

YMCA

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MAGAZINE

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AUTUMN 2020

**EATING BY
THE SEASON**

**NUTRITION
SPOTLIGHT:
EXTRA VIRGIN
OLIVE OIL**

**HOW
NUTRITIOUS
IS THE MILK
YOU DRINK?**

**THE
BENEFITS OF
PLANT-BASED
DIETS**

WELCOME TO OUR AUTUMN 2020 EDITION!

This edition is bursting with topical and informative content, exploring intermittent fasting, the benefits of plant-based diets and the nutrition lowdown on kombucha and extra virgin olive oil. If you need some motivation to get active, dip into our in-depth exploration of how exercise can benefit our minds and bodies.

As usual, we'll introduce you to the produce in season this autumn, and show you plenty of delicious ways to use it. Autumn can be a funny time weather-wise in our part of the world, so we've included some lighter salads as well as a few more hearty dishes for when the weather starts to get chilly. Think roasted veggie salads, zucchini meatballs and ginger and pear muffins, just to mention a few.

What milk do you drink? With the boom in plant-based milks in recent times, we thought it was a great time to give you a really practical breakdown of different milks and how they stack up nutritionally.

We hope you enjoy autumn at your local Y.

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YMCA Victoria acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work.

**FIONA KRIARIS**

Fiona Kriaris is a health and fitness professional with YMCA Victoria. She is pioneering mindfulness and meditation at the YMCA, to bring a more holistic approach to health and fitness. A graduate of the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Centre in Los Angeles, Fiona's studies in this field extend internationally, and she brings global leading trends to a local environment with compassion and integrity.



VISUALISE YOUR POTENTIAL

Fiona Kriaris explains the 3-step visualisation process and why everyone can benefit.

Mental practice is a form of visualisation and can be a powerful tool. By simply visualising yourself practicing a skill, it can help develop and reinforce the skill in real life, as the brain doesn't differentiate between the visualisation to the real activity. Through visualisation, the same regions of the brain are stimulated with the neural pathways being created in the same way when the actual behaviour is carried out.

Some of the benefits of this cognitive practice are improved attention, perception, and memory, while also enhancing motivation, confidence, performance and self-efficacy. This is why so many world-class athletes use this mental practice as a method to support their training to achieve their goals. However, this isn't just for high performing athletes, anyone can reap the benefits.

A study on visualisation and weight training compared two groups. One group attended the gym to participate

in weight training exercises while the other group were only allowed to use visualisation. The study revealed that the group attending the gym gained a 30% increase in strength. Surprisingly, the group using visualisation only, gained close to half of that strength with 13.5%, and still maintained the results three months later.

How does it work?

The reticular activating system (RAS) is the navigator of the brain that filters information, selecting what things to notice and omit from our experience, influencing everything that makes up our beliefs, thoughts and emotions. We can control what our RAS selects by using our attention wisely.

Attention is one of our most precious commodities, yet our habitual responses often override our ability to choose what we focus on and bring to our awareness. The cognitive process of attention can be regulated and this can assist in shaping a

higher quality of life and utilising our best potential. A simple micro-moment throughout the day can be taken to intentionally select what you want your attention to focus on. For a more dedicated practice you can use this 3-step visualisation process.

3-step visualisation process:

- ▶ Take an inward glance by closing your eyes.
- ▶ Mentally begin to repeat in your mind your desired outcome, then begin to incorporate positive emotions. Combining the mental and emotional response will strengthen the visualisation and in turn, create greater activation of the brain. Spend as much time as you like here.
- ▶ Repeat the process to enhance the practice.

Whatever you practice you cultivate, start thinking and feeling positive experiences and see how it transpires in your everyday life! ▼

**MARNIE NITSCHKE**

Marnie is an Accredited Practising Dietitian at www.n4foodandhealth.com. She works in private practise consulting at Everyday Nutrition in Glen Iris www.everydaynutrition.com.au and in clinical nutrition at Epworth Healthcare.

EATING BY THE SEASON

We explore the perks of seasonal eating in autumn with dietitian **Marnie Nitschke**.

After a long hot summer, many of us will be more than happy to welcome the change in season to cooler weather, and the new seasonal produce that comes with it.

So what's in season this autumn?

Fruits:

Apples, bananas, figs and strawberries, persimmon, pomegranate, grapes, melon, pear (including nashi) and rhubarb.

Citrus fruits – grapefruit, mandarins, and oranges are delicious autumn choices.

Vegetables:

Beans, beetroot, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, capsicum, carrot, cauliflower, celery, chillies, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, leeks, lettuce, onions, parsnip, peas, potatoes, pumpkin, silverbeet, spinach, spring onion, squash, sweet potato, tomatoes and zucchini.

Herbs:

Basil, chervil, chives, coriander, dill,

mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary, tarragon, thyme and sage.

There are many great reasons to look to the seasons for eating and cooking inspiration. Colour, flavour, convenience and cost are just some. So rather than rehashing the same recipes you've been using for months, why not look around your local grocer or market. Take note of the freshest, most vibrant looking fruits and vegetables. Chat to the experts, and ask them what they'd recommend, and how they like to cook it at home.

Things to remember:

Seasonal produce is more nutrient-dense and less costly.

