

Diet & Health

November 2014

Today

Zoë Harcombe

What should we eat?

Oliver Selway

The weird and wonderful world of obstacle course racing

Rachael Porter

What's your child being fed at school?

PLUS:

Bearing fruit, Mystic pizza, Healing spaces and John Nicholson's view on the times we live in.

More delicious low-carb recipes from

Ryan Turner

November 2014

Contents

- 4 **What should we eat?**
Zoë Harcombe
- 7 **Bearing fruit**
Clare Hargreaves
- 8 **Mystic Pizza**
Chris Packe
- 9 **Healing spaces**
Kate Jones
- 10 **Chef's Corner**
A selection of deliciously healthy and low-carb recipes from **Ryan Turner**
- 14 **Like a pig in mud**
Olly Selway
- 16 **What's your child being fed at school?**
Rachael Porter
- 18 **John's piece**
A usually thought provoking piece from John Nicholson
- 19 **Contributors**



Diet & Health Today



Thank you for the journey

Diet & Health Today started out life as a monthly 'magazine' for members of The Harcombe Diet Club. For more than 4 years we've been publishing articles that challenge the conventional wisdom behind diet and health messages.

This past year, we tried something different, pooling the resources and generosity of other health and food writers to create this free-to-all, digital, magazine.

Through the combined following of the contributors, we estimate that around 60,000 people will have downloaded and had access to Diet & Health Today. We've really enjoyed pulling the magazine together and we hope that you've enjoyed the articles from some great writers.

For a number of reasons, this issue will be the last one in this format. Starting next year, we'll still seek to publish interesting and challenging articles from a range of contributors and these will be published through the magazine website, www.dietandhealthtoday.com, which will be having a refresh in design to make all the content much easier to find and 'mobile friendly', so that you can read the articles on your favourite mobile, tablet or desktop.

We hope that you'll continue to check out the content at our website and support the contributors by visiting their personal resources or checking out their books and other writings. It's thanks to their generosity that this magazine can come to you in its advert and sponsorship free format.

If you'd like to contribute to this magazine with an article, recipe or a real-life health story, please send in your submissions to editor@dietandhealthtoday.com.

Very best wishes

Andy & Zoë Harcombe

Diet & Health Today is a free magazine,

made possible by the generous contribution of its authors, editors and creators.

Please feel free to share this magazine with your friends, either by email, printing off a copy and sending it to them or by sending them a link to download it themselves. This edition, and others, can be downloaded at www.dietandhealthtoday.com

The content of this magazine is intended to inform, entertain and provoke your thinking. It is not intended as medical advice. It may, however, make you question current medical and nutritional advice. That's your choice. It's your life and health in your hands. Neither the authors nor the publisher can be held responsible or liable for any loss or claim arising from the use, or misuse, of the content of this magazine.

The views expressed in the articles are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the publisher. If you wish to quote, use or republish any of the work in this magazine, in full or in any part, you must get permission to do so from the appropriate author.

Thank you for sharing and supporting the work of the contributors of this magazine.



What should we eat?

Zoë Harcombe

Food (noun): “Substance taken into body to maintain life and growth; nutriment.”

My mother told me to eat my liver, eggs and greens, to drink my milk and to take my cod liver oil. Her mother told her the same and her mother before that. Somewhere along the line we seem to have forgotten that we eat food for a reason. Food is essential for human life and health and we need to eat food because of the nutrients it provides.

Macronutrients are, collectively, carbohydrate, protein and fat. The Greek word macro means large and these are nutrients that we (allegedly) need in large quantities. It is debateable whether or not we need carbohydrate at all, let alone in large quantities. The term "essential" in nutrition means something that we must consume - the body can't make an essential substance. There are essential fats (omega-3 and omega-6); there are essential proteins (the amino acids that the body cannot make); but there are no essential carbohydrates. The critical macronutrients for the human body are thus protein and fat. However, there are valuable carbohydrate sources for micronutrients.

Micronutrients are, as the name suggests, those needed by the body in smaller quantities. Vitamins and minerals fall into this category. (We also need water and oxygen, but I'll take those as read).

There are 13 vitamins in total: A, B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B7, B9, B12, C, D, E and K. The fat soluble vitamins are A, D, E and K and, as their name suggests, they are found in fats and need to be consumed in/with fats for their absorption. The water soluble vitamins are vitamin C and the vitamin B group, which comprises: B1 (thiamine); B2 (riboflavin); B3 (niacin); B5

(pantothenic acid); B6 (pyridoxine); B7 (biotin); B9 (folic acid) and B12 (cobalamin).

There are two categories of minerals – macro minerals are both present in the body and needed by the body in larger amounts than the trace minerals (where only a trace is needed). The main macro minerals are: calcium; chloride; magnesium; phosphorus; potassium; sodium and sulphur. The key trace minerals are: chromium; copper; iodine; iron; manganese; molybdenum; selenium and zinc.

Food in an obese world

Eating to overcome an obesity epidemic, we have no room for empty calories. Every calorie ingested must contribute to our nutritional requirements. We cannot afford to consume manufactured foods, which have been comprehensively and carefully designed to be irresistible and 'moreish'. Instead of counting calories we need to make every calorie count.



Did you know that the average UK citizen is consuming 1,150 calories a day from just two ingredients – one with no nutritional value and one with so little that it is subject to fortification legislation, with a requirement to add back in nutrients removed in processing? World Health Organisation data tells us that the average UK citizen consumes 36 kilograms of sugar per year. Statistics from the Flour Advisory Bureau note that UK per capita flour consumption reached 74 kilograms in 2008/9. This represents a few calories short of 1,150 per person per day from those two ingredients – when did that become a healthy balanced diet?

The USA has higher corn consumption than the UK and concomitant lower wheat consumption. The corresponding figures for the USA, for 2008, were 458 calories of sugar, high-fructose-corn-syrup and other sweeteners, and 618 calories of wheat flour, adding up to 1,076 calories in total per day for the average American citizen.

I did an interesting experiment, using the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) food and nutrition database and the USA per capita consumption of sugars and flour. I analysed the nutritional value for the 121 grams of sugars and 170 grams of flour consumed daily by the average American. I then tried to see if I could get the American Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) from eating approximately the same number of calories (1,076) in *real* food. The USDA database does not have information for Biotin and it only records 11 minerals. There is not even an RDA for vitamins B5, D and K or for the minerals calcium, potassium, sodium and manganese. There is an “Adequate Intake” (AI) apportioned instead. The concept of RDA is bad enough. As Sally Fallon Morell said at the London Weston Price Conference in March 2010: “why am I only *allowed* a certain level of nutrition?”

