



Berkeley Zen Center



August 2009 Newsletter

Sojun's 80th Birthday Party!

Everyone had a wonderful time at Sojun's 80th!
See page 4 for details and photos.

Late Summer Work Day

Our late summer Work Day is approaching, on Sunday, August 9. As you know, the state of the economy is leading us to take on more and more of the significant upkeep projects of the sangha ourselves, rather than hiring others (i.e. painters, contractors) to do this work. Those of us who are not old-timers marvel at the early spirit that accomplished such major projects as the rebuilding of the zendo and adding an understory to 1933 1/2. Can we recapture some of that spirit? We don't have projects that big, but they are major nonetheless:

1. Seismic reinforcement of the community room porch and the room above.
2. Repainting 1929 and 1933. We will do this over many work periods, but a work day is one of our most significant opportunities to make major headway.
3. Repainting the kitchen. We did a top-to-bottom cleaning of the kitchen last work day, but the problems go all the way down to the paint. This is a task that we can accomplish in one work day with enough people, and will make a major difference in the cleanliness and appearance of our kitchen.
4. Airing the zafus and zabutans for a dust-free zendo environment - and a number of other, smaller projects.

We encourage everybody in the sangha to consider coming out for Work Day (half days are possible if that allows you to join.) Let us invigorate our spirit of sangha with the spirit of an old-fashioned barn-raising! AND—lunch will be provided!



Affirmation of Welcome

Walking the path of liberation, we express our intimate connection with all beings. Welcoming diversity, here at Berkeley Zen Center the practice of

zazen is available to people of every race, nationality, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and physical ability. May all beings realize their true nature.

B Z C S c h e d u l e

August

Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 8/2, 8:00 a.m.-noon

Founder's Ceremony

Monday, 8/3, 6:20 p.m.

Tuesday, 8/4, 6:40 a.m.

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 8/8, 9:40 a.m.

Work Day Sitting

Sunday, 8/9

Kidzendo

Saturday, 8/15

Summer Recess

Sunday, 8/16-Sunday, 8/23

September

Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 9/3, 6:20 p.m.

Friday, 9/4, 6:40 a.m.

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 9/5, 9:40 a.m.

Two-day Study Sitting

Saturday-Sunday, 9/5-6

Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 9/13, 8:00 a.m.-noon

Kidzendo

Saturday, 9/19

Women's Sitting

Sunday, 9/27

Caring for Buddha's Robe

If you need assistance (or simply time and space) with rakusu/okesa/robe repairs, replacement, or finishing of already started rakusu, the following dates are on the calendar. Each session is from 1-5 pm. Please contact the sewing teacher, Jean Selkirk (510-655-0820), before you attend the first time. Any changes to the schedule will be made on the bulletin board. Material fees only apply for envelopes or new (second or replacement) rakusu, and the usual class fee applies for new rakusu, which must be started by the end of August. Starting a first rakusu for Lay Ordination will begin in January as usual. If you are considering this, please speak first with your teacher and then with the sewing teacher before the winter break begins.

Sewing Schedule:

Sat. August 1
Sun. August 16
Sat. August 29
Sun. September 13
Sat. September 26
Sun. October 4
Sun. October 18
Sat. October 24
Sat. November 7
Sun. November 22

Summer Recess

It's summertime!

This month we are trying out an old schedule adjustment: a week on summer recess. It will begin after Saturday program on August 15 and end with the resumption of formal zendo activities on Monday morning, August 24. As with winter break, we plan to offer informal zazen Monday through Friday at 5:40 a.m. and p.m., and on Saturday the 23rd at 6 a.m. We would like to have volunteers who can open the zendo at those times. A signup will be posted on the patio bulletin board. Please speak to the zendo manager Leslie Bartholic for questions. We will be starting to work on the 2010 calendar later this month, and are considering continuing August recess next year, for either one or two weeks. If you have thoughts about this, please speak with Alan or Andrea.



Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturday mornings for zazen from 9:30 to 10:15, then families are welcome to listen to the lecture on the sound system in the community room. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend; call or email Laurie Senauke, 845-2215, or lauries@kushiki.org.

Childcare for 8:45 Zazen Instruction and Beginner Orientation may be offered by special arrangement.

Kidzendo

A talk in the zendo for young ones three and up is offered on the third Saturday of each month (or the fourth Saturday if a sesshin is scheduled on the third). We meet in the community room at about 9:45, then sojourn to the zendo for the first ten minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene in the community room as usual. From time to time we offer additional activities at kidzendo.

