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# THE RAW

# Food revolution



Alicia Silverstone, Demi Moore and Donna Karen have all done it. Burgeoning from its hippy roots into an increasingly popular approach to eating, the raw food diet is swaying a growing number of celebrities, but is there more to it than hype? Dawn Mellowship investigates.

Proponents of the uncooked culinary craze report a myriad of health benefits ranging from increased energy, glossy youthful skin and weight loss to the alleviation of a bewildering array of ailments. Raw food chef Russell James credits his switch to raw food with a physical, emotional and spiritual transformation. After a short stint at a fasting retreat in Koh Samui Russell discovered the raw food revolution and found that his skin condition cleared up, along with experiencing numerous other benefits.

"Now when I eat raw foods I really do get that magical energy that everyone talks about. I notice I'm able to stay a lot more alert later into the day, and generally find that I'm more cheerful and accepting of others. Emotional changes are also something to expect; I find myself feeling other people's emotions more intensely. I go through phases of really opening up spiritually - I think it's always been there, so by not eating the heavy foods that shut down

my more spiritually aware self, I really allow myself to grow in that area."

If you thought that a raw food diet was all about nibbling carrots and chowing down on lettuce leaves, think again. Russell says,

"With the rise of more talented raw food chefs, teachers and fantastic raw food restaurants, the world is finding out about raw foods and how they can integrate it in their lives, to whatever degree they feel comfortable with."

In fact, it's become so trendy that the glitterati are lining up for raw cuisine at the vegan restaurant, Saf in Shoreditch, part of an international chain headed by US-based executive chef, Chad Sarno. Saf serves 100 per cent plant-based, predominantly raw food, with meals so aesthetically attractive it seems a shame to eat them.

## What's involved?

So, more precisely, what does the raw food diet entail? As nutritionist Glen Matten notes, "Raw food diets can mean different

things to different people, ranging from moderate versions - including a good percentage of raw fruits and vegetables in the diet - to more extreme versions - typified by exclusively raw food diets. So it might be 50 per cent of the diet or 100 per cent of the diet."

Generally speaking, raw foodists eat a vegetarian or vegan diet based predominantly on organic fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, healthy oils (such as flaxseed oil and olive oil), superfoods (such as mesquite, maca and goji berries), algae, sea vegetables and sprouted grains and beans, with 70-100 per cent of the foods consumed being raw. Some raw foodists use a dehydrator (which blows warm air through the food), careful not to heat the food above 115F. This allows for the preparation of healthy twists on conventional cooked foods such as crackers, breads, cookies, dried fruits and other snacks. For those who cannot afford a dehydrator, an oven can be used on its lowest possible temperature.





### My top raw chocs

- 1 Mood Foods Cashew & Coconut Chocolate, [Rawchocshop.com](http://Rawchocshop.com).
- 2 Raw Living Be the Change Chocolate, [Rawliving.co.uk](http://Rawliving.co.uk).
- 3 Conscious Chocolate Best Ever Hint of Mint, [Consciouschocolate.co.uk](http://Consciouschocolate.co.uk).
- 4 Raw Chocolate Co Vanoffee Chocolate, [Therawchocolatecompany.com](http://Therawchocolatecompany.com).



Many raw foodists eat occasional healthy raw treats such as raw chocolate made from raw cacao (the fruit of the cacao tree). Cacao is a powder produced from roasted, husked and ground seeds of the Cacao. Why is raw chocolate better for us than its cooked counterpart? According to Richard Turner of Mood Foods, makers and sellers of raw chocolate,

"Most chocolate is produced from cocoa that has been roasted and exposed to other high temperature processing. The main health benefits from cocoa are the flavanols which are responsible for the powerful antioxidant effect. However, flavanols have a bitter taste and so are often removed, and they are also heat sensitive. Raw Chocolate is usually vegan and sugar-free, unlike conventional chocolate bars made by the multinationals, which still all use refined sugar. It also tends to be made from mainly organic ingredients and with an emphasis on ethical trading."

### Is raw food good for us?

Eating a diet predominantly based on raw, vegan foods has its benefits and drawbacks according to nutritionist Glen Matten,

"Whilst there are all manner of claims made testifying to the health benefits of raw food diets, there is little in the way of robust scientific evidence to back them up. On the plus side, with a high intake of fruits and vegetables individuals following 'living food' vegan diets tend to have higher intakes of antioxidants and consequently higher levels in the body, along with lower cholesterol levels. This might conceivably reduce the risk of certain chronic health problems such as heart disease. There is also some very limited evidence of improvements in conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia.