I compared the 12 vitamins available and eight minerals – those for which there was both information available and an RDA, plus calcium and manganese, as important macro and trace minerals respectively. The results are summarised in the following table:



Nutritional comparison of real vs. processed food

Nutrient (RDA/AI)	Sugars & Flour	Healthy Basket	Main source from healthy basket (Note 1)
Calories	1,076	1,077	Eggs
Carbohydrate (g)	250	62	Oats
Protein (g)	17	95	Sardines
Fat (g)	2	57	Eggs
Vit A (900 mcg) (Note 2)	0.0	8,585	Liver & spinach
Vit B1 (1.2 mg)	0.2	1.3	Liver & seeds
Vit B2 (1.3 mg)	0.0	3.5	Liver & eggs
Vit B3 (16 mg)	2.2	18	Liver & sardines
Vit B5 (5 mg) (AI)	0.7	10	Liver & eggs
Vit B6 (1.7 mg)	0.0	1.9	Liver & seeds
Folic Acid (400 mcg)	44.1	1,040	Liver & eggs
Vit B12 (2.4 mcg)	0.0	27	Liver & sardines
Vit C (90 mg)	0.0	115	Broccoli & spinach
Vit D (10 mcg) (AI)	0.0	11.5	Sardines, eggs & milk
Vit E (15 mg)	0.2	16	Seeds & sardines
Vit K (120 mcg) (AI)	0.5	1,022	K1 Spinach, K2 sardines
Calcium (1,000 mg) (AI)	26.7	1,018	Sardines & milk
Magnesium (420 mg)	37.3	506	Cocoa & spinach
Phosphorus (700 mg)	183.3	1,921	Sardines & eggs
Copper (900 mcg)	200	2,475	Cocoa, liver & seeds
Iron (18 mg)	2.0	26	Liver & spinach
Manganese (2.3 mg) (AI)	1.2	4.8	Oats & spinach
Selenium (55 mcg)	58.3	202	Sardines & eggs
Zinc (11 mg)	1.2	12	Liver & eggs

Note 1: Healthy basket: 35 grams of porridge oats; 125 grams of whole milk; 75 grams of liver; 50 grams of broccoli; 200 grams of spinach; 25 grams of cocoa powder; 125 grams of sardines; 200 grams of eggs and 20 grams of sunflower seeds.

Note 2: Please note that half the vitamin A comes from the spinach, which would have a low bio-availability and hence the intake would be much lower than indicated.

The outcome was that only the requirement for selenium was met by the flour and sugar intake. Every other nutritional requirement was woefully lacking. All RDA's and AI's could be achieved by eating 1,077 calories comprising the following: 35 grams of porridge oats; 125 grams of whole milk (not low fat); 75 grams of liver; 50 grams of broccoli;

200 grams of spinach; 25 grams of cocoa powder; 125 grams of sardines (oil based, bones included); 200 grams of eggs and 20 grams of sunflower seeds. The most interesting lessons were not the results, but the exercise itself. It illustrated the following:

- It is difficult to get even the RDA for many nutrients and very difficult to get the RDA for some (calcium, magnesium, zinc, vitamin D and vitamin E were the most difficult) and this is with every food on the planet theoretically available.
- In our preoccupation with macronutrients, we seem to have forgotten about micronutrients. If we eat food to obtain the vital micronutrients, the macronutrients will be what they will be (take care of the pennies and the pounds/dollars look after themselves). If we eat food to try to meet some made-up macronutrient composition,^[1] the micronutrients are likely impossible to consume. It is an inescapable fact that processed carbohydrates have little or no natural nutrition and even nature's carbohydrates are comprehensively beaten by nature's fats and proteins. Telling people to avoid fat is the same as telling us to avoid nutrition.
- Our parents and grandparents were brought up on relatively cheap, highly nutritious, foods like liver, eggs and sardines. Cod liver oil was commonly administered by previous generations. When you see the vitamin A and D content of the latter, our elders were very sensible. We shun such foods nowadays and should not.
- This is the *most* nutrition that we can derive from even real foods. This makes no allowance for: the quality of the food; nutrients lost in harvesting or over use of the land; cooking methods; or the fact that some nutrients need others for their absorption.

What are the implications of this for the obesity epidemic? The body has a substantial and varied nutritional requirement. If we base our meals on starchy foods and consume an average 1,100 largely useless calories, we still have a nutritional requirement to be met. The body will continue to seek food in an attempt to get the nutrition it needs. We may then consume another 1,100 calories, likely as nutritionally lacking as the first batch and we arrive at a population that is both overfed and undernourished. That's another way of defining the 'developed world' today.

Healthy eaters should not stop at the basket of foods mentioned above. We can have more oats and sunflower seeds, with the milk, for breakfast. The sardines and hard boiled eggs can form part of a large 'chef's salad' for lunch with lettuce, cucumber, celery, tomatoes, beetroot, celeriac, grated carrot, spring onions, coloured peppers, mixed with olive oil dressing. Dinner need not be just liver, spinach and broccoli, but any other vegetables that can be found (in butter, of course, to deliver the nutrients) and cheese or natural yoghurt for dessert – to help with calcium intake.

Eating in this way has the following advantages over calorie deprivation:

- 1) There is no hunger, so there is no *general* and continual drive to eat;
- 2) All nutritional needs are met, so there is no *specific* and urgent drive to eat;
- 3) The metabolic advantage is equivalent to having a calorie deficit, without needing to eat less.

Expanding on point (3), the real food basket comprised carbohydrate:fat:protein in the ratio 29:27:44. The flour and

sugars, being consumed by the average American each day, has the macronutrients in the ratio of 93:1:6.^[2] This gives the real food eater the benefit of energy used up in making available energy. Protein and fat calories also have vital jobs to do and can therefore be used by the body in fulfilling these roles. Up to 85% of the energy need of the body is determined by basal metabolic rate for good reason. Carbohydrate can only be used for energy. Sugar, the most nutritionally void carbohydrate, cannot do anything useful in the body. It must be used as energy or it will be stored as fat (and it can be stored as fat because it causes insulin to be released).

