


CLEAN PLATE

CLEAN SLATE

SPICES ARE THE NEW KALE, AND FIBRE IS THE NEW PALEO. IF DIETARY TRENDS ARE ANYTHING TO GO BY, HERE'S WHAT'S ON THE MENU FOR 2018.

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With a new year comes new dietary trends. It's as inevitable as the next season of *MasterChef*, exciting our palate and providing us with the perfect opportunity to give ourselves a dietary overhaul – or perhaps just add a little zest. So, what can we expect to see emerge or expand over the course of 2018? Plenty if past years are anything to go by.

“I think we’re starting to become a little more savvy about crash diets,” says Gemma Clark, clinical nutritionist and founder of The Sprout Nutrition & Wellness. “Let’s be real, they will always be around, and there will always be someone making money out of them; but for the most

part, I think women, in particular, are starting to like the idea of balance more than restrictive fad diets.”

The new year looks like it will finally, once and for all, kill off the low-fat era.

“Research is continuing to promote the benefits of including healthy fats in our diets and they are so important for so many things – hormones, energy, body composition, hair and skin, energy, the list goes on,” says Clark.

The brief rise of nutritionism – isolating nutrients in order to make food and our health more of a science – also appears to be getting the cold shoulder. Yes, that means it’s ok to love food again; you don’t have to pull

it apart, break it down and analyse its every component. When it comes to natural, whole foods, it’s the sum of its parts that imparts the magic, not the detail.

“There is definitely a move towards looking at the total diet and diet pattern rather than isolating single nutrients,” says Kate Gudorf, dietitian and spokesperson for the Dietitian’s Association of Australia. “This is a welcome change from past trends that saw individual nutrients or food groups being singled out as good or bad. For people wanting to eat healthy in the new year, these changes should help make that easier. Remember, we eat food, not nutrients.”

YOUR MENU CIRCA 2018

WELCOMING BACK THE PRODIGAL CARBS

That’s right, they’re back – sort of. It’s just that we’re not calling them carbs anymore, we’re calling them fibre. And in 2018, fibre is the new black.

“A lack of fibre can lead you to overeat, struggle with an insatiable appetite, and cause havoc with your health and weight loss goals,” says Larina Robinson, nutritionist and dietitian from The Body Dietetics.

“Always choose the higher fibre option to help naturally keep your portions lower and your calories down. Remember, dietary fibre doesn’t get digested by the body, so those fibre calories don’t count.”

Fibre’s most well-known role is that of allowing efficient elimination of waste and toxins. However, research is increasingly finding out that fibre plays a crucial role in lowering cholesterol, controlling weight, managing diabetes and preventing disease.

Current recommendations are for 25g of fibre per day for women and 30g for men.

“That sounds like a lot, but by eating a large variety of plant-based foods you will get to your daily target with ease,” says Alexandra Handreck, clinical nutritionist. “Some examples of fibre-rich foods include 3g of fibre per banana, 16g of fibre per cup of lentils, 8g of fibre per cup of raspberries, 5g of fibre per cup of cooked cauliflower, 4g of fibre per cup of cooked quinoa and 4g per medium sweet potato.

“But note, if you intend to up your fibre intake, do so gradually, and with an increased intake of water to avoid digestive issues.”

GUT HEALTH FOCUS

With paleo in decline, gut health is likely to become a major health focus, which means all things probiotic are likely to take centre stage.

“We predict a big increase in the interest in probiotics,” says Alex Parker, dietitian and co-founder of The Biting Truth. “We’ve started to see more kefir products pop up on supermarket shelves and we expect this to continue. Kefir is a probiotic drink made from grains, which

act like the starter culture in yoghurt. Traditionally the grains are added to milk and fermented via the lactose.”

Parker agrees. “More and more people are looking at the link between gut health and its impact on the brain, mood and performance,” she says. “We foresee huge trends in gut-related diets, such as the low FODMAP diet, in 2018 as individuals seek to improve their gut health. This diet will involve people limit the amount of ‘gassy foods’ that they consume, eg. cabbage, beans, onions and stone fruit.”

Addressing gut health may also help deal with undiagnosed and untreated food sensitivities, says naturopath and nutritionist Kate Johnston.

“Unlike a food allergy where the reaction is immediate or up to four hours following exposure, food sensitivities affect you cumulatively and are usually a secondary issue caused by impaired gut function or hyperpermeability,” she says. “Figuring out the foods you are reacting to is an important step in reducing inflammation, improving gut health, and recovering from many chronic conditions such as eczema, IBS, chronic fatigue and even hormonal imbalances.”

GETTING SPICY

Australians have been getting hotter and spicier – in terms of what we like to eat, that is. And 2018 may be the hottest year yet, benefiting our health. According to research published in the journal *Chemical Senses*, chilli, which contains capsaicin, has mild appetite-suppressing qualities, combined with the fact that spiciness in general tends to deter us from overeating.

“Research has indicated that chilli can have a positive effect on fat metabolism, blood sugar control, digestive function and has anti-inflammatory properties,” says Sharon Natoli, dietitian with Food and Nutrition Australia.

“Adding chilli or red pepper to meals can help reduce energy intake following the meal and has been shown in some instances to have cholesterol-lowering properties. In people with diabetes, the active ingredient in chilli, capsaicin, is used as an alternative therapy for diabetic neuropathy. Animal studies have also demonstrated an anti-tumour effect of capsaicin.”

