

9 success tips to Staying with Raw – Handy Hints

So you've been eating raw for a while now and you're looking and feeling great! You're rawking! Yet, somehow your diet has become limiting, eating the same food over and over, sticking to your favourite recipes and snacks. Whilst there is nothing wrong with this, as long as you are meeting your nutritional requirements, it can lead to the temptation to go back to eating cooked foods. Woah! Do you want that?! No, great well read on for my top 9 handy hints to staying with Raw.

How do you vary your diet? How do you stick with raw?

I believe the best way to stay raw is to “think out of the box” with your food choice. By this I mean, don't just think of raw as a salad! Think of raw as a meal. What are your favourite cooked recipes, flavours – can you adapt these to be raw? For example, a traditional Sunday Dinner is meat and veg. How about replacing the roast with a couple of large florets of cauliflower, the veg you don't have to cook that do you? – serve it raw and gravy well how about blending up some onion, mushroom, soy sauce, apple, sage. The best thing about raw is it is very hard for you to go wrong when experimenting in the kitchen!

Often the problem with staying raw is you have got into a rut and are stuck in the making salad approach. Below I list some techniques to change the appearance of food which gives your raw food repertoire an overhaul!

1. Marinating

Use: oils, citrus (lemon, lime, orange) and vinegars. These will all soften or wilt the vegetables to give a more “cooked” appearance and texture.

Good with: mushrooms, green vegetables (cabbage, kale, broccoli), aubergines.

This does require forward planning of what you want to eat as I recommend marinating your vegetables for at least an hour, often overnight (well 30 minutes minimum, well actually 10 minutes will change the texture but...). However, if we think cooked for a moment, marinating is a technique often used for flavouring meat for BBQs, casseroles, frying. Just because you're eating raw doesn't mean it always has to be instant!!!

Marinating is also a fantastic way to get different flavours into vegetables. Think herbs, chilli, lemongrass, ginger, soy sauce, spices (curry, cumin, coriander, star anise etc.). Just throw your favourite flavour into your base of oil, citrus and/or vinegar. Also vary the flavour of your base by using different oils, citrus and vinegars.

Again, lets think about cooked food – do you have some favourite dishes? If so, check the recipe which flavours they are using for the marinade and copy!!!

Easy Thai Marinade

Great big glug of Soy sauce
Glug of flax oil
1 chilli chopped
1 tbsp coriander seeds crushed
1 tbsp cumin seeds
1 stalk lemon grass bashed and chopped
1 inch cube of ginger grated
1 clove garlic
½ red onion chopped
Handful of basil leaves torn into pieces

You will need enough soy sauce and oil to cover your veg. This is fantastic with mushrooms and/or aubergines. Turn veg over every now and then!

2. Salting

Use: Sea-salt, rock salt or for the raw food purest Himalayan Pink Salt
Rub or sprinkle salt and maybe a bit of oil into/over vegetables.
This will draw out the water contain within the vegetable and consequently soften them.

Good with: courgette, butternut squash, turnip, mushroom.

Using a potato peeler or my favourite the saladacco (a little hand driven machine that makes long strips out of vegetables) make raw pasta/noodles with courgette or squash. Sprinkle over the salt and pat dry with kitchen towel. This makes the vegetables an excellent tasty base for your sauces.

I salt grated turnip to make a cheese substitute!! Heck, it looks like grated cheese - it might not taste of gourmet cheddar but hey it looks good! And surely the mind can play great tricks on the taste of food.

The Classic Wilted Kale Dish

Large handful of kale chopped into bite size pieces
Sprinkle of salt
Dose of oil

Add all ingredients to a bowl – get your hands in and really massage the salt and oil into the kale.
Add anything else in that you fancy eg avocado, chilli, olives, tomato, dried tomatoes etc.

3. Soaking

Use: Water, juices

Soaking softens and expands giving you a different texture to play with.

Good for: nuts, seeds, dried fruits, oats.

Throw your desired quantity into a bowl and cover with water.

Soak oats for a minimum of 5 minutes, seeds for say 4 hours and nuts overnight.

Try varying the liquid you soak in. For example oats especially take on the flavours that you soak them in eg apple juice.

The beauty of soaking your nuts and seeds is you get more for your money as they enlarge with the water. They also taste juicier and fresher. Plus as a big bonus – you remove the enzyme inhibitors so your nut/seed is more nutritious to eat, as the nut/seed after soaking is now primed to grow!

Honeyed Orange Apricots

A couple of handfuls of dried apricots

1 tbsp honey

Juice from 5 oranges

Mix the honey into the orange juice and soak the apricots overnight.

4. Blending

Use: This to me is the best piece of equipment in the kitchen. It's an excellent way to make sauces, dressings, dips, puddings.

Good for: Everything!

Think of your favourite cooked sauces and make em raw!!
Eg tomato and basil, pesto, curry, thai, hummus, chilli the variations are endless.

