

No. 7: Rainbow Soups & Al's Healthy Eating/ Healthy Living Philosophy



This is a Newsletter in three parts because it's been months since the last one. I actually wrote Part I last and it's my core Healthy Eating/Healthy Life Philosophy that follows on from the Why Eat? Essential/Luxury/Avoid foods discussed in No 6. It's in because I felt I needed to explain how I got to Parts II and III. It might be a bit of a lecture though so if you don't feel like being lectured to skip straight to Part II. Even if you do read Part I and feel a bit lectured to you should still definitely continue into Part II because I lighten up a lot. Part II is little more than photos of my Orange 40th Birthday meal with its accidentally anti-oxidant laden ingredients. Part III has some new soup recipes inspired by the idea of single coloured foods that the orange party started. They taste far too good to be as healthy as they are.

Part I – My Healthy Eating/Healthy Life Philosophy

- *There are no rules it just makes sense.*

Part II – The Orange Food Party

- *Lots of pictures of orange food and a recipe for a very healthy Mango & Ginger 'Ice-cream'*

Part III – Rainbow Soups

1. ***High Gloss Orange*** - Mixed orange veg, beans and chickpeas. Anti-oxidant booster. Wholesome and hearty.
2. ***Very Yellow*** - Smoked haddock & Sweetcorn Chowder with a twist. Omega 3 booster. Rich and satisfying.
3. ***Distinctly Green*** - Green veg, peas, beans and herbs. Vitamin B & Mineral booster. Refreshing and ridiculously healthy.
4. ***Really Red*** - Tomatoes, beans & chorizo. Lycopene booster. Chunky with a chilli kick.

Part I – My Healthy Eating/Healthy Life Philosophy

Al's Healthy Eating/Healthy Life Philosophy

- 1. We've got to eat a lot to eat healthily.*
- 2. What you eat is more important than what you don't eat.*
- 3. Eat whatever you want but don't live in denial. Know that everything you eat has some sort of impact on your short and long term health. Know what you are eating and make an active choice about everything you put into your body.*
- 4. If you eat it and you don't need it... it's still wasted.*

I call it a philosophy because this is how I've learnt to think of food and the part it plays in my life rather than mindlessly following anyone else's rules (like those diets in magazines). It's not like I sat down one day and decided what it was and wrote it down, it's developed over many years. I was a rather overweight child (even my mother called me 'well-built') and although I was a slim enough teen I struggled with it daily/hourly as most teens do. I was always healthy though. I rarely if ever got more than the occasional cold or bout of tonsillitis and most of the infections that swept through school knocking people down like flies seemed to pass me by.

Because I was struggling to keep my weight down, I really only thought about food in terms of its energy/calorie content and therefore how little I could eat of it. If I ate an apple, I liked it well enough but mainly, in my head, I was eating it because it was low calorie and might fill me up enough to stop me eating the chocolate bar I really wanted. That was what an apple was to me back then. People told me I was lucky to be so slim but I already knew that wasn't the case, I was working really hard at it.

I didn't really think about being healthy, I liked not being ill but people just told me I must be built strong, be of good genetic stock and I accepted that was probably the case. I accepted, as many of us do, that being healthy was some sort of lucky accident.

Then I went to Liverpool University and discovered rowing. I found I quite liked rowing ☺. I liked it and wanted to get good at it and so for the first time I started to think about my body as more than just something that was pitted against me in my battle not to get fat. I started to need it to move a boat, get in the team and win me/us races. I needed it to do these things that made me happy. I was terrified before my first ever race in an eight on the Manchester Ship Canal because I didn't know if my body would last the distance. I had no idea what would happen to it/me when I pushed it really hard and I was scared stiff that it would give up on me and I'd have to stop and then I'd let the rest of my crew down. But it didn't give up on me. I pushed it hard and it let me finish my first race and experience the most amazing euphoric adrenalin rush ever.

Over the years it was like a series of experiments, I'd push my body to go even harder, even faster and it would respond and do it for me. I was always amazed. And it rarely if ever broke down. I began to feel like I was unbreakable. But I started to see quite early on that whilst I may have been born with some of it, I was controlling a lot more than I'd thought. In that first year of rowing I was exercising properly for the first time in my life. I thought I'd be burning a lot of calories doing that and I took the brakes off what I ate. I ate whatever I wanted whenever I was hungry (and sometimes when I was not) and justified it with "I'm burning it all off". By the time I went home for Christmas less than four months later I didn't fit into any of my clothes and the scales said I'd put on 1 ½ stones. I was the heaviest I'd ever be in my life by quite some way. So I began to see that exercising didn't mean I could eat whatever I wanted and when I went back I was more careful again and the weight came off.