Childcare Schedule

Aug 1	Childcare
Aug 8	Childcare
Aug 15	Kidzendo
Aug 22	Interim – no program
Aug 29	Childcare
Sept. 5	Sesshin—no program
Sept. 12	Childcare
Sept. 19	Kidzendo
Sept. 26	Childcare

Sojun would like to find a volunteer to transcribe lectures. Thank you for considering this. Please contact him if you are interested in this practice.

Breath

From a talk by Sojun Roshi
May 19, 2001

In Buddhist meditation, paying attention to breathing is one of the most important factors. Breathing is usually taken for granted because it is so constant. The blood runs through our veins. We don't see it but we are aware of it as heat, so we take it for granted also. Breath is something that is going on moment by moment. It connects inside and outside, so to speak. Each one of us has this experience of breath. Coming in, going out, inhaling, exhaling. This is the fundamental movement of our life. When we sit zazen we pay attention to posture, we pay attention to breath. Posture is first, because posture is the fundamental structure of this body. After we establish posture, we pay attention to breath. So zazen is harmonizing body, mind, and breath; all three elements. We pretty much know this. If you have been sitting zazen for a long time, you have this experience. But one big factor we tend to ignore is the role of breath, or how we pay attention to breathing in daily life. When we sit in zazen we let go of the business of our daily activity, all the complications, and it's pretty easy to just pay attention to the rising and falling of our breath. But in our daily life it's much more difficult. When paying attention to the breath and sitting up straight, the breath becomes more subtle, and we then experience a feeling of liberation, lightness, settledness, freedom, and selflessness.



This kind of attention to the breath can be applied through all of our activities. When you walk, be attentive to the breath with each step. When you are hiking it's pretty easy, you know; sometimes when you are hiking up a steep mountain its one breath one step. With each step, huh, huh, huh, pretty easy. But in our daily life of varied activities it's much more difficult: to be aware of breath in your work; to be aware of breath while sitting down at your computer; how you actually breathe with the activity; the rhythm of the breath and the activity; driving a car, turning on the ignition, the rhythm of shifting gears (some of us still have them), putting on the brake, stepping on the gas. To actually pay attention to breath and the movement in this way is how we carry our meditation practice into our daily life. It is an activity that is common to both zazen and daily life. Suzuki Roshi said in a talk, "We should be kind with ourself and very kind with our breathing. We should have a warm-hearted feeling toward our breath." We can relate to our breath as a constant companion, not simply taking it for granted. To have this awareness focuses our attention and helps us to be concentrated on what we are doing. It's the kind of energy that's not chattery, but calm and collected, and creates a joyful mood. When we can keep coming back to the breath, then our disposition actually becomes sweet and smooth and makes it easy to smile. It helps us to respond to circumstances rather than just reacting.

It is important to keep the breath down low in your hara. Breath in Japanese is called Qi, in Chinese, Chi, in Sanskrit, Prana. So Qi or Chi is the place of power or strength. When our breath is down here in what feels like our lower abdomen, our center, (its just at the bottom of our lungs) we feel it just below our navel. This is called the Sea of Qi, the key of C...*(laughter)*...Suzuki Roshi said it's also called rice paddies, which in the Asian way of thinking means "place of plenty," nourishment, and the source of our energy and well-being. You notice, when you hyperventilate, it can create a feeling of euphoria. And when we put on an oxygen mask and take a hit of oxygen, we feel high. It's not necessary to do that, natural breathing is enough. But often we find ourself breathing in our chest. When we become angry or irritated or frightened or anxious, then our breath tends to become very shallow and we lose our center or ground. So when we pay attention to breathing and allow ourself to breathe deeply then the body relaxes and lets go of holding on to itself, and our state of mind becomes free. Our state of mind and the breath are very much connected; this is why it is important to harmonize body, mind and breath, and resume our natural state of mind, which is free of conditioning.



Sojun's 80th Birthday Bash

By Andrea Thach and Peter Overton

Balloons flew, wine flowed, scrumptious lasagna was consumed, stories were told by old friends, a lifetime in pictures was revealed on the white movie screen as more than a hundred and fifty of us gathered to celebrate Sojun's eightieth birthday on July 5th. Sojun was clearly tickled pink, and at the end, we all got up and danced! He was presented with gifts from the sangha: a new computer, a new razor, a custom repaired key on his favorite, rare recorder, and a unique rain stitch rakusu sewn by many at BZC and SFZC.

