

Chapter 1

Raw Food 101

In This Chapter

- ▶ Figuring out what *raw food* really means
- ▶ Considering how raw you want to go
- ▶ Making sure you get the nutrients you need
- ▶ Keeping your momentum going with a daily dose of raw foods

Gourmet raw foods can be just as delicious and satisfying as any food on the planet, and more and more people every day are exploring the raw food lifestyle. Many raw enthusiasts want to enjoy better personal health, whether it's looking and feeling better or healing from a major health challenge. Others want to support a friend or family member recovering from conditions like cancer, diabetes, or heart disease. And some people are simply intrigued by the concept of eating delicious food with plenty of flavor, complex texture, and natural, vibrant beauty.

Fruits and vegetables, unlike animal proteins, are delicious without much help, and they contain the nourishment your body needs to stay strong and energized.



In other words, a raw diet is power-packed with nutrients that provide plenty of protein, calcium, antioxidants, and essential fats and facilitate optimal health. The only supplements we recommend across the board for raw foodists (and many meat eaters, too) is vitamin B12 and, for those who don't get enough sunshine, vitamin D.

Of course, you don't need to eat all raw food all the time to enjoy the health benefits of the raw lifestyle. Different levels of raw are right for different people. Some choose to dedicate one meal a day to raw foods; some aim for an 80/20 split — a diet that's mostly raw; and others choose to live with only raw foods. It's a personal choice, and this book can provide the details you need to make informed decisions about what's right for you.

In this chapter, we define a raw diet and point out why it's a good idea to incorporate more raw foods into your meals. We describe the harm caused by cooking food and give you tips on how to stay nourished, balanced, and satisfied with raw, plant-based foods.

Exploring the Raw Food Lifestyle

No matter what your reason is for exploring a raw food diet, you can rev up your health, energy, and appearance by eating more raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. The transformation that's possible when you follow a diet that's high in raw plant-based foods is truly incredible.

In this section, we point out how cooking food harms it *and* compromises your health. But there's no need to wrinkle your brow like that. We also have good news to share: Eating more raw foods can make an immediate and lasting impact on your health and vitality!

Going beyond roots and shoots: What is a raw food diet?

A raw food diet is all about abundance, not deprivation. As a raw foodist, you can eat as much delicious, health-promoting, plant-based food as you need to feel satisfied. Going raw doesn't mean you have to give up your favorite flavors and textures, because we show you how to make delicious raw meals that mimic the experience of traditional cooked foods. Our goal is to help you make healthy living delicious and satisfying.



Here are some characteristics of a raw food diet:

- ✓ Includes fresh, ripe, raw plant foods rather than processed or refined products
- ✓ May include a small amount of lightly cooked vegetables, whole grains, and legumes
- ✓ Typically contains no raw or cooked animal products
- ✓ Is high in nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and phytonutrients
- ✓ Includes organic products whenever possible
- ✓ Contains a significant quantity of chlorophyll-rich green foods and other colorful plant foods
- ✓ Contains adequate complete protein from plant sources
- ✓ Contains a large proportion of foods with high water content, providing excellent hydration
- ✓ Includes raw vegetable juices
- ✓ Contains all essential fatty acids, including omega-3 fatty acids from naturally occurring plant sources

- ✓ Has moderate yet adequate caloric intake
- ✓ Contains only low to moderate amounts of sugar, which come from whole food sources
- ✓ Is nutritionally optimal for detoxification and healing

Flip to Chapter 3 for the nutritional details of terms such as *essential fatty acids*, *complete proteins*, *enzymes*, and *phytonutrients*.

Understanding how cooked food harms your health

Phytonutrients and antioxidants in the body are front-line defenders against cancer and other chronic illnesses. *Phytonutrients*, also referred to as phytochemicals, are health-promoting compounds that give plants their vibrant colors; phytonutrients are available only in plant foods. That's why eating fruits and vegetables representing the full spectrum of the rainbow is helpful. The thing is, phytonutrients and antioxidants are both heat and light sensitive; cooking breaks them down and reduces their power to protect.