I discovered the fine balancing act between energy in and energy out and stopped playing the victim to my body and blaming it for making me get fat. Even when I was rowing full time, training really hard 3-4 hours a day I still had to think about everything I ate and make active choices or I put on weight. Even though I was burning 4-4,500 calories a day my hunger still seemed to run a little ahead of my capacity for calories and if I ate a lot of energy dense food then I would put on weight. And it wasn't just me, I saw it was the same for all the other girls (except perhaps Debbie) so again I couldn't play the victim (although it did seem a little unfair that I was doing all this exercise and I still couldn't sit down and eat my way through a box of chocolates if I really felt like it).

But of course I also very quickly learnt that food isn't all about the calories. When I started rowing and began to think of my body as a friend I thought about feeding it properly and giving it all the things it needed to help it get through the training and win races for me. It probably helped that I was a Biologist so thought about my body in a scientific way and remembered all the links between carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals and body function from my O/A Levels. I started to put more fruit and vegetables back into my previously rather stodgy student diet - now, not just because they were low calorie but because they were high in the vitamins and minerals my body needed. **I started eating apples because they contained something, rather than because they contained nothing.**

The more hours and the harder I'd train over the next 15 years the more care I'd take over not just how much I ate but what I ate and I stayed healthy and I didn't get injured. I'm not sure at what point I realised that while my healthy childhood may have been a lucky accident on my part it was not purely genetic luck. One of my Dad's favourite hobbies was gardening, particularly produce gardening and my Mum's was cooking. We had the best part of a market garden of fruit and veg being produced behind our house and Mum would cook it all up into huge meals. Being from Yorkshire we didn't like to waste anything but in summer, even the best eating efforts of our five strong family could not keep up with all the fresh produce ripening each day. We gave a lot away and had an industrial sized chest freezer in an out house that stored so many bags of frozen peas, beans and soft fruit that despite eating as many as we could all winter Mum would still reluctantly have to throw some away when the new crop came in. Anything that wouldn't freeze well whole got cooked up and frozen that way. Tomatoes, onions and courgettes were made into gallons of ratatouille, apples and rhubarb were made into endless pies and crumbles and then when we ran out of dishes just frozen as purees to be made into something later. And the cabbages, sprouts and other winter veg kept coming fresh from the garden most of the rest of the year anyway. I remember picking frozen spouts off the stems on Christmas Day.

And it wasn't just my Mum's cooking that kept me healthy. I went to the village school across the green until the age of 11 and in those first body formative years school dinners were full on meat and two veg meals cooked from scratch in the school kitchen by Mrs Botwright, the school cook. Since there were only about 30-40 of us at the school, we'd drag the tables out every lunch time and all sit down together for a proper two course sit down meal. There was no school snack bar so by lunch time we were all starving and we ate whatever was put in front of us and it was all proper food. Roast dinners, mince and dumplings, liver and bacon, steak and kidney puddings. Not low

calorie, low fat, low salt 'health' food, just real food and again all served with fresh vegetables.

We often had proper cooked puddings with custard and then Mum would also cook another big meal and always a proper pudding for tea (I used to pity my (slimmer) friends who just got yogurt). And the cake tins were always full because she loved to bake (and later so did I) so I ate a lot. I ate too much and I was a fat kid but I was also a healthy kid and that's not something that goes together these days. **These days fat kids have got fat on chips, burgers, cake, crisps, chocolate, sweets and fizzy drinks. I don't think that is the same type of fat.** And of course it's not just kids who get most of their daily calories from the above modern diet.

So I think I did get a good start in life. But even if I hadn't, I know from my interest in Science that our cells are constantly renewing themselves and our bodies almost totally rebuild themselves with new cells every 15 years (not all at once you understand, that would be rather scary) so I am totally responsible for the 40 year old body I now inhabit (more on how little our genes effect our health compared to our lifestyle in Newsletter No 4).

And the final piece of what I'm sure is still an evolving philosophy slotted into place when I retired from rowing. After a couple of years I ended up doing what I'm doing now and working all over the country as a speaker, leadership consultant and coach. I spend most of my week living out of hotels and motorway service stations, eating client dinners and brown buffet lunches. A few weeks into this new life I was sitting in a London hotel dining room, tucking into yet another cooked breakfast that felt like such a treat and looking round at all the grey (I mean grey skin rather than grey hair), middle aged, overweight men tucking their bellies under the table so they could get close to the huge plates of food in front of them and I thought "That's not going to be me" (well the female equivalent obviously). Cooked breakfasts and restaurant dinners were not the occasional holiday luxury anymore they were part of my new lifestyle and so I had to adapt my life.

