

In The Raw!

How eating uncooked foods can improve your health

By Cindy Klinger

The raw food diet is nothing new—in fact, it's probably the oldest diet known to man—but over the last several years it's been gaining in popularity as people increasingly seek ways to both lose weight and optimize their health. The benefits are numerous, and so are the devotees, including recognizable figures like Robin Williams, Woody Harrelson and Demi Moore. So, what's all the buzz about?

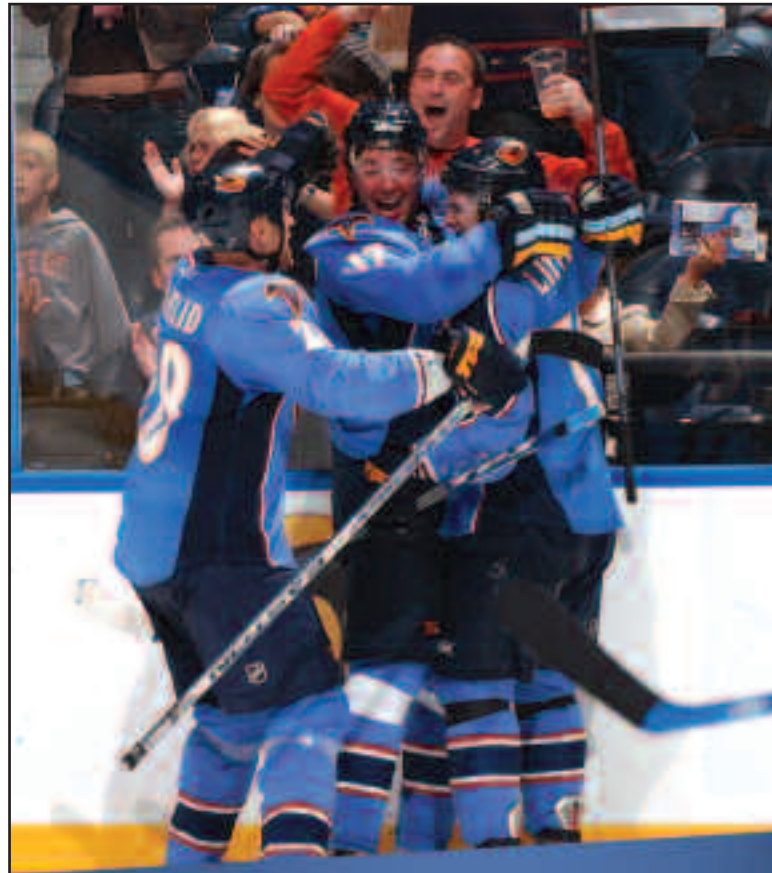
The raw food diet is based on the concept of eating foods that are either completely raw or not heated above 116 degrees F. Anything cooked above that temperature denatures many enzymes, making them inactive and lowering the nutritional value of the food source. Raw food diet staples include natural, unprocessed foods like vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes, beans and seaweed. Advocates believe that eating uncooked foods gives the body the “fuel” it needs to not only function at an optimal level, but also heal and regenerate itself when necessary.

The action of “cooking” isn't used in the raw food world. Baking, broiling and grilling are swapped for sprouting, juicing, soaking, blending and dehydrating. Increased energy, clear skin, mental clarity and healthy digestion are just a few of the benefits followers attest to experiencing. Even more astounding, consuming raw foods can help prevent people from developing degenerative diseases and is believed by some to aid the immune system in ridding the body of illnesses altogether—including some that are considered terminal.

One of these success stories—and raw-food converts—is 23-year-old Chattanooga, Tenn., resident Bridgett Bryant. In April 2007, Bryant was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, a type of cancer that starts in the lymph system and spreads throughout the body. Because Bryant also has hemochromatosis, a rare blood disorder, her body had a hard time handling the chemotherapy and radiation her doctors prescribed as treatment for the cancer. That October, when her doctor told her she had three months to live, the self-described junk-food junkie, who previously would never have given up her hamburgers, hot dogs and doughnuts, was ready to try anything.

She discovered Atlanta's Living Foods Institute, which offers 10- and 12-day seminars on raw and living food diets (living food is anything that's actually sprouted or growing when you eat it, like broccoli or mung

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Jenya Hampton's Chocolate Mousse

MAKES 4-6 SERVING

3 avocados, peeled and seeded
7 ½ tbsp. raw cocoa powder
½ cup agave
1 tsp. vanilla extract
pinch of sea salt
pinch cinnamon



- Place the avocados, cocoa powder, evaporated cane juice, vanilla, salt and cinnamon in a food processor, and process until completely smooth.
- Serve at room temperature or chilled. Stored in a sealed container in the refrigerator, chocolate mousse will keep up to three days in the refrigerator and two weeks in the freezer.
- For fudgesicles: Freeze the chocolate mousse in ice cube trays. Thaw for five minutes before serving.
- For chocolate sauce or fondue: Increase the water to 1 cup.

