



HERE TODAY GONE TOMORROW

Fad diets promise fast weight loss now. Jan Purser uncovers the truth – do they really work?

It's pretty tempting to take up the latest diet craze to shift a few kilos of extra padding fast. But how much good are you actually doing for your body in the long run? The fad diet has been around for centuries and an Englishman named William Banting wrote the first diet book in 1864 called *Letter on Corpulence*. He apparently lost 22 kilograms after changing his eating habits and wrote about it. The book was a top seller. In more recent times we hear about celebrities following their favourite diet with exceptional results. It all sounds great ... until we hear how they've put on all the weight again, plus some extra.

Let's take a look at the effectiveness of some popular fad diets doing the rounds:



The Ketogenic diet

involves reduction in the refined carbohydrates in our diet, with emphasis on reducing cravings and regulating blood sugar, by adjusting the balance between fat, carbohydrates and proteins. The aim is to have the body move into a natural fat burning state, called ketosis, the advantages of which include reduction in appetite and preservation of muscle mass. Ketones, expelled in urine, should be measured daily to help indicate fat burning state. The Atkins, South Beach and Zone diet will all result in a mild ketogenic state, but the safest way to embark on this diet is with the support of qualified practitioners or nutritionists.



The Lemon Detox diet is really a fast where you make a drink from a syrup mix and lemon juice and have this throughout the day rather than eating foods. This diet is extreme and is likely to leave you feeling very fatigued. It's quite possible that you will lose muscle mass in the process and this muscle loss will result in slowed metabolism and then weight gain beyond where you started once you have completed the diet.



The Cabbage Soup diet is where you make a cabbage and veggie soup and have it every day along with other allowed foods that vary each day during the seven-day program. This is definitely a faddish diet. For example, one day you can eat up to eight bananas and as much skim milk as you like, along with the soup. This is the type of diet where you might lose weight (some of it muscle) but will most likely put it all back on once you go back to normal eating.



The Atkins diet is where you avoid all carbohydrates and fruit and have a diet high in protein, fat and fibre, with some non-starchy veggies and salad. A lot of controversy surrounds the original version of the diet as it encourages the consumption of animal fats in bacon, butter and cream, so there is concern that it increases the risk of heart disease. You will lose body fat but also water, which will return once finished the diet. It's a difficult diet to sustain long-term and in social situations.



The Grapefruit diet is a low-carb diet that involves eating half a fresh grapefruit or unsweetened grapefruit juice at the beginning of each meal. The remaining foods include meat, chicken, fish or eggs with salad and non-starchy vegetables. Taking out a food group completely, such as starchy carbs, might result in weight loss (fat and water) but would be difficult to maintain.



The South Beach diet starts with a no-carb phase for two weeks, focusing on protein foods, vegetables, salads, eggs, cheese and nuts served in three meals and two snacks. Phase two reintroduces starchy carbs plus a few indulgences. Phase three is the maintenance program and must be followed long term. This diet takes you through phases and makes it clear that to maintain a healthy weight you have to make changes for life. It is more balanced than some and is similar to the Zone diet.



The Zone diet involves each meal containing a kilojoule breakdown of 40 per cent carbs, 30 per cent protein and 30 per cent fat. By keeping to this ratio, you better manage blood glucose levels and this reduces inflammatory processes that can occur with excess body weight. This focus makes satiety easy to achieve, reduces sugar cravings and there is room for a couple of treats each week. This diet includes all the food groups, making it the most balanced and easier to stick with long term. Also, like the South Beach, you need to follow the principles long term to maintain a healthy weight.

Catherine Saxelby, a well-known Sydney-based nutritionist, states in an article on her website (www.foodwatch.com.au) that extreme fad diets don't work because "they give short-term results, but fail to establish sensible eating habits that allow you to eat 'real food' as part of normal life". Another of her concerns is that fad diets often cause you to lose lean muscle, which results in a reduced metabolic rate. This, of course, means you burn fewer kilojoules each day so that once you finish the diet your weight is more likely to creep up beyond where you started.