Antioxidants, vitamins and minerals are found at their highest levels in fresh, naturally ripened produce. Sure, you can find just about any fruit or vegetable you need these days at the big supermarkets. Let's think about food miles and the loss of nutrition incurred by shipping these in from other countries. You'll also notice a

bigger (sometimes shocking) price-tag on produce available out of season, which can significantly impact on your weekly budget.

Seasonal fruit and veggies taste better and are less perishable.

When produce is grown locally, naturally ripened, picked and sent straight to market, it tastes so much better. It will also last longer once it reaches your fridge or fruit bowl, meaning less goes to waste. Another win for the weekly food budget!

Here's a round-up of our recipes using seasonal produce in this edition:

- ▶ Roasted cauliflower salad, p.5
- ▶ Vietnamese salad, p.5
- ▶ Ginger pear muffins, p.13
- ▶ Stuffed capsicum with sweet potato chips, p.16
- ▶ Roasted chickpeas and vegetables with yoghurt dressing, p.16
- ▶ Zucchini and ricotta meatballs, p.17
- ▶ Chilli tuna spaghetti, p.17 ▼

**CATHERINE SAXELBY, FOODWATCH**

Catherine Saxelby is an Accredited Practising Dietitian and prolific on all things food and health. She has authored 12 books including *Nutrition for Life* (Hardie Grant).
Learn more: www.foodwatch.com.au

**JULIA BOASE, BLOOM NUTRITION**

Julia has deep experience with children experiencing feeding and eating difficulties. Her website bloomnutritionstudio.com.au is dedicated to providing nutrition tips and fuss free recipes. She consults in Adelaide at liveyeaters.com.au.



ROASTED CAULIFLOWER SALAD

Makes: 4 serves

Julia's tip is to prep the cauliflower, pearl barley and dressing ahead, so you can simply layer it and add the baby spinach for minimal fuss come mealtimes.

INGREDIENTS

1 whole cauliflower cut into florets
2 tbsp olive oil

SPICE MIX

1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground coriander
1/8 tsp cayenne pepper (more if you like it spicy!)
1 tbsp turmeric
1 cup of pearl barley – cooked as per instructions on packet
1 bag of baby spinach
Pepitas

METHOD

1. Roughly chop the cauliflower into florets, and mix spices together to create a spice mix.
2. Toss in olive oil then in the spice mix.
3. Spread cauliflower on a baking tray and cook for about 20 minutes at 180°C (or until a skewer will pass through easily). Remove from oven and allow to cool.
4. Whilst cauliflower is baking, cook pearl barley according to instructions on packet.
5. Mix yoghurt, mustard and lemon juice together in a bowl.
6. To assemble, add about a cup of baby spinach to each bowl. Layer with 1/2 cup of cooked barley and scatter with a 1/4 of the cauliflower florets. Dollop around dressing and sprinkle with a few pepitas. ▼

DRESSING

200g natural yoghurt
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
Zest and juice of 1/2 lemon

VIETNAMESE SALAD

This salad is a fresh and zesty accompaniment to grilled fish on the barbecue. It has almost no fat, heaps of fibre and still turns out fine if you haven't got the turnip.

Makes: 6-8 serves

INGREDIENTS

2 cups finely shredded Chinese cabbage
2 Lebanese cucumbers, cut into matchsticks
1 small turnip, peeled and cut into matchsticks
1 carrot, peeled and cut into matchsticks
1 bunch mint leaves, picked
1 bunch chives, cut into 2cm lengths
1 small red chilli, finely sliced
1-2 tbsp chopped peanuts

DRESSING

1/4 cup white vinegar
2 tbsp sugar
2 tsp fish sauce

METHOD

1. Place all the ingredients, except the peanuts, into a large mixing bowl.
2. To make dressing, whisk white vinegar, sugar and fish sauce together until the sugar disappears.
3. Just before serving, pour over the dressing and toss well.
4. Serve sprinkled with chopped peanuts. ▼



**MARNIE NITSCHKE**

Marnie is an Accredited Practising Dietitian at www.n4foodandhealth.com. She works in private practise consulting at Everyday Nutrition in Glen Iris www.everydaynutrition.com.au and in clinical nutrition at Epworth Healthcare.

WHY YOU SHOULD EXERCISE WHEN YOU LEAST FEEL LIKE IT

If you're feeling too flat or stressed out to exercise, maybe these are the exact reasons you should be making it a priority.

Why exercise? Sometimes it can be difficult to find the time and motivation to get out and get active, especially when we're under the pump and feel like we're running on empty. However, you might be surprised to learn how being active can improve your energy levels and benefit your mental and physical health.

Physiological benefits of exercise

Many of the benefits of exercise start with circulation. The simple act of moving your body and getting your heart rate up, gets more blood circulating around your body. This delivers more blood to the working muscles, and with it oxygen and glucose to power the muscles and produce energy.

- ▶ Aerobic exercise (the type that gets you huffing and puffing) increases lung capacity and fitness, and helps burn energy for better weight control.
- ▶ Increased circulation results in better elasticity of our arteries, lower blood pressure, and reduced risk of blockages that lead to heart attacks, blood clots and stroke.
- ▶ Whether we're playing soccer at the park, bouncing on the trampoline or working out at the gym, we're using up excess glucose in our blood, which helps stabilise our blood sugar levels, and can reduce our risk of developing diabetes.
- ▶ Exercise - especially the muscle-building type - increases



EXERCISE AIDS IN BETTER BLOOD FLOW AND OXYGEN SUPPLY TO THE BRAIN

the effectiveness of the hormone insulin (essential for blood glucose control). Better insulin sensitivity means lower insulin levels, less body fat storage, and better 'metabolic health'.