I haven't banned myself from the cooked breakfasts but I have a bit of a private rule (that I don't always stick to) that I'm only allowed bacon for breakfast if I get up and go for a run first. Even so, I only have a very small portion of the bits of cooked breakfast I really love alongside at least two bowls of fruit (hotel breakfasts are great for fruit, when you stop being a victim you see the choice) and of course porridge if they have it. **Every meal, whether I'm stopping at a service station or choosing from a buffet or set dinner menu I search for nutrition and let energy find me, rather than the**

other way round (see Newsletter No 6) and pick all the most colourful foods and choose fish when I can. Even on a 'bad' day where everything else I've eaten has been 'junk' and I've given in to the crisps, cake and brown buffet lunch, I will STILL have found 8-10 portions of fruit and vegetables to eat somewhere so I've still got my nutrition in and certainly eaten less of the provided calorie dense food than I would have otherwise. I make or buy salads in advance of predicted 'brown' days and always carry apples. I aim to exercise most days, planning several days ahead what I will do and when each day. If I really can't see a way to fit any proper getting sweaty exercise into a day then I'll make an extra special effort to walk whenever possible and use the stairs rather than lifts or escalators. I wear funky (rather than sensible) shoes I can walk in rather than designer heels that I can't.

Nearly seven years after I retired from rowing, I'm still very rarely ill, am never injured, weigh the same as I did when I retired from rowing nearly seven years ago and my skin is still pink (and rather freckly).

So, at some point I think I have uncoupled the words thin and healthy and fat and unhealthy that we are otherwise so brain washed into thinking go together. I no longer think of my body as an enemy that won't let me eat what I want but more as my biggest ally in helping me do whatever I want in life. I have stopped thinking of myself as a victim to genetics and started thinking of myself in control of my weight and my health (which isn't always easy by the way, it's still tough when I eat the cake to take responsibility for my thickening waist line, it would be so much easier to blame my parents or my metabolism) and I've developed this philosophy of food, life, the universe and everything (and the answer is not 42). I wondered if it was just me it worked for so I started sharing this philosophy through talks and the newsletters a couple of years ago and now other people who try it tell me it works for them too.

1. We've got to eat a lot to eat healthily.

A more detailed explanation of this is included in Newsletter No 6, p3 (<http://www.alisonmowbray.co.uk/recipes.htm>). But essentially, we need to eat a lot of essential oils, amino acids, vitamins, minerals and other micronutrients to be healthy. We get these from fruit, veg, fish, nuts and seeds and we need to eat a lot of them to get enough of them to be really, really healthy. Eating nothing or nearly nothing might make you skinny if you can keep it up but that's not the same thing as being healthy.

2. *What you eat is more important than what you don't eat.*

Again the evolution of this philosophy is in Newsletter No.6 but I believe that, contrary to popular opinion cake and chips are not intrinsically bad for us and if we cut them out of our diet we do not automatically become healthy. As for point 1, not eating is not the same as healthy eating. The majority of dietary advice focuses on cutting things out – fat, sugar, salt, and yet none of these ingredients are actually toxic (although I'm obviously not advising we eat loads of any of them). It's what we eat – the fruit, vegetables, fish, nuts and seeds that contain the nutrition we essentially need to keep us healthy. So there is a physiological reason to focus on what we are eating rather than what we are not eating but there are also psychological reasons.

We know, we all know that when we ban ourselves from eating something (or even worse if someone else bans us) we want it all the more and look for ways to cheat the rules. But more than that, **stopping doing something is such a negative mindset compared with doing something (which is so positive)**. And even more than that if we set ourselves up to stop doing something and then break our own rule (which we always do eventually because we are human not robots) there is nothing left but to feel bad about ourselves. There is no way we can go back and not do it or not eat it (except of course bulimia and I hope we all agree that is not a good way to go). So if we say we are not going to eat sugar and last till the afternoon but then give in and eat the cake or chocolate bar then we think it's all over, its ruined and we might as well eat the whole cake and then we feel bad about ourselves as people because we have no self-control and feeling bad about ourselves makes us feel like we might as well eat a second cake because we are fat and unattractive and no one loves us anyway (guys this is probably more a girl thing but you know you do the same with pasties and beer).

And yet do we learn from this? No. We go and set ourselves exactly the same goal tomorrow and again and again and again.

So, I say, let's stop doing that to ourselves. Let's tell ourselves that "What I eat is more important than what I don't eat" and **set doing things and eating things goals rather than not doing and not eating goals** because then we can always make it up and get it back. If I say I'm going to eat 8-10 portions of fruit and vegetables a day and by mid-afternoon I've not eaten any I can still make it up by eating fruit and smoothies all afternoon and a big salad or loads of veg for my dinner. If I have a 'bad' day and only eat 2 portions on Monday I can eat extra for the rest of the week and make it up. If I have a 'bad' week I don't have to feel bad about myself because I can still take control and eat lots of fruit and veg for the rest of the month. If I've had a 'bad' 10 years, I don't

have to feel bad about myself from today onwards because I can still get it back. Every day I eat loads of fruit and veg my body will build healthy cells that work rather than rubbish cells that struggle to function and even after day 1 a small part of my body will be healthier than it was yesterday and after a week a bit more will be and then more and more and if I have a 'bad' day my body will be stocked up enough to let me get away with it and I can fix it by eating lots more good stuff tomorrow.

