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How do make curry out of raw food?

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How do you make a curry out of raw food? Canadian raw food chef Lisa Pitman, who is here on a mission to "rawify" Indian curries, shows us how with a raw saag curry. This dish combines cashew nuts, sea salt, ground coriander, cumin, garlic, ginger, sweet onion, water, lemon juice and baby spinach, in a blender. Yes, it is that simple. "You can make rich curries using coconut, nuts, or sun dried tomatoes combined with spices. Toss in diced vegetables and let everything marinate for a while. The flavours will infuse the vegetables just as it does when you simmer them over a flame," says Pitman.

Below 50 degrees C

"Raw food means anything prepared without heating above 118 degrees Fahrenheit (47.7 degrees C)," says Pitman. "That means making cheesecakes and date squares without the use of an oven or a stove."

Instead, she mainly uses a food processor for mixing fillings, a blender for smoothies, and a dehydrator for pizzas and pancakes. Instead of an oven, she chills most of her crusts, allowing them to set.

But Pitman is best known for her healthy desserts — she makes them using different combinations of nuts, coconut, spices, dried and fresh fruits. Her signature dish is date squares, which she can whip up in minutes. The crust is made by mixing pecans, walnuts or cashews, raw oats, dates and a dash of cinnamon.

"When this is blended in a food processor, it begins to clump together. This mixture, when placed in a pan lined with parchment paper, becomes your crust," says Pitman. The filling is made by blending dates, orange juice and orange zest. A little crust is sprinkled on top. The dish is chilled for an hour and served.

She makes a cheesecake with almonds, unsweetened coconut, medjool dates and vanilla, all blended together to form a crust, and then refrigerated. The filling is made with coconut, cashew or almond milk, cashews, date paste, fresh lime juice, vanilla extract and raw, cold pressed coconut oil. This mixture is chilled for two hours.

Ever since she arrived in India this week, Pitman has been wowing audiences with her desserts — raw cheesecakes, fruit sorbets, cookies, tarts, pies and more. "You should hear the reaction when people take a bite of a raw cheesecake... no one complains about the missing cholesterol or saturated fat... I've replaced all that with fabulous flavour," she says.

Back to basics

Pitman, 33, has been a vegan since the age of two, when her parents realised she couldn't ingest animal protein. Then, seven years back, she started reading about the connection between diet and health and found herself slowly eliminating refined and processed foods like white sugar, refined salt, flour and butter from her daily meals. She inspired her mother, who was suffering from diabetes and asthma, to try her vegan whole food diet. "After a year, she had lost well over a hundred pounds, reversed her diabetes and stopped needing her asthma medication," says Pitman. Then she shifted completely to raw vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds.

No compromise on flavour

Pitman is a full time social worker doing public policy for the government. Her day starts with a blended fruit smoothie, a parfait, or oats porridge.

The parfait is a layered recipe that is more structured than the others. She pulses dates and orange zest, then adds pecans, oats, dried cherries and salt to create a granola-like mixture. Separately, she combines cherries, orange juice, dates and salt. She also blends frozen bananas to get an ice-cream like texture. The three mixtures are then layered in a glass to provide a nutritious breakfast or evening snack. "This recipe is also a great way to get kids involved in the kitchen. They can add ingredients to the food processor, push the pulse button to get things moving and study the transformation from frozen bananas to ice cream," says Pitman.

During the day, she snacks on fresh fruits. She also makes dips using nuts or sprouted beans and spices, which she enjoys with sliced vegetables.

"My favourite foods are raw cheesecakes, ice creams and cookies. But I also make simple main course dishes with raw foods," says Pitman. An example of this is spring pasta, using zucchini noodles. "A vegetable peel



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will give you fettuccine-like noodles. In a blender, combine frozen peas, asparagus, avocado, water, lemon juice, lemon zest, thyme and pepper to make a smooth sauce." Pitman uses hot water in this recipe, to pour over the asparagus and peas for a couple of minutes. They are drained and mixed with the noodles and sauce. "You don't have to choose pleasure or wellness. You can have both," she says.

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