- ▶ Increased blood flow and body movement also enables our lymphatic system to 'pump' lymphatic fluids through the body, which removes toxins and other harmful materials.

Exercise can improve our mood and mental performance

It's also well known that exercise is a stress buster and mood booster. But how does this work? For a start, exercise helps get you out of your head and into your physical environment. Even if doing it alone, going for a walk, run, spin class or swim, usually means you're around other people which makes you feel socially connected. It's an added bonus to exercise outdoors where you



READY TO GET ACTIVE?

Across Victoria the YMCA has a range of programs and facilities to help get you moving.

Whether it's a swim at your local pool, getting active in a group fitness class, or a gym where qualified instructors will set you up with a tailored program, the Y has lots of options. Visit victoria.ymca.org.au/locate

can reconnect with the natural environment. Getting out and moving your body helps to reconnect with the world around you, and keeps things in perspective.

- ▶ Exercise aids in better blood flow and oxygen supply to the brain, which stimulates growth and renewal of brain tissue. This means better memory, mental clarity and performance.
- ▶ When we're stressed, our bodies produce increased levels of chemicals like adrenaline and cortisol. Although these would be useful if we needed to escape quickly from physical danger, they're not so helpful in managing modern day stress. Exercise reduces production of these stress chemicals, and increases their breakdown and metabolism, helping us feel calmer and less emotionally reactive.
- ▶ Physical activity also improves our mood by stimulating the production of endorphins in the brain. Endorphins are chemicals that act as powerful natural painkillers and mood elevators, which is why we can experience a natural 'high' after a workout.

Less tension, and more sleep

Gentle moving and stretching helps to reduce tension, especially in the neck and shoulders. It forces us to change our posture and use different muscle groups to those we over-work when we're hunching over computers, steering wheels, and craning our necks looking at our phones.

Exercise has also been shown to help us sleep better. Studies show that regular moderate intensity exercise can help us fall asleep quicker, stay asleep longer and improve sleep quality. And we all know what a huge difference it makes to get a good night's sleep! ▼

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AUTHOR



EBONY MCCORKELL, APD.

Ebony McCorkell is an Accredited Practising Dietitian and chef who has special interests in plant-based nutrition and gut health. She is passionate about improving cooking skills and helping people create delicious, satisfying, and sustainable meals. Follow Ebony at www.ebnutrition.net.au, on Facebook www.facebook.com/ebnutrition and on Instagram [eb_nutrition](https://www.instagram.com/eb_nutrition)

FEATURE ARTICLE

AUTUMN 2020

THE BENEFITS OF PLANT-BASED DIETS

Dietitian **Ebony McCorkell** shows us the ropes of plant-based eating and why it's a good idea for everyone to eat more plants.

What does plant-based eating mean?

Plant-based diets are essentially ways of eating which reduce the consumption of meat and animal products. Over the last few years there has been a boom in the plant-based foods market, with an increasing number of people across the globe trying to decrease their intake of animal products. Their reasons range from concerns over animal welfare to climate change and personal health.

Benefits of plant-based eating:

Environment: A major study published in 2018 found meat, fish, egg and dairy production uses around 83% of the world's farmland and contributes 56-58% of food's different emissions, while only providing 37% of our protein and 18% of our calories. The researchers concluded that compared to current diets, diets that exclude animal products have the potential to reduce land used for food by a staggering 76%, including a 19% reduction in farmable land. When looking into greenhouse gas emissions, both strictly vegan diets and flexitarian diets (which limit intake of animal products to one serve of red meat and modest amounts of poultry, fish, milk and eggs) have both been predicted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by half.

Health: Plant-based diets tend to be higher in fruits, vegetables and wholegrains and lower in saturated fat and salt. These factors help to prevent diseases such as cancer, Type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. Clinical trials have also shown that vegan diets specifically can reduce inflammation in the body in patients with coronary artery disease, thereby reducing the risk of heart attack.

Ebony's take on what a balanced and delicious vegan 'day on a plate' might look like:

Breakfast	Snack
Banana smoothie with ½ cup oats, 1 banana, 1 cup calcium-fortified soy milk and 100g calcium-fortified coconut yoghurt.	Hummus and veggie sticks.
Lunch	Snack
Salad packed multigrain sandwich with ½ a cup of smashed chickpeas and a drizzle of vegan mayo.	Mixed nuts and a piece of fruit.
Dinner	Snack
170g tofu stir fried with 1½ cups of your favourite veggies and sauce served with a cup of brown rice.	Hot chocolate with calcium-fortified soy milk.

Whether you're looking to eliminate animal products completely or just reduce the amount you consume, every contribution has an impact on the animals, environment and your health. ▼

This is part one of two articles by Ebony McCorkell. Keep an eye out in the winter edition for part two of 'The benefits of plant-based diets', where she will look at specific nutrients and key food groups in plant-based diets.



