



photography Louis xxxxxx



WELCOME TO

HEATHER'S KITCHEN

words Caroline Okello

Nutritional therapist Heather Cuthbert explains to HealthyWoman why healthy food needn't be bland

BACKGROUND

I was born and brought up here, in Kenya, where food is always so fresh. My mother was an amazing cook, always making fun and new creative recipes from all over the world. We travelled a lot as kids and visited many countries, which also had an influence on my interest in food. My fondest food memories from childhood are making homemade pancakes for EVERY meal on Pancake Day: crepes with strawberries for breakfast; pancake wraps filled with herby mushrooms for lunch; and then for dinner, we would make pancake cannelloni! Our family definitely made the most of Pancake Day!

My mother taught me all that I know about cooking. She was a huge inspiration for me while I was growing up. She was and still is a fantastic cook. She taught me all the basics at an early age. I then went on to study Food Science at A Level, where I learned all about meal preparation and timing. I then enrolled myself into a Cordon Bleu Cookery Course at Edinburgh School of Food and Wine. But it was the Institute for Optimum Nutrition that really inspired my healthy cooking—this was mainly self-taught.

STYLE AND PREFERENCES

I love baking and making adventurous desserts; for example, healthy teatime treats like beetroot brownies, superfood fudge or a cheese-less cheesecake. When it comes to food trends, I think that I definitely have my own style, but I keep up-to-date with the latest crazes in nutrition in the UK and I have friends who share their new recipes and ideas. I also try out the latest raw food eateries when in London and I recommend going to the Wild Food Café or Nama Foods if you ever visit London.

I am constantly sourcing and testing new recipes. Sometimes, I discover new dishes completely by accident (big cooking mistakes can make interesting new recipes!). I am an experimenter and love to invent new dishes. The health food world is always growing, so there are always new “super foods” and combinations to try out.

I consider basic herbs in any kitchen. Fresh or dried herbs automatically upgrade a meal. They don't just add flavour, they are so rich in antioxidants that they improve the health properties of your dish too.

The one type of food that I would never get sick of eating is Avocado! Avocadoes find themselves in all sorts of snacks and meals in my kitchen; from guacamole to dairy-free cheesecake, to dairy-free cacao mousse or dairy-free icing for my cakes and, of course, just eating them straight from the skin with a sprinkle of Himalayan salt.

One meal I would fantasise about most if I were stranded on a deserted island is grilled jumbo prawns with ginger, garlic, lime and chilli with a mango, coriander and tomato salsa. Wow, I am drooling just thinking about it.

NUTRITIONAL THERAPY

Growing up, I was always intrigued by the interplay of physiology and food, and I wanted to find out more about how to improve an individual's quality of life through controllable factors like diet and lifestyle. That influenced me to become a nutritional therapist.

Before returning to Nairobi last year, I led a “Cooking for Health” class in London at the College of Naturopathic Medicine as a therapeutic chef. I demonstrated meals that specifically target particular health conditions, body systems and deficiencies. I taught people how to create snacks and allergen-free meals, and meals with other dietary sensitivities as well as enzyme-rich raw food. I found this to be a great way to inspire and motivate people to access a variety of delicious meals suitable to their needs.

At the moment, I am based at the Karen Surgery and Power Vibe Studio in Westlands for nutritional therapy consultations. I also have a healthy food range that I sell at various fairs and markets under my company name, Nuts about Nutrition. I also have a blog (www.nutsaboutnutrition.co), which I update with regular recipes, and my Instagram and Facebook account is great for getting some foodie inspiration (@nutsaboutnutrition). My next plan is to start up a healthy brunch or supper club in Nairobi, a great way for people to meet and try out new and exciting healthy food.

COMPLIMENTS AND ADVICE

My guests always know that the food I will serve will be somewhat ‘different’ when they come around for a meal. They normally end up playing ‘guess the ingredients’, since most of the time, there will be something that you would never expect. My favourite person that I've cooked for, excluding family, would be when I cooked and demonstrated a Valentines themed lunch at the Faraja Cancer Support Trust in February. It was a very motivated group of ladies. The biggest compliment for me as a cook is friends telling me that my brownies, cheesecake and courgette pasta are better than the real deal.

The best advice on cooking I've ever received is practice makes perfect. Every skill gets better with time. Be inventive, use fresh and raw ingredients. Enrol yourself in courses that teach you new skills on different types of food.

RECIPE MY DAIRY-FREE MANGO CHEESECAKE

BASE

1 1/2 cup almonds, unsalted, unroasted
1 cup dates, pitted
A pinch of Himalayan salt

FILLING

1 1/2 cup cashew nuts, unsalted, unroasted
3/4 cup coconut oil
1/2 cup coconut milk, canned
1/2 cup honey
2 1/2 cup ripe mangoes, (around 2 1/2 mangoes)
diced Juice of 1 lime

DECORATION

1/2 mango, sliced

METHOD

1. Before you begin, soak the cashew nuts in water for at least an hour (overnight is best).
2. Begin with the base: In a high-powered food processor, blend together the almonds and dates with the salt. Pulse until they become fine crumbs. Scoop out the crust mixture into a 7” removable-bottomed tin and press it down firmly with wet hands, keeping the base even throughout.
3. Put the base in the fridge to harden. Rinse the food processor well.
5. Thoroughly blend together the soaked cashew nuts, coconut oil, coconut milk, mango and lime until smooth. Then, add the honey and blend again until very smooth and creamy.
6. Pour the mango filling onto your chilled base and smooth it over with a spatula.
7. Place it into the freezer to set.
8. Remove your cheesecake from the freezer an hour before serving.
9. Decorate with the mango slices and tuck in!

