



# Eating Well

## GUIDE

Making small changes to your diet today,  
that could make a difference to your gut health





Many of the people who suffer from gut symptoms are sensitive to the food they eat. So, eating well is not just a matter of eating a balanced, healthy diet, it also involves being aware of foods that may normally irritate a sensitive gut.

While we consume enough food to give us energy to remain fit and active and ensure a diet that contains enough essential amino acids, fats, vitamins and minerals, we also need to maintain a viable gut microflora – while also restricting those foods that may stimulate gut spasm, retain fluid and generate large volumes of gas through fermentation.

Knowing how different foods affect the gut, and the little changes we can make to our everyday living that may have a positive impact, helps us care for our gut so much better.

In this guide, we share top tips on how we can all eat to help keep our gut healthy and happy, as well as tricks and swaps you can make that will have you cooking the gut-friendly way, every day.

*“Although 8 in 10 people recognise the importance of having a healthy gut, millions are unaware of the small, and simple, lifestyle changes that can be made to improve digestive health<sup>1</sup>. This is why it’s so important to understand your gut, and the lifestyle factors which can impact it, so ultimately you can give it the love it deserves.”*

JO TRAVERS, REGISTERED DIETITIAN



*“Eating for your gut health, doesn’t have to be boring. There are so many delicious ingredients and flavours available, that eating mindfully to help benefit your gut, your brain and your overall wellbeing doesn’t have to be difficult. Sometimes it’s simply a case of little swaps here and there, and little lifestyle changes, which may make a difference.”*

DR JOAN RANSLEY

# Introduction



<sup>1</sup> Love Your Gut 2021 Research

## TIPS to keep your sensitive gut happy and healthy

### 1 **Have a balanced diet**

Make sure your diet has plenty of variety – not only carbohydrates, but also a good range of protein rich foods, essential oils from nuts, seeds and oily fish, dairy, lean meat, and cereals and grains rich in fibre.

### 2 **Eat a healthy breakfast**

Always make sure you have a good healthy breakfast. Oats with berries and soya milk, with a glass of orange juice, is an excellent way to start the day – or how about a slice or two of toast and marmalade? For those who have a sensitive gut, they may find it easier to eat smaller meals more frequently, while others may tend to consume three meals a day. Listen to what works best for your gut!

### 3 **Five a day**

Rich in essential vitamins, minerals and fibre, ensuring you have five fruit and vegetables – that can be tolerated by people with a sensitive gut – a day can make a big difference to the health of your gut. Take note of the fruits that can cause diarrhoea in sensitive guts and those that can cause bloating. Citrus fruits, berries, kiwi fruits, courgettes, squash, aubergines, tomatoes, cucumber and lettuce are acceptable.

### 4 **Drink enough fluid**

Having enough fluid with your food, aids digestion, ensures adequate hydration and may help to prevent constipation. Listen to your body. Do not ignore a feeling of thirst. Take plenty of fluid with you if you are out in hot weather. Examine your urine as a guide to whether you're dehydrated. It should be a very light straw colour. Dark yellow to orange urine may indicate that you need to drink some water.

### 5 **Know your onions (and other vegetables and fruit)**

Many fruits and vegetables are poorly digested. Although these help 'feed' the good bacteria present in the colon, maintaining a healthy environment and building gut immunity, stone fruits can retain water and cause diarrhoea - while leeks, onions, beans, lentils, cauliflower and sprouts can increase gas production in the gut. While it would be unwise to eliminate these foods from your diet, let your symptoms be a guide to prudent restriction.

## 6 Use your loaf

'Bread is the staff of life' but can occasionally be problematic. It contains small amounts of poorly absorbed fermentable carbohydrates (fructans), which may be a problem in those consuming large amounts (half a loaf a day). If bread seems to be a problem restrict your intake to no more than a few slices a day and get tested for coeliac disease. Wholemeal bread is said to be healthier as it contains valuable fibre, vitamins and minerals but the insoluble fibre may irritate a sensitive gut.

