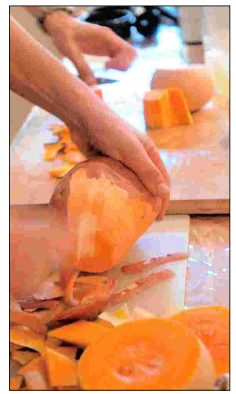




COCKTAIL KICK: Blended butternut and sweet potato soup topped with a dollop of white coconut oil.

Pictures: Alan Taylor



NATURAL: Find all you need for healthy living in colourful snacks, courtesy of Mother Nature.



YUM: Broccoli in almond satay sauce and rocket salad with honey-lemon dressing.



GO GREEN: This 'goo' is good for you.

Go raw and help the body fight toxic invaders

DOMINIQUE HERMAN

I RECENTLY rediscovered my fondness for Bar One chocolates. And now Beryn and Peter Daniel have gone and ruined it all. On day two of their raw foods "cooking" course, they laid out what previously would have looked like quite an appealing array of goodies to me: some biscuits, crisps, crusty rolls, doughnuts, fizzy drinks and some choccies.

"That's not food. When I look at that stuff, it's as if I'm looking at rat poison," Peter says. "Next time you see crisps, think rat poison. They will do the same thing to you as rat poison, it just takes longer. Besides not being food, it's actually drugs," he adds.

Beryn, Peter's wife and co-instructor, says our desire for junk foods is simply about the emotion we set to them. "We need to take that emotion away. It's all just associations - we need to re-associate."

When one eats raw food, "these kinds of things don't feature very much", she says, pointing to the products. "Life has a different glow to it." The chocolate-frosted doughnut is singled out as the biggest poison of all. As one course participant says, "the only saving grace is the hole".

A large black garbage bag is hauled out as we each throw our "poison" into it. "It's not wasting," Peter says, pre-empting any comment that might be forthcoming on these freshly bought supermarket goods. "It's not food. It's waste."

Today we're learning that in order to start eating healthily, we need to cleanse and detoxify, and the first step in doing that is to cut out these "poisons of the palate": white refined sugar and flour, dairy, but milk in particular, soft drinks, trans fats, artificial sweeteners, soy and

coffee. According to the US Food and Drug Administration, there is no safe level of consumption of artificial sweeteners and trans fats, say the Daniels.

Apparently there is some exception to be made for dark chocolate, but that requires "a lot of time" and will be left for next class. "Chocolate needs time," another participant agrees, clearly relieved. "You can't *sommer* throw it away."

Beryn explains why one feels so wretched during the detoxing process: it's due to the principle of diffusion. Toxins are first channelled to the digestive system but when there are too many for the colon to process, they are distributed in the blood, lymph and tissues. When one starts filling one's body with good stuff, the toxins start to reverse the process back into the colon to be cleared out of the system. The toxins swirling around one's body are what produces that short-term awful feeling.

The body is clever, she says: when a person is overweight, the body has pushed the toxins out as far away from the vital organs as possible. The same applies to acne, eczema, headaches and tumours. It's trying to get the toxins out.

The best way to cleanse is to drink a lot of green vegetable juice - about a litre a day. This helps to alkalise the blood, which is a lot of what the raw food diet is about.

Human beings need an acid/alkaline balance in the blood and many traditional Western meals are completely acidic (a can of Coke requires 27 litres of water to neutralise its acidic effect).

When we eat too many acids, our bodies get clever again and look to balance the alkaline first from places where it will have the least effect on our health: our saliva, followed by the stomach lining.

Eventually, if our bodies don't have enough, they take the alkalising calcium and magnesium minerals from our bones, which is why osteoporosis develops. If our blood is too acidic, we die. "You can live longer with osteoporosis than you can with acidic blood," Beryn says.

Bacteria thrive in acidic swamps "which, unfortunately, is what most of our bodies are".

Peter says to cure Candida (yeast) infection, for example, one need just abstain from eating sugars for 10 days. Sugar is what the bacteria feed on. Without it, they disappear.

A deep-green celery and bok choy concoction is juiced and sweetened with apple, carrot and lemon to make it more "manageable" for us. It is important to dilute the juice with water (only one quarter to a half of the amount consumed should be pure juice).

To enhance the cleansing idea, lunch is a liquid affair with a blended soup of raw butternut and sweet potato with shallots, cayenne pepper, coconut oil, garlic, cashew nuts and water.

It comes out creamy, with a rich butternut colour and slight kick from the cayenne pepper, which

Peter describes as the "Ferrari" for our system, dilating the taste buds so they absorb more of the minerals from the food.

Coconut oil is 100% saturated fat, but it's plant fat which is good - "It's actually essential," Beryn says.

It helps to lower cholesterol by stimulating the body to convert it into progesterone, but it does have a high calorie count so needs to be burned off with exercise.

It is also the only oil one should cook with (olive oil is second choice). The flax seed is introduced

in our "Malibu smoothie".

Peter says he grinds tablespoons of it and mixes it with coconut oil to form a paste which he eats daily as is: "It's delicious."

Next week: Super foods!

The "Elements of Health" four-week raw-food prep classes are two-and-a-half hours once weekly followed by a raw, organic two-course meal at the Kloof Street Medi-Spa. For more information, call 021 780 9156, or 072 056 9033, or 074 100 7547, or e-mail beryn@soaring-free.com. See www.superfoods.co.za