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# Life <sup>in</sup> the raw

Uma Thurman and Natalie Portman are devotees, but is the raw-food diet just another impractical and half-baked fad? **Genevieve Roberts** cuts out the cooking to find out

**T**here was a time when only hippies and health fanatics would consider living on raw food. Well no more. A raw-food revolution is under way – and celebs are leading

the way. Uma Thurman, Natalie Portman and Alicia Silverstone have all been eating uncooked food in the name of optimum health. Woody Harrelson went so far as to publish a 400-page tome on *Living Cuisine*. But then the beautiful people, I suspect, were beautiful and shiny-haired before they gave up ovens. What could raw foods do for me? I decided to give my oven a rest for a week, to see if I can catch any symptoms of glamour and gorgeousness.

## Tuesday

Bloating is not the nicest word. So thank you to Samara Reid at London's Hale Clinic for the warning. The angel of traditional Chinese medicinal doom also warned me about weight

because the body has to warm it to digest, which depletes stomach and spleen energy."

She threatens me with weight gain on my upper legs, a muzzy head and unclear thoughts. Apparently, chewing every mouthful of food 50 times will help. How do you chew a lettuce leaf so many times without it disappearing like candyfloss?

But I get some sympathy from Deborah McManners, a naturopath at the Hale Clinic and GP. She knows I will be suffering. It is a "drastic plan" that she does not recommend anyone to try for more than a week. No chance of that, the 168-hour countdown to real food is on.

I am to avoid tapeworm-riddled raw pork, but beef, venison and veal are safer, unless I have any intention of getting pregnant.

She suggests that I eat vast quantities of pumpkin seeds, raw nuts, avocado and fresh juices. "Juicing bursts open cells so the

pounds. I am happy. Scoffing sushi and satsumas by day and night, I complete day one, hungry.

## Wednesday

What to eat? Bread is the most difficult thing to give up when eating a raw-food diet, says Karen Knowler, author of *Raw Food for Beginners*. The breadbasket on the table at Chez Gérard is as difficult to resist as chocolate in an advent calendar in November.

"Bread is addictive, people find it quite difficult to go a day without wheat products. Cravings do vanish after a few weeks or months," Knowler says. A few months? By that time I will be emaciated, probably hospitalised, whispering the word 'toast' to anyone who will listen.

A true disciple of the religion of raw, there were only three weeks during her pregnancy when Knowler did not eat raw food. "I did not want to believe it could make so much



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gain. "Cold food can stay in the intestines for a long time," she says. Which may not be so bad – if my lunch is lurking, I won't be spending my time hunting for raw things and pretending they constitute a meal. Except that "according to the Chinese way of thinking, food is warmed in order to promote digestion. Cold food is not a good idea,



antioxidants in plants, which are proven to prevent cancer, can be absorbed," she says. "Uma Thurman would probably drink fresh juice and eat fruit for breakfast, and salads with grain, avocados and sprouts for lunch." A bit of Uma would not be so bad.

My blood pressure is a pleasingly low 96/60, and my weight is, um, just fine. She tells me I will lose several

difference, but the purity of food gives results, you feel the freshness running through your veins," she says.

The science of the religion of raw is like Darwinism to an evolutionist. "Cooked food has less water and no oxygen. Phytochemicals, which make you feel good, get destroyed by cooking and enzymes in food are destroyed at 48 degrees Celsius," Knowler says.