However, the big problem with strict raw food vegan diets is that they run the risk of inadequate intake of a number of key essential nutrients such as vitamin B12, omega-3 fatty acids, calcium and selenium. This may have a number of unwanted ►



I AM ALICIA SILVERSTONE, AND I AM A

# VEGETARIAN



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consequences, for example, an increased risk of osteoporosis. Ironically, a lack of vitamin B12 (which we need to get rid of a toxic by-product of protein breakdown called homocysteine) and omega-3 fatty acids, may actually increase the risk of heart disease.

Strict raw food diets are also associated with substantial weight loss. Whilst this may be desirable for some people,

the evidence does suggest that for others this may be excessive and unhealthy, to the extent that some women will actually stop menstruating due to a BMI that has fallen below a normal, healthy level. This of course is not good news for health and raises significant concerns over the long-term safety of raw food diets.

To top it off, strict raw food diets, which contain a lot of fruit, are also linked with increased dental erosion."

Of course, a typical Western diet can result in all manner of nutritional deficiencies and as with those on a 'normal' diet, there will be raw foodists who don't take a nutritionally balanced approach to their diet, whilst others are careful to eat a broader range of foods and take the appropriate supplements where necessary.

## What's wrong with cooked foods?

Is cooked food really such a bad thing anyway? Raw food proponents argue that food enzymes are destroyed at high temperatures, compromising the body's ability to adequately digest foods. Nutritionist, founder of The Institute of Optimum Nutrition and author of The Optimum Nutrition Bible, Patrick Holford, says,

"The cooking process tends to destroy enzymes. Professor Artturi Virtanen, Helsinki biochemist and Nobel prize winner, showed that enzymes are released into the mouth when raw vegetables are chewed: they come into contact with the mouth and start the act of digestion."<sup>1</sup>

Many doctors and some nutritional experts argue that the body has its own enzymes to break down foods and that the digestion process would destroy plant enzymes anyway. Patrick Holford has suggested that this is not the case, with more than half of the digestive enzymes from raw foods reaching the colon intact and beneficially altering the intestinal flora.<sup>2</sup>

Cooking foods can also damage the nutrient content. As far back as 1933, E.B. Forbes wrote in a paper published in the Ohio Journal of Science, that the initial use of fire by humankind in the preparation of food damaged the vitamin content, particularly vitamin A and C, which are easily damaged by heat and oxygen, and vitamin B, which is sensitive to heat and moisture.<sup>3</sup> We now know this to be true, for instance, cooking foods destroys more than half of B vitamins.

Forbes also noted in the same paper that "Cooking renders food pasty, so that it sticks to the teeth and undergoes acid fermentation." It also reduces circulation of blood to the jaws and teeth because less chewing is required. This, says Forbes, can result in "complications of great seriousness."<sup>4</sup>

Raw foodists also claim that cooked food causes leukocytosis – abnormally increased white blood cell count. When leukocytosis occurs the immune system is in a state of red alert to fight an infection or virus. If it is caused by the consumption of cooked foods the white blood cells are overworked, because they are almost constantly at an increased level.

Thus, when a real infection occurs, conceivably, they may not be able to function adequately. Dr Paul Kautchakoff, M.D., presented a





**Raw foodist toolkit**



**Dehydrator** – blows warm air through the food, removing water but leaving enzymes and nutrients intact. Not all raw foodists eat dehydrated food, so it's not essential. Recommended: Excalibur five or nine tray. It's pricier than other dehydrators but the best. From Fresh-network.com.

**Sprouter** – To sprout legumes and grains. It's not essential, a jam jar will do, but a sprouter is easier and produces healthy sprouts in a shorter space of time. Recommended: Easygreen Automatic Sprouter because it's simple to use and creates great sprouts quickly, with no pre-soaking required. From Energisyourlife.com.



**Juicer** – beneficial for producing healthy fruit and vegetable juices. Recommended: Oscar Vitalmax masticating (for better preservation of nutrients), from Energisyourlife.com.