It works for exercise too by the way. If you miss a day don't beat yourself up. **What you do is more important than what you don't do.** Get back out there as soon as you can or just walk round the block or up the stairs. **Doing something even very small leads to us feeling more in control and better about ourselves - which leads to more doing.**

Break the cycle by thinking positive thoughts about yourself and doing rather than beating yourself up and not doing.

3. Eat whatever you want but don't live in denial. Know that everything you eat has some sort of impact on your short and long term health. Know what you are eating and make an active choice about everything you put into your body.

Top denial statements

- It makes no difference what you eat or what you do. Guy down the road from me ran every day and ate really healthily and had a heart attack in his late 40's anyway.
- It makes no difference what you eat or what you do. Guy down the road from me smokes, eats fish and chips every day and has never exercised a day in his life and he must be 70 if he's a day.
- I'd rather eat what I like and live like this and go out with a bang than end my days dribbling in a nursing home anyway.
- If I was as thin as you I'd never eat salad.
- You're so lucky being able to eat that cake. I only have to look at food and I put on weight.

If you hear yourself saying these and the above lecture hasn't knocked you out of denial yet then maybe read Newsletter No 4 (<http://www.alisonmowbray.co.uk/recipes.htm>).

4. *If you eat it and you don't need it... it's still wasted.*

This is the latest addition from the growing up of the Yorkshire girl in me. The Yorkshire girl in me says – “Nothing should ever be wasted so I must always clear my plate and in fact even if I've done my bit and cleared my plate and there is some left in the pot I have to eat that too or it'll go in the bin. In fact, if there is any food anywhere in the world that is going spare it is my responsibility to eat it so it won't be wasted”. While this might have worked for a pre-war and war generation where people didn't know where the next meal was coming from in our current lives of plenty a change of mindset was obviously needed.

If we eat more calories than we need to maintain our body weight then we will put on fat, we all know that. If we are deliberately building up our fat stores for a polar expedition or because all shops everywhere will be shut for the next month and there will be no more food available anywhere than that is fine. But otherwise food stored as unwanted and unnecessary body fat is as wasted as if we put it in the bin. If you really can't throw it away then give it away or freeze it but don't eat more food than you need. Eat slowly, enjoy every mouthful and stop just before you are full. That's how not to waste food.

Part II – Orange Party Food



The idea of eating rainbow coloured foods is nothing new. The idea that a colourful plate is a healthy plate has been around a while and is an easy way to monitor the nutritional content of your food. I still use the two mnemonics I learnt in school physics lessons (thank you Mr Temple) to remember the colours of the rainbow. Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain or the other way round, that well known word, VIBGYOR - Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo & Violet (Purple will do for our purposes).

Referring mainly to vegetables and assuming of course that the foods you are eating are naturally coloured the easiest way to think of it is that **foods in the red, orange, yellow part of the spectrum are high in Beta carotenes (Vitamin A), Lycopene and other vitamins, particularly the antioxidant ones** that are so important in neutralising oxygen free radicals that cause the cell damage associated with premature aging (very good to bear in mind when you are turning 40), cancers, heart disease, dementias etc. And **green foods, especially the dark greens are generally rich in minerals like iron (for your blood), calcium and phosphorus (for your bones), zinc (for your immune system) and magnesium (for making enzymes)**. By the time you get to the blues (well blue berries really, can anyone think of any other naturally blue foods?) and purples you are back round to being high in vitamins and antioxidants and **some of them, like purple cabbage, beetroot and purple sprouting broccoli have the best of both ends of the rainbow**. It's all a real generalization as all fruit and vegetables are rich in a mix of vitamins and minerals regardless of their colour but I find this an easy way to think about making sure I get a good mix of everything I need.

So I'm used to looking for foods with lots of colour and mixing them up but then a chance event gave me a new idea to make it a whole lot more fun. And that is important because the way motivation works is that if it's fun we are way more likely to do it more often and sustain it for a longer period of time. **Eating healthily definitely works best if you do it more often and sustain it for a long period of time, preferably for life (which will now be the longer for it so you have to keep it up for even longer – it's a double edged sword)**.

I turned 40 a couple of months ago and was planning to cook lunch for some friends as part of the (two week long) celebrations. It was to be the first big meal I'd cook in my brand new kitchen. My brand new HIGH GLOSS ORANGE kitchen ☺. It's not everyone's cup of tea but I love it. So, as dual celebration I invited friends to an orange party and said I was going to cook an orange meal. It started as a bit of a joke but then I when I thought about it,

it wasn't so difficult and even just thinking about all the orange foods I could cook started to be fun (I lead a quiet life). I also realised that by it's nature an orange meal was going to be an intrinsically healthy meal as most of the foods I'd be using for the orange colours would be fruit and vegetables (unless I'd taken my brothers suggestion "Fish and Chips are orange, why don't you just go and get take-away?").

