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VEGGIES GO GOURMET

The joy of getting in the raw

A new restaurant is showing that raw food is not just for rabbits. **Tom Moggach** gets down and dirty with the capital's vegans

Raw food is light and nutritious, perfect for the summer. But while some take the raw diet to extremes, forever nibbling seeds and crudites, most of us just want creative tips for bringing out the best in raw ingredients.

Well, help is at hand. For a start, it's Vegetarian Week, a perfect excuse to cut down on meat. And chef Chad Sarno has just launched Saf, a new restaurant in Shoreditch, where he gives vegan food a gourmet twist.

He's putting a big emphasis on raw food, with most dishes not heated above 48C (raw food fans say that heating food above this temperature has a negative effect on both taste and nutrition).

London has always lacked high-end veggie venues. But now Sarno is knocking up spring veg with a beetroot-merlot reduction and arranging exquisite towers of vegetables, pestos and pepper coulis for a pasta-free lasagne. His top tip? "Gently crank up the amount of raw ingredients in your diet. Don't

binge on raw food then go back to old habits."

When combining ingredients, Sarno follows a simple formula to balance flavours.

"Always combine a fat, a salt and an acid," he says. For example, an avocado, which contains natural oils, tastes best with a sprinkle of salt and a few drops of lime juice.

To add an extra touch of sweetness, he uses a range of

natural sweeteners in his palette of ingredients (see box).

Salads

Try Sarno's simple citrus dressing: Whisk together equal parts of orange juice and olive oil. Thicken by mixing in a dollop of white miso paste, available in health food shops. This keeps for a week or so in the fridge. To add an Asian slant to this base dressing, blend with garlic, ginger, sesame oil and coriander. For an Italian twist, do the same with sun-dried tomatoes and basil or oregano.

Juices

Most of us have a juicer we seldom use. The trick is getting into a routine. For a thick and decadent smoothie, blitz a handful of almonds in a

blender, add orange juice, then blend together. For energy, Sarno juices three apples with a handful of kale or chard and a squeeze of lemon. A tiny pinch of sea salt enhances the flavour of all juices.

Fruit salads

Hunt for properly ripe fruit. For picnics, buy wooden skewers and chop up fruit chunks. Assemble your

own fruit kebabs, dipping in Sarno's cashew cream. Soak the nuts overnight. Blend with a splash of water, a bit of vanilla pod and a touch of salt. Use agave or maple syrup as a natural sweetener.

Raw fish

Raw food doesn't have to be completely veggie. You won't



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find it on the menu at **Saf** but lots of us get a raw buzz from foods such as oysters or sushi. For something different, try ceviche, a cooking technique from Latin America. Buy salmon fillet from a fishmonger. Ask him to remove skin and any bones. Chop against **grain into pieces roughly 1cm** thick. Sprinkle generously with salt. Count to five. Pour over juice of a lime. Count to ten. Pour off lime juice. Mix with shaved red onion, torn coriander leaves and slices of jalapeno pepper. Eat at once.

CONTACT DETAILS

Saf Restaurant and Bar
152-154 Curtain Road,
EC2A
020 7613 0007
www.safrestaurant.co.uk
Vegetarian Week
www.vegsoc.org/nvw

FATS

Oils
Avocados
Coconut milk
Nuts

SALT

Capers
Tamari (a type of soy sauce)
Miso
Sun dried black olives
Seaweeds

ACID

Lemon
Lime
Grapefruit
Cider vinegar
Wine vinegar

SWEETNESS

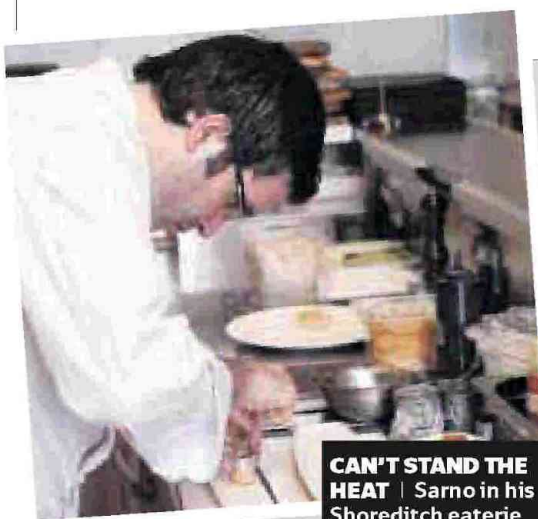
Fruits
Tomatoes
Peppers
Agave syrup
Maple syrup



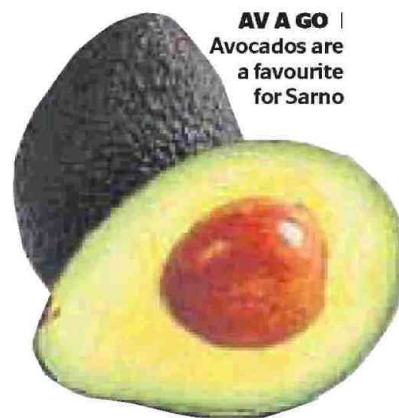
It's all in the balance

Experiment with raw foods by balancing three key flavours – a fat, something salty and something acidic. Add sweetness if needed. This is important for dressings and marinades. Here is Chad Sarno's list of suggested ingredients
www.therawchef.com





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