This celebration (in preparation and in spirit) began early in the year and eventually blossomed into many offerings. **Mary Mocine**, **Alexandra Frappier**, and **Gerry Oliva** led the organizational team, coordinating selection of the venue and dinner menu. **Mary Mocine** served as head cook. Other dedicated volunteers included: Setup and take-down, **Jake Van Akkeren**; parking, **Richard Urban**; hors d'oeuvres, **Judy Bertelsen**; flowers, **Nancy Suib** and **Barbara Strauss**; decorations, **Denise Forest**; entertainment: **Ron Nestor** and **Bob Rosenbaum**; sewing coordinator, **Jean Selkirk**.

Special thanks to **Ko Blix** for telling Mel's story on the screen. It was fascinating to see many of us, both present and not, appearing as our much younger selves.

Last, but not least, **Dean Bradley** took many memorable photos.

In addition, this event was the occasion for the publication of two books about Sojun. **Susan Moon** has compiled and edited *A Path Unfolding*, based on a series of interviews with Sojun; and **Michael Wenger** and **Max Erdstein** have published *Umbrella Man*, a collection of essays by Sojun's deshi (dharma heirs). Both of these books are available from BZC at our book sales table on Saturdays, or through contacting our office manager.

A big Thank You! for everyone's contribution to making this heartwarming event possible!

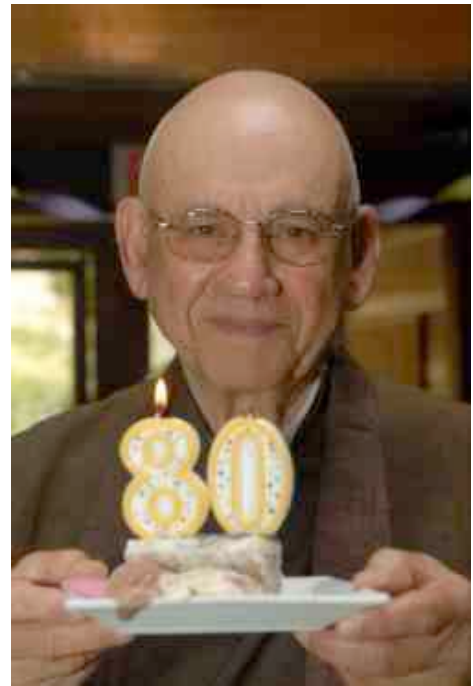


Photo by Dean Bradley

Verse for Sojun's Birthday

*After 80 years
the White Dragon
has accomplished nothing*

*A brilliant wind
shakes the trees
on Old Plum Mountain*

— Hozan Alan Senauke, 9 July 2009

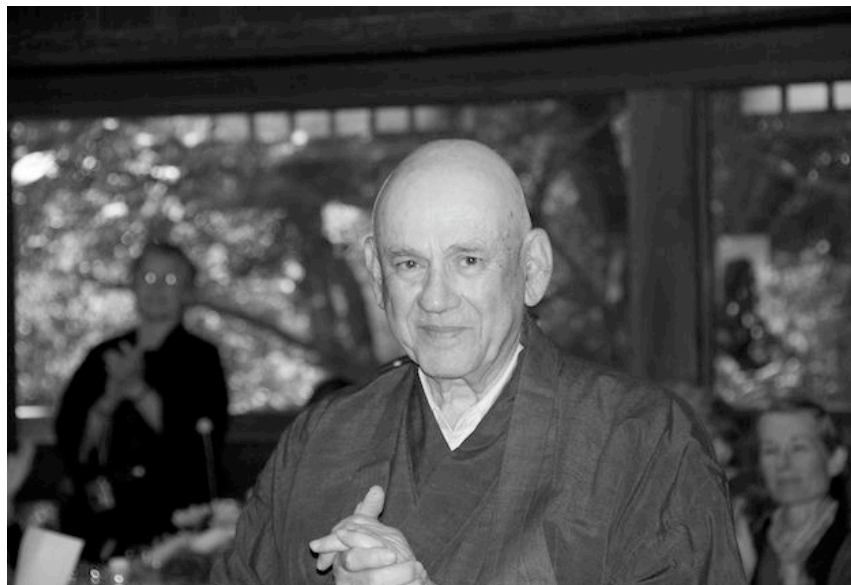


Photo by Alan Senauke

Sangha News

We want to express our gratitude to Agnes Kaji for her year of "just right" care of the dokusan hut. Thank you, Agnes. We welcome Catherine Galloway into that position.

