THE ROAD TO HAPPINESS CONFERENCE JUNE 2015

We, in Scotland are now classed as the second fattest country in the world, behind America. We also have the highest levels of chronic disease in Europe, for diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer, bowel disease and MS.

Not surprisingly we are also the biggest consumers of ready meals and fast foods eating more than the rest of Europe put together.

* We eat more than half the crisps and savoury snacks eaten in Europe at 51%.
* We are literally digging our own graves with a knife and fork!
* It is a very true saying, ‘You are what you eat’.

We seriously need to be eating way more real foods based on wholegrains and seasonal fruit and vegetables and cutting down drastically the amount of processed, ready meals and junk food we consume if we value our health.

* All vegetables have major nutritional value including fibre, for good digestive health, antioxidants for fighting disease and vitamins and minerals to boost our immune system.
* We want to eat as wide a variety of colours as possible for the maximum benefit to our health.
* In a recent survey, 1 out of 3 Britons say they do not eat vegetables because they require too much effort to prepare!

All of the following ideas and recipes are simple, cheap and highly nutritious so if you want to improve your health I suggest you try them!

**Green smoothies** Are a delicious way of adding vegetables to your diet.

You can make all sorts of combinations using pineapple, banana, oranges, green grapes, kiwi fruits and a few handfuls of spinach or kale.

Probiotic yoghurt is a good addition which adds beneficial bacteria to improve gut health and your immune system, as does all the fruits which are high in Vitamin C.

Broccoli, Spinach & Butter Bean Soup

*This tasty soup couldn’t be easier to make and is incredibly nutritious-low in calories and very filling. Both broccoli and spinach are nutritional power houses and highly regarded foods for cancer prevention. We should be eating dark green leafy vegetables every day!*

**Ingredients**  Serves 4

* 1 onion
* 1 large or 2 med heads of broccoli
* 2 or 3 handfuls of spinach
* 1 400g tin of butter beans
* 1 litre of good quality vegetable stock

**Method**

1. Quite simply roughly chop the onion and broccoli, put it in a large pan, add the drained butter beans and the stock, cover and simmer for 20 minutes until the broccoli is soft. Add the spinach for the last 5 minutes.
2. Puree with a hand blender until smooth, season and enjoy!

Feel free to use any combination of green vegetables and white beans like cannellini or haricot. Also if you prefer a thicker soup use 2 tins of beans or add more stock if you prefer it thinner.

Salads

*Salads are a great way to up your intake of vegetables and you can make all sorts of combinations using more than just the ubiquitous lettuce, tomato and cucumber! Chick peas, puy lentils, feta cheese, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, toasted walnuts, sun dried tomatoes, oven roasted butternut squash are all great additions and can make a salad into a more filling meal. A simple balsamic dressing using heart healthy extra virgin olive oil, a clove of garlic and some sea salt can transform a dull salad into a taste sensation! All you need is a tablespoon balsamic, 3 tablespoons olive oil, a crushed clove of garlic, some sea salt and a tablespoon of water. Simply add to a glass jar , put the lid on and give it a good shake.*

*Tabbouleh is a delicious middle eastern dish based on bulghur wheat, which is a wholegrain and contains fibre, protein B vitamins and calcium and it only needs to be soaked for 30 minutes; it makes a great lunch and can be kept in the fridge for a few days.*

Tabbouleh

**Ingredients**

* 1 red onion chopped
* Small bunch of spring onions chopped
* Juice of 1 lemon
* 2 handfuls of coriander or flat leaf parsley, chopped
* 2 handfuls of mint, chopped
* 1 cup of bulghur wheat
* ½ cucumber diced
* 10 cherry tomatoes, halved
* 2 tablespoons olive oil
* 1 teaspoon sea salt

**Method**

1. Place bulghur wheat in a bowl and cover with 2 cups of boiling water. Leave to sit for about 30 minutes.
2. Chop the red onion, spring onions, tomatoes and herbs.
3. Cut the cucumber in half lengthways, scoop out the seeds and chop into small chunks.
4. Drain the bulghur through a sieve to get rid of excess water then use a fork to separate the grains, then add chopped vegetables, herbs, lemon juice, olive oil and salt to season.
5. Lightly toasted pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds , chopped nuts or cubes of feta cheese can be added.
6. Leave the tabbouleh in the fridge for a few hours before serving to allow the flavours to develop.

**Serves 6**

*Lentil Bolognaise*

*Lentils are a great heart food, rich in soluble and insoluble fibre. They reduce cholesterol, lower blood pressure and provide lashings of B vitamins which help to maintain the health of the arteries and veins.*

*We should all be reducing our intake of red meat and lentils are a great substitute, filling, high in fibre and protein.*

*Lentils come in many varieties - red, green, brown and puy to name but a few. None need soaking prior to cooking so they are excellent when you need a meal in a hurry.*

*They are also cheap so what more could you want!*

**Ingredients** Serves 4-6

* 1 onion {finely chopped}
* 2 med carrots
* 2 sticks of celery
* 1 red pepper
* Clove of garlic (finely chopped)
* 1 mug red lentils (approx. 250g)
* 2 tablespoons olive oil
* 400g tin chopped tomatoes
* 1l good quality veg stock(I would recommend Marigold Swiss Vegetable Bouillon Powder)
* 2 teaspoons dried oregano
* 1 level teaspoon ground cinnamon
* A handful of spinach (optional)

**Method**

1. Chop the onion, carrots, celery and pepper fairly small.
2. Heat oil in a large pan and sauté the chopped vegetables and garlic for around 10 minutes.
3. Stir in the lentils, tomatoes, stock, oregano and cinnamon. Bring to the boil then reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Add more stock if required.
4. Add spinach, if using and simmer for a further 5 minutes.

The sauce is now ready to serve with your preferred pasta. It also freezes very well.

Date and Oat Truffles

***These delicious snacks are a great energy booster and can be eaten straight from the freezer!***

***Dates are naturally sweet and delicious and contain fibre, protein and a whole host of beneficial vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. The fibre and protein slow the rate at which the sugar is absorbed into your bloodstream which is great news for your weight, mood and energy levels.***

***The chia seeds and nuts add a hefty helping of anti inflammatory omega 3 good fats.***

Makes 20 med balls

***Ingredients***

* 2 cups pitted dates
* 1/4 cup warm water
* 3/4 cup jumbo oats
* 1 cup desiccated coconut plus for ¼ cup for rolling finished balls in
* 1/4 cup sesame seeds
* 1/4 cup sunflower seeds
* 1/4 cup chopped almonds, walnuts or hazelnuts
* 2 tablespoons chia seeds (optional)

***Method***

1. Place dates and warm water in a food processor and process until smooth
2. Transfer into a bowl and fold in the remaining ingredients. If the mixture is soggy then slowly add more oats, if the mixture is too dry slowly add warm water.
3. Shape into balls and roll them in desiccated coconut.
4. Enjoy right away or place on a baking sheet in the freezer for 30 minutes to set.