I planned a menu and went shopping. Even the shopping was fun; in fact I think the shopping may have been the most fun part. Looking round a supermarket just for foods of a single colour changes your perspective rather. I found several foods I'd never have thought to buy and a couple of totally new ones. I was cooking for nine so needed a lot of food and un-loading a whole large shopping full of orange food onto the checkout conveyor belt was entertaining in itself. It was so sunny, just looking at it made me smile.

I spent the best part of two days cooking and this was the result.

Appetisers



Warm Cheese Straw Biscuits topped with sun-dried tomato pesto or red pepper pesto (both orange pastes), sun-blush tomatoes and either honey smoked mackerel or smoked salmon.

Starters

Lycopene Soup (the best tomato soup you've ever tasted – see Newsletter No.2 for the recipe)

&

Homemade Sundried Tomato and Red Leicester Cheese bread



Main Course

Orange Peppers stuffed with Butternut Squash & Saffron Risotto



Turmeric & Paprika rubbed Chicken



Roast Sweet Potato & Butternut Squash



Boiled Carrots (obviously)

Orange & Celery Stuffing (celery being all but white I reckoned I could get away with it). And there was gravy as well and that was orange from the spices on the chicken but somehow that didn't get in the picture.

Desserts

Hot Orange Sponge Pudding

Clementine, Pineapple, Dried Apricot & Tinned Peaches, Sherry Trifle (I mixed the cream with orange yogurt to make it go a little bit orange and topped it with orange hundreds and thousands – the only artificially coloured ingredient in the meal)



Instant Mango & Ginger Ice-cream

Most of these dishes are self explanatory but the Mango & Ginger 'Ice-cream' is probably worth a mention as it's got about the highest taste v sin factor ratio I know for any desert. To make it:- freeze ripe mango in chunks (you can even buy it like this) then put the frozen mango into a large bowl with lime juice, vanilla yogurt, fresh grated ginger and a little orange juice and blitz the lot with a hand blender. It's hard going as you need to keep it solid so can't add too much juice and you need a high powered blender (at least 600W) but the result is something that tastes like exquisite, creamy ice-cream but is really no more than pureed fruit – it's magic. Serve immediately before it melts.

Cake



Jo made me a fantastic carrot cake with orange cream cheese icing which we all agreed was the best we'd ever tasted.

So, there you go – a totally orange meal (well almost). It was fun to plan, fun to shop for, fun to cook, fun to serve up to my intrigued (and very indulgent of my eccentricities) friends and most importantly very much fun to eat. It was also a perfectly balanced healthy meal with almost no conscious thought. Yes there was a fair bit of butter in there and Red Leicester cheese but way over half of everything we ate in that meal was fruit and veg. and even our (small) portion of Omega-3 laden oily fish was there. *What you eat is more important than what you don't eat.*

The orange meal inspired much talk over lunch about possible variations on the single coloured theme. Red, yellow and green all seemed more than possible and I reckon purple would be a challenge but could be done.



Kate Mac was inspired to cook (or at least help to cook) a totally red and pink meal for Valentines Day. Kate also found that the shopping was the most fun. There were three red and pink courses but she sent me a photo of the main course - pink salmon and prawns, red peppers stuffed with red rice and red onion and a tomato sauce. Top marks for creativity and presentation but the judges have deducted a point for the yellow lemon slice - careless.

I can't help thinking kids would love the idea, especially if they were involved in all the shopping and cooking and it's got to be better for them than most of the party food they crave. **If you have a go with any single coloured Rainbow meal for yourself or your kids please let me know and send photos and I'll try and include them in a Newsletter.**

Part III – Rainbow Soups

1. High Gloss Orange

This all started as a gorgeous accident really. A couple of weeks after my birthday meal I still had a pile of unused orange vegetables left in the fridge. The peppers especially looked like they would not last much longer so I decided to make the whole lot into soup and freeze it so as not to waste anything. The resulting soup was not only a perfect match for my kitchen (if I took my eye off it I lost it for a while so well was it camouflaged) but from the first spoonful I stole from the pan I decided it was **the best soup I had ever tasted**, beating even the legendary Lycopene soup (the previous best soup I'd ever tasted) by a fine margin.

Both are soups are orange but High Gloss Orange soup is more orange than Lycopene soup so my first thought was that the degree of orangeness is probably linked to the degree of tastiness. I then thought that if I could make an even more orange soup than High Gloss Orange then I could scientifically

test my theory (you are now not surprised it took me 5 ½ years to get my PhD, or that I don't use my Dr. title very often) but I'm not sure this is actually possible. High Gloss is very, very orange.

