



do or detox

FEELING TOXIC AFTER THE FRIVOLITIES OF THE SILLY SEASON? **NADIA CORRENTI** LOOKS AT DETOX DIETS AND ASKS THE EXPERTS WHETHER OR NOT THEY WORK.

YEP, IT'S that time of year again. Christmas and New Year's have come and gone, and most of us are feeling guilty as sin about all the Christmas pudding and booze we've consumed. And then, of course, there's the ridiculous resolutions we made for 2008...

We're discussing ours here at *Style HQ* one morning when our exuberant fashion writer, Marie, strolls in with a broken arm, looking a tad worse for wear. Not only is she giving up alcohol, caffeine and dancing in stilettos, she informs us, but she's going to do the Lemon Detox Diet, aka the Maple Syrup Diet, made famous by Beyoncé who used it to drop almost 10kg in two weeks for her role in *Dreamgirls*.

Now, Marie is nowhere near as bootylicious as Beyoncé, and, naturally, we're all slightly alarmed that our slim friend is planning to embark on what seems like a pretty radical diet.

"I'm not really doing it to lose weight," she says. "I just haven't been eating healthily and I figure my system probably needs a good flush."

"Well, you may as well let me write a story about it," I sigh. For a moment I consider detoxing from my Freddo-a-day habit... but no, this is crazy talk. "Does anyone else want to detox for my story?" I ask hopefully.

Silence.

"I'll do a re-tox!" our editor Kate yells from her desk.

The standard version of the Lemon Detox Diet lasts five to seven days. During this time, you consume only salted water (taken in the morning to prompt a bowel movement); the Lemon Detox Diet drink (which consists of a product called Madal Bal Natural Tree Syrup mixed with lemon juice, cayenne pepper and water); and herbal tea (taken before bed). It's recommended you drink a glass of the Lemon Detox Diet drink six to nine times a day, or whenever you feel hungry.

The website says: "Remember that the Lemon Detox Drink

is liquid food, both nourishing and energising. It provides the body with the required minerals and nutrients whilst on the program. Fluid intake is the key to the program. The detox drink will satisfy your hunger and give you energy."

The day before her detox, Marie shows up with a bag of KFC tucked under one arm and a 1-litre tin of Madal Bal Natural Tree Syrup under the other.

Not only is she giving up alcohol, caffeine and dancing in stilettos... she's going to do the Lemon Detox Diet.

"I haven't had KFC in ages," she explains, flustered, seeing the amused expression on my face. "I don't even really feel like it. I just thought, 'What the hell?'"

Detox diets are on the rise. Walk into a health food store or pharmacy and you'll be presented with a huge variety of detox kits. Some are designed to cleanse your digestive system or your liver, while others promise weightloss. Many involve ingesting pills or viscous-looking liquids, and most require some degree of fasting or the elimination of certain foods. Either way, they don't really sound like a fun way to spend a weekend.

At the other end of the spectrum, you can sign up at a health retreat like The Golden Door, where detoxing is all about cutting out bad habits and adopting a healthy lifestyle.

"Firstly, we remove substances such as caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and sugar from your diet for a week," says Golden Door naturopath Rules Vikthory. "Then we reduce saturated fats in the diet. We don't have fried or refined foods and there are no additives or preservatives. Basically, what we're doing is taking the load off the liver, which is the main organ for detoxification.

"People go into withdrawal from these things sometimes, so we recommend they start cutting them out before they arrive. Particularly caffeine, because that seems to be one thing people have the strongest withdrawals from.

"We encourage people to drink plenty of water. The first two days they're here we get them to take it really easy, because detox does use up a lot of energy. We also encourage things like body wraps, detox wraps, the sauna, the spa, gentle exercise, spending time with nature, positive thoughts and being with positive people, which helps the whole process."

I'm dubious about the concept of our bodies becoming toxic. Aren't they equipped to repair themselves?