Thanks to Bob Rosenbaum for his work in reorganizing the way in which we do zazen instruction. Thanks to him as well for setting the zazen instructor schedule the last few cycles, and for his two years setting the Saturday speakers schedule. He turns both duties over to Karen Sundheim.

And to Karen, welcome and thanks for leading the past two women's sesshins as the Women's Coordinator. She has passed this duty on to Catherine Cascade.

A big bow of thanks to Mark Copithorne for graciously juggling the many duties of the kitchen keeper, including offering his signature Saturday tea treat as a special extra, this past year. He steps back now with his daughter's early arrival! He and his wife Diane became joyful parents of "a perfect baby girl at 8:44 p.m. on July 16. She is small at five pounds 8 ounces, 18.5 inches. She looks just like our son David and to my eyes, like my father David. Light blond hair. Perfect and beautiful." They are catching their breathes as they consider her name.

We are pleased to welcome Lisa Nelbach as the new kitchen keeper.

Upcoming Women's Sesshin

On Sunday, September 27, 8:30-5:00, Yvonne Rand will lead a day of inquiry into the ways that women's experiences and understandings of the dharma serve to expand the container of practice for both men and women as Buddhism takes root in the West. She has a longstanding interest in being able to see and separate the different strands of culture from the teachings of the Buddhas.

The day will include a sequence of meditation while moving, meditation in stillness, lecture, and discussion.

Yvonne Rand is a meditation teacher and householder priest in the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition. She began her practice and study of Zen with Shunryu Suzuki Roshi in 1966. Her other principal teachers and mentors have been Dainin Katagiri Roshi, Maureen Stuart Roshi, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Venerable Tara Tulku, and Shodo Harada Roshi. Yvonne is the founder and resident teacher at Goat-in-the-Road, a practice place and garden in Mendocino County, where she lives with her husband Bill. Contact Catherine Cascade with any questions: catherinecascade@sbcglobal.net.

Labor Day Sesshin

BZC's Labor Day sesshin will be held on September 5 and 6. This will be a study sesshin, an opportunity to combine more intensive dharma study with zazen and work practice. In addition to the usual schedule of zazen, service, formal meals, and work, there will be an hour and a half

group study period every morning and afternoon. A signup sheet, along with information about the text, will be posted on the bulletin board. Participation in the full schedule on both days is expected. If you have questions please contact the sesshin director, Tamar, at tlxnoch@earthlink.net, or call 510-644-1928.

Annual Women's Retreat at Empty Nest

by Alexandra Frappier

Approximately thirty women attended the five-day women's retreat at Empty Nest Zendo June 25-29, 2009. The retreat was led by Grace Schireson, Darlene Cohen, and Angie Boissevain. The retreat was an inspiration to all who attended, and focused on Grace's new book *Zen Women*, a description of the stories and teachings of the Zen women ancestors from India, China, Korea, and Japan. The book addresses the question, "What is the difference between men and women in Zen practice?" based on the stories of the women ancestors. Much is revealed in conjecturing just why these stories were omitted from the Zen records.

Darlene Cohen talked about the two poles of self-indulgence and self-neglect. She asked, "How do we take care of ourselves and how do we take care of others?" She suggested that we try living from the body's point of view, that we find our breath in every situation, that we be aware of our body's needs and desires and that we never be far from the reality of birth, breath, and death.

Angie Boissevain taught through the medium of free expression such as writing, poetry, and stream of consciousness. The point was to just get it down on paper and create an open space in which we could live, experience, imagine, and speak our reality in written words. The result of our efforts to do this was some surprisingly insightful and beautiful expressions of who we are. We were encouraged to continue to express ourselves through writing, to bring forth what resides deep in ourselves through words.

All in all, the retreat was deeply moving, creative, and relaxing, with plenty of time to reflect on our lives. The schedule was flexible enough to provide the space to rest or to write, or to just simply take a swim in the pool or an early morning walk or hot tub. I personally found it deeply relaxing and spacious, providing enough time to settle in over the five days, to sink into the subject matter presented, and to reflect on my life and practice.

Lay Entrusted Dharma Teachers Meeting

Several BZC members attended a recent meeting of the Lay Entrusted Dharma Teachers that was held at the home of Wendy Johnson at Muir Beach on Sunday afternoon, July 12. Laurie Senauke, Susan Moon, and Meghan Collins drove over to Marin for the occasion.

