

nutrition

by Jamie Richards

Jamie Richards explores the pitfalls of a diet-hungry nation.

There is an endless stream of fresh dietary advice bombarding us everyday. No self respecting magazine goes to press without at least three weight loss articles (Inspired Times will never reach those dizzying heights!). TV diet shows abound and we're bombarded with books from the latest 'diet gurus'.

As part of a survey, two thousand adults were questioned about their weight. Researchers found that 64% of them were determined to lose weight this year. They also found that 86% of the people who had previously resolved to diet at New Year admitted they had been unsuccessful. The UK diet industry is worth billions, yet is there any other industry that thrives on a failure rate of 80-90%? Even the word 'diet' is now taboo in nutritional circles. We prefer to use the terms 'food plan' or 'meal programme' when talking with our clients. The word 'diet' puts people into a tailspin, in fear of a future dominated by low fat spread, meal replacement drinks and calorie counting. It no longer refers to the everyday foods you and I choose to eat and is now associated with differing forms of restriction.

restrictive diets

The truth is that most of these diets are highly restrictive. Restrictive diets are destined to fail and many play havoc with your health. Here's why;

Diets which severely restrict calories effectively send the body into starvation mode as if there was a real famine situation. This then gradually reduces the body's metabolism and the rate at which we burn calories. When we return to a more normal eating pattern, weight will accumulate very quickly. Many low fat diets fail to distinguish between the types of fat consumed. Whilst it may be unhealthy to consume a large amount of saturated fat in your diet it can also be very harmful to your health to cut out fat completely. The much-maligned saturated fats play many important roles in body chemistry and essential fats found in nuts, seeds and oily fish help to regulate metabolism and promote healthy weight control. Restricting particular food groups often leads to unpleasant side effects that may lead to further health complications. High protein diets can lead to headaches, irritability, hormonal and digestive problems, bad breath and sleep issues. In extreme cases they have been known to lead to kidney damage and other irreversible problems. Low carbohydrate diets can increase cravings for sugary foods because they reduce the body's ability to make the 'feel good' neurotransmitters, serotonin and dopamine.

Most ignore the fundamental nutritional issue facing us in the 21st century. Much of our food has extremely poor nutritional value whilst being highly addictive in nature. That leads us to want

more of it even though it fails to provide many of the essential nutrients we need in order to thrive. It leaves us feeling hungry only a short time after eating it and we naturally want more.

modern day eating

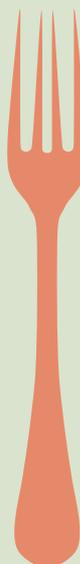
So, for those of you who have failed on a restrictive diet, your willpower hasn't weakened; it's just harder to eat healthily in modern society. Most people I speak with understand the basics of a healthy diet but they find it incredibly difficult to put the theory into practice. Many popular diets are associated with commercial products of poor nutritional value. Foods labelled 'healthy' aren't always so. They're commonly calorie dense, stripped of fibre, stripped of nutrients, with unnecessary added ingredients. I fail to see the 'health' in most of it.

For me, this isn't about what we shouldn't be eating. It's all about what we should be eating. Eating fresh ingredients, cooked simply, with a balance of protein, fats and carbohydrates to provide long term energy for the day. Foods that leave you feeling satisfied because they provide nutritional value. Foods that provide us with energy that allows us to be active and mobile. Foods that provide the optimum level of nutrients our bodies need to function and thrive.



Jamie Richards is a nutritionist based in Bristol. He gives consultations throughout Europe as well as talks and workshops. His website can be viewed at www.jamierichards.co.uk

Here are some of Jamie's recommendations;



Breakfast

- Freshly laid eggs on rye toast
- Pancakes made with spelt flour & soya milk
- Pre soaked porridge with nuts, seeds, fresh fruit & live yogurt
- Kedgeree or last night's left over's

Lunch

- Soups and stews made with beans or lentils
- Frittatas
- Rice or quinoa salads with a variety of vegetables & goats cheese (keep herbs and dressing separately & add just before eating)
- Rye toast sandwich with chicken salad & hummus

Dinner

- Chicken noodle soup with live miso, homemade stock and masses of herbs
- Grilled salmon or chicken with stir fried vegetables and herby rice
- A hearty Dahl (make in large batches)
- Butternut squash risotto with goat's cheese