There are overall wellbeing benefits from eating only real food: people report having higher and more stable energy levels, no 11am and 4pm hypoglycaemia; bloating, bowel problems, headaches, skin complaints – diverse and seemingly unrelated conditions disappear. I firmly believe that doctors' waiting rooms would be virtually empty if people ate only real food. If you are sceptical, try eating only food in the form that nature delivers it for even a couple of weeks and the more processed your current diet, the more you will notice the difference.

The route to sustained weight loss (I believe the only way) is to return to eating food in the form that nature provides it and having carbohydrate intake driven by nutritional requirements and not by the insatiability of manufactured 'food'. Steak, rack of (Welsh) lamb, wild salmon, an omelette made from the neighbour's chicken eggs, berries of the season and fresh cream, whole grain rice with an array of stir-fried vegetables, the finest local cheeses, English apples in August, red wine, cocoa and cocoa butter 'chocolate' – this is how nature can feed us in the modern world and it should be embraced.

There's just one small problem to overcome – we seem to have got the idea from somewhere that nature put real fat in real food to kill us. That Ancel Keys fellow has so much to answer for!

References:

1 - The USA recommended intake for carbohydrate is at least 130 grams per person per day; the recommended intake for protein is 46-56 grams; the recommended intake for fat is "as low as possible."

2 - Both calculations are based on grams (weight). The real food basket contained 62 grams of carbohydrate, 95 grams of protein and 57 grams of fat. The flour and sugars contained 250 grams of carbohydrate, 17 grams of protein and 2 grams of fat.

Zoë Harcombe is an author and obesity researcher and creator of The Harcombe Diet®. Further information at www.zoeharcombe.com and www.theharcombediet.com
Follow Zoë on twitter @ZoeHarcombe





Bearing Fruit

Clare Hargreaves

Increasing demand for British-grown fruit and a renewed interest in heritage varieties is creating something of a renaissance

Picture autumnal Britain and what comes to mind? For me, it's wonderfully misshapen trees and hedgerows studded with ripe fruit.

There's no question that the terrain and climate make the UK perfect for growing truly flavoursome fruit. Along with lamb, it's the food we do best. 'We don't get the temperature extremes that other countries get. Our maritime climate is ideal,' says Adrian Barlow, CEO of English Apples and Pears. So it's odd – some would say shocking – that as a nation we grow just 12% of the fruit we eat. Even at the height of the season it can be hard to find British fruit. We've all heard the reasons: British growers are unable to compete with cheap imports because of high labour costs – that's if they can persuade any workers to pick at all. Another is that consumers are spurning traditional British varieties in favour of foreign, sweeter, cosmetically beautiful ones.

The good news is the juggernaut is slowly turning. We're producing and eating more homegrown fruit, and are increasingly unhappy about buying fruit transported from overseas. Supermarket sales figures bear this out. Of the apples sold at Sainsbury's, for example, 38% are now British grown, compared to just 21% five years ago. How has it happened?

For starters, growers realise they need to be commercial to compete, so are planting densely packed dwarf trees that are productive and easy to pick. The biggest revolution, perhaps, is cherry growing, thanks to the breeding of smaller trees that can be covered to protect fruit from frost, birds and rain. Strawberries are now largely housed inside vast temples of plastic – not pretty perhaps but, some would argue, a small price to pay for the revival of British fruit. About 70% of the strawberries we consume are now UK-grown, compared to 48% in 1998. We're branching into new fruits, too, like blueberries, now Britain's second-most-consumed soft fruit.

To compete with imports, however, British growers are having to adapt the varieties they grow to modern tastes. In the case of apples, this means blemish-free and sweet. Which means forsaking old British favourites, such as Cox's Orange Pippin. 'The Cox has a complexity many consumers no longer want,' says Barlow. 'The way ahead is likely to be the New Zealand variety, Gala – which has just ousted the Cox as number one – and new varieties such as Jazz and Kanzi.' For cherries, it's fat, juicy, black varieties such as Stella. Some object that these trends do little to help ancient varieties of fruit and traditional orchards ('traditional' signifies the trees are full-size, not dwarf). Over the past 60 years, we've lost an estimated two-thirds of our traditional orchards, partly due to EU grants in the 70s that encouraged digging them up. A

recent survey by the People's Trust for Endangered Species found 35,378 traditional orchards left, covering 16,990 hectares.

Conservationists are worried not only about the loss of fruit varieties – Britain has over 2,000 varieties of eating apple – but also about wildlife in the orchards. Happily, there's a renewed interest in our fruit heritage. Owners of vast orchards, such as the National Trust, are turning their fruits into juice, jam and ice cream. The trust has joined forces with juice-maker Copella to run a campaign to plant and protect English apple trees. The Co-op is selling a 'Tillington 1000 Heritage Apple Juice' made from 1,000 heritage apple trees it rescued in 2008. BBC chef Raymond Blanc is creating a 20-acre orchard to grow British fruits for his Michelin-starred restaurant, Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, near Oxford. The revival in craft cider and perry is also helping save cider apple and perry pear orchards in Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire.

Small steps, but they do show we're keen to be proud of British fruit again.

Food and farming writer **Clare Hargreaves** is the author of four books and writes for the national press, including BBC Good Food magazine and The Independent. Drawing on her contacts with

Crunch time

The good news

We're eating more British apples. In 2009, 34 per cent of all the apples bought were grown in the UK, up from 24 per cent in 2003.

The bad news

Demand for UK-grown pears is falling, accounting for 17 per cent of total sales in 2009, down from 20 per cent in 2003.

What you can do

How about replacing your morning glass of orange juice with some locally pressed apple?

Feast with a Chef

many of the country's top chefs, Clare's most recent venture is running Feast with a Chef, offering fine dining in village halls. She calls it 'Fine dining without the starch.' To find out more about Clare, her writing, and Feast with a Chef visit www.clarehargreaves.co.uk or www.feastwithachef.co.uk

Mystic Pizza

Chris Packe



“Live each day as if it were your last”...

A familiar phrase, and a wonderful notion. And utterly impossible to actually carry out, like trying to teach Twiglet, our pet stick insect, to dance.

Nevertheless, I still find something pretty wise and compelling about it. The idea of getting over petty things and attending to what's really important is worth trying out. Tackling the whole idea of Life is probably a bit ambitious, so I thought I'd start with Pizza.

I had previously attempted “breathing meditation”. I wasn't flaky about it – I got up at 6.30 every weekday morning (it was never going to work on a weekend) for 6 months and did 20-30 minutes of guided mindfulness meditation, using an app called Headspace. Tibetans supposedly speak of a phenomenon call the Monkey Mind, an endless screeching of thoughts going like traffic through your head and making the present moment evade you. I found that although I enjoyed giving this meditation a good go, sitting motionlessly was never going to be my preferred way of arriving in the present moment (well, my body was still at least... I found I had a busy troop of chimps flinging poo in all directions in my tiny mind).