Meghan (a student of both Mary Mocine and Sojun) and her daughter Laura Burges of SFZC, who was also present, both received their green rakus this spring within a month of each other. (*Ctd. on p. 6*)

Dharma Teachers *(Ctd. from p. 5)*

Also attending were Ed Sattizahn of Vimala Sangha in Marin, currently serving as chairman of the board of SFZC, Martha de Barros of Everyday Zen Sangha, and Wendy Johnson, who has had a longtime connection with Green Gulch. She is the author of *Gardening at the Dragon's Gate*, about gardening at Green Gulch Farm.

The focus of the meeting was the question: what are the activities and what is essential to the training of a Lay Entrusted Dharma Teacher? A document of their present understanding about these definitions is under discussion.

Lay Entrustment is a fairly recent addition to the practice structure of sanghas in Northern California (it is not derived from Soto practice in Japan), and its identity is still evolving. As general custom, Lay Entrusted Dharma Teachers have all been shusos, have a close connection with a senior teacher, and have a long practice history. They may lecture, teach classes, and give practice discussion, but are not eligible to give the precepts.

BZC Board Election

The Board is looking forward to this year's Board election. The nominating meeting (and potluck) will take place on Tuesday, September 15. Dinner will begin at 6:30, meeting at 7:30.

As the Board works to create a slate of candidates, we have been considering a variety of useful skills, including: communications, money management, fund raising, engineering, building maintenance, and non-profit law. Potential Board members should be willing to serve on working committees that support our practice and administration. Candidates are also asked to draft a short statement touching on their wish to serve, their skills, and perhaps their vision of BZC.

All BZC members are welcome to nominate other members to run at our September meeting. If you have a candidate in mind and you think they have skills to offer, please check with that person to see if he or she is interested in running and serving on the Board.

Ordinary Mind

from a talk by Yakuso Ryushin Andrea Thach

What is ordinary mind? How is it when we're our most ordinary that we're also our most extraordinary? What is the effort that brings that which is already our natural birthright to fruition? How do we know who we actually are, through what kind of effort when it's already there? What is the knowing that is not reached by feelings and deliberations, words or letters? These are all the koans of this koan.

So, Joshu has the answer. He's given it up front: ordinary mind is the Way. And yet, he still wants some kind of specific instruction. Don't we all? We come to practice and we have some inkling of what we're looking for, but we don't know how to find it. And he asks this question in such a way that he really knows there's nothing he's going to be given, but still he has to ask: "Shall I try for it?" he says. The answer—And if you try for it, you become separated from it.

I think the idea "separated from" is very helpful. There are echoes here of what Dogen Zenji will write four hundred years later in the Genjo Koan. Moving comparing, setting up a reality compared to that which is wholesome at first, such as an dissolution and separation of the intimate our own original nature is the Way. But the usual way is that we go after things: by corrupting our very sincerity. So what then kind of exertion, or strength of will, some It's like trying to tighten a screw down too hard with a screwdriver and stripping the threads. That's a certain kind of effort that we sometimes make. Or it's like a valiant filly running the Kentucky Derby with all of her force and breaking her legs because she doesn't know her limits.



towards things, we are evaluating, measuring, ourselves. But seeking to attain something, even end to our suffering, we set up a duality. This knowing of the true reality of all being which is paradox in wanting it and going after it in the knowing, by obtaining an experience, we risk is right effort? We usually think of effort as some kind of mighty force. And that's often misplaced.

Suzuki Roshi tells us we should make "perfect effort." Perfect effort is also a kind of a catch, I think. And I think he was a master at putting words together in a way that challenge. There is a meaning underneath. So, "perfect effort." You know, there is a kind of striving inherent in the ideal of perfection, or at least, there can seem to be. That's the catch. He also says we should make pure effort. Pure and perfect effort. Effort is one of the factors of enlightenment, one of the requirements of becoming enlightened. Pure effort is kind of like having all of the ingredients that you need: meditation, moral conduct, patience, wisdom; it's the baking soda. It's what allows it to rise, this pure effort that we make. Pure effort is what I'd like to call "nothing special added" effort. The NSA of our practice. *(Laughter)* The NSA of our effort is what Suzuki Roshi says is the right effort. The right effort is to get rid of something extra. So that something extra is that which we ourselves add to try and make some particular outcome, to try and make it good, to try and get it right. But actually, we don't have to do that. All we have to do is apply ourselves with complete and sincere and perfect effort and it will be exactly as it's meant to be.