**Blender/food processor** – To make smoothies, soups, healthy raw sauces for your food and tasty puddings and snacks, such as raw fudge and raw nut butters. Recommended: Vita-mix blenders are some of the best but incredibly pricey. For a cheaper but still powerful option try the L'equip 228 Blender, from Juiceproducer.com

paper to the First International Congress of Microbiology, Paris 1930, which reported that in contrast to raw food, cooked and manufactured food, such as wine, vinegar, white sugar, chocolate, ham etc. cause leukocytosis. When cooked food was combined with raw food, leukocytosis did not occur, unless more than one type of cooked food was eaten.<sup>5</sup>

Microwaving may be even worse. A small study by Swiss food scientist, Dr Hans Hertel, found that microwaving food may

present a great risk to human health than conventional cooking methods, by altering the structure of the nutrients and generating potentially deteriorative changes in the participants' blood.

To add insult to injury, relatively recent research has demonstrated that cooking a wide variety of foods to high temperatures produces the chemical compound acrylamide – a known animal carcinogen and probable human carcinogen. The worst offending foods are chips, fries, crisps, bread, coffee and breakfast cereals. Baking, frying, deep-frying and over-cooking foods may generate substantial amounts of acrylamides. As it stands, there is insufficient evidence on whether dietary intake of acrylamide in humans causes cancer, although a Dutch study found that an increased dietary intake of acrylamide was associated with increased risks of postmenopausal endometrial and ovarian cancer.<sup>6</sup>

**Raw Food Recipe  
Tomato & Macadamia Mozzarella Pasta**

Makes 5 starter-size portions

**Linguine**

500g carrots (4 medium-sized), peeled  
500g parsnip (4 medium-sized), peeled  
1/2T salt  
15 large basil leaves, cut chiffonade  
2T Italian seasoning  
2c baby plum tomatoes, cut into small sections

**Macadamia Mozzarella**

3/4c macadamias  
3/4c cashews  
1T Nama Shoyu or Tamari  
2t lemon juice  
1/4c water  
1T nutritional yeast (optional)

**Red Pepper Sauce**

1/2c pine nuts  
1 red pepper  
1/2T lemon juice  
1T Nama Shoyu or Tamari  
1T agave

**Method**

Turn the carrot and parsnip into thin strips with a mandoline, then cut lengthwise with a knife to achieve linguine strips. Alternatively you can make spaghetti with a spiral-slicer. In a bowl combine the vegetable pasta (linguine) you have produced with the salt and mix well by hand. Leave to stand whilst preparing the mozzarella. Combine all mozzarella ingredients in a Vita Mix or food processor. Blend until a creamy texture is achieved. Set aside. Mix all Red Pepper sauce ingredients in a

Some folk will no doubt see eating raw food as a passing fad and more scientific research into raw and cooked foods is needed, but its devotees are convinced that raw food is the way forward for our health and overall wellbeing. As for me, I became a Vegan four years ago and having eaten 50-70 per cent raw foods for the last couple of months, I'm already feeling the benefits.

1 Holford, P. *The Optimum Nutrition Bible*, London: Piatkus, 1997, p91.

2 Ibid, p91.

3 Forbes, E.B. *Critical Situations in the Mineral Metabolism of Human Beings and Domestic Animals*, Ohio Journal of Science, September 1933;5:389-406.

4 Forbes, E.B. *Critical Situations in the Mineral Metabolism of Human Beings and Domestic Animals*, Ohio Journal of Science, September 1933;5:389-406.

5 Kouchakoff, P. *The influence of cooking food on the blood formula of man*. Proceedings: First International Congress of Microbiology, Paris, 1930, p1-4.

6 Hogervorst, J.G. *A prospective study of dietary acrylamide intake and the risk of endometrial, ovarian and breast cancer*, Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention, 2007;16:2304-2313.



Vita Mix or blender until smooth. Go back to the linguine, wash the salt off and dry with kitchen towel or a salad spinner. Transfer linguine to a clean, dry bowl and add the remaining linguine ingredients. When thoroughly mixed add the macadamia cheese and mix again by hand to coat all linguine in the cheese mixture. Serve with the Red Pepper sauce.

© Russell James – Therawchef.com. Glen Matten is a Nutritional Therapist who runs nutrition clinics in London and Norwich. For more information phone 01603 616126 or email glen@realnutrition.co.uk. For more information on Russell James, The Raw Chef, and his recipes see Therawchef.com and Therawchefblog.com.