

Guess who's com

Christmas tradition saves most of us venturing beyond turkey, Brussels, an average diet? Kathryn Leigh asks four idiosyncratic eaters what's on



The Lifestyle Consultant

*Joanna Hall, 31
Head of Joanna Hall Lifestyle
Management*

Eats: Low fat and healthy

'I was never a junk-food addict but at university I really came to understand that what you put into your body has a direct effect on how you feel, how much energy you have and how long you can concentrate.'

'I've now been in the industry for 12 years and I definitely live by the principles I teach but I'm not a health-food junkie either – I'm a great fan of having a good time. My philosophy is to be the best you can while living the life you want to lead.'

'This Christmas we're going to a chalet in the Swiss Alps with 20 friends and I'm catering. It will be low fat and healthy but no-one will feel hungry or deprived. It will be a fish Christmas: it's good-quality protein, full of omega-3 fatty acids and tastes brilliant. We're taking a whole salmon and fish nibbles from our fishmonger.'

'We'll start the day with a buffet of Swiss muesli, eggs with smoked salmon and croissants. Then we'll go skiing or tobogganing and mess about. We'll probably stop at a mountain cafe for mulled wine or hot chocolate – though I'll have peppermint tea – and then prepare dinner for late afternoon.'

'Our friends aren't worried about missing their traditional Christmas meal – they know they'll have a good time and good food, not some miserable nut cutlet. The boys have requested roast potatoes, which I'll do in olive oil. And if I didn't do Christmas pudding I think there'd be a mutiny. Although I'll serve sorbet or fresh fruit, we'll also have Christmas pud with custard...'

'It may be healthier than average but no-one will be disappointed.'

Joanna Hall Lifestyle Management has a 14-day January eating plan including menus and a shopping list, from £48; 0171-736 5551.

ing to dinner?

roast potatoes. But what about people who don't eat their menu. Tim O'Sullivan takes the photographs

The Vegetarian

Debra Pieri, 26
Press Officer for the Fresh
Fruit and Vegetable
Information Bureau

Eats: Everything except meat
and fish

'I didn't eat a lot of meat before I turned vegetarian six years ago, just sometimes chicken and fish. It was a conscious change though. The whole idea of eating a living creature didn't appeal to me and I just stopped.

'It wouldn't have been so easy if I wasn't living away from home. My parents are getting on a bit, they're quite traditional and from Italian descent, so a vegetarian diet was unusual for them.

'Any kind of family gathering, such as Christmas, is difficult if you're the only vegetarian because you feel excluded from the feast around the table. However I have learned more about the options the longer I've been a vegetarian. The choices have grown a lot, too:

'I believe you can make very good vegetarian food that even meat eaters would want to eat. It's a question of being a bit inventive, using fresh vegetables and herbs in an interesting way. I think fruit and vegetables taste better than meat or fish, there's more variety, more versatility and more interesting colours.

'Christmas is a time when you can feel just a bit odd, though, which I don't like. At first I may have wished I could have a little bit of turkey but now it's a bit of a laugh and I stand up for myself.

'I'll be going back to my family in Cumbria this year and will make my own alternative meal, probably something like a mushroom loaf. I usually prepare it myself - I try not to get in my mother's way; it's just a small tin I can fit in the oven with everything else. If I get the chance I'll make vegetarian gravy to go with it. My dad usually has a bit; he thinks it tastes like the stuffing.'



The Athlete

Paula Radcliffe, 24

Double world cross-country silver medallist; UK and Commonwealth record holder in 5km and 10km

Plans to compete in the IAAF World Cross Challenge Series on December 20 and January 2-3

Eats: Everything, in large portions.

'I have a normal diet, pretty balanced, but with more carbohydrates than most people. In a normal day I would train in the morning, then have a huge bowl of cereal, I mean huge, mixing porridge, with Weetabix or Special K, followed by toast. I have fruit snacks through the day. At lunchtime I have a sandwich with cheese, tuna or cold meat and salad but no butter, and a small cakey thing. From 5-6pm I train again, then eat my main meal - either rice, pasta, potatoes, couscous and fresh vegetables, steamed or stir-fried. I have red meat three or four times a week because I was anaemic five years ago. I also drink at least three litres of water a day.

'Nothing is banned. If I ban something I crave it. Before a big championship I might cut out cakes but I still eat chocolate. Twice a year I have a break and eat whatever I want, knowing that whatever weight I put on I'll lose when I start training again.

When I'm training, I probably eat more than the average person but always low fat, and not so that I feel stuffed - not even at Christmas.

'This year I think it will just be my boyfriend and I in the French Pyrenees. I've just bought a flat there, near the altitude training centre.

'I only train once on Christmas Day so I'll probably get up, have a drink and either go running or cross-country skiing, depending on how deep the snow is, to get it out of the way. Then I'll come back for a big breakfast. Then we'll get started on making Christmas dinner, then have a walk and come back to eat at 3 or 4pm.

'Cheesecake or Christmas pudding is the highlight of my meal, but the races are important and they're always at the back of my mind. It's probably lucky that my boyfriend is there to eat them first.'



The Fruitarian

Karen Knowler, 26

Co-ordinator for The FRESH Network

Eats: Raw fruit (70 per cent), raw vegetables, seeds, nuts, sprouted beans and pulses, fresh fruit and vegetable juices.

'I used to eat everything: burgers, sausages, chips twice a day. I even worked in my family's butcher shop. I didn't link health with food.

'Then I moved from living with my mother to my father's. He's a healthy eater and I became aware of different ways to eat. I decided to try to cut out meat because of the cruelty aspect, but ironically, I didn't like vegetables until I was 18. My body was so polluted with junk, I didn't like the taste of healthy food.

'I read a lot about healthy eating and it all made sense. I gave up meat, then fish and experimented with being a vegetarian, a vegan and a fruitarian over the next five years.

'This time, I've been a fruitarian since June and intend to stay with it. My energy levels have lifted incredibly, my moods are consistent and my weight continues to drop as my body clears itself out. I recognise my true appetite and have eradicated food cravings. I wake up in the morning completely bright and feel good inside my own skin. It's given me a real joie de vivre.

'Some people think I'm denying myself, but for me, it's freedom for the first time. I just eat when I'm hungry and have whatever I like. My taste buds are so acute I get all the flavour of everything I taste. It's limited in terms of food groups, but within each group there's so much variety.

'Last Christmas I didn't eat 100 per cent raw food because I didn't want to be a problem for other people. The idea of being socially difficult or "different" put me off for years – having to conform was the only problem with being fruitarian. This year I'll make sure I have a truly fruitarian Christmas. Most people are fine about it, they usually think my meal looks tastier than theirs.'

For more information about being a fruitarian, contact The FRESH Network, PO Box 71, Ely, Cambs CB7 4GU.