## 7 Choose lower fat products

Many people still tend to consume too much fat, risking obesity, type II diabetes and coronary heart disease, which can drastically affect the way the gut works. Fat can also stimulate nausea, indigestion, gallstones, gut spasms and diarrhoea. Reduce fat intake by choosing skimmed milk, reducing your intake of cream, soft cheese and chocolate, having meat free days, restricting red meat and fried foods and choosing lower fat varieties of ready meals.

## 8 Give time to your meals

Don't eat your meals on the run. Good comfortable digestion only takes place if you relax and allow yourself time to consume your food. Make meals an opportunity to relax with friends and eat slowly, savouring each mouthful.

## 9 Limit alcohol intake

A glass of wine can relax you and aid peaceful digestion, but don't be tempted to drink on an empty stomach or consume too much. Alcohol can irritate the lining of the stomach and too much can lead to serious gastrointestinal and liver disease. Allow yourself a minimum of two alcohol free days a week. Both men and women should not drink more than 14 units a week.



## Cookery School Tips

Looking for simple tips that will help you cook the gut-friendly way? Stick onto your fridge or kitchen cupboard, for a snapshot of some of our favourite ways we cook for our gut health!

**Tip #1:** Onions, garlic and leeks contain fermentable carbohydrates called fructans which should be avoided. Instead use the green, leafy parts of spring onions, leeks and chives to flavour the recipes you cook with.

**Tip #2:** Soak a tablespoon of oats, or oat bran, in three times the amount of water, to make porridge or muesli. Not only is this an easy gut-friendly option, it makes a standard portion swell, and go further.

**Tip #3:** Try making your own garlic oil! Gently fry a sliced garlic clove in oil and then discard the garlic. The flavoured oil left over can then be drizzled on a dish before serving.

**Tip #4:** For a creamier taste, soak sunflower seeds and walnuts overnight to use in porridge, bread and vegetable pâtés. They add texture and nutrients to the dishes you make.

**Tip #5:** Keep a diary of the food you eat and the portion size you can tolerate. Sometimes it is the amount of a food rather than the food itself that upsets your sensitive gut.

**Tip #6:** Looking for a mid-afternoon crunchy snack to keep you going? Try swapping the often high-fat, low fibre packet of crisps for popcorn, or homemade vegetable crisps! A 30g snack bag of popcorn contains 3g of fibre, contributing 10%-12% of the recommended 30g per day of fibre or 25g per day of fibre in the UK and Ireland, respectively.

**Tip #7:** Peas are a great freezer staple that can be a cost-effective vegetable to add to many meals. Peas are versatile and a great way to add fibre to the diet to support gut health. Soups, curries or added to pasta, there are lots of ways to bulk out your meals with extra plants like peas.

**Tip #8:** Try brown bread, wholegrain bread, rye or mixed seed varieties for more fibre in your lunchtime sandwich. The same applies to rice or pasta! Try wholemeal varieties and mixed wild rice to add more fibre to your meals, for the important starchy carbs on your plate.

## Tofu Scramble

PREPARATION TIME: 10 MINUTES | COOKING TIME: 20 MINUTES | SERVES 4

Try this easy and delicious dish, to start your day the gut-friendly way! Tofu has a creamy, soft texture that compliments both eastern flavours such as turmeric and coriander, and South American ingredients such as sweet peppers and avocado. Tofu is suitable for vegetarians and vegans and can be added to many delicious dishes as a high-quality protein ingredient.



Dr Joan's  
RECIPES

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tbsp fresh coriander, finely chopped
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- pinch mild curry powder
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 400g firm tofu, drained and mashed with a fork
- 4 slices light rye sourdough bread, lightly toasted
- 2 ripe avocados, cut in half, stone removed and sliced



### METHOD

1. Place the chopped red onion, tomatoes, and coriander into a bowl, reserving a little of the chopped coriander to serve. Add the turmeric and curry powder and mix well.
2. Warm the olive oil in a frying pan and swirl to ensure the base is coated. Add the onion, tomatoes, coriander and spices to the pan and let the mixture sizzle for two minutes, stirring regularly until soft.
3. Add the drained and mashed tofu to the pan and cook on a low heat for five minutes until the tofu is heated through. Serve the scrambled tofu on a slice of warm sourdough toast, topped with slices of avocado and a few chopped coriander leaves.

