



# Salad lessons through WhatsApp

**Here's why over 1,000 people around the world were hooked to a 21-day salad challenge**

For the past three weeks, every morning in Nairobi, Deepa Ballal would wait for her phone to light up with WhatsApp notifications from Mumbai-based SHARAN. The text read plain: a simple salad recipe. This was what she needed to prepare each day, in order to compete in the vegan wellness group's 21-day challenge which ended on Sunday.

Over 1,500 participants from all over the world had set out with noble intentions to prepare and eat a different salad each day, while of course, sending in an Instagram-worthy picture of their garnished greens. The one with the best picture was mentioned on SHARAN's Facebook page. And yet, only 25 managed to do it daily.

It was all done through WhatsApp, says Reyna Rupani, SHARAN Mumbai Head. "Each day, we sent out recipes before 12 pm, and the participants needed to prepare the dish and send in a photo of it by noon the next day," she explains, "Some people, especially those who were travelling, liked to innovate and improvise. But most stuck to the recipes we shared,"

So while on one day it was an "immunity booster salad" with cabbage, pumpkin and coconut, on the other raw papaya Thai salad, or raw *raita* salad — the vegan version, made with coconut milk. "Along with the recipes we would also share health and diet tips, on the WhatsApp broadcast," she says.

Did the strict organic and vegan rules (no oil, no sugar, cheese and mayo without dairy) pose a challenge?

While Deepa is a vegan, even she found it tough initially to find organic produce. "My trips to the vegetable market nearly doubled," she exclaims. Adds Reyna, "Our participants were from Hong Kong and London to India. So we would make sure everyone had the ingredients needed by sending out a shopping list six days in advance."

"Many a time the type of ingredients required would leave me bewildered. For instance, I was skeptical of using raw tendli (ivy gourd), but the final results were a revelation," says Deepa, adding that her daughter too, tried the vegetable for the first time.

But the biggest challenge? Clicking multiple pictures of the food from multiple angles before she could finally dig in!

*Head over to SHARAN India's YouTube page to check out the other recipes, and to hold a #21DaySaladChallenge for yourself.*