The simple fact is there is no one secret to weight loss. It's easy to be tempted by promises of a Cabbage Soup diet or Lemon Detox but diet alone won't help shift the kilos, as eating is only one part of the equation. Unless we have a healthy relationship with food and embrace physical activity, sustainable weight loss will remain elusive.

Nutritionist Natalie Wight, of Revive Weight Control at Goodlife Health Club Alexandra Hills, believes we need to embrace a more holistic approach to weight loss that centres on the three key elements – focus, food and fitness. "My history as a naturopathic nutritionist is based on whole foods and a natural approach to life. Calorie counting and shakes might work in a controlled environment and for a short period of time, but not long term. It's about educating people on healthy food, helping them with mental focus and increasing their movement. It's about long-term weight control." ■

Goodlife's weight loss tips

- Forget unbalanced fad diets
- Get back to eating the least processed foods
- Eat regularly, every 3 to 4 hours
- Have at least 5 serves (2½ cups) of vegetables daily
- Eat some protein at each meal
- Have 2 serves (1 cup) of fruit daily
- Always eat breakfast
- Exercise at least 45 minutes daily
- Include strength training exercise to increase muscle tone (and metabolism)
- Focus on balance and looking after yourself
- Use positive self talk and affirmations – they work
- Eat for your future health



RIP IT OUT AND TAKE IT WITH YOU!



Grilled feta and vegetables

Serves 4 | Prep 10 minutes | Cook 15 minutes

- 2 tbsp olive oil
 - 2 capsicums, quartered
 - 2 long Asian eggplants, halved (optional)
 - 200g goat's feta or chevre
 - 250g cherry tomatoes
 - ¼ cup kalamata or other tasty olives
 - 1 tbsp chopped oregano (or 1 tsp dried)
 - 1 tsp rosemary leaves
 - Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
 - 2 tbsp best-quality extra virgin oil
 - Salt and grinds of pepper
1. Heat oil in a large frypan and gently fry capsicums and eggplants, if using, until softened, about 6-8 minutes. Remove from heat.
 2. Slice feta into four portions and place each in the centre of four heatproof gratin dishes or metal pans. Divide capsicums, eggplants, cherry tomatoes and olives between dishes and scatter over herbs and zest. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with sea salt and pepper.
 3. Place under a preheated grill and cook until cheese is lightly browned, 6-8 minutes.



Moroccan lentil soup

Serves 6-8 | Prep 10 minutes | Cook 1 hour

- 2 tbsp olive oil
 - 1 large onion, diced
 - 2-3 cloves garlic, chopped
 - 1 tbsp grated fresh ginger
 - 2 tbsp tomato paste
 - 1 tbsp ground cumin
 - 2 tsp ground coriander
 - ½ tsp each ground cinnamon, smoked paprika and turmeric
 - 1 tsp chilli flakes
 - Pinch of saffron (optional)
 - 2 carrots, peeled and grated
 - 2 stalks celery, finely diced
 - 250g pumpkin, grated
 - 400g can tomatoes in juice
 - 2 cups puy lentils, washed
 - 9-10 cups water
 - 1 tsp salt and grinds of pepper
 - ½ cup chopped fresh coriander or parsley
1. Heat oil in a medium-large saucepan and gently fry onion, garlic, ginger, tomato paste and spices until aromatic and onion has softened without browning.
 2. Add vegetables, lentils and water and simmer on lowest heat for 1 hour. Season to taste.
 3. When ready to serve, mix in coriander or parsley. Delicious served with crusty bread topped with hummus. Soup reheats well – add coriander or parsley when serving.



