

A raw deal worth having

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"IT'S NOT about food." These are not the words one expects to hear on the first day of a cookery course.

But learning how to prepare raw foods – some so they taste as if they have been cooked – is not a conventional cookery course.

We begin with a glass of water followed by a freshly squeezed watermelon and mint juice. There's a bit of guided deep breathing and then with eyes closed we listen to a recorded narration about the quality of one's life being brought about by the quality of one's thinking. Turns out it is Sir Laurence Olivier reciting a poem from a 1960s West End play, *Time*.

Why are we listening to this? asks one of our instructors, Peter Daniel. "You are what you eat. The secret to the universe is Q and the intent for the four days is to bring an opportunity to begin to question. Food is a good thing to question as it will rub off on other areas of life," he says.

The bit about Q makes more sense when Peter is talking. It also makes more sense when at the end we are told our "home-work" is to be more mindful of everything we eat: What is it? Where does it come from? How does it make us feel?

We are conditioned to eat in a certain way (that way being cooked for the most part), and we are going to have to "transition" to an exclusive or predominantly raw foods way of life.

The cornerstone of Mind Power, a system of conditioning the brain which relies on the concept that thoughts are real things, is the basis of Peter and Beryn Daniel's "first basic universal law". And for them it starts with what's on your plate. Every food you eat creates a different thought, they say. Every food leads to a health destination. Everything is energy and every food has a different vibration and resonance. Thoughts affect food. And, conversely, food affects thoughts. We raise our vibration by eating high energy foods and that, in turn, raises the quality and mood of our thoughts. "Quantum food!" one over excited potential raw foodist shouts out.

Beryn and Peter are married and worked as "chalet chefs" in the French Alps before moving to the UK. There they started investigating an alternative way of eating, eventually training to become raw food chefs. They then moved back to South Africa about a year ago at the same time that they went totally raw.

Apart from instructing, catering and operating a stall at the Saturday market in Woodstock, they import "super foods" such as the goji berry and hemp protein powder, as well as sell "tools to process food in a healthy way". These include a R3 500 blender that can whip any type of seed, nut or grain into a pulp, and a dehydrator, which removes the moisture from foods giving it the taste of being cooked without it having actually been cooked.

"We are not nutritionists, healers or doctors. We are raw food chefs," Peter states. But, he adds, that does not dispute the energy, the "amazing clarity", you get from eating like this.

It would take a 900g steak to provide the same amount of protein as 10g of spirulina, since



GOODVIBES: Chefs Beryn, left, and Peter Daniel prepare an organic, uncooked lunch with the help of course participants.

Picture: Alan Taylor



COLOURFUL: Salad sushi wrap, organic crudité, freshly made tahini, pesto and 'refried bean' pâté.

Picture: Alan Taylor

steak loses much of its nutritional value when cooked. And spirulina is more bio-available than beef, Peter says.

If you cut animal fats out of your diet, you will not have a cholesterol issue ever, he adds. "Your body doesn't recognise it as food," Beryn says, referring to items such as *slap* chips, "and it goes into fight mode". When we get hungry, that is our body's search for minerals. Organic food, though more expensive, is higher in minerals and so we need less to be satisfied and eat less as a result, and the key to longevity is calorie restriction.

Most of us at this stage are about to slit our wrists. As one participant says, "maybe we should do that breathing thing again". Instead Peter whips up an aloe and orange smoothie for us (although oranges today are devoid of vitamin C, he adds). An aloe ferox leaf – the sort available all over the local landscape – is filleted and dropped in the blender. While that's happening, Beryn cuts off pieces of an aloe vera pot plant and we rub it onto our hands. It's very slimy but in a few seconds it has absorbed completely. Perfect for an "instant

facelift", she says.

Finally we get to the food bit. There's salad sushi wraps – the organic brown and wild rice is the only cooked ingredient and meant as a transition for us newbies. Same for the mushrooms, which provide a "meaty" taste and, after being dehydrated, the look of being cooked.

Refried bean pâté, which is neither fried nor has beans in it, is a combination of blended sunflower seeds and sundried tomatoes creating a pinky paste to which Mexican spices are added.

The food is really good. And it does not require much to feel satisfied, and that satisfied feeling remains for many hours afterwards.

Cut out one unhealthy food a week. Adopt one new raw food recipe a week. "It is ordinary things consistently done that produce extraordinary results."

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.

Call 021 780 9156, 072 056 9033 or 074 100 7547 for more info, or e-mail beryn@soaring-free.com or go to www.superfoods.co.za