**CHARLOTTE MILLER**

Charlotte is one of the co-founders, chefs and dietitians at We Feed You, offering healthy ready-meals which also cater for a wide range of dietary needs. Charlotte is also the Nutrition Lead for the Essendon Football Club. Learn more: www.wefeedyou.com.au

HOW NUTRITIOUS IS THE MILK YOU DRINK?

Have you ever wondered which milk is best? Dietitian and chef **Charlotte Miller** helps us navigate the nutritional content of traditional cow's milk and four popular plant based alternatives.

Cow's milk

Cow's milk contains around 8g of high biological value protein (meaning a good mix of essential amino acids) in each 250ml cup. It's also a good source of many nutrients important for bone health, including calcium (250-300mg/cup), phosphorus, magnesium and potassium.

These days, cow's milk comes in an array of different fat contents, as well as options like A2, plant sterol-enriched (for cholesterol lowering), lactose free and vitamin D enriched.

- ▶ The fat content of your milk will affect the energy (kilojoule) and saturated fat intake – the best choice will come down to each individual and their requirements.

- ▶ Some people find lactose (the natural carbohydrate in milk) a little difficult to digest, which can cause unpleasant gut symptoms. Lactose free milk simply has a natural enzyme added, which helps us to digest lactose.
- ▶ A2 milk contains no A1 beta-casein protein, but is otherwise similar to regular dairy. There is some scientific evidence that A2 milk may be better tolerated by those with dairy intolerance symptoms.

Soy milk

Traditional soy milk is made by soaking, grinding and boiling soy beans. Soy is another good source of high biological value protein (in this case around 6-7g/250ml cup), which comes in a variety of fat contents and formulations. Depending on the brand, soy milk may also contain ingredients like emulsifiers, stabilisers, flavours and sweeteners to improve texture and palatability.

- ▶ It's important to know that soy beans are not naturally a good source of calcium. Look for a product that's been fortified to provide similar amounts to dairy (at least 100mg calcium per 100ml).
- ▶ While soy milk is naturally lactose free, some can still be

allergic or intolerant to soy protein, so this milk is not necessarily going to suit everyone.

- ▶ A bonus of soy milk is that it comes with natural plant phytonutrients that can be beneficial for bone and heart health.

Rice milk

This grain-based milk option is made from milled rice and water, and like most 'non-traditional' milks, it will usually contain a number of additives to improve both the texture and flavour, making it a relatively highly processed product that can contain a lot of sugar.

- ▶ Rice milk is very low in fat, but also contains virtually no protein or valuable bone-building micronutrients like calcium, phosphorus, magnesium or vitamin D.
- ▶ Because of its poor nutrition profile, nutrition authorities advise against using rice milk as the main milk for infants, children, and nutritionally compromised or underweight individuals, unless under the advice of a trained health professional.

Almond milk

Being based on nuts, almond milk sounds like a healthy and nutritious alternative to dairy. Unfortunately, this is another milk alternative that doesn't live up to its 'health halo'.

- ▶ If you check the ingredient label of a few popular almond milk brands,

you'll find that most are between 95-98% water, with even the most 'wholesome' options offering only 5-7% almonds.

- ▶ The result is a product that is low in protein, fat and kilojoules, but also a poor source of calcium and other micronutrients, unless it's been fortified. In fact, to get the calcium content of one glass of regular milk, you'd need to eat about 100g of actual almonds!

For those who can't drink other milks, almond milk can be a convenient coffee option at your local café or in your smoothie. However, like rice milk, it's not a great dairy alternative in terms of bone health or nutrition.

Coconut milk

Despite its name, coconut is not actually a nut, so it is safe for many with nut allergies. It's also important to understand that typical coconut milks for drinking are very different from the stuff you get in a can to use in curries or desserts.

- ▶ 'Coconut beverage' drinks are based on coconut cream, diluted with water to make them less thick and rich (a decent source of fat at around 5g/cup).
- ▶ The predominant fat in coconut milk is the saturated variety, which we're advised to eat sparingly for cardiovascular health.
- ▶ Coconut milk contains virtually no protein, calcium or vitamin D unless it's been fortified, and can have an eyebrow-raising ingredients list when it comes to sugars and other fillers.

The bottom line

Some people suffer dairy allergies or intolerances, or may prefer to avoid cow's milk for ethical reasons. If you choose to use plant-based milk alternatives, make sure you're reading labels, and choosing options fortified up to 100mg/100ml with calcium. It's also a good idea to try to include plenty of calcium and protein rich foods like green leafy vegetables, nuts, seeds, and if you eat fish, choose bony varieties, for adequate nutrition and bone health. ▼



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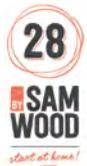
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**JULIA BOASE, BLOOM NUTRITION**

Julia has deep experience with children experiencing feeding and eating difficulties. Her website bloomnutritionstudio.com.au is dedicated to providing nutrition tips and fuss free recipes. She consults in Adelaide at livelyeaters.com.au.

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CORNFLAKE CHIA COOKIES

Makes: 20

Julia gives us a nutritious take on the simple corn flake cookie, with the addition of chia seeds for extra fibre and omega-3 fats. A great nut-free treat for school lunch boxes.