Here are some of the other negative things that happen to food as it cooks:

- ✓ Vitamins, antioxidants, and phytonutrients are lost in varying degrees depending on cooking temperature and time.
- ✓ Proteins become *denatured*, or altered in such a way as to render them no longer useful to the body.
- ✓ Water in food evaporates, which leads to the loss of valuable minerals and water-soluble vitamins like vitamin C and B-complex, which help other nutrients do their jobs.
- ✓ Food reduces in volume but maintains its calorie count, so you end up consuming more calories by volume of food than your body needs.
- ✓ Food softens, making it easier to eat quickly and overeat.
- ✓ High heat creates toxins, especially when cooking starches and fats, and some of those toxins are *carcinogenic*, or cancer causing.

Another problem is that many foods that are alkaline when raw become acidic when cooked; this includes tomatoes. Acidity is rough on the body. For starters, it strains the kidneys, which can lead to kidney stones and kidney damage as well as bone loss and acidosis. Concentrated sweeteners (such as sugar and unripe fruit), cooked starches, and animal products also cause acidity in the body. When your body becomes too acidic, it takes calcium from your bones to neutralize the acid. That's why eating more alkaline foods helps safeguard your bones.

Additionally, raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds contain enzymes that are necessary for the digestion process. When fruits begin ripening, they actually start digesting themselves by changing their starches into simple sugars. Sugars are much easier to digest than starches, so ripe fruits are easier on the body. You can even taste your body's preference for ripe fruit when you bite into, say, a peach. A ripe one is so much sweeter. And the enzymes in the fruit that convert starch into natural sugar also aid your digestion of that food; when enzymes are destroyed by cooking, the body must work harder to digest food. Enzymes in raw foods are best preserved by keeping the food's temperature below 118 degrees.



Preserving important enzymes in whole foods is one of the primary reasons people choose to follow a raw food diet. Enzymes are necessary for every function in the body, and they're the most heat sensitive of all nutrients. Take a look at Chapter 3 for more information on how food enzymes help your body digest foods properly and why good digestion is important to good health.



When choosing food in grocery stores or restaurants, watch out for words that mean cooked. Terms like *pasteurized* and *hydrogenated* indicate that the food has been heated above the 118 degree threshold. Check out Chapter 6 for tips on reading labels to ensure that you're getting foods that are whole and in their nutritious natural state.

Boosting planetary health with vegan choices

For many raw foodists, the choice to forgo consuming animal products is an instinctive step made to minimize the negative impact of the meat industry on the planet. Growing animals for food requires huge amounts of fresh water and grazing lands, and it's totally unnecessary. With only a few exceptions — including vitamin D, which comes from the sun or a supplement, and vitamin B12, which people must get from supplementation or fortified foods, the human body can get all the nutrition it needs from plant-based sources.

Plus, because conventional farming pollutes the earth with pesticides and *genetically modified organisms* (GMOs) that get into your body when you consume the bounty, a raw plant-based diet typically supports local and organic foods, which require fewer resources from seed to spoon. So aside from the enormous human health benefits it provides, a raw vegan diet nurtures the soil, safeguards the environment, spares animals, and supports farmers.

Embracing a lifestyle, not a fad diet

Transitioning to raw food is not a process related to a temporary diet. Instead, it's a lifestyle decision with positive long-term effects that will benefit you for the rest of your life.

Unlike most diets that rely on restricting calories or carbohydrates, a raw food diet allows you to maintain your basal metabolic rate (BMR), so you can eat enough to keep your metabolism up *and* your energy high to sustain prolonged exercise and promote healthy body processes.



Your *basal metabolic rate* is the amount of calories you need to cover your basic energy needs, including breathing, keeping your heart pumping blood, maintaining brain and nervous system activity, repairing body tissues and cells, and performing other life-sustaining processes. An average adult needs to consume between 2,000 and 2,500 calories daily to ensure healthy body function and to maintain current weight.

Many traditional diets are designed to limit the amount of calories consumed in order to lose weight. In contrast, weight loss happens naturally when you transition to eating raw foods because you give yourself outstanding nutrition with foods that aren't calorie-dense. For the most part, you can eat all the raw foods you want and feel satisfied. Think about it: Have you ever heard of someone getting fat from eating too many vegetables, fruits, and sprouts?