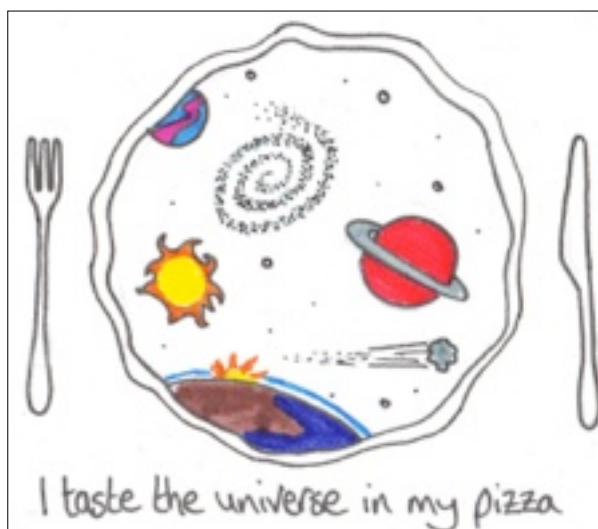
So I thought I'd take the experiment instead into the waking world, and see how that suited me.

This I learned: untangling any big, knotty issue can start with one pizza, and can go from there.

If a person stops for a moment and just carefully chews a morsel that they can get their mouth around, a chain of events will inevitably unfold and solutions will begin to present themselves. I believe this, utterly.

So, for several months now I have attempted to condense the Living Life idea into pizza with a little experiment following these rules:

- Eat alone (preferably at Franco Manca, the most delicious pizza in the world...ever);
- No distractions: no books, doodling, chatting with waiters. And the phone stays at home;
- No multi-tasking: no loading of forks or cutting slices at the same time as chewing;
- Chew each mouthful thoroughly, just like mama taught me;
- Pay attention to the pizza, and only the pizza... but everything about the pizza.



Forget living my whole life like each day were my last – it is a struggle enough to eat a pizza like it were my last. There is so much compulsive productivity and distraction to overcome. It's the same feeling as meditation: all I need to do is sit quietly...why can't I stop thinking about dinosaurs?

But my goodness, there are moments when the pizza tastes amazing. Hey, I've never really tasted the tomato before! How springy the mozzarella is ... I wonder if I can roll it into a ball on the roof of my mouth. And even the anticipation on the walk to the pizza parlour is pretty intense.

It now feels more like pizza is something I *delightedly experience* rather than something I *forcibly do to myself*.

It has begun to extend to chocolate. I began to notice when I wolfed down a mouthful of choccie as if it were a snakebite antidote, not a moment of delicate enjoyment. I began to apply it to cuddles (with children and wife mostly I guess, but now I'm good to try it with anyone, particularly Andy Harcombe). Perfunctory cuddles while at the same time

running through a mental to-do list are better than nothing I suppose, but a deep, primal cuddle is a transcendent feeling. There's definitely a subconscious thing going on there which I don't understand; I just know that I love it, as two people's heartbeats gradually synchronise when pressed together.

All these things make life feel simultaneously a bit lighter, and deeper, and *richer*. It is a vitalising experience to allow myself to really *feel* something, and that awareness inspires a universe of possibilities.

How tragically easy it has been in the past to work so hard and end up with nothing. To feel like I have given it everything, but realise I have merely burnt calories being busy, and given little of my *true* self.

Recently my wife and I wept, because we felt we had passed a threshold where our children were no longer babies. Were we happy or sad? That depends on whether it felt like their infancy was something that we were truly, wholeheartedly *there* for. Had we remembered to stop and immerse ourselves in one of the richest human experiences possible, or had we mindlessly gobbled?

This I know: it's about the pizza, nothing but the pizza, but everything about the pizza.

Read more of Chris's work at 'Chris Packe's Freedom Blog'

www.chrispacke.com

Follow Chris on twitter@Chrispacke



Healing Spaces

Kate Jones

"I use the word nursing for want of a better. It has been limited to signify little more than the administration of medicines and the application of poultices. It ought to signify the proper use of fresh air, light, warmth, cleanliness, quiet, and the proper selection and administration of diet—all at the least expense of vital power to the patient." — Florence Nightingale

Recently I visited my mother-in-law in hospital and was struck by the absence of any sense of it being a healing space. Despite the fact that no one was watching it, there was a television on the whole time. When I asked my mother-in-law about it, she said that it was on until very late at night and that requests to have it turned off were ignored. This alone would have driven me mad, but the whole environment of the ward seemed designed to increase rather than decrease stress. Much of the paraphernalia of nursing was on show, untidily stacked in plastic bins. The window had bars, presumably for health and safety reasons; it certainly didn't provide fresh air or a relaxing view.

An often-quoted piece of research by Roger Ulrich from as far back as 1984 revealed the importance of environment to healing in hospitals. Ulrich compared patients who had undergone gall bladder surgery and who were all cared for by the same medical staff. Half of the patients in the study had a view of a grove of trees and half the patients a view of a brick wall. After controlling for any significant variable such as age, sex, whether a smoker or not etc., Ulrich found that patients with the view of the trees left hospital a full day earlier *and* that they required less pain medication while in hospital.

We already have an archetype for healing spaces in the **Maggie Centres** designed to support cancer patients. In a survey of patients at the London and Edinburgh centres 95% agreed that the building made them feel better. All the centres are different - they have different architects - but the design brief is the same: to create a domestic ethos rather than an institutional one. The buildings incorporate views of nature and make use of natural materials; there are communal eating areas and more intimate spaces for private conversations, as well as rooms for yoga or other forms of gentle meditative exercise. I suppose you could argue that having a television on all the time reflects our home spaces, but we have the freedom to turn the TV off at home or to move to another space, something that is no longer possible in many hospitals where the communal day room, where the TV used to be housed, has disappeared.

Esther Sternberg in her book, **Healing Spaces**, reminds us that we knew the importance of the environment, particularly the effect of light and nature on healing, in the nineteenth century when many hospitals were designed with solariums at the end of each ward. She refers to the work of modernist architect, Alvar Aalto, who designed a TB sanatorium in Finland (1929-32) with south-facing rooms

overlooking a pine forest. Even imagining this space, I can feel my stress levels coming down - the very opposite of what I experienced when visiting my mother-in-law.

