



Everyone knows about healthy foods, but I'm like a little helping friend who says, 'let's do it,' says Violetta Cope

Smoothie operator

Pictures by Gareth Williams

Come the end of the festive season suddenly everyone seems to be on a diet or detox of some kind. Anita Merritt spoke to Violetta Cope — The Green Chef

In the New Year we all pledge to eat more healthily — but old habits are hard to break. Admitting to needing a helping hand to stay on the straight and narrow is the first step and that's where Violetta Cope comes in. Going under the name The Green Chef, Violetta doesn't preach about dieting or what you should or shouldn't be eating.

Instead the inspirational mother-of-two simply educates people about the benefits of raw food and how you can incorporate it into your normal diet.

Violetta, who is also a qualified manual lymph drainage therapist, offers one-to-one food consultations and non-dairy and gluten-free workshops

at her home in Teignmouth. Both aim to help you discover how to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables in your diet, eat more healthily, detox sensibly and cater for allergies or food intolerances.

Violetta's kitchen is

brimming with colourful fruit, vegetables and rows of jars filled with healthy nuts and seeds. Her first words are reassuring: "Good, healthy food that makes you feel great doesn't need to be expensive or take ages to prepare."

Equally pleasing to hear is that Violetta cannot live without chocolate. "I love my sweets," she admits. "I need to have my comfort food, but in moderation. The best chocolate for you is the darkest and it has to be organic with very little sugar content."

"I call myself The Green Chef as I have done raw food training, which is very different from the normal food preparation chefs do."

"Everyone knows about healthy foods, but I'm like a little helping friend who says, 'let's do it'. I do it because it's wonderful. It's life enhancing. I find once you get into energising fresh food you don't want to live without it."

Coming from a medical family, Violetta has a background that led to a deep and long-term interest in food, nutrition and well-being.

And as you would expect, Violetta looks a picture of health but that hasn't always been the case. Her commitment to training as a 'living food' instructor and chef was strengthened when a blood test some years

ago revealed she was suffering from a severe food intolerance to yeast, wheat, egg white and dairy products. It reinforced her interest in nutrition and dietary alternatives and is a passion she is keen to share with others.

The workshops she holds cover different stages of kick-starting your healthy lifestyle. The first step is learning how to make green smoothies which provide almost all of your recommended daily fruit and vegetable intake in one glass.

"You will never look at your greens in the same way again!" warns Violetta. "I have a green smoothie every morning so a third of my diet is already taken care of. My daughters, aged 11 and eight, don't like salads, so I created the smoothies as a way for them to get their daily greens. They really like them."

"The greener the vegetable, the more oxygen it has. I recommend you gradually increase your intake of greens starting off with very light ones such as organic baby spinach."

"If you adapt green smoothies into your daily diet on a daily or even weekly basis you are already improving your diet by so much. If you do it right your body will adjust and will want less of other things that aren't good for you. It's about breaking the habit."

Violetta is also quick to introduce people to the idea of how our bodies digest food and what cooking does to food's goodness.

Raw, or 'living foods' as they are called, are easy to digest, rich in enzymes and highly nutritious when prepared appropriately.

Violetta explains: "Preparation is critical. If food gets too hot, the enzymes are destroyed which is the life force of the plant. There is a science to food."

"Nuts and seeds should be soaked overnight because they are much easier for the body to digest."

"People eat muesli for breakfast thinking they are being good to their body but it is so hard for the body to break down and digest."

At this time of year Violetta receives a lot of calls from people wanting information on how to detox.

"What I worry about is people who go on a strict two-week detox then bounce back into their normal eating," she says.

"You can't sustain a detox, but some part of it can be incorporated into your daily life."

"A good detox is getting goodness into your normal diet gradually."

Violetta will be holding three-hour fresh food workshops on Sunday, January 7 and Sunday, January 21.

For more details, contact 01626 770121 or visit www.thegreenchef.co.uk



Quickes Traditional Limited has been awarded gold at the British Cheeses Awards 2006 for its Unpasteurised Cheddar. Quickes says the cheese is a must for people looking for a high-quality, truly artisan product; it is renowned for having an 'additional level of complexity' as a result of the unpasteurised milk. The award helps highlight the high-quality milk production on the farm at Newton St Cyres in Devon, where currently just under 400 cows are being milked solely for the production of Farmhouse Traditional Cheddar.

"Raw milk cheese is very subtle and individual in its flavour and is a true expression of the art of cheese making," says Quickes. "The flavour is different because of the effect of pasteurisation on the protein in the milk and the enzyme action from the naturally occurring non starter lactic



acid bacteria. With pasteurisation, these bacteria are killed off, hence the subtle difference in flavour when these bacteria continue to thrive." Quickes Traditional Unpasteurised Cheddar is allowed to mature naturally on wooden racks and is available in all sizes — from a 26kg truckle to the pre-pack sizes.

Add something interesting to your cheese board today!

Quickes Traditional Ltd, Home Farm, Newton St Cyres, Exeter, Devon.



Food notes

News from the region's producers and traders

If you are feeling a bit woozy at the thought of another leftover turkey concoction, then head to **Gibson's Plaice** in Exeter's Magdalen Road for all the ingredients you will need for a fish supper.

With over 15 different fish displayed in the window, you cannot fail to find something to suit your tastes. And owner Richard Beynon is on hand to offer advice and recipes.

All the fish is caught fresh on the day and is prepared in store, ready for the oven.

"We specialise in fresh fish from Brixham Market. I go down there every morning and buy it straight off the day boats, bring it back in the



refrigerated van and sell it that day. You cannot get any fresher — except if you were catching it yourself."

Gibson's Plaice, 38 Magdalen Road, Exeter. Details: 01392 495344.