Plus, the raw food lifestyle is so delicious. The variety of raw foods is much more exciting than the traditional low-cal options. So adding more raw fruits and vegetables to your diet means you can be better nourished, enjoy more energy, and achieve your natural body weight.

Examining Different Ways of Eating Raw

People take many different approaches to living raw, so what's optimal? Unfortunately, we can't tell you what's right for you because the answer is different for everyone, and it changes at different times of life. What feels right for you now may not make you feel best after a year or two. Your body is always evolving, and you must allow for changes in your tastes and nutritional needs. In this section, we help you figure out how raw you want to go. Finding the right balance of raw food in your life is personal.

You're a unique individual with individual needs, so tune into your body's signals to find out what foods work for you and which ones don't. Be gentle on yourself. This discovery process takes time, but you need to pay attention.

Total raw may not be realistic for you right now — or ever. Pay attention to how you feel when you choose different foods. We recommend keeping a food journal so you can record how you feel after eating certain meals. Over time, this journal can help you see patterns related to what you eat and how you feel, enabling you to find out what foods make you feel best. If you feel energetic, happy, healthy, and able to handle stress, you know you're making good food choices. Allow yourself the freedom to refine and change aspects of your diet as your needs change over time.

How much raw food do you need to consume to be considered a raw foodist and experience the benefits of the raw food lifestyle? If you enjoy and appreciate raw food, you're already a raw foodist! And if your daily diet consists of 20 percent raw food and you increase that to 50 percent, you'll notice a big difference in how you feel.

Quite often, people start a raw food journey on a very strict diet of 90 to 100 percent raw for healing, weight loss, or detox purposes. After achieving their goals, these folks tend to soften their approach and allow a few well-chosen cooked foods into their regime. Many raw foodists include some healthy cooked foods in their diet simply because of convenience when traveling, dining in restaurants, or eating in social situations. Still, most people say that the more raw food they eat, the better they feel.

Here's a general breakdown of some different ways to live raw. You may fit neatly into one category or change your regimen depending on time of year or based on what you're doing.

- ✔ **All raw all the time:** A small number of raw foodists eat only raw food and never touch anything that's cooked. Most of these folks also stay away from meat, fish, eggs, and dairy; and many don't eat oil or concentrated sweeteners, preferring instead whole-food fats and natural fruit sweeteners. A few all-raw foodists eat raw fish and raw cheese, but most are strictly raw and vegan.
- ✔ **Mostly raw vegan:** This raw foodist group is the most populous. These folks eat all raw on most days and a little cooked food on occasion or as part of a meal — a cup of cooked soup with a big salad, for example. Most of the people in this group occasionally consume carefully selected cooked foods, such as steamed vegetables, whole non-glutinous grains, and legumes, as well as fish, eggs, and dairy, but they try to ensure that raw plant-based foods make up about 80 percent of their diet.
- ✔ **Transitional raw:** These folks eat a lot of raw plant-based foods (usually at least 50 percent) and a small amount of animal protein. The remainder of their food choices tend to be healthy cooked foods.

Considering the USDA MyPlate guidance

The USDA recommendation for what and how much to eat now recognizes that a plant-based diet provides adequate nutrition and no longer insists that meat is the only form of protein. The new guidelines encourage you to make fruits and vegetables half of what you eat on a daily basis. This change is definitely a step in the right direction! But the new version of the Food Pyramid is still flawed. For starters, we think grains still carry too much weight on the chart (but we're glad that whole, gluten-free

grains such as quinoa, wild rice, and buckwheat are included). Instead of calling this category *Grains*, we prefer to think of it as *Starches* so that it includes potatoes, yams, beets, carrots, and winter squash. Also, the Dairy circle could be better named as *Calcium-Rich Foods* or deleted altogether, given that dark leafy greens and whole grains provide calcium plus a whole lot more. Dairy products and dairy substitutes are really not needed at all in a healthy diet.

Chapter 4 can help you decide how much raw is right for you. Just keep in mind that any increase in the percentage of raw food you consume offers health benefits. Here are a few general guidelines for a healthy daily diet:

- ✓ Fats should comprise 10 to 30 percent of calories.
- ✓ Protein should make up 10 to 15 percent of calories.
- ✓ Carbohydrates should make up the remaining 55 to 80 percent of calories.

