



Replenish those enzymes!

In each issue of *Women's Health* we invite a complementary practitioner to write on their chosen theme. In this issue, medical herbalist **Patricia Ferguson** explains why we should treat our bodies to more raw and living food



Sadly, in our society it is expected that with age comes deteriorating health, declining function and loss of physical attractiveness. With the first signs of ageing, women in particular increasingly feel pressured to undergo cosmetic procedures in an attempt to regain their youthful looks.

To attain or recapture natural beauty brings with it many unexpected benefits; more importantly, it should not compromise health, but complement it. Few things are more empowering than looking, and feeling, your best.

The various surgical procedures, cosmetics, miracle skin creams, hair products and vitamin supplements that many of us have come to rely on could never replicate the natural and unique revival in our looks and wellbeing that we can obtain ourselves by incorporating some raw and living food into our diet.

What is 'raw' and 'living' food?

First of all, I am not talking about raw meat, fish, eggs or dairy products. The raw and living food we must add to our diet for maintaining and improving health and beauty are vegetables, especially dark green leafy vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, fermented foods, green juices, green smoothies and sea vegetables.

Living foods are soaked, sprouted seeds and grains such as sunflower seeds, chickpeas, wheat, rye and barley. These are soaked to encourage germination, then sprouted, growing rapidly – their enzyme potential increasing up to 30 times.

Typically in raw and living food cuisine, nuts are also soaked for several hours before consuming, as soaking washes away enzyme inhibitors and produces lipase, a fat-splitting enzyme that digests fat. Wine, cider and champagne are all fermented and are considered 'raw'.

Crucial role

When we cook, we destroy valuable enzymes. Some are destroyed at temperatures of 105°C, while others can survive at up to 160°C. Cooking also destroys 50 per cent of protein from 70–80 per cent of vitamins and minerals, and 95 per cent of all nutrients in plant foods.

Enzymes have a crucial role to play. Every physiological function and chemical reaction that takes place within the human body relies on the presence of enzymes. We are all born with a 'bank' of enzymes. As we use them we must replace them and when we run out, life ends.

When we consume food lacking in enzymes, we use up those in our bank to perform digestive functions, instead of the metabolic functions they were designed for. Eating a good proportion of raw and living food prevents our enzyme bank from becoming depleted. Enzymes digest, metabolise and extract nutrients



from our meal.

As cooked food is devoid of enzymes, it is essentially dead food. As such, it creates morbid matter from undigested fragments of fat, protein, inorganic minerals and sugars. This morbid matter is revealed in the shape of retained fluid, weight gain, cellulite, rough and dry skin, warts, moles, dark puffy circles under the eyes, sunken cheeks, premature ageing, sallow complexions and weak, thinning hair.

Raw can be gourmet

Understandably, 'raw food' means lettuce and carrot sticks to many people. But over the last few years, as the benefits of raw food have become clear, many conventionally trained chefs are now turning their skills to creating delicious raw gourmet dishes.

The dehydrator – the living food chef's equivalent of an oven – has also played a big role in the growth, popularity and versatility of raw and living food. The dehydrator works by gradually removing moisture from foods at low temperatures, allowing enzymes to remain intact and producing food similar in taste and appearance to oven-baked food.

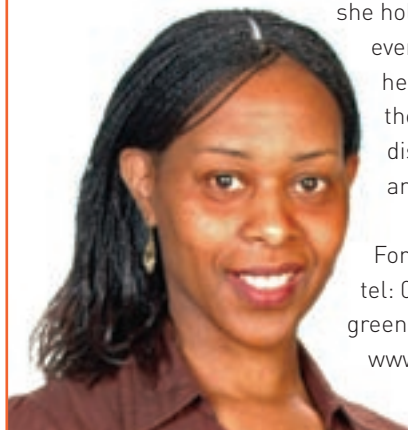
A dehydrator enables you to make a variety of dishes including bread, pizza, biscuits and crackers. However, to get started you only need a decent blender, a food processor and a good knife. With these items it is possible to create



Putting the lifestyle into practice

Patricia Ferguson completed a four-year degree course in herbal medicine at the University of Westminster. In the year after graduation, she became interested in raw and living foods after reading books by enzymologist Dr Edward Howell and living food pioneer Dr Ann Wigmore.

After experimenting with raw and living food, the health benefits and dramatic improvements in her own physical appearance led her to follow a predominantly raw and living food lifestyle. Her consultations include the option of living food education and preparation classes;



she holds regular raw and living food events and workshops in practical herbal medicine. The photos on these pages show some of the dishes Patricia prepares using raw and living ingredients.

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a variety of satisfying dishes – cottage pie, lasagne, curries, vegetable wraps, soups, p te, ice-cream, cakes, mousse, nut milks, smoothies and breakfast cereals, for instance.

Bingeing and weight gain

Bingeing on sweets, crisps and biscuits is often triggered by a lack of nutrition. When we do not satisfy the body's need for cellular nutrition, the signal to stop eating does not come, thus compelling us to continue eating. The body will call for the food it knows, so if your diet is poor, it will call for those foods. In fact, it is becoming increasingly common for people to be overweight while still being undernourished.

The more you improve your diet, the more you will be drawn to higher-quality food. It is very much about the quality of the food we eat,

not the quantity. Raw and living food is super-rich in enzymes and nutrients: therefore, you will find that your appetite is satisfied easily and that the need to keep eating disappears.

Rejuvenation and healing

Our vital organs – brain, heart, liver, lungs and kidneys – take priority when it comes to taking up nutrients for maintenance. But a diet including a good proportion of raw and living food provides a surplus of nutrients to nourish the hair, skin and nails, and that is when rejuvenation can begin.

Of course, the more raw and live food you eat, the greater the changes that will take place, as morbid matter is broken down, erasing years from your face and body shape. It is also at this time that many health challenges begin to disappear, as balance and harmony are restored. 🍋