There are plenty of raw food resources right here in Georgia

To learn more, visit: www.icesupreme.com
www.sproutrawfood.org www.lovingitlive.com

bean sprouts) as well as other detoxifying, healing modalities. She decided to give the program a try.

During the first few days on a raw foods diet, one's body is typically detoxifying, and Bryant "detoxed" hard. As toxins began to leave her body, Bryant still was feeling sick. "I was like, 'It's not working!'" she recalls. "By the fifth day, I woke up and I was a completely different person. I had energy and I wasn't throwing up." From that day forward, Bryant's results kept improving. "After the fifth day, I just kept getting better and better," she says. "It was the first time in nine months I didn't fake having energy."

On Jan. 14, Bryant visited her doctor for another workup to see how the cancer had progressed. "They did the test three times," she says. "They couldn't find a trace of cancer in my body or a trace of the hemochromatosis."

"Some people come in after everyone has given up hope," says Brenda Cobb, founder of the Living Foods Institute. "I don't believe it's ever too late because of how many people have come when people told them it's too late." She and many other raw foodists believe an optimal level of raw food would be 80 percent of your diet, with 20 percent cooked foods comprising the rest.

Jenya Hampton, a raw food chef, instructor and founder of Essential Energy Cuisine, helps clients and those in her classes incorporate a realistic raw food lifestyle into their daily routines. "I look at

it like this," she says. "You may know how good it is for you ... but if you're not doing it, then you're not getting the benefits. It's about making it simple for yourself, learning the basics and incorporating what you can." She emphasizes going easy on yourself and celebrating what you can do. "When you increase fruits, vegetables and greens in your diet from where you are now, you're already a step ahead, en route to better health," she says. "And if you can make it convenient and taste good, then you're more likely to succeed."

Some of the tricks to make success easier include finding time to go grocery shopping. "Have fruits and vegetables in the house so you can throw a smoothie together, a salad together or a soup," Hampton says. "It takes no more than 10 minutes to process vegetables into a [raw] soup." She also recommends having things on hand to snack on so you aren't tempted to reach for unhealthy foods or swing by the drive-thru.

Hampton knows firsthand the benefits of the diet; she alternates her diet between eating 80 percent and 100 percent of foods raw. And people notice. She has 26-year-old twin sons, who many people mistake for her dates! She says the biggest misconception people have about a raw food diet is that it's restricting and confining, that you're eating carrot sticks and celery sticks. "It's really a delicious way of eating," Hampton says. "It's a very expansive way of eating."

For more information about the Living Foods Institute or Essential Energy Cuisine, visit: www.livingfoodsinstitute.com or www.essentialenergycuisine.com.

Online recipe sources:

www.goneraw.com www.sunfood.com
www.rawguru.com www.oneluckyduck.com

The Author's Take

Taking Hampton's 21-Days to Vibrant Health Series allowed me to realize that raw foods go way beyond apples and salads: they're delicious, nutrition-packed and as fun to create in the kitchen—if not more so—than cooked meals.

The small group of motivated and charismatic women who signed up for the five-session workshop quickly bonded and became enthused and inquisitive about every detail of Hampton's creations in the kitchen. We learned about things as varied as durian, an exotic Asian fruit that tastes like custard, the best way to crack a coconut, and how to grow our own sprouts—without getting our hands dirty! Hampton's easy approach and laid-back attitude assured all of us that our raw-food diets didn't have to be all or nothing; that adding in as many raw foods as we can was better than nothing at all; and that best of all, this can be easy and fun! We watched, explored, wondered, examined, discussed, pondered and tasted our fair share of new ideas and novel tastes.

Hampton's 21-day workshop went beyond food. She also led a stress-reduction workshop that guided us through how to begin writing in a gratitude journal, a 20-minute meditation and breathing exercise, and an anti-aging protocol that focused around a do-it-yourself facial massage. A field trip to DeKalb Farmer's Market helped us learn how to efficiently shop and store our favorite raw goodies. Perhaps the most satisfying was the last session, where everyone from class prepared a dish and invited guests to take part in this healing tradition. I might not quite be a full-fledged raw foodie yet, but I'm excited about uncovering more about the uncooked! ♦



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