Ingredients

2 Onions (they are orange in their skins so they sneak in)	Vit C
1 bag of carrots	Vit A, Vit C, lycopene
1 sweet potato	Vit A, Vit B5, Vit B6, Mg, Ph, K
1/2 butternut squash	Vit A, Vit B6, Vit C, Mg
2 orange peppers	Vit A, Vit C, lycopene, Vit B6
Chicken or vegetable stock	
Can of chickpeas	Protein, Vit B6, Folic acid, Iron, Mg, P, Zn
Can of haricot beans	Protein, Vit B6, Folic acid, Iron, K

Mg = Magnesium, P = Phosphorous, K = Potassium, Zn = Zinc

All the above ingredients contain many more nutrients than I've shown. I've just selected those that appear in the most significant quantities. All vegetables are also high in fibre and all contain at least some carbohydrate.

Al's Top Tips on Knowing Your Onions

- Onions may look from this list to be the poor nutritional relation to some of the more colourful vegetables but this is not the case and just serves to demonstrate how inadequate our diet would be if we relied on vitamin and mineral supplements to provide the nutrition in our diet. Most nutrition tables (including the ones I used from Wikipedia in compiling this) only contain information on common nutrients. **All fruit and vegetables also contain dozens (in some cases hundreds) of other components that although present in tiny quantities play an essential and yet often unexplored role in keeping us healthy.** More are being found all the time and there are certainly many that have not even been discovered yet so there is no way they will appear in any bottles.
- Wide-ranging claims have been made for the effectiveness of onions against conditions ranging from the **common cold to heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and other diseases.** ["World's Healthiest Foods". Whfoods.com. 2006-06-06.] They contain chemical compounds believed to have **anti-inflammatory, anticholesterol, anticancer and antioxidant** properties such as **quercetin**. Preliminary studies have shown that increased consumption of onions **reduces the risk of head and neck cancers** [Onion and garlic use and human cancer. (The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition)". Ajcn.org. 2006-11-01].

Method

1. Melt a little butter and olive oil in a large saucepan. Add the chopped onions and peeled and sliced carrots (as these take longest to cook). Stir to coat then 'sweat' on a low heat with the lid on for a few minutes while you prepare the rest of the vegetables.
2. Peel and chop the sweet potato and squash add to the pan and leave for a few more minutes.
3. Core and chop the peppers and add to the pan. Leave for a couple more minutes so that the onions and carrots will have had about 8-10 minutes in total.
4. Add enough stock to more than cover the vegetables. Add some salt and freshly ground black pepper. Bring to the boil then simmer until all the vegetables are very soft (20-30 minutes).
5. Remove from the heat and blend until smooth.
6. Return to the heat and add more stock or water if you think it's too thick and adjust the seasoning to taste. You can eat it like it is or for a heartier soup....
7. Drain and rinse the chickpeas and beans, add to the soup and reheat.

2. Very Yellow

From making High Gloss Orange I got excited about the potential of single colour soups (like I say I lead a quiet life) and wanted to make some others. It was too easy just to blend the appropriately coloured veg so I set out to make each one as different as I could. I've always loved chowders and it's already quite a yellow soup so I thought that was a good start.

I added a yellow pepper to up the yellow, the veg and the **antioxidant** count and switched the white potato for parsnips which are sort of very pale yellow (if you catch them in the right light). I used smoked haddock for it's yellow colour, rich taste and **Omega 3** content and added a few king prawns because even though they are perhaps more pink/orange than yellow I thought they

might be a nice touch, purists can leave them out. I took out the cream (because most chowders overdo it anyway) but left in the butter and white wine because **what you eat is more important than what you don't eat**. I cooked it all up and tasted it and quite frankly I think I might be a genius because **THIS is the best soup I have ever tasted**. I think it does slightly pip High Gloss Orange which blows my correlation between orangeness and tastiness theory right out of the water



The combination of smoked fish and parsnip flavours is subtle and sweet. The creamed veg gives it a creamy texture without any need for cream and the butter adds richness and depth. It tastes far, far too good to be as good for you as it is. I have already made this again and it is **Very Yellow**.

Ingredients

500g smoked haddock

Protein, Omega-3, Vit B12 & B6, Iron, Selenium

500ml semi skimmed milk

15g butter

2 dsp plain flour

2 medium yellow onions

2 cloves garlic

250g parsnip (2-3)

2 yellow peppers

2 corn on the cob

Vit C

Vit B6, Vit C

Vit C, Folic Acid, K, Mg, P

Vit A, Vit C, lycopene, Vit B6

Vit B1, B3 & Folic Acid, Vit C, Mg, Ferulic acid

150ml white wine

200ml water

~200g frozen raw prawns

Protein, Omega-3, Vit B12, Iron, Selenium, Zn, I, P, K

Handful of fresh parsley (I know I lose a point)

It's the little things that count

Ferulic Acid - Ferulic acid, like many phenols, is an antioxidant in the sense that it is reactive toward free radicals such as reactive oxygen species that are implicated in **DNA damage, cancer, accelerated cell aging**. Animal studies and in vitro studies suggest that ferulic acid may have direct **antitumor activity** against **breast cancer** [1] and **liver cancer** [2]. Ferulic acid may have pro-apoptotic effects in cancer cells, thereby leading to their destruction [2].