I vividly remember as a child visiting my aunt, who was a Carmelite nun, in Oxford. The convent adhered to the kind of minimalist beauty beloved of architects like John Pawson (who has, in fact, designed a monastery in Bohemia): it had polished wooden floors and whitewashed walls; the sparse furniture was made from natural materials, such as rush-matting and wood, and soothing neutral colours predominated. The convent was just off the busy Banbury Road but inside was a haven of tranquility, and I believe that the interior architecture, as much as the life of contemplation lived by its inhabitants, contributed to this atmosphere - it has had a powerful effect on my aesthetic preferences ever since. Sadly, when I attended my aunt's funeral a few years ago, it was at the new convent in Kirkintilloch, Scotland. I really can't convey the dismay I felt at the surroundings; instead of the beautiful, tranquil space in Oxford, the new convent's aesthetic was closer to that of a shoddily built community centre, and I can't help thinking that I would have found a life of contemplation and prayer much more difficult in those surroundings.

Why is it that in Britain we still tend to see design as an indulgence and one that we cannot afford to incorporate into our public spaces such as schools and hospitals? They are too often downright dismal places that work against what the people inside are trying to achieve. Effective design should be part of the brief, and objections that we can't afford good design need to be interrogated more carefully. The hospital I have described above is in the process of adding a new wing, a potential opportunity to improve the environment but I'm not holding my breath. There is now plenty of evidence linking environment and healing - there is even the **Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture** in the States which carries out evidence-based research on the subject. According to Sternberg, **The Pebble Project** in the States has shown that when we incorporate what we have learned about what makes healthy spaces into building new hospital wings, the costs are quickly recouped. In one example from the project, it was estimated that a new wing which cost \$12 million would recoup \$11 million dollars in the first year due to savings, not only in patient health but in the health of the hospital staff.

In this magazine we talk about the foods we put into our bodies and the exercise that is most effective to keep us healthy. In a way we are dealing with the internal space of the body. But haven't we all experienced the difference between exercising in a gym and exercising outside in beautiful natural surroundings? We all know the pleasure of arriving at a hotel room on holiday to find we have a room with a view of the sea or the mountains. There is much we can do to make our own individual spaces conducive to good health, but isn't it time we began to demand that our public spaces are built for the human beings who use them? Cutting costs at the expense of intelligent design could be a false economy. At best, good design could prove to be a preventative health benefit, and at the very least it would make our shared environment a much more pleasant place to be.



Chef's corner

With Ryan Turner

Ryan continues his series of low carb recipes for us. For this edition, he's created some deliciously simple dishes that we can all try out.

www.thefoodbible.com

Creamy cauliflower, bacon and chicken soup



Method

1. Lightly cook the chopped onion and butter in a large heavy bottomed saucepan for a few minutes until softened but not coloured.

2. Cut the cauliflower into florets and add to the pan and continue to cook for another 5 minutes, which will help release the flavor of the vegetables.

3. Add the chicken stock, paprika, thyme and cream.

4. Reduce the heat to a light simmer and continue to cook for approximately 25 minutes until the vegetables are tender.

While the soup is cooking, grill the streaky bacon until crispy and set to one side to cool, once cool roughly chop the bacon.

5. Remove the soup from the heat and use a hand blender to purée the soup until smooth and creamy.

6. Check the soup for seasoning and add as much freshly ground black pepper and sea salt as the soup needs.

7. Stir in the chopped crispy bacon and shredded chicken and then return to the heat for another couple of minutes until the soup is piping hot, serve immediately!

Chef 's tips

Try garnishing the soup with some additional crumbled blue cheese and crispy bacon

Ingredients

½ white onion, finely chopped
1 large cauliflower
100g unsalted butter
100ml double cream
6 rashers smoked bacon
Half a cooked chicken (removed from the bones and shredded)
1 litre chicken stock
¼ tsp paprika
1 tsp freshly chopped thyme

Serves 4
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cooking time: 30 minutes
Difficulty: easy
Makes: 8 portions

Herby pesto garlic chicken with toasted pine nuts, arugula and parmesan shavings



Ingredients

2 large chicken breasts
Zest of 1 lemon
3 cloves of garlic (crushed)
4 tbsp basil pesto
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
Olive oil to cook
1 tsp freshly chopped thyme
1 tsp freshly chopped oregano
25g toasted pine nuts
50g parmesan shavings
2 handfuls of rocket salad
2 tbsp olive oil

Serves 4
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cooking time: 6-8 minutes
Difficulty: easy

Method

1. Cut each chicken breast into two lengthways as if you were going to butterfly the breast. You should end up with two thin slices of chicken breast equal in size.
2. Place the chicken breasts between two sheets of plastic wrap and use a rolling pin to bash the chicken breasts out until they are 1/8 of an inch in thickness then use a fork to stab the chicken multiple times to tenderize the meat.
3. Sprinkle the meat with lemon zest, the crushed garlic, the freshly chopped herbs, pesto and a good amount of seasoning and a drizzle of olive oil. Use your hands to rub the seasoning into the chicken breasts
4. Place a large frying pan onto the stove on a medium high heat and add a good amount of olive oil. Wait for the oil to become hot and then add the chicken breasts, cook for about 3 to 4 minutes on each side, try not to move the chicken around too much when you are cooking as this will help the chicken to become nice and crispy and golden brown.
5. When the chicken is cooked, place onto 4 serving plates and top with the rocket salad, which has been dressed with a little olive oil, then sprinkle over the pine nuts and parmesan shavings and finish with some freshly ground black pepper.

Fragrant coconut fish curry with roasted courgette



This is a really tasty and filling curry that could also be made using shop bought curry paste, if the long list of spices scares you. Use any type of fish you like for this recipe and you could even add some flash fried shrimp to the curry for an extra special touch before serving.

