

TASTE

NO RAW DEAL

Skipping meat for fresh vegetables and turning zucchini into pasta-like shreds, raw food practitioners are changing the way we eat. *Vogue* offers a five-step guide. By MEGHA MAHINDRU

1

▼ ATTEND

The second Sunday of every month in Mumbai, a bunch of enthusiasts gather to exchange notes with raw food practitioner Mona Gandhi. Having steered clear of cooking since 2012, she espouses a plant-based diet comprising fruits, vegetables, nuts and sprouts. Armed with a cutting board and vegetables, I made my way to one such session of **Something To Chew On** (search 'Khanabadosh' in Facebook pages). We soon got going—dicing, chopping and grating—as Gandhi filled us in on her sustainable life plan. "I attempt to bring simplicity to food as a response to the hyper-processed age we live in," says Gandhi, who has also been sharing her goodwill with community farming groups like Green Souls and Urban Leaves in the city.

In Delhi, Soorya Kaur is known to conduct **Raw Food Detox** programmes (Sooryakaur.com). While critics dismiss raw foodism as elitist hogwash, those like Kaur and Gandhi are battling for awareness. "Heating and cooking food destroys the natural nutrients and enzymes," states Kaur.

JAMES WOJCIK/TRUNK ARCHIVE; SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



A 'Something To Chew On' session

Today, if you were to look closely at our eating habits, Spike Jonze's post-modern tale, *Her*, wouldn't seem all far-fetched. "You got to eat your fruits and juice your vegetables," is how the film's lonely protagonist, Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix), is introduced to the latest dietary practices.

After a decade of slow cooking, the tables are turning to no-cooking. Here's a five-pronged guide to being a raw foodist: a person who opts for a nutrition-packed diet comprising organic, uncooked and unprocessed food.

2

► DRINK

Anuj Rakan can safely say that in the six months since he launched the health juice brand **RAW Pressery**, he's had a lot of explaining to do. Rakan has been extolling the benefits of the cold-pressed technique that involves grinding and pressing fruits and vegetables without heat and air (unavoidable in household mixers and juicers). "Blenders and juicers reduce nutritional value and destroy healthy living enzymes," he says.

Committed to delivering health to your doorstep, it was the lack of health juice options in India that prompted him to introduce his catalogue of six cold-pressed juices that eschew preservatives, additives, artificial flavours, sugar and even water.

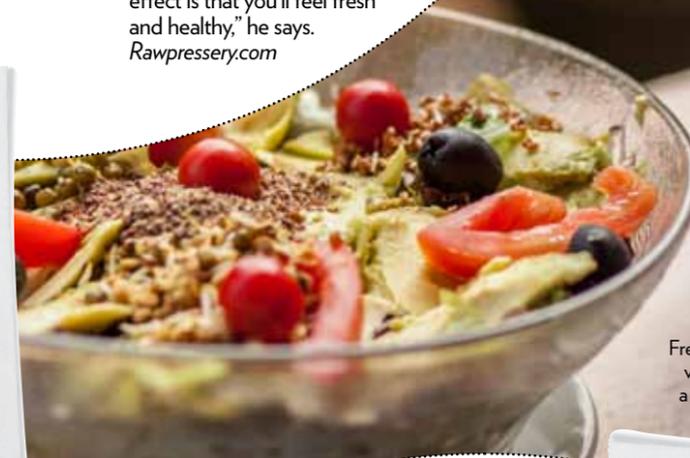
RAW Pressery came about after in-depth research, sessions with nutritionists (to arrive at ingredients), farmers (to source fresh, organic produce) as well as sensory analysts to ensure the juices were tasty. Their RAW Cleanse plan entails giving up cooked food for a day and opting for a liquid diet that's equally nutritious. "The only side effect is that you'll feel fresh and healthy," he says. Rawpressery.com



Blue Planet Cafe, Goa

▲ EAT

It's not your typical eat-out session when the restaurant you're at doesn't have a kitchen or stove. Puducherry's **The Auroville Raw Food Centre** is one of the first eateries in India to bring raw food to the table. "Raw is the highest level in holistic health but not easy to adopt. Start off with a plant-based diet," says Dr Nandita Shah, founder of Sharan India, which supports ecologically sustainable lifestyles. A growing breed and celebrity backing (Demi Moore, Uma Thurman) have made raw eateries commonplace in the West. In India, eateries like Goa's **Blue Planet Café** (Blueplanet-cafe.com) and Bengaluru's **Carrots, The Healthy Kitchen** (Carrots-india.com) are reinventing raw food, looking beyond salads to offer options like zucchini pasta and raw beetroot cakes on menus (purists allow food cooked below 48 degrees celsius in their diet.)



Fresh, uncooked vegetables are a staple for raw foodists

4

► SHOP

The conscious foodie no longer stocks up at supermarkets or picks groceries from street vendors. To bag the freshest supplies, the shift is now toward **farmers' markets** (held weekly in most metros), where farmers sell locally grown, organic produce directly to customers. It's also a meeting point for health-conscious gourmands. "It's a good place to stock up on your weekly supplies, and organic vegetables taste better too," says Diya Ranjan, who's been a regular at Mumbai's Maharashtra Nature Park farmers' market in Mumbai since it debuted in 2010. If you need convincing, raw foodists have a buffet of preparations on offer here. Farmersmarket.co.in



A farmers' market

GREEN ALERT
Dr Nandita Shah on the flipside of going raw

- Don't plunge straight into raw—start by making half your meal raw.
- Monitor your Vitamin B12 and D levels regularly.
- Hygiene is crucial. Wash vegetables thoroughly.
- Opt for soy milk over unpasteurised or non-homogenised dairy products.

READ

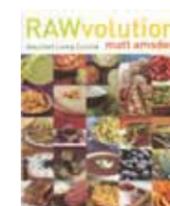
Three books to master the art of uncooking



Get American chef Matthew Kenney's book on plant-based desserts.



Model-actor Carol Alt shares her secret to looking good.



Going beyond salads, this one is a keeper for raw food gourmands.