INGREDIENTS

125g butter softened
 ½ cup caster sugar
 1 egg
 1 cup wholemeal plain flour
 1 tsp baking powder
 2 tbsp chia seeds
 2 cups of crushed cornflakes
 Pinch of salt

METHOD

1. Heat oven to 180°C.
2. Using an electric mixer, beat butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Add the egg and beat until mixed.
3. Fold in the flour, baking powder, chia seeds, crushed cornflakes and salt.
4. Shape into small balls and place about 5cm apart on a baking tray. Cook for around 15 mins or until lightly golden.
5. Store in an airtight container in your pantry for up to 4 days or freezer for 3 months. ▼

GINGER PEAR MUFFINS

Imagine the wonderful smell of ginger and pear filling your kitchen while these are baking!

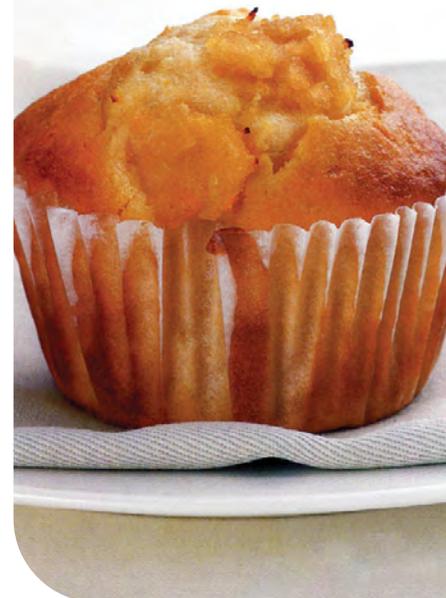
Makes: 12

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups self-raising flour
 1 cup wholemeal self-raising flour
 2 tps ground ginger
 ¼ cup brown sugar
 2 tbsp margarine, melted
 ¾ cup (190 ml) milk
 200g low fat natural yoghurt
 1 egg
 2 large, ripe pears, peeled and grated

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F).
2. Lightly grease a 12-hole muffin pan.
3. Sift flours into a large bowl, add 2 teaspoons ground ginger when sifting the flours (tip husks into the bowl, too).
4. Stir in sugar and make a well in the centre.
5. In a small bowl, whisk margarine, milk, yoghurt, egg and pear together, then add to flour mixture.
6. Stir gently until mixture is just combined but do not over beat.
7. Spoon mixture into prepared pan.
8. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until muffins are well-risen and spring back to the touch.
9. Leave in pan for a few minutes, and then transfer to a wire rack to cool, or eat warm. ▼



**TARYN RICHARDSON DIETITIAN & SPORTS DIETITIAN**

Taryn is the founder of Dietitian Approved. She is a firm believer that healthy eating shouldn't be HARD or BORING. For more info and free recipes: dietitianapproved.com.au

WHAT IS INTERMITTENT FASTING? SHOULD YOU TRY IT?

Advanced Sports Dietitian **Taryn Richardson** delves into the science behind this latest dietary trend and whether intermittent fasting really is the answer we've all been looking for.

What is Intermittent Fasting?

Intermittent fasting encompasses several different dietary behaviours, all of which focus on controlling the period in which food is consumed. Unlike traditional diets, intermittent fasting doesn't restrict the types of foods consumed during feeding times.

The popularity of intermittent fasting has boomed in recent years, with many people being attracted by claims of superior weight loss, metabolic and digestive health benefits. Let's take a closer look at the science behind these claims.

The three most popular methods that are circulating the health and fitness industry are:

▶ Time-Restricted Feeding

Daily fasting for a minimum of 12 hours (the most common fast is 16 hours, with 8 hours during the day to eat, for example only eating between 11am and 7pm).

▶ Alternate Day Fasting

Involves cycling between one day of "fasting" and one day of consuming your regular diet. On the "fasting" day, you consume less than ~25% of your daily energy requirements. For an average adult this equates

to ~2175kJ/519 calories – or roughly equivalent to your lunchtime chicken sandwich.

▶ The 5 and 2 Method

This involves energy restriction to less than 25% of requirements for two non-consecutive days per week (around 500 calories or 2000kJ per day). While the other 5 days you eat as per usual.

The Health Benefits

Studies of intermittent fasting show that it can result in significant weight loss (4-8% of body weight) in the short-term (typically 6-12 weeks). Sounds great right? However, when this result is compared to traditional calorie restricted diets, there appears to be no difference in weight loss between the groups. An interesting trend seen, however, was less loss of fat-free mass (muscle) during intermittent fasting, compared to traditional dieting.

Intermittent fasting has been linked to reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, however with the current research available it is difficult to observe if





benefits are unique to fasting, or if they simply occur as a result of weight loss. These benefits include improvements in cholesterol (lowered LDL and total cholesterol), triglycerides, blood pressure, and inflammatory and oxidative stress markers. Fasting has also shown decreases in fasting insulin levels and insulin resistance - good news for the prevention and management of Type 2 diabetes.

Is fasting an option for you?

When considering changing up your dietary routine, one of the most important questions to ask is, “is this sustainable long-term for your lifestyle?”. Are you thinking about fasting just for the promised quick weight loss? If so, you may like to reconsider. Dietary modifications focused on short-term, weight or body size goals do not usually result in long-term improvements to our weight or health.

Intermittent fasting might work for you if:

- ▶ You have a fairly neutral, pragmatic, ‘food is fuel’ outlook when it comes to food and eating.
- ▶ You feel good and can focus well on an empty stomach.
- ▶ Fasting fits easily into your lifestyle and usual routine.