But it’s not just about the hot stuff. Another of the great Indian pleasures, turmeric, with its anti-inflammatory benefits and possible anti-Alzheimer’s effects, could quite possibly steal chilli’s culinary thunder. Interestingly, though, turmeric needs to be combined with chilli in order for the body to receive the full benefit.





GOING FLEXITARIAN

Yes, flexitarian is a thing – and it suits 2018's slightly decadent ways perfectly.

“We predict a definite rise in the flexitarian trend,” says Parker. “This is the movement that celebrates eating more vegies and plant-based foods without the commitment to becoming a full-time vegetarian or vegan. It’s a more flexible, long-term approach and allows people to enjoy a little bit of meat occasionally.”

Any trend that gets Australians eating more vegies get the thumbs up, as it’s an area we’ve traditionally performed poorly in.

“Currently, only seven percent of Australian adults are meeting the guidelines for vegetable intake

daily, which is an alarming statistic,” says Gudorf.

“We recommend that adults aim for five serves of vegetables daily, which is half a cup of cooked vegetables or one cup of raw/leafy vegetables.

“If you choose to focus on increasing vegetable intake, there are many ways that you could do this. Try to include vegetables with breakfast, perhaps by adding sliced tomato to your toast or making a vegetable omelette. Aim to include two to three serves of vegetables with your lunch, perhaps lettuce, beetroot and carrot on your sandwich, or have a large leafy salad with chicken and sweet potato. For dinner, aim to make half of your plate vegetables.”

GREATER MINDFULNESS

Mindful eating took off in 2017, and the new year should see it continue to skyrocket. It helps that mindful eating can be combined with virtually any dietary approach, except perhaps when munching down a post-midnight kebab.

“I think we’re entering the era of mindfulness when it comes to eating,” says Clark.

“We’ve been implementing more meditation and mindfulness into our days, but intuitive and mindful eating are making a big resurgence. This is all about listening to your body and understanding how it communicates with you to tell you what it does and doesn’t need.”

Invariably, if you listen to your body, you’ll get your food choices right.

THE INSTAGRAM DIET

The phenomenon of taking photos of the masterful dish you’ve just created, or just been served, has resulted in an indirect and unforeseen health benefit – if your meal looks colourful and interesting enough, chances are it’s healthy too.

“If you’re sick of counting calories and using maths for every meal, cut down on the hassle by infusing colour into your plate instead,” says Robinson. “Colourful water-based vegetables and fruit are nutrient-rich, low-calorie options and most contain fibre, so they help keep you satisfied.”

Then take a photo, (no photoshopping allowed).

“Take photos of everything you eat for three to four days and see if you can spot every colour of the rainbow,” says Clark. “If not, challenge yourself to get every colour into your body for the following three to four days – and that doesn’t mean scoffing a packet of Skittles.”



CHANGING FATS

Just because the low-fat diet is out, it doesn't mean that all fats are created equal. And one that had many people championing its health benefits in 2017 is being put under the microscope come 2018.

"It's time to re-assess your obsession with coconut oil," says Robinson. "The coconut oil phase has reached its peak, and while it's not inherently 'bad' for you, there are many other more nutritious oils and fats to use.

"Switch it out for extra virgin olive oil, avocado oil, ghee or cultured butter. And don't forget that a little still goes a long way! If you really want to make the most out of your fat intake, eat most of it from wholefood sources such as avocado, nuts, seeds and oily fish. They'll give you your best nutritional bang for your buck."

If you're one of those people who have avoided fats as a rule, think about introducing them.

"Studies are emerging every day, teaching us about the importance of healthy fats," says Gabriella Ratner, nutritionist. "Healthy fats do not cause weight gain; on the contrary, they increase satiety, help balance blood sugars and maintain a healthy mood."

BOOSTING WATER

Does water really qualify as a trend of dietary proportions? Well, if you look at it as arguably the most important substance we ingest, then absolutely.

"In terms of specific changes that make a drastic change quickly, try simply drinking more water," says dietitian Georgia Bevan. "Thirty-five to 45ml per kilogram of body weight will help decrease fatigue and you will be less likely to hold on to excess water through dehydration. If you struggle to drink enough, try 500ml upon waking, at least one litre at work, and a target amount – or your choosing – on your commute home and before dinner."

Carrying around a water bottle as a reminder to constantly sip can also help form the habit, while reducing your salt intake will aid hydration levels.

"Reducing salt intake will also decrease the water your body holds, thus helping to feel 'lighter'. Use spices and

fresh herbs to season dishes rather than relying on salt for taste," says Bevan.

"Reduce your intake slowly – avoiding processed sauces, pastas and packaged food – to allow your taste buds to adjust. This simple swap is a great motivator for your health journey."

JIMMINY CRICKETS

Looking for something completely new this year? Traditional dietary approaches not doing it for you?

You could try cricket flour.

Made from dried, ground up crickets, it's a nutritious high-fibre option that is winning over many a health-conscious eater. And with a future many predict to include food shortages, it does provide one alternative that is not only high in protein, vitamins and minerals, but is also – importantly – sustainable.

We are game if you are. ■

