



Eupepsia's signature  
Ayurvedic Shirodhara  
treatment.

# East Meets Southwest

Finding balance at Eupepsia Wellness Resort.

By SHERRIE PAGE GUYER

I CAN'T PINPOINT EXACTLY when Dove squares and Nightingale Ice Cream Sandwiches became a food group in my book, but sugar had me on speed dial, and I knew it was time to regroup.

In years past, I've taken healthy getaways to Hilton Head Health, Yogaville, and a beachfront boot camp in Tulum, Mexico. This time, I chose Eupepsia Wellness Resort, set on 256 acres in Bland, an hour west of Blacksburg.

Compared to spa destinations like Canyon Ranch, Eupepsia's rates are reasonable, and the drive was just four hours from Richmond. The prospect of hiking the Appalachian Trail and eating vegetarian meals—cooked by someone who wasn't me—convinced me to give it a whirl.

Eupepsia's program is grounded in Ayurveda, a holistic healing system that originated in India more than 3,000 years ago. Designed to restore the body's equilibrium, an Ayurvedic lifestyle clears the body of the imbalances that create the chronic inflammation that causes disease. The approach here is simple: clean diet, herbal remedies, immer-

sion in nature, and meditative practices. The name Eupepsia translates to "ideal digestion." So come prepared to talk about it. A lot.

*At Eupepsia, digestive health is the path to wellness. Come prepared to "rest and digest." You'll talk about it. A lot.*

## Restoring the Immune System

And with good reason: Eupepsia's founder Shivani, an Ayurvedic counselor, tells me that gut health supports the immune system. She's right: 70-80 percent of our immune cells reside in our gut. To support them, much of the food is grown on-site in an expansive greenhouse. Fresh and wholesome, there's nothing to avoid. "It's time to stop being afraid

of food," Shivani tells me, as I recount my recent romance with sugar, "especially when it's nutritious and pure."

Eupepsia's chef, Tarek, embraced Ayurveda before he arrived here in 2017, the year it opened. Like all of the staff members, he is calm and soft-spoken, even while cheerfully accommodating guests with special requests. I have seen the positive effects in my life," he tells me. "At the same time, I love cooking and exploring different cuisines. So I'm combining my two great passions."

Shivani founded Eupepsia to share her own healing practices—and her decades of experience in the wellness field—with others. She arrived in Virginia from Dubai, home of sister property, Eupepsia Medical Clinic. In short order, the Virginia retreat has collected a World Spa Award along with accolades from TripAdvisor, *USA Today*, *Blue Ridge Outdoors*, and *Luxe Life*.

At a post-yoga Q&A session, Shivani insists Ayurveda is based on common sense. "If people avoided caffeine and alcohol, ate healthy foods, and got plenty of rest and sleep, they'd find relief from a range of health concerns, from anxiety to type 2 diabetes." True, I think. But sometimes, that's easier said than done.

Guests arrive seeking pampering in a bucolic setting, or to ease medical problems. During my stay, one woman found relief from the arthritic inflammation in her hands after just a few days on the Ayurvedic path. Another returns with her husband each year to manage his high blood pressure. "I never imagined him meditating," she tells me, "but it brings him back, and it's working."

## Austerity and Luxury

We gather for meals in the property's main house where Chef Tarek bakes fresh herbs into his satisfying homemade focaccia, pairing it with a salad of grilled peaches, yellow tomatoes, and avocado.





A dip and a mountain view from Eupepsia's outdoor jet pool.

## EUPEPSIA'S TOP AYURVEDIC LIFESTYLE TIPS

- **Eat three warm meals a day** and avoid snacking. It overloads the digestive system.
- **Avoid processed foods.**
- **Balance all six flavors**—sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent to feel satisfied and prevent cravings.
- **Prepare yourself for a good night's sleep** with a cup of Golden Milk (recipe below).
- **Spend time in nature** to boost your immune system. Get outside, go on hikes, try forest bathing.

Surrounding the main house, a large outbuilding houses the guest rooms, spa treatment areas, a fitness center, and the Grand Yoga Hall, where intricately-carved doors open to a studio lit by elaborate chandeliers.

The combination of austerity and luxury extends to my room—with a wall fireplace, an adjustable bed, and a bidet and toilet with more bells and whistles than I can count. As I settle in, Joana introduces herself as my personal point of contact. Anything I'd like to do, she'll arrange it.

Most spas offer a daily schedule of fitness classes, lectures, and cooking demonstrations, but at Eupepsia, the days are more go-with-the-flow. Beyond a boot camp class each morning, activities here are ad hoc. If I want to hike, Joana assures me, she'll arrange a guide.

Each night, after dinner, we pore over the endless list of therapeutic spa treatments—I lost count at 65. There's an Ayurvedic full body warm-oil massage, known as abhyanga, reflexology, and a “marma” facial, which promises to improve the flow of life-force energy. You'd need to stay a month to try them all. Some guests do.

### Rest and Digest

You get a lot of Ayurveda for your buck here and that's by design, to encourage people who aren't in “the spa set” to experience its power to transform their health. Despite the modest rates, Eupepsia's facilities are impressive. There's a



Eupepsia's Himalayan salt chalet.

Himalayan salt chalet, infrared sauna, flotation room, and magneto therapy, which improves circulation and energy using magnets. The impressive gym offers a climbing wall, regulation basketball court, and the latest cardio and weight-training equipment. A hydrotherapy pool features an underwater treadmill. And in nearby tanks, you can pedal Aqua Cycles, also underwater.

As I return from my hike, I discover that I've just been “forest bathing.” Immersion in nature,

Shivani explains, has the power to increase our white blood cell production, regulate blood pressure, elevate mood, and relieve stress, all to support our immune system.

A few days into my stay, I've shed my hyper-alert busy state and entered “rest and digest” mode, rediscovering the natural ebb and flow of hunger. It reminds me of childhood, when my family gathered for meals, cooked from real, unprocessed food. Like most kids then, my days were punctuated with alternating intervals of activity and rest: playing outside with friends and reading books, instead of devices. By the end of the week, Eupepsia has restored these essential rhythms and I feel calm, content, and cared-for.

Once home, I notice it's easier to focus on work, now that I'm not distracted by cravings for Dove squares and ice cream. And after giving up alcohol, sugar, and processed flour for a week, three meals a day, with no snacks, feels right. When I feel full, I notice and stop eating. And I've reclaimed the balance that had slipped away from me. Now, it all feels like common sense. But sometimes, we just need reminding. [Eupepsia.com](http://Eupepsia.com)

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### EUPEPSIA'S GOLDEN MILK

*Before bedtime, guests at Eupepsia sip Golden Milk to promote relaxation and sleep. Grounded in Ayurveda, Golden Milk's therapeutic properties have been prized for centuries.*

- 1 cup full fat organic milk
- 1 teaspoon organic maple syrup
- ¼ teaspoon ground green cardamom pods
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric powder
- Pinch of black pepper

Heat ½ cup of the milk in a saucepan over medium low heat for one minute. Add maple syrup, ground cardamom, turmeric, and black pepper. Stir until combined. Pour remaining milk into the saucepan and cook over medium heat, 3–5 minutes until flavors blend. Makes one serving.