You’re likely to find intermittent fasting difficult and unsustainable if:

- ▶ You have an intense relationship with food, and focus a lot on planning, cooking and socialising over meals.
 - ▶ You tend to feel irritable, lethargic and have difficulty focusing when you’re hungry.
 - ▶ You can’t get to sleep when hungry and wake up in the morning with a raging appetite for breakfast.

How will intermittent fasting affect your workout or endurance?

Whether you’re a recreational athlete or a serious competitor, having enough fuel in the tank is essential to get you through training sessions at your best.

Studies show that during higher intensity exercise our body is reliant on carbohydrate (rather than fat) as the primary fuel. Without enough carbohydrate available, we feel more fatigued, and are forced to slow down, in order to utilise fat stores as a fuel. What does this mean in practise?

If your daily training routine is more aerobic, slow and steady style, then fasting may not impact too much on

performance. Planning rest days or shorter, easier, recovery type sessions on your fasting days could be the way around this.

If you’re more interested in short, sharp, high-intensity sessions, you would struggle to get the best performance out of your session in a prolonged fasted state.

Another consideration here is that recovery is significantly impacted if you’re not able to refuel after a training session. If you can’t refuel post-exercise, it may result in muscle breakdown and inadequate energy for training on subsequent days.

The final word

Although intermittent fasting may look good on paper, there is still inadequate research to promote it globally as a superior method for weight loss or prevention of chronic disease in the long-term.

Our bodies are good at playing catch up, and it’s common for people to report excessive hunger and overeating outside of fasting times. For some, fasting can trigger disordered eating behaviours (e.g. bingeing) and a troubled relationship with food.

At the end of the day, it doesn’t matter how much weight you lose and how great you might look in the short-term – if you’re not eating healthily, your health will suffer in the long-term. The best diet is a balanced one that is not overly difficult to stick with! ▼

Fasting may not be wise for people with certain health conditions (e.g. diabetes), so consult your doctor before making any significant dietary changes. If fasting is something you want to consider – see an Accredited Practising Dietitian who can ensure you’re getting everything you need across the week, no matter what fasting program you’re on.

**SPORTS DIETITIANS AUSTRALIA (SDA)**

SDA is Australia's peak professional body for dietitians specialising in sports nutrition. See more at sportsdietitians.com.au

**ANNA DEBENHAM, APD & ALEX PARKER, APD**

Anna and Alex are the co-founders of The Biting Truth and are dietitians, food bloggers and speakers. This duo has a no-nonsense, science-based approach to nutrition and wellness. www.thebitingtruth.com



STUFFED CAPSICUM WITH SWEET POTATO CHIPS

Makes: 4

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1 cup quinoa, uncooked | 1 tsp minced garlic |
| 4 red capsicums, deseeded, tops removed | ½ tsp fresh oregano |
| 1 tbsp olive oil | ½ tsp fresh rosemary |
| 400g sweet potato, peeled, cut into chip slices | 3 carrots, finely diced |
| 30g pine nuts, toasted | 3 stalks of celery, diced |
| 1 onion, finely diced | 1 small eggplant, cubed |
| 300g lean beef mince | 1 tsp honey |
| | ½ tsp cinnamon |
| | 80g feta cheese, to crumble on top |

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Fill a small heavy-bottomed saucepan with 2 cups of water, add quinoa and bring to the boil, then simmer over low heat until water evaporates (approximately 20 minutes).
3. Meanwhile, spray capsicums with oil, place on a baking tray and roast in the oven for 15 minutes.
4. Toast pine nuts in a frying pan until golden (5 minutes) and set aside.
5. Place oil and onions in a large pan and cook, stirring occasionally until soft (2-3 minutes). Add beef mince, garlic, oregano and rosemary and stir until beef mince is browned. Lastly, add carrots, celery, and eggplant and cook for another 10 minutes to allow the flavours to meld. Add cooked quinoa to the mixture.
6. Cut the capsicums in half, fill with mince and quinoa mixture, and top with crumbled feta.
7. Place the sweet potato chips and the capsicums on a tray with baking paper. Top the sweet potato chips with honey and cinnamon.
8. Cook both the chips and capsicum for 20 minutes, then serve. ▼

ROASTED CHICKPEAS & VEG WITH YOGHURT DRESSING

Serves: 4-6

A warming, nutrient packed autumn salad guaranteed to taste as good as it smells.

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| ¼ kent pumpkin, sliced (approx. 1kg) | drained, rinsed |
| 1 beetroot, diced into large chunks | 3 tbsp Greek yoghurt |
| 1½ tbsp extra virgin olive oil | ½ lemon, juiced |
| 1½ tsp cinnamon, ground salt and pepper, to season | 1 clove garlic, minced |
| 2 zucchinis, chopped lengthways | 1 tsp pine nuts |
| 1 rosemary sprig | |
| 1 can chickpeas, | |

DRESSING

Mix the Greek yoghurt, lemon, garlic, salt and pepper.

