

theguardian

# WELLBEING HANDBOOK

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**CAN YOU  
CHANGE  
YOUR  
LIFE  
IN TWO  
WEEKS?**



# The raw deal

Uncooked food is a life force – or so the theory goes. But could Hannah Pool survive a fortnight on a strict diet (and no oven)?

**M**y diet is like many women's: healthy one meal, unhealthy the next. Always hoping the good (lots of water, no caffeine) will counter the bad (lots of alcohol, a late-night pasty habit). Lately, it's been more bad than good, hence the decision to "go raw".

The concept behind this fad is that raw food, unlike cooked or processed, is a "life force" and inherently better for you. To be 100% raw is to consume no meat, no wheat, no dairy, no alcohol. A few raw foodies eat sashimi (raw fish) but most don't. Organic is preferable (more nutritious, tastier and more filling) and shop-bought fruit juice doesn't count (pasteurised) unless it's been made in front of you. Now you see why I had a fry-up and a bottle

of wine the day before I started.

Karen Knowler, raw food coach and director of the Fresh Network (which specialises in "raw and living food"), is guiding me through my experiment. She asks what my flash-points will be. I tell her I eat a packet of crisps most days at 4pm and there's an office party coming up that I can't imagine not drinking at, never mind bypassing the canapes. Karen tells me to take each day as it comes.

On Monday a selection of raw food arrives: flax crackers, a copy of *Eat Smart*, *Eat Raw*, and some sheets of nori (a sea vegetable). I make a huge fruit salad for breakfast, eat a salad with flax crackers for lunch and make nori rolls (like sushi but filled with avocado, tomato and onion). This is my diet for the next fortnight.

I vary things as much as possible – trying out vegetarian cafes (though

many salads are cooked or contain cheese), buying things I've never bought (custard apple, anyone?), and drinking plenty of freshly squeezed juices (carrot, apple, kiwi, celery and ginger becomes my favourite).

Eating out, however, is a problem. I become the type of person who orders the dressing on the side; I even ask the man in the juice bar if the beetroot is raw. For the first few days I swing between feeling amazing and dreadful, often in the same hour. I go to the party and don't drink, but it takes all my willpower not to get chips on the way home.

Karen has lots of sensible advice on the lines of, "Keep food you can eat to hand to stop you snacking." Week two is scarily easy. The night sweats have been replaced by deep sleep. I feel less bloated; people tell me I am glowing.

On the final Thursday I eat a raw lunch of quinoa with butternut squash, arame salad and raw tortilla from the Little Earth Cafe, a raw food haven in London's Primrose Hill. But there are two problems with raw. It's deeply awkward, and not much fun, which also makes it an antisocial way of eating. I can't shake the worry that eating raw is just another excuse for not eating, like those anorexics who disguise themselves as vegans.

**Did it work?** I felt great by the end.  
**Would you do it again?** I'd consider going 70% raw if I needed a boost.  
**Is it worth the money?** What you spend on salad you save on alcohol.  
**What did you learn?** Being a picky eater is no fun.

**Karen Knowler, £50 for 45 minutes, 01383 723133, fresh-network.com**

