

# Eat your way to wellbeing

**Kristina Georgiou finds out about the benefits of eating food as close to its natural state as possible**

For those new to the term, 'raw food' might conjure up images of simple salads or mountains of fruit. But vegetarianism long ago dispelled the assumption that it is without variety, texture or taste, and raw food is no exception.

Creative substitutes, such as raw hummus and raw chocolate are becoming increasingly popular in food stores across the country. Kooky cafes and restaurants are filling up their counters with raw delights, and there are even festivals dedicated to the movement.

So what can raw food do for you?

"All my life I suffered from food allergies," says Rob Hull, editor and founder of Funky Raw Magazine. "I thought the idea of raw food was strange but after several months I was hooked. I had more energy, I loved the food, the logic just made sense. And I could breathe as normal. What a relief."

Eating food as close to the source as possible – organically, locally, seasonally – and avoiding processing, means that plants still have all their energy and nutrients when consumed. Enzymes are important proteins needed for all bodily functions, like the breaking down of food. When we heat food above 48C (118F) enzymes can be degraded or destroyed, as well as many vitamins, minerals and amino acids.

Hippocrates, the Greek physician who studied medicine around 460–370BC, said "Let food be your medicine." At the Hippocrates Health Institute in Florida, people are treated for diseases with an "enzyme-rich diet, complemented by exercise, and positive thinking." The institute has found that learning how to combine the right foods for our body – and we all have different needs – can unlock years of depression, a bloated stomach, and a lack of energy.

"It's a good idea to get professional help and guidance," says nutritionist

Jill Swyers, who regularly visits the institute for training. "It's not about giving up foods, it's about adjusting one's lifestyle, one step at a time. We've still got to have our balance of nutrients."

For all-round health, Jill recommends daily doses of wheatgrass and 'green protein' juices. A simple recipe is to blend cucumber, celery, sunflower green sprouts, pea green sprouts, romaine lettuce and perhaps some ginger or garlic for flavour. You can also use dark, leafy kale, which is abundant in nutrients. She also suggests eating pumpkin and sunflower seeds twice a week, as well as nuts and avocado, and taking a vitamin B12 supplement.

But Jill points out the dangers of going to extremes if you haven't done your research, like eating too much fruit, which will affect your blood sugar levels. "Don't feel guilty if you can't eat fully raw," she says, "it's about achieving little goals for yourself that suit you at that time."

The same advice comes from Rob: "Take it slowly and don't feel you must do it in any particular way. Try adding fresh ripe fruit before your breakfast. Have a salad before your main meal. It's just a case of learning new techniques."

Shane Jordan, a chef from Bristol, enjoys the simplicity of creating raw food. "The fact that you don't need to

heat, boil, bake or steam anything in order to have a meal is what attracted me to raw food, not to mention feeling lighter and having improved my skin complexion," explains Shane.

Raw foodies approach the concept on different levels. For Shane, "raw food is not just a dietary thing; it is a way of life." He adds: "Some people's comments can be negative at times – but don't let that put you off."

Kate Magic, author of four books on raw food, uses 'superfoods' such as maca and goji berries, and different types of algae and seaweeds in her recipes. She directly relates her use of these to a positive, conscious awakening in her everyday life. When our nutrient consumption reaches its optimum level, we have more opportunity to reach our full potential, she believes.

For raw food enthusiasts, reclaiming our health and wellbeing is about simply using the sun, water and time. Like any controlled diet, the journey isn't always easy; but the raw food movement is showing that it is one way to deeply cleanse and nourish the body, mind and soul.

#### MORE INFORMATION:

funkyraw.com, rawrob.com, rawliving.eu  
hippocratesinst.org, jillswyers.com