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Lay out pumpkin and beetroot on a tray lined with baking paper. Drizzle with half the olive oil, sprinkle with cinnamon and season with salt and pepper. Toss to coat. Then transfer tray to oven.
3. After 20-30 minutes, take the tray out of the oven and add zucchini, rosemary and chickpeas. Season with olive oil, cinnamon, salt and pepper and return to the oven for a further 15-20 minutes.
4. Remove tray from oven and allow to cool, drizzle with yoghurt dressing, sprinkle with pine nuts and tuck in! ▼





DR JOANNA MCMILLAN AND MELISSA CLARKE

Dr Joanna McMillan is a PhD qualified Nutrition Scientist and Accredited Practising Dietitian. Born in Scotland, she is now one of Australia's favourite and most trusted health and wellbeing experts. Joanna is a regular on television, most recently hosting the ABC's series Gut Revolution and Beating Diabetes; she is also a regular commentator on Channel 9's Today Show. Co-author Melissa Clark is a professionally trained caterer.

TUNA CHILLI SPAGHETTI

Serves: 4 | *Note, this is an edited extract from the original recipe.*

This pasta is quick to throw together, tastes divine and uses lots of pantry essentials, so it's perfect for when you have very little in the fridge.

INGREDIENTS

400g wholemeal spaghetti
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
8 mushrooms (about 200g), finely diced
1 red onion, finely diced
1 garlic clove, crushed
2 anchovy fillets
425g tin tuna, drained
1 bird's eye chilli, finely chopped (optional)
2 x 400g tins no-added-salt crushed tomatoes
1 tbsp flat-leaf parsley leaves, roughly chopped
120g baby spinach
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
60g feta cheese or soft goat's cheese, crumbled

METHOD

1. Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil. Cook the pasta according to the packet instructions until al dente, then drain.
2. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Sauté the mushrooms, onion, garlic and anchovies until softened. Stir in the tuna and chilli, if using. Add the tomatoes and parsley. Gently simmer for 10 minutes or until the sauce has thickened slightly.
3. Stir in the spinach and season with black pepper.
4. Stir the pasta through the sauce or divide the pasta among serving bowls and top with the sauce.
5. Serve sprinkled with the crumbled feta. ▼



RICOTTA ZUCCHINI MEATBALLS

Serves: 8 | *Note, this is an edited extract from the original recipe.*

This recipe makes enough meatballs for two meals for a family of four, so you can serve half now and freeze the rest for another meal with a fresh batch of polenta.

INGREDIENTS

500g extra lean beef mince
500g extra lean pork mince
1 large zucchini, grated
1½ cups (150g) finely diced mushrooms
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
⅓ cup flat-leaf parsley leaves, finely chopped
2 tbsp salted capers, rinsed and chopped
½ cup (115g) ricotta cheese
2 large eggs
½ tsp ground black pepper
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
700ml jar tomato passata (puréed tomatoes)
Basil leaves, to serve
Soft polenta (serves 4)
1 tsp salt
1 cup (190g) polenta
½ cup (40g) grated parmesan cheese
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

METHOD

1. Add the beef, pork, zucchini, mushrooms, onion, garlic, parsley, capers, ricotta, eggs and pepper to a large bowl. Mix with your hands until well combined. Roll into balls about the size of a golf ball.
2. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
3. Heat oil in a large ovenproof frying pan. Gently fry the meatballs over medium heat in several batches until browned. Return meatballs to the pan and pour in the passata. Half-fill the passata jar with water and shake, then pour into the pan. Cover the pan, transfer to the oven and bake for 30–35 minutes until the sauce is rich in colour.
4. To cook the polenta, combine 4 cups (1 litre) of water and the salt in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Slowly pour in the polenta while whisking to ensure there are no lumps. Simmer the polenta, stirring often, for 15 minutes. Stir in the grated parmesan and the oil.
5. Serve the polenta immediately, topped with the meatballs and basil leaves. ▼



Images and text from *The Feel-Good Family Food Plan* by Dr Joanna McMillan with Melissa Clark, photography by Alan Benson. Murdoch Books RRP \$35.00.

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MORE INFO.

**REBECCA GAWTHORNE**

Lover of health, fitness and summer, Rebecca is a dedicated and energetic dietitian with a powerful influence in the online health space. Rebecca has extensive experience in working with brands to advocate healthy, nutritious living and consumer education. You can find out more on Instagram @nourish_naturally or via her blog rebeccagawthorne.com.au

WHAT IS KOMBUCHA, AND WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?

Dietitian **Rebecca Gawthorne** takes a look at kombucha – one of the biggest new players in the world of fermented food.

Kombucha is a fermented tea that originated in China centuries ago. It's popularity and commercial production has boomed in recent years, resulting in kombucha being widely available now in Australian supermarkets, cafes and even convenience stores.

Kombucha is made by combining black or green tea, sugar, and a symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast known as SCOBY, then left to brew. During brewing, the SCOBY ferments (i.e. breaks down) the sugar; changing the polyphenols in the tea to form various acids and alcohols that give kombucha its sharp taste.

It is these organic compounds formed during fermentation that give kombucha its health benefits. Although there is no hard evidence for the probiotic benefits of kombucha, it does contain several species of lactic-acid bacteria that have been associated with probiotic health benefits. Better diversity of gut bacteria is thought to assist digestion, reduce inflammation in the gut, and even influence mood and energy levels.

The fermentation process also forms carbon dioxide gas, which gives

kombucha its bubbles – making it a refreshing effervescent drink that can be a great alternative to sugar laden soft drinks.

