

Dark Lunch
By Suzy Bell

It all started at a Mad Hatter's tea party in the hippy elasticated waist skirt side of Hout Bay. Alice in Wonderland was chit chatting from the telly: 'Why with an M?' said Alice. 'Why not?' said the March Hare. Alice was silent. We were wearing teacups as hats and making hot pink icing for the cup cakes. I grew up with the understanding that Mad Hatter's tea parties were about Smartie smothered cup cakes, double-thick pecan nut chocolate cake, fluffy scones with dollops of fresh cream and strawberry jam and steaming pots of Earl Grey tea. And when Rustler's Valley was a hippy carefree Rustler's Valley a Mad Hatter's tea party was about being nakedly caked in orange river mud where twelve of you and Dr Hoffman howled to a slither of a smiling moon.

It's changed! The guitars, live poetry, the drums and the didgeridoo were replaced with DJ's at Rustler's Valley playing other people's music, never their and then Rustlers Valley burnt down. And instead of Earl Grey, even Rooibos has been replaced by Green tea. Smarties and Jellytots have been replaced by fat free dried cranberries and Goji berries (the much-yakked on about antioxidant superfood). We now nibble on walnuts not biltong. Food is not cooked, it is eaten raw. Cakes are no longer baked, but made raw.

At the party in Hout Bay the raw puddings were admittedly the most delicious. I still have not forgotten the guy who has done more Vipassna's than I have juiced Coriander Cures who bought the yummy avocado biscuity pepperminty cashew nut raw cake. Those few that bought raw food to the party sat and levitated in an ecstatic glowing Goji *Aum*. They spoke with earnest about the importance of staying away from GI spikes, about replacing sea salt with Himalayan peachy crystal salt and practicing cellular hydration to detoxify body's cells... "Have you noticed the colour of our teabags lately?" asked Kerishnie, the girl with skin smooth as alabaster, a smile so serene you'd want to choke her, I mean smother her with sisterly love. "They're using unbleached tea filter paper to avoid the bleaching process used to make the tea filter paper white." Kerishnie it transpires is a raw foodist who eats hemp, instead of smoking it.

There is an organic, raw foodist movement happening in Cape Town for sure and it's not just the gathering which took place over the weekend at the Natural and Organics fair with 'conscious cooking corners' and 'organic wine gardens' and talks on 'how to choose a green car'. Yep the Landrover is out and the Toyota Prius Hybrid is in. Instead of the convenient 'aisle shopping culture' we're lured to shop organic and wholesome at the Woodstock Neighbour Goods market, The Oude Libertas market in Stellenbosch, Organic Living in Plumstead, Healthy Life at the V&A Waterfront, Nature's Lore in Noordhoek and Organics Alive in Muizenberg. We juice to cleanse and alkalise our bodies while wearing 100% organic cotton aprons and hemp G-Mo shoes. Or do we? How many of us are really juicing? How many of us are popping raw cacao beans instead of Lindt? How many of us are really reading *Odyssey* magazine and heaven forbid, Paul Coelho?

Oh and that lip gloss you're wearing – it has petroleum in it. Check that label sistah. Oh. No listed ingredients. Ditto for your lipstick. There are chemicals in our face cream, our soap, our shampoo, our washing powder, our loo-roll, our perfume, our sunscreen. I hope that is a non-toxic, deet free anti-mosquito patch you're wearing? It doesn't really end there of course. Every time we rinse an apple under a tap of non-filtered water we're adding more chlorine into our bodies. Help!

Relax. If you seek abundant health, a Goji berry smile, some semblance of emotional radiance in wanting to change your lifestyle into what superfood guru's Beryn and Peter Daniel call a 'healthstyle' then get juicing, buy a good water filter, cook with coconut oil, swop your table sea salt for Himalayan crystal salt and eat less cooked food and eat more raw. Dear Durban see what Cape Town is doing to me!

Ditch dairy? What no more full fat rhubarb strawberry yoghurt, no more salmon sashimi, no more ostrich steaks and no thanks to that sundowner gin?

To make the transition easier I trotted off to the local Kloof Medi-Spa to check out the 'Soaring Free Superfoods' raw food workshops to see what all the live foodist fuss is all about.

"Juice green leaves," insisted angelic faced Peter looking like Legolas Greenleaf the Elfin Orlando Bloom in *The Lord of the Rings*. "You strip the fibre and get the protein," he added.

After Peter's talk about how healthy hemp is there was a lone query from the packed audience: "Is hemp seed legal?" quizzed the elderly gentleman.

"20% of the hemp available makes you stoned," answered Peter.

"We want you to be bright, clever and clear" he added.

"Not stoned and stupid. Eat hemp don't smoke it," chirped his live foodist partner Beryn, an illuminating radish-cheeked magnificent portrait of health. I reckon if you took a kirlian photograph of the two of them it would crack, sizzle and radiate from the Medi-Spa in Kloof Steet to the Lighthouse on Robben Island and back. Incidentally they are both UK-trained, raw food chefs working towards "raising raw food consciousness" in South Africa and the UK and profess to eating just over a 95% raw food diet. To think Beryn grew up in her parents' bakery (King Cake) next to the chocolate buttercream tub and Peter used to go to bed with a box of icing sugar next to his bed!

At the first evening workshop they taught us how to make yummy sushi wraps, orange and pineapple smoothies, coriander and basil pesto, refried bean pate and tahina. The food tasted unbelievably good. Who knows maybe this summer I'll be the one arriving at a Holistic Super Club pool party with a Goji berry glow and a dish of raw food avo, cashew nut, peppermint cake... Oh yes and another thing, if you're new to juicing, go easy on the beetroot.

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