Fideua

Serves 6 | Prep 10 minutes | Cook 10 minutes

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
 - 4 cloves garlic, crushed
 - 2 tsp smoked sweet paprika
 - ½-1 tsp chilli flakes
 - 375g dried angel-hair pasta or ribbon egg noodles
 - ½ cup white wine
 - 4 cups fish or chicken stock
 - 20 strands saffron (optional)
 - 3 large tomatoes, chopped
 - 1 tsp salt and grinds of pepper
 - **Seafood:** 300g prawns, 1.3kg fresh mussels and/or cockles in the shell, 400g boneless fish, cut into chunks
 - **Garnish:** ¼ cup finely chopped parsley, diced flesh or 2 roasted red capsicums (optional), wedges of lemon or lime
1. Heat oil in a large, deep pan and sizzle garlic, paprika and chilli flakes for a few seconds. Break up noodles or pasta into small pieces with your hands and add to pan. Stir over heat for a minute or two until noodles start to brown a little. Add wine, stock and saffron if using; cover and bring to simmer.
 2. Add tomatoes, seasoning and all the seafood, stirring to combine evenly and pushing all the mussels into the mixture to submerge their bases.
 3. Cover and cook until mussels open, 5-6 minutes. Taste for seasoning and garnish with parsley and roast capsicums if using. Accompany with wedges of lemon or lime.

Recipes and images extracted from *Eat Fresh: Cooking through the seasons* by Annabel Langbein (Simon & Schuster Australia) RRP \$34.95.

Calamari with rocket, chilli, sesame seeds and garlic

Serves 2

- 1 calamari tube, cleaned
- Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
- 200g rocket leaves
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 2 small red chillies, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tsp sesame seeds, lightly toasted
- Lemon wedges

1. To prepare the calamari, cut down one side of the tube and open it out flat to form a rectangle. Use a sharp knife to lightly score the inside surface of

- the calamari with a crosshatch pattern. Cut into small rectangles and season with salt and pepper.
2. Arrange the rocket on a serving platter.
 3. Heat the two oils in a large frying pan and fry the chilli and garlic for about 30 seconds. Add the calamari and stir-fry over a high heat until it starts to curl up and colour slightly.
 4. Tip the calamari onto the rocket leaves (make sure you include all the bits of chilli and garlic), squeeze on the lemon juice, sprinkle with sesame seeds and serve with lemon wedges



Spinachkopita

Serves 4

- 1 x 250g packet frozen spinach, thawed and well drained
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 100g Greek feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 tbsp Greek yoghurt
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 6 spring onions, chopped
- Large handful flat-leaf parsley leaves, chopped
- Juice of ½ lemon
- Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
- ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Combine all the ingredients, except for the parmesan, in a large mixing bowl. Stir together until evenly combined then tip into a small ovenproof dish (Pyrex is ideal). Smooth the surface with a knife then sprinkle on the parmesan cheese.
3. Bake for 45–50 minutes, or until the surface is golden brown and bubbling.
4. Remove the spinachkopita from the oven and leave to cool before cutting into wedges.



Chilli tuna steaks with wasabi coleslaw

Serves 2

- 2 x 140g tuna steaks
- 2 tsp extra-virgin olive oil
- Pinch of dried chilli flakes
- Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
- Lime wedges
- Coriander leaves

Wasabi coleslaw

- ¼ red cabbage, finely sliced
- ¼ white cabbage, finely sliced
- 2 spring onions, finely sliced on the diagonal
- Handful of snow peas, finely sliced on the diagonal
- 1 tbsp mayonnaise
- 1 tbsp Greek yoghurt
- Wasabi paste to taste

1. To make the coleslaw, combine the cabbage, spring onions and snow peas in a mixing bowl.
2. In a smaller bowl mix the mayonnaise and yoghurt to make a creamy dressing, then add as much or as little wasabi as

you like. I find it best to start with a small squeeze and increase to taste. Add the dressing to the coleslaw ingredients and toss to combine thoroughly. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

3. To prepare the tuna steaks, rub them all over with a little olive oil then sprinkle with a good pinch of dried chilli flakes and season generously with salt and pepper.
4. Heat a non-stick frying pan over a high heat. Place the tuna in the pan then lower the heat to medium-high. Cook for about 4 minutes then turn and cook for 2 minutes on the other side. This will cook the tuna medium-rare. Cook for 6 minutes on one side and 3 minutes on the other if you prefer it well done.
5. Serve the tuna steaks with coleslaw on top, lime wedges on the side and scattered with coriander leaves.



Recipes and images extracted from *Jane Kennedy: Fabulous food, minus the boombah* by Jane Kennedy (Hardie Grant Books) RRP \$39.95.