

# Nutrient density is just 'too sensible'

From CI

book *Volumetric Weight Control Plan*, by Barbara Rolls, published a couple of years ago, is about how to feel satiated on fewer calories. Rolls will be releasing a follow-up companion to her first book this year.

"What I've seen is even more disordered eating with low-carb diets," says nutritionist Leah Hawirko. "People are afraid and don't know what to eat anymore. They're asking if it's okay to eat a banana."

People found it hard to maintain the low-carb diet, she says. "It was making them very tired. You need carbs for brain functioning, for daily living. They'd start craving carbs or be depressed, tired, and lethargic. Carbs give you serotonin, a feel-good hormone. The low-carb diet is amazing for short-term weight loss but it's harmful in the long-term."

Nutrient density, she says, is something she's been promoting forever. "I don't talk about it in terms of calories, but in terms of foods that are filling and full of nutrition. The reason we crave carbs is we tend to eat nutrient-poor foods and our bodies crave carbs for the energy. I absolutely think nutrient density would be a good trend." The reason it hadn't caught on, she says, is because "it's too darn sensible."

## MERCY MEALS

The industry term calls it home replacement meals but in many busy homes, they're mercy meals, meals you pick up, ready to eat, or have delivered weekly to your home. In Vancouver, there are a number of places, besides restaurants and pizza parlours, that cater to demanding take-out palates, like Rangoli, Urban Bites, Lunch Box Soup and Saffron. And Whole Foods, Urban Fare, Choices and Capers Community Market all have above average take-out sections.

Donna Wadsworth, of Savoury City, makes weekly or monthly meal deliveries to private homes. "We've doubled over the last year. I'm astounded by the level of business," says Wadsworth. "People are catching on to it and starting to understand it. They're huge time-savers. You get home late. You don't want to eat out. You don't even want to stop and make one more decision. It's thawed and ready to go in the fridge. You pour the wine and have braised lamb shanks for dinner." Her meal menus change every six months and currently include dishes like French country chicken, Thai yellow seafood curry, Irish lamb stew, North African pork tagine, beef bourguignon, oven-roasted Mojito chicken and cost about \$8 to \$10 per serving.

## LOOSE LEAVES

Last year, matcha tea saw frenzied sales. This year, look for interest in loose whole-leaf (as

opposed to cut leaf) teas in tea bags. "People want the ease of the tea bag but the aesthetics of loose tea," says Petra Allman of T on West Broadway. T's whole-leaf teabags come in the shape of a pyramid, furthering the aesthetics. They sell eight of their teas, bagged.

And still on tea, chefs are finding myriad ways to employ tea in their cooking and baking. Allman says chefs have used her teas in imaginative ways, like Earl Grey macaroons, tea-infused chocolates, goat cheese with pressed tea as well as creme brûlées and sponge cakes flavoured with tea; also you'll notice dessert and tea pairings.

## BEYOND ORGANIC

Organically grown foods are good for the environment and health, but some producers are going beyond the basics. Take Nomad Cows. The company works on principles of biodynamics, with as little human interference in the raising of their Black Angus cattle and there are no questions of mad cow (get it? Nomad Cows?) disease in their stock. "We create an equilibrium between the livestock and land so it becomes a natural cycle." Nomad cattle roam freely on spacious pastureland and are stress-free; they're totally unmedicated (if they do require medication, they're pulled out of the herd) and never see a feedlot nor are they fed grain, which the owners say is not natural to their digestive system; and the cows breed according to their natural cycle. Once butchered, they're dry-aged for 28 days (better than wet-aging). The result? Exquisite flavours and tenderness. And yes, you pay for quality. Tenderloins cost about \$29 a pound, New York and rib-eye steaks, about \$20 a pound; ground sirloin, \$9.84 a pound.

Nomad Cows owner Douglas Goerz only sells and delivers directly by internet (nomad-cows.ca) and will be at the East Van Farmers' Market, when it opens in spring. He started selling three months ago and through word of mouth, has about 150 regular customers. "You're going to see a lot more of this. Consumers are starting to care more about where food comes from. It's going to matter a lot," he says.

## SOUS VIDE COOKING

Developed for institutional and mass production cooking, sous vide (under vacuum) is no longer shameful.

Basically, food is vacuum-sealed and cooked in hot water. But chefs like David Hawksworth, of West restaurant, have taken it to another level. In fact, he's aiming to cook 75 per cent of his dishes sous vide. "I'm at the 50 per cent mark right now," he says.

And no, it's not simply boil-in-a-bag cooking. He's refined temperatures and timing so that the



GLENN BAGLO/VANCOUVER SUN

Savory City chef Donna Wadsworth prepares meals for delivery to private homes: 'They're huge time-savers.'

finished product is perfectly moist with no loss of flavours.