Ingredients

1.5 kilo of fresh fish of your choice (I like to use salmon, halibut and sea bass)
1 medium summer squash (yellow courgette)
2 medium courgettes
500ml full fat coconut milk
500ml double cream
Zest and juice of one lime
1 tbsp almond flour
Small handful of fresh coriander (chopped)
3 tbsp toasted unsweetened shredded coconut
3 tbsp olive oil

For the spice paste:

½ white onion (finely chopped)
1 tbsp mustard seeds
3 tbsp chopped curry leaves (optional)
2 tbsp freshly grated ginger
2 cloves garlic (crushed)
1 tsp ground turmeric
2 tbsp medium hot curry powder
¼ tsp fennel seeds
½ tsp ground fenugreek seeds

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Serves 6
Prep time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 30 minutes
Difficulty: easy

Method

1. Pre heat the oven to 400F/200c.
2. Place the dry ingredients for the spice paste into a spice grinder and blend on high power until you have a fine powder then add the onion, garlic and ginger and blend until you have a smooth fragrant paste. Alternatively you could use a good quality pre-made curry paste.
3. Place the spice mixture into a heavy bottomed frying pan on a medium heat along with 1 tablespoon of olive oil and gently cook for 3 minutes, until aromatic, then add the coconut milk, cream and lime juice, bring to the boil and reduce to a light simmer.
4. Meanwhile slice the courgettes and place onto a baking tray, drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper, place into the oven five minutes before the fish.
5. Cut the fish into large chunks about 2 inches wide and place onto a baking tray then drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place into the oven on a medium shelf for 20 minutes.
6. Remove the courgettes and fish from the oven - the courgettes should be golden brown and the fish should be cooked through.
7. The curry sauce should have reduced by half and thickened up by this point. To finish the curry, stir in the almond flour and chopped coriander and cook for a further two minutes. Add the roasted courgettes and fish and gently stir until well combined, cook for a further two minutes until all ingredients are piping hot.
8. Serve in large bowls topped with a sprinkle of toasted coconut and freshly chopped coriander.



Classic Caesar salad with anchovies, grilled chicken and Parmesan shavings

Ingredients

12 anchovy fillets
75g fresh Parmesan shavings
2 Grilled chicken breast
2 Romaine lettuce hearts

For the dressing:

2 cloves garlic, crushed
3 tsp Parmesan, finely grated
1 medium free-range egg
1 ½ tsp Dijon mustard
Juice of ½ small lemon
2 anchovy fillets, finely chopped
150ml cups olive oil
salt and freshly ground black pepper
to taste

Serves 4
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cooking time: 0
Difficulty: easy

Method

1. For the dressing, put all ingredients, except the oil and seasoning, into a food processor and blend until smooth. With the motor running, trickle in the oil. Add a little hot water to dilute dressing if it's too thick. Season to taste.

2. Trim off the base of lettuce hearts to separate leaves. Wash well and place in a large bowl. Pour over dressing and toss well. Divide among four large plates and garnish with the marinated anchovies, sliced chicken breasts and Parmesan shavings.

Chef's tips

Try serving the salad with grilled Salmon instead of chicken



Like a Pig in Mud: The Weird and Wonderful World of Obstacle Course Racing

Oliver Selway

You may not have noticed it, but suddenly marathon running has become old hat. By the truck load, athletic types (and some not-so-athletic types) are rejecting the slow, steady slog of the 26 mile challenge and throwing themselves into something which promises a bit more razzmatazz.

The Obstacle Course Race has well and truly arrived and is now a serious rival to traditional long-distance races and the usual triathlon variations. OCRs, as they're called, can be held anywhere from flat, boggy land to mountainous terrain over course of varying from 5k to 35km and contain a fresh challenge at every twist and turn of the course. As a result, they have captured the imagination of thousands looking for something with a bit more of an adventure attached.

And that's certainly what you get. With obstacles every few hundreds yards, the competitors rarely know what they will face until they meet it head on. They do know for certain though that the course will be utterly unique and that the race organisers will have pulled out all the stops to make their event completely original.

Although at first glance the off-road running concept does bear close resemblance to the traditional army or marine assault course, the scale and the inventiveness of the obstacles has really moved things on to the next level.

In the race I finished last month, *Rock Solid* (Silverstone Woods, Northamptonshire) I found myself paddling an inflatable boat across a lake using just my hands, shooting down a 70ft 'slip-n-slide' into a massive vat of freezing water and completing a mini sack race up and down a steep, 200m-long slope. (I can tell you that the last of those was one of the hardest things I've ever done – my calves ached for a week after that.)

Other such obstacles include swimming across ponds, wading through mud pits, crossing streams, hiking rocky terrain, scaling downed trees, climbing walls, crawling under barbed wire, carrying heavy items such as sandbags or buckets, running through twisting streams, scaling cargo nets, wading through deep water, scaling cargo nets, jumping through fire and anything else which the fiendish course designers can conceive.

Unlike other multi-sport events such as triathlons, racers complete these obstacles fully clothed and wearing shoes.



You can touch the bottom of most water obstacles, and quality events are supervised by race staff or trained professionals. You are however required to sign a disclaimer so that the organisers cannot be held accountable for the higher risk of injury events like this pose to contestants.

There is also a clear divide in ethos between traditional sporting events and this new breed. There's nothing sombre



or dull here and the US's influence on the atmosphere is inescapable, even though the first race of this sort was run here in the UK. On arriving at the start, one is met with a cacophony of feel-good music (remember that theme tune from Rocky?) and a 'totally pumpin' commentator who could appear enthusiastic about the licking of a stamp, such is his enthusiastic demeanor.

Most events are either entirely about team work or have a high level of team involved. A few of the bigger races have a professional following whose racers shoot out in front of the rest in the first wave. However for most, the aim is simply to get around as a team, the same group of buddies that you signed up with, have a great time, get filthy dirty and get some great finishing photo shots of themselves and their friends, head to foot in mud and grinning from ear to ear.

Of course, some people will not be able to complete every obstacle. How this is resolved differs from race to race. Some of the more serious ones impose a time penalty; others offer an alternative forfeit (25 burpees before being able to continue, for example). In other events you can just walk around any obstacle you don't fancy; especially if the event is billed as a 'run' rather than a race.

For me, one of the more interesting aspects of these sorts of events is that they reward a very well-rounded sort of fitness.

The *Tough Mudder* race website (the granddaddy of them all) puts it like this:

Road running may give you a healthy set of lungs, but will leave you with as much upper body strength as Keira Knightley.

Indeed. The neat thing about this situation is that you can train in as many different ways as possible, and you can't go too wrong. To do really well though, you'll need strength, stamina, agility, mobility, speed, power and some specific movement skills that make many obstacles much easier. (Try going under a cargo net if you can't crawl, for example.)

As a trainer myself, when I've prepared teams to tackle OCR events I consider all of these aspects, on the basis that you're

only as strong as your weakest link. To give you an example: in the last competition I entered, I completed all the obstacles bar one. It was a tricky monkey bar swing (yes, like the sort you sometime see in children's playground but suspended over a pit of water.) I was doing fine until I reached a series of bars which had been designed with thicker tubes.

