the inside, out. Adding ample amounts of ghee to each meal aids in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins and minerals from other foods, therefore assisting in the healing of the tissues in the body and the uterus. Ghee is high in antioxidants, calcium and is also a rich source of Vitamin A & E which provides lactation support for breastfeeding mothers.*

2. Supports good mood. *Consuming fatty foods during the postpartum period promotes healthy mental balance. Postpartum depression is a real thing and can be a major concern amongst new mothers. According to Ayurveda practices and modern science, consuming fatty foods assist in stimulating the release of oxytocin in the brain, promoting a calm, relaxed and clear state of mind. Keeping our hormonal levels balanced by digesting healthy fats, helps us prevent that strung out feeling, giving us protection against the 'baby blues' within our bodies.*

3. Aids digestion. *Powerful digestion is one of the foundations of postpartum recovery. The mother is in a state of complete depletion after giving birth which takes a huge toll on her digestive fire (aka agni). Post-delivery, our liver and guts are highly inflamed, and that's exactly where consuming ghee can help! Ghee softens and protects the tissue of our large intestines and provide nourishment for the good bacteria in our stomachs. The butyric acid that ghee is made up of, plays a vital role in the absorption of nutrients and eases constipation.*

Consuming ghee and making it a part of your postpartum care will result in a happier, healthier you and give you smoother moves during the postpartum period.

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Hope you've enjoyed this complimentary guide that has been carefully put together and that it has helped you somehow in preparation for or during your postpartum healing journey.

We'd love to hear from you if you have any questions, special tips, favourite recipes or wisdom to share with us.

Please email us on hello@themodernpy.com anytime and join our community of powerful mothers and women.

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Love,
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xoxo