Getting Proper Nutrition

Despite concern among some people, a raw food diet provides more than enough protein and calcium for healthy adults. It also offers plenty of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants with one or two exceptions that actually apply as well to the general population: vitamin B12 and, for those who don't get enough sunshine, vitamin D.



Here are some general rules for getting the nutrients you need from raw food:

- ✓ Consume a wide variety of fresh, ripe, raw, organic fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Eat all the colors of the rainbow to get a full spectrum of nutrients.

- ✓ Emphasize nutrient-packed green foods.
- ✓ Give enzyme- and mineral-rich sea vegetables a place in your diet.
- ✓ Enjoy a variety of raw nuts and seeds in moderation.
- ✓ Include omega-3 rich foods, including flax, chia, and walnuts.
- ✓ Soak and sprout nuts and seeds, and enjoy these foods regularly.

After you conquer the basics of meeting your body's nutritional needs, you can take your healthy eating plan to the next level by choosing to take these additional steps:

- ✓ Reduce your intake of concentrated sweets and sweeteners.
- ✓ Minimize salt intake; stick with Himalayan crystal salt if possible.
- ✓ Choose gluten-free grains, such as quinoa, millet, amaranth, and buckwheat, if you eat steamed or sprouted grains.
- ✓ Soak and sprout legumes, if you choose to include them in your diet, to make them more digestible.
- ✓ Choose organic food whenever possible to minimize chemical residues.
- ✓ Minimize or eliminate meat and dairy products from your diet.

Getting enough protein without meat

Confused about which foods provide the best protein? You're not alone. After all, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a category of foods called proteins that doesn't even include green leafy vegetables, which, calorie-to-calorie, have twice the amount of protein as red meat.



Don't believe it? Take a peek at the amount of protein in a 100-calorie serving of these foods:

- ✓ Broccoli: 11.2 grams
- ✓ Kale: 11 grams
- ✓ Sirloin steak: 5.4 grams

It's true that the volume of these foods are different; for 100 calories, you get 10 ounces of broccoli, 7 ounces kale, and just 2½ ounces of steak, but calorie for calorie, your best bet is vegetables. Find out how much protein you actually need and how to get it from plant-based sources in Chapter 3 (and refer to the sidebar "Considering the USDA MyPlate guidance" for info on the new Food Pyramid).

Ask the experts: Doesn't everybody need milk?

(Cows) milk is mother nature's "perfect food" . . . for a calf! Cow's milk is designed to turn a 65-pound calf into a 400-pound cow. Dr. Michael Klaper, author of *Pregnancy, Children, and the Vegan Diet*, states, "You have no more need of cow's milk than you do rat's milk, horse's

milk or elephant's milk." Even Dr. Benjamin Spock, noted pediatrician and author of *Baby and Child Care*, says, "I no longer recommend dairy products after the age of 2 years. Other calcium sources offer many advantages that dairy products do not have."

Dishing out the facts on dairy

Humans are mammals, and a few things are common to all mammals: We're warm blooded, have body hair, give birth to live young, and nurse babies. However, humans are the only mammal that continues to drink milk after being weaned. In fact, as humans leave infancy, production of the enzyme lactase, which is necessary to digest milk, declines.

But instead of listening to their bodies' insistence to get off the milk, many people take a lactase supplement so they can comfortably digest dairy products, which are totally unnecessary to a healthy diet and cause a range of health problems, including obesity and heart disease, due in part to the high amount of cholesterol and saturated fat they include. And don't think you're doing yourself a favor by choosing 2 percent milk; 35 percent of those calories are fat!



The major argument for drinking milk (and eating dairy products in general) is to ensure that you get enough calcium. But the truth is that plants provide all the calcium you need in a form that's more useful for your body — without the health risks of milk. Some of the best sources of calcium are collard greens, kale, spinach, okra, broccoli, and almonds. But you don't have to live without milk and cheese in a raw diet; flip to Chapters 9 and 11 to find out how to make these foods from delicious and heart-healthy nuts and seeds.