Restricted Diets and Sesshin

The meal form is one of the more beautiful parts of our sesshin practice. The quick silent service, the carefully prepared food, bringing our full attention to setting utensils on the meal cloth, handing the gomasio to a meal partner with a silent bow, chewing rice, wrapping bowls. The sounds of the names of Buddha ringing out in the zendo as the servers move swiftly down the aisle with the first pot. But what happens to those with restricted diets who can't be sure that the food is safe for them to eat? How can we ensure that everyone feels a sense of security and ease during the sesshin meal?

Two policies have been tried in the past. A few years ago, tenzos prepared separate special meals for those with special diets, and these meals were served separately in the zendo. At a certain point, especially with a large sesshin, it became clear that creating and serving these special meals (sometimes as many as seven) meant a great deal of extra work for the tenzos and the servers. As the tenzos are already making a huge donation of time to sesshin by shopping and cooking for as many as fifty people, it didn't seem fair to burden them with this extra responsibility. More recently, the policy has been to ask tenzos to customize their menus so that a single menu meets the needs of all participants, including those with restricted diets. The intention of this policy was to avoid the complications of serving many different special needs by serving meals that could be eaten by everybody in the zendo.

In practice, this policy has also proved to be problematic. While it is relatively simple to create menus without one or two ingredients, such as mustard or cashews, things get more complicated when we try to accommodate those with multiple dietary restrictions, especially if there is more than one sesshin participant with a very restricted diet, and the restrictions are very different. Under these circumstances, planning a sesshin menu that everyone can eat starts to resemble solving a Sudoku puzzle. In addition, tenzos often find themselves having to make major last-minute changes to meals they may have been planning and practicing for several weeks.

To explore other solutions, sangha members with restricted diets who attend sesshin regularly were surveyed to find out how they thought they could be best accommodated. It turned out what they wanted was the chance to make their own arrangements if they needed to. They especially wanted advance information about the menu, and the opportunity to prepare and eat extra food outside of meal times if necessary.

Based on these discussions, the practice committee has decided to try a new policy, outlined below, to accommodate sesshin participants with dietary restrictions. The new policy will be put into practice for the next six months, and then re-evaluated by the practice committee. Feedback, especially from tenzos and those with dietary restrictions, will be very much appreciated.

You can speak to the Sesshin Director, Tamar, send e-mails to her at txlenoch@earthlink.net, call 510-644-1928 (no calls after 8:30 p.m., please), or leave a note in her box on the community room porch.

Meal Policy to Accommodate Dietary Restrictions

1. As always, participants with dietary restrictions must register for sesshin and inform the director of their food restrictions by the registration deadline. It may not be possible to accommodate special needs without adequate advance notice.
2. Sesshin tenzos will be asked to follow a few general guidelines to accommodate some of the most common food sensitivities in the sangha:
 - Limit nuts to one bowl.
 - Do not serve a grain with gluten at both breakfast and at lunch. At least one meal should have a gluten-free grain. (There is a list of grains that contain gluten in the kitchen.)
 - Limit dairy/eggs to one bowl a day and do not use them in the gruel.
 - Limit mustard to one bowl per day, and do not put mustard in the gruel.
3. The tenzo should prepare a detailed list of ingredients for each dish except the gruel. The list should be e-mailed to the sesshin director by the afternoon before a one-day sesshin or the first day of a multi-day sesshin, so that it can be communicated to those with allergies. The ingredients list should also be posted in the morning. Tenzos cooking on multi-day sesshins should post their ingredients list on the evening before they cook.
4. The sesshin director will continue to communicate information about dietary restrictions to the tenzo before each sesshin. The tenzo will use this information to be mindful about the use of such ingredients. She or he may choose to modify the meal plan to limit or eliminate the ingredient. Alternatively, the tenzo may choose to use the ingredient but to be especially careful to indicate on the ingredients list that it has been used.
5. Those with restricted diets will have access to a kitchen in one of the resident's apartments, including refrigerator space for food storage and a microwave. If they need to, they can eat food they bring from home in this kitchen during breaks after meals. The sesshin director will be responsible for making appropriate arrangements with residents. During multi-day sesshins, those with allergies may need to ask for time during work period to shop or prepare food. This can be arranged with the work leader.

**Berkeley Zen Center
1931 Russell Street
Berkeley, CA 94703**