Choosing a kombucha

The final nutrition composition and potential health benefits of kombucha will depend on many factors. These include:

- ▶ Initial concentrations of tea and sugar
- ▶ The species and strain of bacteria and yeast used
- ▶ Fermentation time and temperature
- ▶ Residual sugar levels in the final product

One option is to brew your own kombucha, or otherwise purchase one of the many commercial brews available. When choosing a commercial kombucha, you might like to look at:

The bacteria used – some species and strains have been well-researched for their health benefits and ability to colonise our gut. Some bacteria, (e.g. *Bacillus Coagulans*) can survive higher temperatures, meaning refrigeration is not required.

Brewing time – kombucha is brewed from 7 to 30 plus days. A longer brewing time results in a lower sugar content in

the final kombucha product and more organic compounds produced.

How it tastes – some kombuchas can have a bitter, vinegary taste, so finding one you enjoy the taste of is important.

Which kombucha should you buy?

Use the points above to guide your kombucha purchase. To weigh up sugar content, use the 'sugars per 100ml' on the nutrition information panel to guide you. Consider that most soft drinks contain around 10g sugar/100ml, and most juices have between 8-10g/100ml. Commercial kombucha has a wide variety of sugar contents, anywhere from 0-6g/100ml. So choose wisely!

Take home message

There are many factors that influence your gut health. Eating a wide variety of nutritious foods, especially plant foods, is key. Kombucha is a great alternative to sugar-laden soft drinks, energy drinks and alcohol. While there is not enough evidence to use kombucha to treat medical conditions, it's a refreshing change, and may have some probiotic and antioxidant benefits. ▼





This is an edited version of information available from the Dietitians Association of Australia, Smart Eating for a Healthier You Fast Fact 'Extra virgin olive oil - the latest update'. This is designed to complement advice from an Accredited Practising Dietitian. To find an Accredited Practising Dietitian who can provide personalised nutrition advice and assist you in reaching your health and nutrition goals, visit: daa.asn.au/find-an-apd/

NUTRITION SPOTLIGHT: EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL



The experts at Dietitians Association of Australia give us the scoop on why this oil is stellar for your health.

What is extra virgin olive oil?

- ▶ Extra virgin olive oil is the fresh juice that is squeezed directly from the olive fruit. The better the quality of the olive fruit and the faster the juice is squeezed, the higher the quality of the oil produced is.
- ▶ Extra virgin olive oil is natural and not refined or extracted using chemicals or heat, leaving it high in natural antioxidants and fats which are beneficial for health.
- ▶ The main difference between extra virgin olive oil and other olive oils is how the oil is extracted from the olives. Less expensive 'light' or 'blended' olive oils are usually refined blends, extracted using chemicals and heat that reduce the flavour and nutrition content of the oils.

Is extra virgin olive oil good for health?

Extra virgin olive oil is the main source of fat in a Mediterranean-style diet. There is a body of established research showing a Mediterranean-style diet is good for health, for example:

- ▶ Weight control – evidence shows that people who consume a Mediterranean style diet usually have a lower body weight and are able to maintain it for longer.
- ▶ Heart health – the high levels of antioxidants found in extra virgin olive oil can help to prevent and reduce diseases associated with the heart and blood vessels.

Tips for choosing high quality extra virgin olive oil

- ▶ Make sure you look for products clearly labelled 'extra virgin'.
- ▶ Oils, which have been cold pressed within 4–6 hours of harvesting, will usually result in a better quality product.

- ▶ Look for the harvest date to ensure you are buying the freshest and healthiest oil. Olive oil is best used within 12–14 months from the time of harvest. Australian olive oils are harvested between March and June each year.
- ▶ Buy Australian, as locally grown extra virgin olive oils don't have to travel so far, resulting in fresher, higher quality.
- ▶ Check if the oil you are buying is certified as meeting the extra virgin grade requirements (look for the Australian Olive Association symbol on the pack).

Top Tip – Once opened, use oil within 4–6 weeks to ensure it has the best flavour and health benefits.

How to include extra virgin olive oil in the diet

- ▶ Drizzle over salads, raw or roasted vegetables or pasta.
- ▶ You can cook with extra virgin olive oil at standard cooking temperatures (120°C–200°C). High quality extra virgin olive oil has a reasonably high smoke point, around 200°C–210°C.
- ▶ Use extra virgin olive oil to replace butter or other oils in baking (choose a mild flavoured variant when baking sweets). ▼



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Dr Joanna McMillan is a PhD qualified Nutrition Scientist and Accredited Practising Dietitian. She is one of Australia's favourite and most trusted health and wellbeing experts, appearing regularly on television, radio and in a variety of online and print publications.

Co-author Melissa Clark – a professionally trained caterer - makes really delicious food for companies, private clients, friends and family.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Providing practical solutions, easy-to-follow advice and expert tips, *The Feel-Good Family Food Plan* will help you get homemade, delicious meals on the table, even on the most hectic days. Inside this super helpful guide you'll find:

- Tips for creating healthy eating habits and portion control
- 60 weeknight dinners the whole family will love
- 4 weeks of meal plans taking the stress out of shopping and cooking
- Quick healthy breakfasts, lunch box ideas and snacks, for fuel on the run



- Suggestions for feeding fussy eaters and getting kids to love veggies
- Plant-rich meals to encourage good eating habits for life, and
- Tips for savvy shopping, storing and freezing.

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