# Breakfast



## Sweet Potato and Orange Soup

PREPARATION TIME: 10 MINUTES | COOKING TIME: 20 MINUTES | SERVES 4

Vegetable soups are a great way to introduce more vegetables into the diet. This recipe is a great introduction to soup making and looks great garnished with toasted mixed seeds and a swirl of tahini.

Lentils are a type of pulse (an edible seed that grows in a pod). Pulses are an important food in the diet because they contain dietary fibre and galacto-oligosaccharides (a type of carbohydrate which acts as a prebiotic) that travel through the gut and are fermented by the colon to provide the nutrients used by healthy gut bacteria.



### INGREDIENTS

- 15ml extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 stick celery, chopped
- 600g sweet potato, scrubbed, peeled and roughly chopped
- ½ tsp ground coriander
- 700ml vegetable stock
- Juice from ½ orange
- 50g red lentils, rinsed in cold water
- 250ml semi skimmed milk

### TO SERVE

- 1 tbsp tahini
- 1 tbsp pumpkin seeds, dry roasted in a pan
- Zest from ½ orange
- 1 tsp chopped parsley

### METHOD

1. Warm the olive oil in a large pan and add the chopped onion and celery. Cook gently for three minutes until they are soft.
2. Add the chopped sweet potato and stir around the pan until it is coated with a little oil.
3. Add the ground coriander and cook for a minute stirring the vegetables in the saucepan to prevent them burning.
4. Add the vegetable stock and orange juice followed by the red lentils. Bring the soup up to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes until the red lentils are beginning to soften and breakdown.
5. Take the pan off the heat and allow to cool slightly. Add 220 ml milk to the soup reserving 30ml to mix with the tahini. Liquidise the soup in batches.
6. Add enough milk to the tahini to make it a pouring consistency.
7. Serve the soup in bowls scattered with a swirl of tahini, toasted pumpkin seeds, chopped parsley and the zest from the orange.



Dr Joan's  
RECIPES

Lunch



## Chicken with Fennel, Olives, Capers and Thyme

PREPARATION TIME: 15 MINUTES | COOKING TIME: 30-40 MINUTES | SERVES 4

Needing a special occasion dinner? Then look no further than this mouth-watering dish from Dr Joan – ideal for entertaining friends and family with. It can be prepared in advance and left cooking slowly as guests arrive.

If you are cooking for a special occasion, choose a recipe with a variety of ingredients. This way, if a guest cannot eat one of more ingredients, you can omit them or swap them for something else.

This recipe contains a good mix of gut friendly ingredients and can be adapted to suit individual guests who cannot eat one of the ingredients, for example onions.



Dr Joan's  
RECIPES



### INGREDIENTS

- 400g small potatoes, scrubbed and sliced thickly
- 2 red onions, peeled and cut into wedges
- 1 bulb of fennel, cut into wedges
- 2 unwaxed lemons
- 2 tbsp capers, rinsed and dried
- 150g large, green, queen olives
- 8 skin on, bone in, chicken thighs, excess skin and fat trimmed
- 5 thyme sprigs
- 2 bay leaves
- 3 small heads of garlic, cut in half around the middle
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

### METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C Fan/gas 6. Place the sliced potatoes in a roasting tin, followed by the wedges of red onion and fennel.
2. Finely grate the zest of one lemon over the vegetables. Squeeze the juice of half of the lemon into the roasting tin and scatter the capers and olives over the vegetables.
3. Place the trimmed, chicken thighs skin side up on top of the vegetables. Slice the second lemon and tuck the lemon slices, thyme and bay leaves under the chicken and the vegetables. Place the cut garlic in with the chicken and vegetables.
4. Drizzle olive oil over the contents of the roasting tin and turn everything over with your hands. Make sure the chicken pieces are skin side up on top of the vegetables and there are no lemon slices sticking out as they will burn quickly in the oven.
5. Roast in the oven for 30 – 40 minutes until the vegetables are cooked through and the skin of the chicken is crisp and golden. Make sure the chicken is cooked well by stabbing with a skewer and checking the juices run clear.
6. Serve this dish straight from the roasting tin to plates or transfer everything to a large, warmed serving dish to serve at the table.