As a quick aside, often cooked sauces will have a slightly sweet taste that isn't there in raw food. This is due to the cooking process turning starches into sugars think of an onion turning brown in a frying pan – this is the onion caramelising. To replicate that in a raw sauce try adding a date or dried apricot or apple.

Super Powered Rawelly (this is like a jelly!)

1 cup cashews
½ cup gogi berries
200 ml water
2 dates
1 tbsp bee pollen
1 tbsp cacao nibs
1 banana

Blend together, leave it for a bit and it should "set" slightly and be a bit wobbly.

5. Coffee Grinder

Use to: make a fine powder

Good for: Nuts, seeds, cacao nibs

Grinding the nuts/seeds can be used to act as a fantastic base for pie crusts, truffles, crumble toppings eg puree some apple and cinnamon with agave nectar (use hand blender) and sprinkle on your choice of nuts and/or seeds grinded and mixed with some soaked oats.

You can also use grinded nuts/seeds to thicken sauces.

Yum* Yum* Truffles*

- 1 cup walnuts grinded
- ½ cup sunflower seeds grinded
- Juice of 2 oranges
- 1 apple grated
- 1 tbsp agave nectar

Mix together with your hands and form into truffle shapes. If too wet add more grinded nuts/seeds, if too dry add more juice, if not sweet enough add more agave, if too sweet add less (I think you get the picture!!!)

6. Grating

Use to: changes the texture of the fruit or vegetable

Good for: root vegetables eg carrots, turnip, beetroot, parsnips and courgettes, apples, pears

Grating your fruit and veg allows you variety in presentation of your food and as it increases the mass of the fruit/veg it then allows more surface area to be exposed to any flavourings you may add to the food.

Example: grated beetroot is a good base for chilli – add chilli, chocolate powder, tomatoes, rosemary, and onion to your grated beets. Experiment!

Lemon Courgettes

2 courgettes grated
1 tsp of lemon zest
Juice of 1 lemon
1 tbsp hemp oil
1 tsp crushed mustard seeds

Toss all the ingredients together.

7. Potato Peeler

Use to: changes the texture of the fruit or vegetable

Good for: root vegetables eg carrots, turnip, beetroot, parsnips and courgettes, apples, pears

As with using a grater, a potato peeler is a good way to change the appearance of food to give you variety in your food presentation.

A potato peeler gives a lovely ribbon effect which I often liken to tagliatelli, so I peel a courgette and use as a pasta substitute.

Cinnamon Apple Ribbons

1 apple peel skin off with the peeler then peel lengths of with the potato peeler
Date paste (blend dates with a bit of water)
Plate with cinnamon on

Dip the apples in the date paste and then dust with the cinnamon.

Simple and easy and delicious!

8. Dehydrator

Use to: dry out foods to give them crunch or density.

Good for: Anything and everything really!

The dehydrator is the raw foodies oven! You can get a few different kinds (go and search on the internet) I personally use the exaliber dehydrator. The idea behind a dehydrator is it removes the moisture out of the food at a low temperature (about 42oC) so it preserves all the enzymes and nutrients in the food keeping it essentially raw.

The versatiliy of a dehydrator is huge as this piece of equipment allows you to create burgers, breads, pizzas, crackers, cookies and all kinds of delights that your imagination can create! This can be invaluable for when your body requires some food with a denser quality to it or you need something with a crunch.

I suggest you find a good raw cookbook for inspiration.

Easy Peasy Flax Crackers

- 1 cup of flax seeds
- 3 cups of water
- 1 tomato
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 stick of celery

Blend together for 5 mins and then spread out on tefflex sheets – put in your dehydrator and dehydrate for 4 hours. Flip over (the easiest way is to put another tefflex sheet over the top, turn the flax crackers over and then peel off the tefflex sheet that the flax crackers where originally on). Dry overnight or until crunchy.

9. Menu Planning

A lot is written about a raw food diet being instinctive and eating what you want when you need it, as your body is telling you what it needs so listen. Whilst I certainly agree with that statement, I still feel it's necessary to have a loose menu plan for the week.

Why?

- It helps with minimising waste. As you know what you're eating for the week, you have a shopping list and you buy what you need from the supermarket. Most of us are not blessed with an organic grocer at the end of our street.
- It lets you know what preparatory work needs to be done. When do you need to start sprouting those seeds, pulses etc. What nuts or seeds need to be soaked overnight.
- You know what you are eating for lunch so no blind panics in the morning before work wondering what to eat, you forget and end up buying cooked!
- Similarly for dinner you know what you are planning to eat so there is no temptation to resort to cooked.
- You have time to marinate, salt food, let the flavours of your food mingle to create wonderful taste sensations.
- It allows you the opportunity to plan new and exciting recipes or try out a recipe from a raw cook book.
- Most importantly I believe menu planning, especially when you have a family ultimately saves time, saves the headache of wondering what to prepare and keeps you focused on eating raw.

I hope these hints and tips have given you some insight into staying raw and you find them useful. Please feel free to give me any feedback on the suggestions and if you have your own suggestions I would love to hear them.