

## RAW POWER

# From garden to plate

The Daniels' diet makes you think that cooking is so last season, writes **Shanthini Naidoo**

**B**ERYN and Peter Daniel bear some resemblance to elves, those ethereal, beautiful creatures who exude light and positivity.

It is not only because he does not wear shoes, that she is ever-smiling or that they have long, flowing hair, radiant skin and serenity.

The founders of the raw food movement in South Africa and raw food chefs, they live off the land and follow a raw food diet.

On a wintery day, their rawlicious lunch and recipe book launch at Leafy Greens organic restaurant in Muldersdrift, western Johannesburg, brought cold, pureed vegetables to mind.

Surprisingly, the welcome drink is hot — okay, *warm* — chocolate.

In their super-blender (a raw foodist's best friend) cacao powder, packed with antioxidants, cashews, honey, vanilla pods and warm water are blended.

It is creamy and comforting, not at all what one would expect without milk. Nuts are used as a replacement for dairy: they even make a non-dairy nut butter.

Raw foodism centres on heating food to a maximum of 47°C, after which nutrients and enzymes start to die.

Food is heated gently with hot water, on a low stove heat, or from mechanical blending.

"Raw doesn't mean cold. It means we don't overheat food," said Peter.

The chief tenet of their lifestyle is that raw plant foods represent the purest form of transformed sun energy.

They eat no refined sugar, dairy or refined wheat, by choice.

The health benefits are visible. Beryn's lifelong eczema disappeared and PMS is a thing of the past.

Peter's bare feet aren't a concern because he can better regulate his body temperature and gain positive ions from the earth.

"The digestive health and weight loss benefits are obvious. But we were surprised about [improved] body odour, halitosis, excessive

sweating stops, even our ability to avoid sunburn has improved," said Peter.

Exercise is easier, they sleep less, and their muscles are relaxed because they get mountains of magnesium from their diet.

"The point is for your nutrition to support you.

"We are not saying that people will live longer, it just means that the last 30 years will be really good," says Peter.

They began following the diet almost six years ago while living in the UK.

After a month-long detox and a six-month transition period during which they met a vendor who made a raw-food delicious coconut cake, the professional chefs decided to dedicate their lives to the healthy cause.

They're creative about it. Cakes may sound impossible, but a food dehydrator helps to create delicious "baked-goods", including breads and crackers. A "spiralator" creates strings of vegetables for interesting salad textures and "pasta".

Their book, *Rawlicious*, is filled with tasty drinks, dips, desserts, chutneys and meals like pizza, quiches, ravioli and burgers.

The sample lunch menu started with "green juice", which makes up about a third of their daily diet. Carrot tops, spinach and kale blended with apple, ginger and honey to add flavour and sweetness, and spirulina for a vitamin boost. It smelt like freshly cut grass, but was tasty.

But is raw foodism sustainable for a modern suburban family?

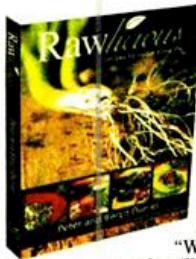
The Daniels' grow much of their own food, for sustainability.

"Most weeks, I only shop for olive oil and avocados," Beryn said.

"Raw food costs us at the most R1 000 a month for two people."

It seems raw foodism does not exist in the fantasy world at all. It can be a reality.

● *Rawlicious* costs R197. Visit [rawlicious.co.za](http://rawlicious.co.za)



**DOWN TO EARTH:** Peter and Beryn Daniel live off the land, are both raw food chefs and are the founders of the raw food movement in South Africa