Staying nourished all day long

By making sure that you include plenty of fresh, colorful, nutrient-dense, high-water-content, raw plant foods in your meals throughout the day, you fuel your body to function properly all day and into old age. No matter how much raw food you consume in a day, be sure to eat meals at scheduled mealtimes and don't skip meals. Enjoying nutritious and filling foods at regular intervals makes it less likely you'll overindulge at dinner or resort to late-night snacks.



Start your day with a good breakfast; at least have a smoothie or green juice to help your body rehydrate after a night without fluids or nutrients. (Find breakfast and juice recipes in Chapters 10 and 11.)

A nourishing lunch helps curb cravings for sweets and other quick-energy foods in the afternoon. But if you do feel a need for sweets, have a piece of ripe fruit or a small handful of nuts or trail mix (recipe in Chapter 16). Keep dinner light and eat it early. Consuming foods near bedtime interferes with your ability to rest deeply because your body is working to digest your meal, which takes at least six hours and often much longer.

Integrating Raw Foods into Your Life

Embarking on a major life change can be exciting — and a little nerve-racking, too. When a person is seriously considering “going raw,” all sorts of questions run through the brain. Foremost: “What will I eat?” Salads get boring, and munching on a raw beet isn’t an overly luring idea.

The good news is that there’s a big wide world of delicious foods to enjoy — no cooking needed. In fact, one of the best perks of a raw diet is exploring new foods and finding creative ways of preparing old favorites. For instance, from a selection of ten fresh ingredients, you can make hundreds of different salads without repeating any. Hint: Don’t use all ten in the same dish!



Make a point of trying new foods and recipes and, over time, replacing less-healthy meals with new raw favorites.

You may find that a new favorite adventure is checking out local produce markets, especially when traveling to new locations. (If this is you, be sure to check out Chapter 19 for tips on how to stay raw when you’re traveling.) Dare to try something new at least once a week. Here are a few suggestions:

- ✓ Try *cherimoyas*, a sweet, white, creamy fruit that has a hint of pineapple and pear that hails from the Andes and now grows in Southern California. Just peel and eat the luscious fruit and discard the large, hard seeds, which are toxic.
- ✓ Take a chance on *durian*, a prehistoric-looking fruit that tastes like sweet onion custard. It’s known in Southeast Asia as the king of fruits. Look for durian in the frozen section of Asian markets. No need to prepare it in any way; it’s delicious just as it is!
- ✓ *Celery root*, also known as *celeriac*, is a crisp, slightly starchy root vegetable that tastes like celery and can grow anywhere root vegetables thrive. Shred it, puree it, or slice and eat with a dip (find dip recipes in Chapter 12).

- ✓ *Gypsy peppers* resemble spicy jalapeño chili peppers but taste like sweet bell peppers. Look for gypsy peppers at your local farmers market. Eat them with no preparation at all or stuff them with nut cheese for a savory treat. (See Chapter 9 for nut cheese recipes.)

Take a look through Chapter 7 to gain some know-how for creating satisfying raw meals. And check out the recipes in Part III to find an assortment of food ideas and step-by-step preparation instructions.

In this section, we show you that it's possible to maintain a raw food lifestyle when eating out, socializing, and even traveling. And if you still want more, go to Chapter 20 to get tips on making friends in the raw world and find out what to eat when you attend food-centered functions that are not raw-friendly.

Planning ahead

As with any major change in your diet, planning ahead for your raw lifestyle is essential to success. Keeping your refrigerator and pantry stocked with raw staples (as we suggest in Chapter 5) makes choosing wisely much easier. And because some raw recipes are a bit time-consuming, prepping key ingredients for certain meals is vital. Nuts, seeds, and grains, for instance, often need to soak overnight, and sprouting takes time. Raw breads and crackers need to dehydrate for as long as 24 hours or more. And fermenting foods like sauerkraut and cheese can require a week or more.

But don't let those timelines discourage you. We help you set up a schedule in Chapter 4 to keep these items in the hopper so you're never without them. And we flag recipes that require ahead-of-time preparation with the Plan Ahead icon. Before long, you'll have multiple batches of seeds sprouting, wheat grass growing, and cheese fermenting so you can whip up your best batch of whatever in no time!