Having trained only with nice, thin, easy-to-grip bars, my finger strength was not good enough to keep hold of a larger, muddier variety. The fact that I can do 15 or more pull-ups became irrelevant: I plunged ignominiously into the chilly waters beneath knowing that lack of all-round preparation was what had let me down. Next time I'll train with a variety bar widths so I'll be ready no-matter what.

When all is said and done, these events represent a marvellous opportunity for proving your individual mettle - and for friends to bond together into a team that supports its members through every stage of the race. The camaraderie on the day means that helping everybody around you, even when they're on another team, is the expectation and the pleasure of the day. Any obstacle can be surmounted when people come together with determination, teamwork and undaunted enthusiasm. And somehow that's a lesson I'd like to take with me into other moments of my life as well.

At the risk of shameless hyperbole, I'm tempted to say that the OCR concept of overcoming obstacle seems almost to be a metaphor for life itself.

Oliver Selway is a Physical Trainer and author specialising in Natural Movement and preparing teams to compete in off-road physical challenges, from adventure holidays, to one-off races such as Tough Mudder. He emphasises team work over individual performance and this is reflected in the highly interactive team bonding that takes place in training sessions.

More information can be found at www.paleotraining.com and www.instinctive-fitness.com

Follow Olly on twitter @PaleoTraining





What's your child being fed at school?

Rachael Porter

“What did you have for lunch today?”

“Errrrm. . . pizza, potato wedges, baked beans. . .”

A bit carb heavy, right? But this wasn't my nutritionally wayward (hopefully temporarily) teenage son that I was talking to. It was my six year old, who since September has been having school lunches, thanks to new legislation that says that schools are obliged to provide all infants in reception, year one and year two with a free lunch.

More than a little concerned with the pattern of this seemingly daily conversation, I decided to visit the school one lunchtime and see for myself what was on offer. The lunch menu leaflet, handed out each term, didn't really represent what my son said he was eating and before marching into the school and asking 'why they don't just give all the kids a can of cola and a Mars bar and have done with it?' I thought it best to see first hand what school meals – and indeed the whole school meal experience – were really about.

And I discovered that my view was not entirely fair and that, to some degree, my son was the problem. That became very clear when I walked into the school dinner hall to see him sat in front of a tasty looking, freshly cooked roast chicken dinner, which he'd then liberally sprinkled with a handful of raisins!

Suffolk does have an outstanding reputation for its school lunches and the furore created when Jamie Oliver highlighted the 'turkey twizzlers' and the 'chips with everything' culture among some school meal providers certainly didn't apply here.

My son also enjoys his school dinners, which are all cooked from fresh using locally sourced meat, dairy produce, vegetables and, as far as possible, fruit. My misgivings were, in part, the result of his choices from a menu that has the potential to be well balanced and devoid of most, if not all, of the typical high-sugar processed offenders.

That said, I was still concerned about the level of carbs/sugar on the menu and I e-mailed the school meal provider for my son's infant school, to voice my concerns. I also questioned the listing of 'baked beans' as a vegetable and the sugary puddings that round off lunch each and every day of the week. Chocolate crunch seems to be a favourite, as does jelly and ice cream. I also asked why cheese is not offered as an alternative to pudding – even though it's listed on the school dinner menu sheet.



Don't get me wrong – I'm not a hair-shirted, anti-sugar kill joy. But there's a time and a place for such 'treats'. And that's not at school on a daily basis.

My boy has a relatively limited sugar intake at home gives me some crumb of comfort. He's not fussy and he'll happily eat olives, nuts, dark chocolate and a myriad of high fat, low carb foods. But he's like any typical six year old. Presented with a bowl of sweeties, or a bowl of olives, he'd eat the sweeties first. Show me a child that wouldn't.

Anyway, this was the reply that I got from the menu and nutrition manager.

“All of our school menus are compliant with the recently revised School Food Plan, which you can read more about if you follow the link below:

http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/School_Food_Standards_140617-V1c-tea-towel.pdf

“We are committed to using fresh UK and local produce wherever possible and all of our recipes are analysed and carefully tested. Carbohydrates and fats are essential in moderate amounts to supply the energy children need. You can see traffic-light nutritional analysis of all the recipes in the current menu on our website.

“Baked beans are classified as a vegetable, their tomato sauce makes them more appealing to children but they are

still very nutritious, we always offer a second choice of cooked vegetable and fresh salads. Cheese and biscuits is offered as an optional dessert every day as is fresh fruit although our staff might discourage a child from having cheese every day because it is relatively high in fat."

I was bemused, to say the least. I'm all for a balanced diet, but as I pointed out, the menu is, in my view, far from moderate in carbs. And I would never say that baked beans are 'very nutritious'. And I guess that children are attracted to them not because of the tomato sauce but because of their sugar content.

And I was wholly disheartened by the final comment about cheese. So, fat is still being demonised. Yes, cheese is high in fat – and protein. And I want my boy to eat plenty of both – not chocolate crunch'.

She's just doing her job and towing the government/local authority line on health and nutrition. But it's flawed and I'm frustrated because the good nutrition I provide at home has the potential to be undermined at school.

But, as I said, I was pleasantly surprised by what I saw when I visited the school. There was cheese on offer – and plenty of it. And salad and fresh vegetables. I didn't see any baked beans that day, nor chocolate crunch. Just those pesky raisins. And, also to give the school meal provider and the school their due, fruit juices are not on the menu. I'm told that they are at some schools, but they have to specifically request them. Only water was available to drink at my son's school.

Another positive is that the choices that he has to make for himself at school have opened up a whole conversation between us about food that I never had with my older son when he was that age. He ate what I put in front of him or what I put in his packed lunch. No questions asked and no need for a conversation about healthy choices – they were made for him by me.

Son number two, at just six, already knows, after a few chats about sugar and how bad it is for him and his teeth (a few graphic images of rotting teeth found on the Internet helped there), that it's bad to have raisins with everything. He's already learning to make informed choices about food – and what's good for him and what's not so good. He's forming good habits, independently.

I think that the nutritious meals on offer at his school are allowing him to do that. He's no longer being 'spoon fed', if you'll pardon the pun, but thinking for himself.

Now when I ask him 'what did you have for lunch today?', he reels off an impressive and varied list and is always proud to tell me, without prompting, that he didn't have raisins 'because they're just sugar and not good for me'.