"I'm progressively getting further into this," he says, "trying out different dishes — pork belly, halibut, yellow tail hamachi, eggs. The textures are just beautiful if cooked at exact temperatures. A lot of Michelin-starred places in Europe only cook sous vide," he says. "It's completely changed the way food is being prepared at the Michelin-starred level [as well as at restaurants like the celebrated French Laundry in the Napa Valley]. Now I can change the texture of an egg. You're not losing any moisture, nothing is escaping and if you work with very fresh products, you have all of the natural flavours sealed in."

With proper equipment, he doesn't see why home cooks can't master sous vide. "The only difficulty is regulating temperatures. I know my stove and I'm eventually getting a water bath that can hold temperatures at a certain level for a certain amount of time."

## PINK SALT

What began some years ago with a few lovely sea salts from France has busted wide open. Pink salt is the latest hot salt. "There's a salt craze," says Caren McSherry of Gourmet Warehouse. "Every country is analyzing their resources for any underground salt deposits they could revive. There's a whole new wave from Hawaii of black, red and white salts. Their big surge should be coming on scene within the next two months."



BILL KEAY/VANCOUVER SUN  
Pink sea salt, the latest craze.



BILL KEAY/VANCOUVER SUN

Avocado and rice bran oils have a high smoke point.

## ETHICAL FOODS

Consumers don't mind spending just a little bit more for ethics. Fair trade foods (produced by farmers and workers in developing countries under a system of fair wages, good working conditions and no child labour). It started with coffee, and now it's expanded to teas, tropical fruits, sugar, chocolate, cocoa and sugar. The number of products will just keep expanding. David van Seters of Small Potatoes Urban Delivery, an organic grocery delivery service, says sales of their fair trade products grew by 343 per cent between 2003 and 2004. "That represents over a third of a million dollars," he says. "We carry about 47 products and probably half of that are coffees. Bananas are the biggest percentage in sales."

## SPAGHETTI STICKS

Fried spaghetti sticks have been noted on a couple of restaurant tables. They're like lean, mean grissini (Italian breadsticks). Spaghetti noodles are quickly deep-fried then salted. That's it, and it's ready for munching and crunching.

## COLD-BREWED COFFEE

Seattle's Best and Starbucks and other coffee bars have been using cold-brewed coffee for

their cold coffee drinks but consumers who want a bold coffee with less acidity and less caffeine (about two-thirds of regular coffee) are lapping it up. Seattle's Best sells Toddy Cold Brew Coffee makers for \$34.95. They require coarse-ground coffee beans, brewed overnight in cold water. It produces a concentrate to which you add hot or cold water.

## HONEY MUSSELS

These B.C.-farmed mussels are all the rage in finer restaurants. A Quadra Island company, B.C. Mussel Company, produces them and they've had rave reviews from A-list chefs, including Michael Stadlander, a top Canadian chef and owner/chef of Eigensinn Farm restaurant, north of Toronto. Unfortunately, honey mussels aren't available at shops, but you'll find them on restaurant menus. Lumiere, Feenie's, West, Blue Water, Circolo, C restaurant, Provence, Cioppino's, Le Crocodile, Villa del Lupo, Bishop's, Joe Fortes, Rodney's Oyster House, Salmon House on the Hill and Cincin are some of the restaurants that feature honey mussels.

"I'm a big fan," says chef David Hawksworth of West. "It's the flavour, the quantity of meat to shell, the pristine quality." They are, however, about twice the prices of other mussels.

"I'll sell them if the price

comes down," says Michael Goleski of Lobster Man on Granville Island. But B.C. Mussel Company owner Dale Williamson says he's in talks right now with Whole Foods. "They're very interested in carrying them," he says.

Says C restaurant chef Robert Clark: "They cost twice as much but you get twice the meat and the taste is sweet and wonderful."

## HOT CHOCOLATE

Big last year and still big, thanks to all the gourmet hot chocolates available. Picnic, next to Meinhardt's on South Granville serves it up in style.

## GOURMET OILS

Olive oil is here to stay but other oils are nudging for shelf space — like macadamia nut oil, avocado oil and rice bran oil. "Avocado and rice bran oils have the bonus of high smoke points," says McSherry.

## IBERIAN FLAVOURS

Figs, preserved lemons, sherry vinegar, bomba rice, chorizo, smoked paprikas, tagines — foods from the Iberian peninsula are big, says McSherry. "They contain salt, sweet and sour flavours, three components of cooking everyone tries to achieve." Preserved lemons are coming on strong and being incorporated into mainstream food. Tagines, she says, started going mainstream a couple of years ago. "Now I hear people talking about tagines daily," she says.

For very good, very inexpensive tagine experience, check out Zanzibar Cafe on Commercial Dr.

## DUEL DISHWASHERS

Unhappy with piles of dishes at the end of a dinner party, many large home owners are squeezing in an extra dishwasher. "They usually flank the sink and people are choosing European models with much longer cycles but are kinder to the china," says West Vancouver kitchen designer Kerry Copeland.

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