

“Some people think raw food is a lot of work. It’s not really (a lot of work) if you have the right tools. When I’m finished fixing a meal, I’m not going to be in the kitchen for hours scrubbing greasy pots and pans. Clean-up in a raw food kitchen is quick and easy.”

— David Dyer, a Cape Coral-based health and wellness coach



David Dyer, who holds doctoral degrees in naturopathy and science, prepares a raw food meal.

RAW

From page 1

the movement with his how-to tome, “Raw” (Ten Speed Press).

Here’s the basic premise of the raw, or living foods, diet: Enzymes found in food provide vital energy to the body. When food is heated to more than 106 degrees, those enzymes die, robbing food of nutrients and causing it to become toxic, forcing the body’s immune system to fight against it. Eating raw, unprocessed food bolsters the immune system, allowing it to heal and protect the body.

To omnivores accustomed to the standard American diet, called SAD by those who eat raw, the concept can be perplexing since they eat little but salads and fruit uncooked. But inventive raw chefs produce a cornucopia of tasty dishes without benefit of meat or dairy, stove, oven, microwave or fryer.

At recent local raw food gatherings, participants dined on lime-agave margaritas, apple-jicama salad, kelp salad, spicy mango ginger soup, burritos, apple pie and chocolate-chili brownies, among other uncooked dishes.

More than salad, but not more work

“Raw food isn’t just about plain salad,” says Charles Marble, who runs Mangroves Health Institute in Naples. “It can be as gourmet as you can possibly imagine.”

Eschewing labels, he doesn’t categorize himself as a “raw foodist” and doesn’t preach that raw is the only way

to eat. But he does conduct weekly classes in how to prepare fresh, uncooked fare in creative ways. Everyone is welcome, no matter what they eat.

“It’s wise to eat sensibly,” Mr. Marble says. “We need more whole fresh foods in the American diet.”

Many clients of Mangroves Health Institute are raw food enthusiasts, he says. “I try to encourage people to integrate these fresh, whole foods in their diet. You need to decide how much and how far you want to go with it. You should do it with pleasure, because it feels good.”

There are some basic skills required to follow the diet. Raw foodists grow their own sprouts, employ powerful juicers to create nutritious vegetable and fruit blends, and rely on temperature-controlled dehydrators to produce crisp crackers, nuts and seeds. They also use organic ingredients, which aren’t as readily accessible in Southwest Florida as they are in some other places.

“Some people think raw food is a lot of work,” says David Dyer, a Cape Coral-based health and wellness coach who holds doctoral degrees in naturopathy and science. “It’s not really (a lot of work) if you have the right tools. When I’m finished fixing a meal, I’m not going to be in the kitchen for hours scrubbing greasy pots and pans. Clean-up in a raw food kitchen is quick and easy.”

The most important tool, he says, is a good (un)cookbook, of which there are many. A juicer, a dehydrator and a mandoline (slicer) enhance the raw cook’s ability to produce a broad range of recipes with relative ease.

raw events

Southwest Florida raw food events

>>Sunday, May 17, 4 p.m.: Fort Myers Living Foods Group monthly potluck, Center to Self Reliance, 1939 Park Meadow Drive, Suite 9, Fort Myers. Cost: \$3. Bring a raw food dish, preferably organic, to share plus recipe. Call David Dyer at 471-0255 to RSVP or online at www.wholefood.meetup.com/151/.

>>Monday, May 18, 6:30 p.m.: Bethany Tait gives a free lecture on weight loss and raw food for women, Mangroves Health Institute, 2335 Tamiami Trail, Naples. Call 403-0555.

>>Tuesday, May 19, 6:30 p.m.: Weekly Raw Simplicity class, with Bethany Tait demonstrating simple raw food recipes that can be made in the average home kitchen in 10 minutes or less. Participants get to eat the results. Cost: \$20. Mangroves Health Institute, 2335 Tamiami Trail, Naples. Call 403-0555 to reserve a spot.