But it's an on-going battle. Next term's menu has been printed and it seems I have another one of my food foes to tackle – Quorn. There's one particular week, in the four-week menu rotation, that this mycoprotein manufactured meat substitute puts in three appearances as the 'vegetarian option'. That's one of the few foods, if you can call it that, on my 'margarine' list. It's low in fat and saturated fat, boast the manufacturers. I say it's low in everything, particularly nutritional value. And how does the body deal with something like that? Just reading about how it's made on Wikipedia, and the photo of the Quorn fillets, 'fried, defrosted and frozen', is enough to put anyone off a meat-free sausage.

I think my boy and I will be spending some more time looking at the Internet over half term.

Rachael is a journalist and editor, specialising in food, farming and the countryside. She lives in Suffolk with her husband and three sons.

<http://reporterjournalism.co.uk/>



John's Piece

John Nicholson



We live in interesting times. Everything the general public thought it knew about healthy eating was wrong. It's a generalisation, but almost everything once said to be healthy, is actually bad for you and everything said to be bad, actually good. The movement to quit eating made-up food and eat real food instead is gathering pace every week.

It must be a confusing and worrying time to be a food processor who wants to pretend their fictional food is healthy. All the rules are changing even as we speak. Fat is less and less the enemy, animal fat, especially. Butter is seen as natural, honest and good. Full fat everything and skimmed nothing is becoming understood as healthy. Sugar is now the number one enemy, mass consumption of carbs will follow in its wake, eventually.

You used to be able to replace sugar with fruit purée or juice and trumpet how natural and splendid this was. Now, not so much. The cat is out of the bag of fruit. The previously innocent fruit smoothy is now known to be a big glass of insulin provoking sugar, though quite how it got away for so long without this being common knowledge, I'm not sure. Especially in doctor's surgeries where their errant advice has done so much damage to so many people for so long that a class action law suit against every medic who ever pushed the low fat, carb-based diet would *not* be unfair. The correct information and knowledge was available; they chose to ignore it.

Similarly, food manufacturers could, and still do, proclaim their so-natural-it-was-made-by-someone-in-a-hair-net-on-an-industrial-estate products are 'low in saturated fat.' and feel virtuous in calling it 'heart healthy.' But now, even that seems so old-fashioned and behind the curve.

I heard Flora pushing their new blend of extruded gunk which now has 'real' butter in. You can hear the confusion in the advertising. They're keen to tell us its 40% lower in saturated fat than butter, but seem to have forgotten to push the poly-unsaturated message that for so long was their absolute mantra. It feels like they're hedging their bets now that all the old certainties have melted away. Oh, its got natural stuff in it and also the oily gubbins we've always made. So it's natural, and err...unnatural as well...err...buy it...please. They seem to have also given up on advertising the crud that lowers your cholesterol. Indeed by adding butter, they're increasing the dreaded cholesterol. They don't have a clue, do they?

I was looking at a packet of breakfast cereal which, when all's said and done, is little more than crushed up biscuits, and the blurb on the box was jumping through hoops to try and find something good to say about itself. About all it was left with to say was that it contained no fat (pity about that), but it did have fibre and it gave you energy, as though the giving of energy was exclusive to breakfast cereal and not actually something that anything you insert into your face might do. Drinking petrol will give you energy. And eating cardboard would give you fibre. Neither is a good lifestyle choice. They love to trumpet all the added vitamins and minerals too, as though completely unaware that the subtext to this is that

their unholy creations are so free from nutrition that it actually has to be added in. It is as if they're saying 'we know this is rubbish but let's just pretend it's not.'

It really is quite pathetic how these food processors have got everything wrong. There's no place to hide any more. We can see unhealthy people eating huge quantities of food marked 'healthy' and the connection has been made. You can't con us any longer. There's only so long this scam can work.

Increasingly, people are assaulted from all sides about what is and isn't healthy to eat and have, understandably, given up on believing anyone. Health claims are made about everything from cranberries to liver to duck fat and, for all I know, a cup of hot gravel. When, for decades, very unhealthy things have been passed off as healthy and have been endorsed as such by the medical profession and even charities such as the increasingly despicable British Heart Foundation, it's no wonder that your average consumer is a bit confused and cynical.

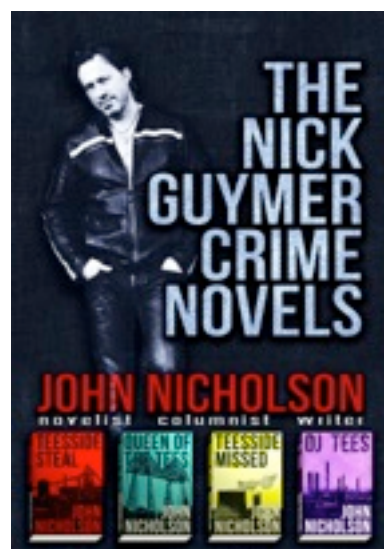
As ever, the advice remains simple and easy. Make it yourself, don't buy it in. If it was made by someone in a hair net, don't eat it. If it comes in a box telling you how healthy it is, it probably isn't. If it says it's 'heart healthy', it isn't, If it lowers your cholesterol, it's bad for you, if it is low in saturated animal fat, it's bad for you. If its full of sugary fruit, it's bad for you. It'd be funny if it wasn't so bloody tragic. It's like being told that a punch in the face is really a sensual massage.

John Nicholson.

www.johnnicholsonwriter.com

Follow
twitter

John on



Contributors

Thank You!



Zoë Harcombe

Author and obesity researcher.
Creator of The Harcombe Diet.
www.zoeharcombe.com



Clare Hargreaves

Freelance food writer and
creator of 'Feast with a Chef'
www.clarehargreaves.co.uk/



Chris Packe

Experimenter. Writer. Doodler.
Woodsman. Whittler. Dog off a
leash.
Chris Packe's Freedom Blog:
www.chrispacke.com



Kate Jones

Kate works at a sixth form
college in Cardiff, where she
teaches critical thinking to young
adults.



Ryan Turner

Low-carb chef and food
consultant.



Olly Selway

Founder, Woodland Workouts.
Author, Instinctive Fitness.
www.instinctive-fitness.com



Rachael Porter

Rachael is a journalist and
editor, specialising in food,
farming and the countryside.
She lives in Suffolk with her
husband and three sons.



John Nicholson

Writer, columnist, novelist, real
foodie, ex-vegan
www.johnnicholsonwriter.com