

Raw101

Sex. Politics. Religion. Some topics are best avoided in the interest of keeping the peace. We'll add one more subject to that volatile list: food.

It seems that just about everyone has an opinion – and usually a strong one – on the proper way to eat. And it's not just the carnivores versus the vegetarians that cause the metaphorical fur to fly. Even those firmly entrenched in the vegan raw food camp have disagreements about what constitutes the optimal diet.

One of the most confusing things to those new to raw foods is the seeming lack of accord among veteran raw fooders. Is fruit the hero or the enemy? Is “gourmet” raw food inferior to a mono diet? Are olive oil, agave nectar, and superfoods OK or not? Who do you listen to when even the high priests and priestesses of the movement can't seem to agree?

For a newcomer seeking guidance and canons to follow, the lack of consistency can be especially discouraging. It may feel like just about the time you think you have it down, someone you look up to says you're doing it wrong.

Relax. There's good news in all of this. The good news is that raw foodism – like life – is actually a continuum. Very few of us jumped 100% into the lifestyle and haven't changed a thing from that day forward. We evolve and adapt at our own pace as our bodies, attitudes, knowledge, and skill-levels develop. You may, for example, start out using honey as a sweetener and decide later that you prefer lucuma or agave or stevia. You might develop a taste for rejuvelac or kombucha or decide the yerba mate you used to drink isn't working for you for some reason. No matter: it's your journey.

Evolve. What's most important is that you are evolving, growing and exploring. But – we hope – you're not judging: not yourself and certainly not others. To criticize and condemn someone else's' personal choices (assuming their decisions don't affect you directly) is the antithesis of what the raw vegan lifestyle claims to embody. Likewise it is uncharitable to assess another person's commitment or character because they cannot say

they're currently “100% raw.” You'll often hear proponents say “*it's not just about the food,*” meaning that being raw is also about living naturally and in harmony, which doesn't leave space for judging. So, quite simply: listen to your inner voice. By extending others grace, you are allowing them the opportunity to explore and make changes at their own pace - which will be appreciated.

Jump in. That said, when you're transitioning from a conventional diet, there are some natural places to jump onto this raw food continuum. The chart to the right may help you sort out what currently works for you. It might also serve as a benchmark as your journey unfolds and you can look back and see the changes you've made as well as prioritize the ones you'd like to explore.

Whether you dive in headlong or take baby steps by adjusting a few simple things, if you're thoughtful and conscious about your choices, you're on path to a healthier way of life.

By Sheree Clark

CURRENT DIET	FIRST STEP	BENEFIT	ULTIMATE GOAL	BENEFIT
Dairy products, eggs**	Limit to 2-3x per week. Switch to free range organic products. Try rice, almond & hemp substitutes. Choose raw goat cheese over cow's	Dairy is mucus forming, contributes to cholesterol and is high in animal fat	Eliminate dairy. Switch to nutritious nut milk, cheese & ice-cream you make	Better digestion, less antibiotics, growth hormones, saturated fats. Improved allergies & stuffy noses
White sugar, high fructose corn syrup, artificial sweeteners	Eliminate all artificial sweeteners. Switch to stevia, raw honey, pure maple syrup, agave & dates	Honey is great for post workout recuperation, agave and stevia are low in GI, dates are high in potassium and fiber	Eliminate sugars and switch to natural organic alternatives such as yacon, dates & lucuma	Higher nutrient content, no GMO's, chemicals and more consistent blood sugar levels
Red meat, poultry, pork**	Eliminate "pink" preserved meats such as hot dogs, bacon & ham, etc. Switch to grass-fed organic beef and free-range poultry	Nitrates are cancer-causing agents. Less antibiotics, growth hormones, saturated fats	Replace animal proteins with plant proteins such as spirulina and hemp	Better digestion, lower incidence of heart disease, diabetes, cancers, lower cholesterol levels, etc.
Seafood, fish**	Switch to wild (not farmed) fish. Eliminate canned tuna. Avoid shark and other high mercury fish	Less exposure to chemical pollutants, mercury levels, overfishing	Replace animal proteins with plant proteins such as spirulina and hemp	Better digestion. Lowered incidence of birth defects, liver damage, cancer
Iodized white table salt	Get rid of the stuff. Switch to sun dried sea salt or Himalayan salt. Use celery, dulse or other alternatives	Reduced blood pressure risk. Natural nutrients & minerals	Find how much you need each day for your own balance, add sea vegetables for iodine	Some salt is necessary in the diet. How much you need varies by genetics & lifestyle
Conventionally grown produce	Avoid the most-sprayed crops (ex: strawberries, celery, spinach), and buy organic if possible	Reduce exposure to toxins and chemicals, reduce run-off pollution to water supply & wildlife	Buy 100% organic or chemical free. Shop at farmers markets; belong to a CSA* or Co-op	Support local farmers, reduce exposure to carcinogens, healthier planet
Packaged non-raw convenience and fast foods	Try "raw by mail" prepared meals, ready-made products; granola, crackers, snacks. Also raw nuts and dried fruits like goji berries	No trans fats, no preservatives or additives, less sodium. Live enzymes, more bio-available vitamins	Make your own healthful snacks and meals. Eat simple meals, such as salads and raw fruit	Ultimate control over what you eat. Gain a connection to your food while adding less trash to the landfill.
Coffee, caffeinated energy drinks, sodas, sweet teas	Herbal drinks such as Teeccino [®] , yerba mate, or switch to organic coffee. Try fresh green juice or water instead; stay hydrated	Less stress on adrenals. Reduced exposure to chemicals. Better sleep. Elimination of an addiction	The natural high and energy buzz that comes from pure living foods, and superfoods like cacao, goji berries, chlorella and maca	Unbridled energy without dependence on a substance. Better hydration.
Alcoholic beverages and cocktails	Limit to organic and biodynamic wines or try Kombucha	Wine is technically "raw;" organic may have fewer or no sulfites but can lead to dehydration	Alcohol-free	Fewer toxins. Eliminate likelihood of bad food choices while under the influence. Eliminate a potentially addictive substance, liver damage
Where should I start?	Try to add a daily smoothie made from fresh fruit, spinach and stevia, also try to add one fresh raw green salad per day with fresh sprouts	Will add extra fiber and nutrients and antioxidants to your diet, and help keep you full	eliminate processed foods, refined sugars, animal proteins. Add whole organic produce, nuts, seeds, sprouts & healthy fats (avocado, olive oil)	May reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease, obesity, many cancers, high blood pressure, acne, etc. Increased energy and sense of well-being

*Joining a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) is a way to create a relationship with a farm and to receive a weekly share of fresh produce. By making a financial commitment, you become a member or "shareholder" of the CSA.

** Editor's note: We do not recommend consuming animal products, however these guidelines are meant to show practical steps for those wishing to transition from a Standard American Diet (SAD) to a Raw and Living Foods diet.

With this issue we introduce a new feature called RAW 101, authored by Sheree Clark of Des Moines, Iowa. Sheree will explore topics of interest, especially to those new to the raw lifestyle. Please send your questions and comments to: letters@purelydelicious.net.

For more information, a free 24-page eBook entitled 'Raw Foods 101' and a free raw food recipe eBook, please visit: www.PureJeevan.com/blog.