>>Wednesday, May 20, 6:30 p.m.: Weekly raw food class with Charles Marble demonstrating four recipes that make a meal. Participants sample each recipe. Cost: \$25. Mangroves Health Institute, 2335 Tamiami Trail, Naples. Call 403-0555 so Marble can prepare enough food.

>>Friday, May 22, 5-7 p.m.: Raw ice cream social, featuring unlimited raw ice cream and a toppings bar, singing and music. Cost: \$20. Mangroves Health Institute, 2335 Tamiami Trail, Naples. Call 403-0555.

>>Tuesday, May 26, 6 p.m.: Certified raw foods chef Debbie Greene conducts a monthly raw foods class showing how to prepare typical party food raw-style. Free. Whole Foods Market, 9101 Strada Place, Naples. Call 552-5100 to register.

>>Sunday, May 31, 6:30 p.m.: Naples Living Foods Group monthly potluck and screening of the movie “Eating.” Cost: \$5. Mangroves Health Institute, 2335 Tamiami Trail, Naples. Bring a raw vegan dish to share. Call 641-5559 to RSVP.

>>Cape Coral Living Foods Group: No meeting set, but information will be posted at www.wholefood.meetup.com/198/ when the next one is scheduled.

Variety is the spice

Doing it properly and in a way that doesn’t create boredom takes practice.

“You need a lot of variety, different colors – reds, yellows, purples, those are powerful foods,” Dr. Dyer says. “Sprouts are the most nutritious food on earth.”

He advises anyone considering a raw food diet not to make the same few recipes all the time. Diversity is important to nutrition and to prevent boredom. Attend-



Sprouts

raw recipes

SPICY MANGO GINGER SOUP

1 large mango
1/2 cup chopped onion
1/2 cup water
1 chili pepper
Juice of 1 lime
1/2 tsp grated fresh ginger

Blend all ingredients until smooth and creamy. Garnish with fresh herbs of choice and serve. 1 serving: 81 calories, 20.7 gm carbohydrates, 2.5 gm fiber, .9 gm protein, 17 percent RDA vitamin A, 51 percent RDA vitamin C, 2 percent RDA calcium, 1 percent RDA iron

MANGO CHUTNEY

2 cups mango or papaya
2 Tbs fresh lemon juice
1 1/2 tsp raw apple cider vinegar
2 Tbs mustard powder
2 cloves garlic
1 1/2 tsp agave
1 bunch cilantro
1/4 cup finely chopped bell pepper
1/4 cup chopped red or green onion
1/4 tsp cayenne
1/2 tsp salt

Combine all ingredients, mix well and serve

RAW BURRITO

2 ripe avocados
3 tomatoes
1/2 hot pepper
2 TBS chopped yellow onion
1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
1 ear fresh corn
2 tsp fresh lime juice
6-8 lettuce leaves

Mash avocado, mix in remaining ingredients and place into lettuce and wrap edges to form “burrito.”

RAW COCONUT FUDGE

3 cups walnuts
1/2 cup carob powder or cacao
2 cups shredded coconut
5/8 cup agave

Grind walnuts in food processor until they have a buttery consistency. Combine carob powder with coconut and mix with ground walnuts. Add agave and continue to mix well. Press mixture about 3/4 inch thick in a glass dish. Place in freezer and chill until solid and firm.

ing meetings of the local living food groups helps, too, because people share their recipes and knowledge.

“We learn from each other,” says Tarrita Brown, who runs the Cape Coral group and has been a raw foodist for four years. “My hope is people will get to know each other well and start having dinner at each other’s houses.”

She’s a glowing example of the benefits of a raw food diet. She’s been 100 percent raw for four years while her three teen-aged children and husband vary from 50 percent to 80 percent. She’s fit, with healthy-looking skin and abundant energy. “I get mistaken for my (14-year-old) daughter a lot,” she says. “We wear the same size clothes. A lot of people think we’re twins, but we’re 31 years apart.”

Be a ‘Rawkstar’

Alone or in groups, proponents say they reap great rewards in the form of improved health, a stronger immune system, increased energy and optimism.

Another champion of the uncooked is Bethany Tait of Naples.