Cooking sweetcorn releases increased levels of ferulic acid which compensates for the loss of Vitamin C (also an anti-oxidant).

1. Antiproliferative and apoptotic effects of selective phenolic acids on T47D human breast cancer cells: potential mechanisms of action. *Breast Cancer Res.* 2004; 6(2): R63-74. Epub, 2003 Dec 15, PubMed.
2. Role of NADPH oxidase-mediated generation of reactive oxygen species in the mechanism of apoptosis induced by phenolic acids in HepG2 human hepatoma cells. *Arch Pharm Res.* 2005 Oct; 28(10): 1183-9; PubMed]

Method

1. **Poach the haddock in the milk in a large frying pan until the fish begins to flake (about 5 minutes).**
2. **Strain the fish reserving the milk stock and leave both on the side for now.**
3. **Melt the butter in a large saucepan and add the chopped onion.**
4. **Fry gently for 5 mins until soft and then add the crushed garlic, chopped pepper and peeled, diced parsnips. Continue to cook for a few more minutes.**
5. **Add the flour and stir well**
6. **Stir in the white wine and simmer for 2 minutes.**
7. **Stir in the water and reserved milk stock and simmer gently with the lid on for about 15 mins or until the parsnip is cooked. Don't worry**

too much if the flour goes a little lumpy at this stage you can blitz it out later.

8. Cut the kernels off ONE of the cobs of corn, put into a jug or hand blender beaker and blend until smooth. Add to the pan.
9. Remove the pan from the heat and blitz with a hand blender so some of the vegetables get blended to thicken the soup and some are left quite chunky. It's about half and half. If your sauce is a little lumpy then I've found blitzing the surface with the blender breaks it all up nicely.
10. Return to the heat. Cut the kernels off the other cob of corn and add to the pan with the poached fish, prawns and chopped parsley and simmer until the prawns and sweetcorn are cooked.

3. Distinctly Green

This is not the best soup I've ever tasted but it is still strangely addictive. You'll have to make it to understand what I mean. It is very lightly cooked and has a clean, almost crisp taste. The best analogy I can come up with is that this might be the closest we can get to the experience cows have when they eat fresh spring grass on a bright dewy morning. If Very Yellow has the depth and warmth of claret then this is a light refreshing lager.



You might not believe Very Yellow is as good for you as it is but everything about **Distinctly Green** screams "I AM VERY, VERY GOOD FOR YOU". I think someone who ate this soup regularly would have to work very hard to get ill.

Ingredients

2 dsp olive oil	
1 bunch Spring Onions	Vit C
2 medium leeks	Vit A, Vit B6, Folic Acid, Vit C, Vit K, Iron & Mg
2 large cloves garlic	Vit B1, B5 & B6, Vit C, Calcium, Iron, P & Zn
200g frozen broad beans	Protein, Vit A & Vit C,
200g frozen soya beans	Protein, Polyunsaturated fat, Vit B6, Vit C, Vit K, Calcium, Iron, Mg, P, K, Zn
200g frozen peas	Vit B1, B2, B5 & B6, Folic acid, Vit C, Iron, Mg, P & Zn
200g spinach	Vit A, Folic Acid, Vit C, Vit E, Vit K, Calcium & Iron
Handful fresh mint	Vit A, Vit C, Folic Acid, Calcium & Iron
Handful fresh parsley	Vit B2, B3, Folic Acid, Vit C, Vit K, Calcium & Iron, Mg, K, Zn
Vegetable stock	

Method

1. Heat a couple of spoons of olive oil in a large pan (don't worry about using oil in this very healthy soup, your body needs it to extract the vitamins from the vegetables) and gently sweat the chopped onion, garlic and leeks for a few minutes.
2. Add stock to double the volume of the vegetables and simmer for 5 more minutes.
3. Add the frozen beans, bring back to the boil and simmer for 1 minute then add the frozen peas and bring back to the boil.
4. Add the spinach and chopped herbs. Stir over heat until the spinach has wilted into the soup (about 1 more minute). Add more boiling water or stock if necessary.
5. Blend until smooth (it will always have some little chunky bits from the beans).
6. Reheat, season and serve. If it is all a bit too healthy grate parmesan or cheddar over the top and melt in.

Why being full of beans makes you full of beans

Rich in L-dopa

- A chemical the body uses to produce dopamine. This is the neurotransmitter associated with the **brain's reward and motivation system**.