Dinner





## Chocolate Mousse

PREPARATION TIME: 15 MINUTES | COOKING TIME: NONE | SERVES 4

This recipe combines just four key ingredients – ripe bananas, avocados, almond butter and cocoa powder. When these ingredients are whisked together, their natural textures and flavours form a delicious light and velvety chocolate mousse!



### INGREDIENTS

- 3 medium ripe bananas
- 2 small ripe avocados
- 80g almond butter (rough or smooth)
- 30g cocoa powder
- 1 tsp vanilla essence
- 100g of fresh berries i.e. raspberries, blueberries, strawberries

### METHOD

1. Peel and roughly chop the bananas. Cut the avocados in half, remove the stones and scrape the flesh from the skin.
2. Place the bananas and avocado in the bowl of a food processor. Add the almond butter, cocoa powder and vanilla essence.
3. Process these ingredients for 30 seconds or until you have a smooth puree.
4. Divide the chocolate mousse into serving bowls or glasses and top with berries.



**Dr Joan's**  
RECIPES

Dessert

## Love Your Gut Partners



**Guts UK** is the charity for the digestive system from top to tail; the gut, liver and pancreas. Our guts have been underfunded and misunderstood for decades. We exist to change that. It's time the UK got to grips with guts. [www.gutscharity.org.uk](http://www.gutscharity.org.uk)



**Bowel Research UK** is the UK's leading specialist bowel research charity. We are dedicated to funding the best science into bowel cancer and other bowel diseases. We invest in the next generation of experts with a dedicated PhD studentship programme. We involve the public in research through our People and Research Together Programme and we work to challenge taboos and break down stigma. To find out more visit [www.bowelresearchuk.org](http://www.bowelresearchuk.org)



**The Primary Care Society for Gastroenterology (PCSG)** is the voice of Primary Care Gastroenterology. We have a (mainly) GP membership and offer advice and guidance on gastrointestinal matters, as well as lobbying and influencing. We hold scientific meetings and have a bi-annual journal 'The Digest'. To find out more visit [www.pcsog.org.uk](http://www.pcsog.org.uk)



**St Mark's Hospital Foundation** supports the work of St Mark's, the UK's national bowel hospital. Founded 185 years ago, St Mark's is a leading centre of excellence in the diagnostics and treatment of complex bowel disease. The Foundation raises money to fund vital research, support education and innovation, as we fight for a future free from the fear of bowel disease. See [www.stmarkshospitalfoundation.org.uk](http://www.stmarkshospitalfoundation.org.uk)



**The IBS Network** is the national charity supporting people living with Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Our mission is to provide information, advice and support and to work alongside healthcare professionals to facilitate self-care. See [www.theibsnetwork.org](http://www.theibsnetwork.org)



**Crohn's and Colitis Ireland** is a patient support group for people who are living with Ulcerative Colitis and Crohn's disease (collectively known as Inflammatory Bowel Disease or IBD), also their families and friends. [www.iscc.ie](http://www.iscc.ie)



**Irish General Practice Nurses Educational Association (IGPNEA)** is a professional membership association of General Practice Nurses. The main objective of the association is the advancement of education in general practice in Ireland. [www.irishpracticenurses.ie](http://www.irishpracticenurses.ie)



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Love Your Gut and Love Your Gut Week is an initiative of Yakult UK and Ireland in association with our UK partners: Guts UK, St Mark's Hospital Foundation, The IBS Network, Bowel Research UK, and the Primary Care Society for Gastroenterology; and Irish partners Crohn's and Colitis Ireland and the Irish General Practice Nurses Educational Association.

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