

THE CLEAN LIFE

Raveena Taurani, founder of Yogisattva, talks about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and lets us in on all we need to know about vegan and raw foods. By **Faye Remedios**



Raveena at a workshop



Raveena Taurani

to health, and offers tips to those looking to become wellness entrepreneurs.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY TO HEALTH.

At the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015, I suffered greatly due to a severe stomach infection, which was later diagnosed as lactose intolerance. At the time, I was very confused, as I had been consuming dairy products all my life. However, milk today is largely made of hormones, which, when ingested, may lead to intolerance over time. I was also on heavy medication for PCOD, and had to take antibiotics every two to three months, since I almost always had a viral fever or flu. I went to Goa for several weeks to practice yoga and discovered raw- and plant-based eating there. The energy, muscle strength, sleep quality, immunity boost and overall well-being I gained through this experience was incomparable. There was no going back.

WHEN DID YOU BECOME A RAW/ VEGAN FOODS PRACTITIONER?

I assisted in film and television advertisements, and I still continue to pursue my passion for acting while being a raw and plant-based chef. I got introduced to this lifestyle when I visited an Ashtanga Yoga Retreat at Purple Valley in Goa last year. Practicing yoga every morning, and eating 70 per cent raw and 30 per cent cooked food, I gained a lot of muscle strength in a very short amount of time. I was always vegetarian but I was continuously asked to eat eggs or cottage cheese, or drink whey protein for my protein requirements. However, being into this

The adage 'food can heal all' finds a perfect proponent in raw foods- and plant-based chef, and yoga enthusiast, Raveena Taurani. Finding that her health dramatically improved after switching to a healthier lifestyle, she decided to get certified in nutrition, and launched her brand Yogisattva, which offers vegan and raw food options. She talks about her wholesome approach

WHAT PROJECTS DO YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE?

We are tying up with a few restaurants so we become permanently available at their outlets. We are also working on setting up a daily delivery system that'll have wider reach within Mumbai. Apart from that, I honestly like not knowing what will happen next because I am constantly surprised by the offers and opportunities we receive as a brand, and I love that feeling.



Raw cacao and orange ice cream

"I DON'T EAT ANY RAW FOODS AFTER 4PM—IT'S DIFFICULT FOR THE BODY TO DIGEST AND BREAK DOWN RAW FOODS AFTER THAT HOUR."



Mexican quinoa bowl with vegan cheese

lifestyle, I began looking at nutrition as a whole as opposed to selective nutrients. I am not vegan—I eat honey, but I don't eat any meat, dairy, gluten or refined sugar.

WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB AS A RAW FOOD/PLANT-BASED CHEF?

The people I work with and the people I meet are the best part. My team is amazing, and they trust me completely. The people



Raveena hosting a Studio Fifteen cooking workshop

I meet through my brunches and cooking classes always have stories to share about their journey in food. Food is so personal, and we are all at different stages in our pursuit for good health.

WHY DID YOU CHANGE YOUR DIET?

I follow a whole foods, plant-based lifestyle. I don't eat 100 per cent raw—I maintain a 50-50 balance and stay flexible depending on my location. But I don't consume any dairy, gluten or refined sugar, no matter where I am. I also don't eat any raw foods after 4pm—it's difficult for the body to digest and break down raw food after that hour. As the sun goes down, so does the body's ability to digest certain foods. The hard cellulose walls of vegetables are difficult to break down when consumed after 4 pm, and can lead to the creation of bad bacteria in the stomach due to indigestion.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER THOSE WHO WANT A CAREER IN THIS FIELD?

My only advice would be to get educated. A lot of people sell vegan and →



Raw pad thai



Raw cacao bliss balls

gluten-free cakes without the chocolate actually being dairy-free. Just because you don't put butter in the cake does not make it dairy-free—the chocolate has to be 100 per cent free of dairy. Cocoa powder in India often has milk fat and hydrogenated oils, which cannot be counted as dairy-free. Similarly, for gluten-free cake, apart from using gluten-free flour, you need to use gluten-free yeast without aluminum in it. There is a general lack of education when it comes to this, and it's important to be honest while selling food as you never know how severe a person's intolerance is.

WHERE DID YOU TRAIN?

I got certified at a chefs' training institute in Bali called The Seeds of Life.

I don't recommend that course as I felt there were many gaps in the education I received and many hidden expenses that were not mentioned before the course began. In order to fill those gaps, I took an online Sports Nutrition and Culinary Nutrition course from the Matthew Kenney Culinary Institute in California. Our assignments were both theoretical and practical—we had to submit pictures of the food we made, to successfully pass the course. I will be taking the Elite Sports Nutrition, Superfoods and Plant Based Desserts course from the institute as well.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST STEP AFTER RECEIVING YOUR CERTIFICATION?

HOW SHOULD ONE BEGIN THIS LIFESTYLE?

They should start by making a change in their own lives first, to see how it feels. They should avoid using inorganic vegetables. It's important to source vegetables and fruits of the highest quality for maximum nutritional gain.

Tell us about your brand—its concept, philosophy and response.

Yogisattva literally translates to Yoga Being. Asana, which is the physical practice of yoga, is only the third limb. Yoga is an eight-fold path towards enlightenment. Every individual on earth is at some stage or the other on this eight-fold path during their time on earth and hence, every individual is a Yogisattva. We started out primarily as a merchandising brand with a focus on yoga-inspired merchandise, and we now focus primarily on making raw- and plant-based food. The response has been great. I live in gratitude of the opportunity to share my food with new people.

What changes have you noticed in your health after you began your plant-based diet? How have people responded to the diet?

I feel amazing. Nutritionally, I am always satisfied. I have no guilt about eating anything; I sleep well; my hair is thick, long and luscious; and I have amazing stamina and strength. The response from people has been overwhelming. Their expression when they take their first bite of my dairy-free ice cream is priceless—they cannot believe it's dairy-free. It still fills my heart with absolute joy every time.

How will you convince the sceptics?

I'll just put a delicious Raw Double Chocolate 'No Cheese' Cheesecake in front of them. They won't be able to resist it!

I began offering smoothies to my friends after their workout. My friend Tanvi Mehra, who owns Tangerine Arts Studio in Mumbai, urged me to take a workshop on International Yoga Day, where I combined yoga with a raw breakfast. I was doubtful of my skills as a yoga teacher but had no hesitation about cooking. Everyone attending the workshop thoroughly enjoyed the food, and I decided to give it a shot. It started as an email group consisting of the participants from the workshop, along with my close friends, and with just four items on the menu. Today, the menu is four pages long and my email list consists of over 1,500 people.

WHAT ARE THE CAREER PROSPECTS IN INDIA?

If you're really passionate about something, the career prospects find you. To have a career in this field, it's important to be prepared to answer a lot of questions about the benefits of eating raw food. People living in India are inherently afraid to eat raw since they've primarily grown up eating cooked food. Foods rich in dairy also make up a large part of Indian cuisine, so it's important to know the difference between sharing a lifestyle and preaching it. It's important not to judge people and their choices. Instead, I always use the approach of introducing foods that people can include in their lifestyle as opposed to a list of foods to exclude. The lifestyle of inclusion is far more appealing to most, and I truly believe this is the only way to introduce the lifestyle to anyone who wants to know more. ■