Rich in B Vitamins

- Perform a wide range of essential functions including helping to **unlock the energy from food**.
- Are water soluble (like Vit C) so excess is excreted in urine and cannot be stored in the body. We need to eat them regularly to keep topped up.
- Folic Acid (important in early stages of pregnancy) is the common name for Vit B9. 100g grams of kidney beans contain 99% of the RDA of folic acid (not that I really put much store by RDAs).
- B6 is also called Pyridoxine. Pyridoxine assists in the balancing of sodium and potassium as well as promoting red blood cell production and is linked to **cardiovascular health**. It is required for the formation of the enzymes needed to make serotonin, dopamine, noradrenalin and adrenalin and as such it has been implicated in the **treatment of depression and anxiety**.
- Despite the plethora of B vitamins in the above vegetables **Vit B12 is not present in plants so is not available in a vegan diet**. Vegans therefore need to make alternative arrangements to get their B12 as deficiency results in **macrocytic anaemia, memory loss** and other cognitive defects. Possibly because of its link with memory B12 deficiency is thought to be one of the risk factors for **dementia**.

Rich in Iron

- Needed to make the **haemoglobin** that carries oxygen in your blood (pretty important), without it you are going to feel like you have really lost your beans. In the developed world about **20% of all women of childbearing age have iron deficiency anemia**, compared with only 3% of adult men. The principal cause of iron deficiency anemia in these countries is blood lost during menstruation which is not compensated by intake from food.
- The iron from vegetable sources like beans is **non-haem iron** as opposed to **haem-iron** from animal sources. Non-haem iron is more difficult for our bodies to absorb but we can help it along by **not eating it alongside tannins** (which block absorption of non-haem iron) from red wine and tea and **eating it with Vitamin C** (as you do in any of these bean containing soups) which increases absorption of non-haem iron.
- Many people have a genetic susceptibility to iron overload without realizing it or being aware of a family history of the problem. For this reason, it is advised that people do not take iron supplements unless they suffer from iron deficiency and have consulted a doctor.

4. Really Red

The photo has come out a bit orange but in real life this soup really is red. Despite this not being absolutely the best soup I have ever tasted some variation of this spicy, bean filled, tomato soup is the one I crave most often. If I'm ever on my way home wondering what to have for tea and I think of this then **Really Red** always gets a tick.



I find thinking of what I want to eat before I actually get hungry a very good strategy for helping me eat more healthily. If I wait until I'm already starving before I plan my next meal then I'll most often crave fish and chips or a curry or.... well fish and chips really and by that point all is lost and nothing else will do. However, if I think about what I want to eat well before that point I find I can plan a far more healthy meal and crave that instead. There have been times when nothing but spicy tomato soup will do so I try to always keep some in the freezer in case of emergencies. Try it, it really works.

In sticking with the red theme I went for the luxury (rather than essential) option of Chorizo. Made from pork, pork fat and smoked paprika, it's not the healthiest option and there are many things you could put in instead but it is really red and I do really love the flavour just a little adds to this soup. Put in more or less depending on whether you are feeling indulgent or virtuous. I also really like this soup made with chopped up grilled sausages rather than Chorizo so you could try that and of course the vegetarian option without any of it is still really tasty. The smoked paprika is at least part of the flavour in the Chorizo so you are not totally missing out.

Ingredients

2 dsp olive oil	
100-200g chorizo	
2 red onions	Vit C, cyanidin, flavonoids (these are red pigment antioxidants)
2 red peppers	Vit A, Vit C, lycopene, Vit B6
2 tins tomatoes	Vit C, lycopene
2 dsp tomato puree	As above but concentrated
1 red chilli or 1/3 tsp easy chilli paste	Vit C, Vit A, B6, Iron, K, Mg
Vegetable stock	
½ tsp smoked paprika	
1 or 2 cans of red kidney beans	Protein, Vit B5, Folic acid, Calcium, Iron, Mg, Zn

Method

1. Chop the chorizo into small pieces and fry for a few minutes until just crisp (you don't need to add any oil). Drain on kitchen paper and leave on the side for now.
2. Finely chop the onions and peppers and crush the garlic. Gently fry in the olive oil for a few minutes in a large pan. If you are using fresh chilli, chop very finely and add at this stage.
3. Chop the tomatoes in the tin (if they aren't already) and add to the vegetables. Refill one of the tins with vegetable stock and add to the pan. Bring the soup up to a gentle simmer (you'll get a richer, sweeter soup if you cook it slowly).
4. As it simmers, add the easy chilli paste (watch out this is very fiery stuff), smoked paprika and tomato puree. Simmer gently for 20-30 minutes or longer if you have time.
5. Remove from the heat and part blitz with a hand blender so the soup is part blended part chunky.
6. Return to the heat and add the beans and fried Chorizo. Add more water or stock if needed. Reheat, season to taste and serve.

