

# Not all raw foods are created equal

Respected raw food authority Jill Swyers argues for balance

**W**hy is it that when we see the word 'healthy' anywhere we immediately believe it is good for us?

Take raw foods for example: delicious; tasty; gourmet. Yes, raw foods have amazing gourmet meals, but that does not necessarily mean that the dishes are healthily balanced! This cannot be stressed enough, especially when transitioning to vegetarian, vegan or raw food diets – when removing a food, it has to be replaced in terms of nutrition.

**When looking for a healthy change, guidance is vitally important.**

In my previous life, I worked in restaurants, hotels and catering companies around the world, including

my own event catering business. Many of the meals were exceedingly rich, beautiful and gourmet and, while delicious, we cannot live on gourmet meals. Too many people try to, which is one of the many reasons why people these days have health challenges including obesity.

I have been very fortunate in the Raw Food life to have attended Hippocrates Health Institute in 1998, at the beginning of my Living Foods career. Had I attended elsewhere as a chef, I may not have understood the Balance of Nutrition.

Having learnt about wheatgrass, sprouts, green protein energy juices and soups and oxygenated foods to have on a daily basis, I then realised I was on the right track! It took time for my mind to adjust but I am a believer.

I have heard so many times from people who have decided to eat Raw Foods and read the internet to get more information. What they end up doing is deciding what looks tasty, sweet and delicious, and then often they become unwell. I remember, particularly, someone calling me and saying that they had followed the advice of three Raw Food books, and their skin was going yellow! After reading a copy of their food diary, it turned out they were eating the equivalent of muffins and not much else! Yes, the 'muffins' were raw, but the body cannot survive on or break down heavy-duty foods alone. That would be like attempting to live on conventional bread and cakes!

I was also recently contacted by someone who needed help with Raw Foods. As far as he was concerned, he already knew quite a lot about it as he had been reading online about it for all of two weeks!

And that is the problem – too many of us attempt to learn from the internet or books, gleaning bits of information here and there, but end up, more often than not, missing out on the basics necessary for a balanced and sustainable food lifestyle.

For example, we can all agree that nuts are healthy and can provide important nutrients. However, some people eat nuts at every meal, every day. While nuts are high in protein and healthy fats, even after soaking in water overnight to release toxins and enzyme inhibitors, they can still be hard on digestion and especially on the liver. To me, that is a heavy-duty food and should not be eaten so frequently, especially if going to sleep at night soon after a meal. Personally, I believe nuts need to be processed in a food processor or blended to make them easier to break down, aiding absorption by the body.

So, you might ask, what do I advocate? First and foremost, seek professional guidance when changing to a Raw and Living Foods lifestyle. If one receives professional guidance, then to begin with the body goes through a cleansing process, with detoxification of the liver. At the same time, though, it is important to nourish the body with the appropriate Living and Raw Foods while going through this process.

The word 'detox' has become quite popular in recent years, but most of us could benefit with doing it just once or twice a year – it is really about keeping the body well nourished.

Understand that change is gradual, and by taking it one step at a time with guidance, you can achieve the balance that is right for you, and not some arbitrary standard espoused somewhere on the internet.



**Jill Swyers** is a Hippocrates Health Educator, consultant, speaker and teacher. [www.jillswyers.com](http://www.jillswyers.com), [info@jillswyers.com](mailto:info@jillswyers.com)