"With that statement it's sort of like saying, 'Well go out and eat and drink what you like because your body will just deal with it,'" Rules says. "The body is pretty amazing at dealing with chemicals from food and pollution. Your body is detoxing all the time, through your skin, bladder, bowels, kidneys and cells. But it is possible for your system to get overloaded. Too much of stuff like additives, sugars, nicotine, caffeine, etc (and that's just external toxins – there's also endogenous toxins, which include chemicals and hormones produced in the body and chemicals produced in your digestive system which enter your blood stream) can force the liver to work overtime to clean it all up."

Claire Collins, associate professor in nutrition and dietetics

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at the University of Newcastle, agrees that a poor diet will eventually take its toll on the body.

"Your body has a pretty amazing self-cleaning facility, but if you keep abusing it constantly by eating badly, your body will basically go on strike; you won't be able to cope with the damage you're doing to it," she says.

"But the most toxic thing you can actually do to your body is smoke. So if you really want to stop putting all these toxins through your body, the best way is to not smoke."

When I tell Claire about Marie doing the Lemon Detox Diet, she groans. "It sounds disgusting. I actually think it's quite dangerous."

Instead of bouncing from one detox diet to another, Claire recommends following a "low tox" lifestyle.

"If you always follow what I call a low-tox or a 'no tox' plan, then you're actually allowing your body's natural protection mechanisms to work really well.

"The key way to help your body detoxify naturally is by eating foods that are high in the phytochemicals that help to break down toxic components, and foods that are high in antioxidants. So mostly vegetables and fruit, lentils and beans, etc."

Claire's tips for low-tox living include: drinking lots of water; eating more than five types of vegetables every day (she recommends signing up to a vegetable and fruit delivery service); eating at least two pieces of fruit a day; and using healthy cooking techniques to make interesting meals.

Toxic behaviour to be avoided includes: smoking; drinking too much (the national alcohol guideline recommends no more than four standard drinks a day for men and no more than two standard drinks a day for women, with at least two alcohol-free days a week); eating lots of processed foods that contain no fibre or minerals; and not eating enough antioxidant-rich food.



Would you like tree syrup with that? Marie, pre-detox



Post-detox, Marie sips her chai latte and revels in her virtuousness

OK, SO we've heard what the experts think, but you're probably wondering what happened to our guinea pig, Marie...

DAY 1

After her salt drink, Marie spends the morning hovering near the bathroom. She drinks the lemon drink, but by mid-afternoon she's craving food. That night she dreams of caesar salad.

DAY 2

My mobile phone beeps. It's Marie. Her desperation is palpable, even via SMS. "I'm. Friggin. Hungry." She feels fine physically (no headaches or hunger pains), but the temptation to eat is driving her crazy. Again, she dreams of food, glorious food.

DAY 3

Marie's lost a couple of kilos but knows this will come straight back when she resumes eating. She's still struggling with the fast though, guiltily scoffing a handful of m&ms before bed.

DAY 4

Marie's skin looks fantastic. She can't stop touching her face and gazing at herself in the mirror. This is the biggest highlight for her so far, and it gives her the strength to stay away from the fridge.

DAY 5

After hitting the beach, Marie's glowing new skin is now slightly

sunburnt. She's cranky and disillusioned. She's had enough. She meets friends for dinner and convinces the restaurant owner to make her eggs benedict. It tastes like heaven.

DAY 6

Marie doesn't want to waste the remaining tree syrup, so she's now having the lemon drink for breakfast. Cellulite is better, legs look tighter and she feels pretty good. By mid afternoon, she's scoffing cupcakes to celebrate her hasty return to eating.

Marie says she probably wouldn't attempt the detox again, however, she does feel it cleansed her system, and she was especially impressed with how clear her skin became (even if it only lasted a day). But has this detox paved the way for a healthier lifestyle for our intrepid fashion writer?

"Absolutely," Marie says. "I'm doing Pilates twice a week, I haven't drunk coffee or Diet Coke for over a month (my peppermint tea is now very amusing to the girls in the office), I'm drinking tons of water and i'm eating pretty well... most of the time!"

OK, she seems confident enough, but if you happen to be at the Greek Club on a Saturday night and spot a tall, fashionably-attired brunette clutching a Scotch-and-Coke and dancing up a storm in a pair of five-inch heels, do me a favour. Tap her on the shoulder, smirk knowingly and ask, "Would you like a shot of tree syrup with that?"


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