Most of the time you won't need more than a knife and a blender to prepare your raw foods, but a food processor and dehydrator come in quite handy for some dishes. If you want long threads of what looks (and feels) like pasta, use a hand-held spiral slicer to turn veggies into noodles. And, if you want to include fruit and vegetable juices in your healthy lifestyle, a juicer is a must. Get the scoop on these and other raw kitchen tools in Chapter 5.

Dining out and staying raw

Just because you're deciding to eat more (or all) raw foods, you aren't stuck eating at home day in and day out. Many restaurants now offer vegetarian and vegan options that you can enjoy as a raw meal. If the restaurant already serves food that's fresh, organic, and minimally processed, you're likely to find healthy options.

But this isn't always the case. Uncle Bud may be in town and insist on gathering at the steak house. No problem! In Chapter 19, you can find tips on scoring a raw meal in practically any restaurant. We point out how to read a menu the raw way and suggest items to pack in, such as raw salad dressing, so you can practically guarantee yourself a filling and nutritious meal.



Keep in mind that you aren't limited to actual menu items. Check out the ingredients in a restaurant's offerings and find out what you can put together to make yourself a raw feast.

If you're lucky enough to find a bona fide raw food restaurant, like the ones in the nearby sidebar, be sure to support it with your dining dollars. Like their traditional counterparts, health-conscious raw food chefs must balance the flavor, texture, and appearance of food in order to please their guests; but raw food chefs have an additional responsibility to provide meals that contain all the nutrients required for optimal health and are easy to digest. So most raw food chefs insist on having the freshest, ripest, most nutrient-dense, seasonal, raw, organic ingredients available, and they limit fats and salt — because most raw food diners demand this level of consideration to food. Sounds like a full plate, right?

Joining the raw community

The raw lifestyle is gaining ground throughout the world and becoming more popular every day. In greater numbers all the time, people are shopping at farmers' markets and getting interested in improving their health with better food choices. This movement means that finding other people who want to consume primarily raw fruits and vegetables is much easier now than it once was.

Nevertheless, you're still a trendsetter, so you probably need to do a little research to find others who eat and live raw. Most larger cities have raw meet-up groups or raw-friendly vegetarian and vegan meet-ups, so strike up conversations at your local organic shop and farmers' markets to see what's going on in your local community. Also, go online and search for "raw food groups" and "raw food classes" to find chat groups, blogs, and classes that can help you learn more about nutrition and food preparation or just meet some like-minded people. Take a peek at Chapter 20 for more on finding a raw community or starting your own group.

Raw-friendly restaurants

Raw and raw-friendly restaurants are sprouting up all over the world. Here are some of our favorites in the U.S.:

- ✓ **118 Degrees, Costa Mesa, CA** (<http://118degrees.com>) serves fresh, organic, living cuisine that's presented in an artful context to be enjoyed with family and friends.
- ✓ **Au Lac, Fountain Valley, CA** (<http://aulac.com>) offers profoundly eye-opening raw and vegan food. Chef Ito has created remarkably delicious and fulfilling Asian-influenced cuisine, from starters to incredible desserts.
- ✓ **Café Gratitude, Los Angeles, CA** (<http://cafegratitude.com>) is a 100 percent organic vegan restaurant specializing in gourmet raw and cooked cuisines featuring organic produce from the restaurant's farm in Vacaville, California (Be Love Farm).
- ✓ **Karyn's Fresh Corner, Chicago, IL** (<http://karynraw.com>) is an organic juice bar, store, and fine-dining restaurant founded by Karyn Calabrese.
- ✓ **Living Light Cafe, Fort Bragg, CA** (www.rawfoodchef.com), located on the beautiful Mendocino coast, is an organic, gourmet, mostly raw, all vegan café with a salad bar, gourmet entrees, soups, smoothies, juices, and an amazing array of desserts. Owned and operated by yours truly (the authors of this book, Cherie Soria and Dan Ladermann), this café also offers some packaged foods online.
- ✓ **Pure Food and Wine, New York City, NY** (<http://oneluckyduck.com/purefoodandwine>) is a gourmet raw vegan fine-dining restaurant that also offers takeaway foods, a juice bar, and a store.
- ✓ **Quintessence, New York City, NY** (<http://raw-q.com>) is a gourmet, 100 percent organic, vegan, and raw restaurant with a commitment to both flavor and health.

