



IF THE FESTIVE SEASON HAS TAKEN ITS TOLL, DON'T DESPAIR.

TESSA CHAN EXPLORES SOME DETOX SOLUTIONS TO GET YOU BACK ON TRACK.

CLEANUP YOUR ACT

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Post-party season is the time of year when everyone's intentions are at their best, so it's little wonder that more brands than ever are jumping on the "detox" bandwagon, sprinkling the magic word on everything from spa treatments and holidays to energy drinks and body creams.

Juicing made a splash in the US last autumn when Organic Avenue – backed by celebrities such as Gwyneth Paltrow and Naomi Watts – offered a Fashionista Cleanse at a pop-up store to New York fashion week attendees.

It was such a success that the health-food firm is looking to open a permanent store at the Lincoln Centre. Meanwhile, actress Selma Hayek has co-founded Cooler Cleanse and is bringing her detox diet to A-list doorsteps, and Jennifer Anniston reportedly embarked on a recent Baby Food Cleanse, involving 14 portions of pureed food a day followed by an "adult" dinner.

Glowing skin, boosted energy, increased alertness, and dramatic weight loss are all part of the lure. Yet detox diets have suffered scrutiny from doctors and scientists who dismiss some of them as potentially dangerous fad; particularly in Britain where, in 2001, a wom-

an suffered permanent brain damage while following an extreme hydration diet. Doctors diagnosed hyponatraemia or water intoxication, resulting in a severe epileptic seizure.

As a result, today's detox industry is rapidly evolving. No longer do you have to survive on sweetened lemon water for 10 days to be considered "clean". Now there are gentler, more manageable options, with low-maintenance "detox till dinner" plans, and creamy nut milks making their way onto the once spartan juice-fast menus.

Ann Cha and Angela Cheng Matsuzawa co-founded Punch Detox in Hong Kong in 2009. "We had two boys under two years old, and felt



Get the juice: Hollywood star Gwyneth Paltrow (left) is a fan of Organic Avenue.

perpetually tired,” says Cheng Matsuzawa. “We didn’t have time to watch what we were eating, let alone exercise much.”

Now they organise monthly programmes, specifically designed for busy Hong Kong people. “We call our detox the Punch Juice Cleanse,” says Cheng Matsuzawa. “All you need to do is clear out three days of your schedule, and we’ll provide all you need.”

She refers to up to 10 kilograms a day of fresh fruits and vegetables containing minerals, vitamins and living enzymes. She claims the Punch Juice Cleanse is a natural way to infuse your body with macro and micronutrients, saying that there are no harsh chemi-

cal, drastic measures, or invasive procedures.

Anita Cheung, founding director of i-Detox International, specialising in urban detox programmes, says that detoxing is becoming increasingly popular in Hong Kong. “Our clientele are people who are educated and who want more out of life,” she says.

“Most of them are not “sick” by medical standards but know they could feel better – have more energy, optimal weight, be free from dependence on drugs for minor irritations like allergies, headaches and pains.”

Cheung says that the age range is also becoming broader. “Now, younger, health

aware people are coming to see us. These are people who are interested in preventative health, or looking their best,” she says. “Vanity is often the reason for people to get healthier and that’s perfectly OK!”

But why detox, when our bodies are already designed to do so themselves? Denise Mari, founder of New York’s Organic Avenue says that although our bodies are efficient at cleansing themselves, most modern diets tend to be far from natural, and are inundated with environmental pollutants and genetically-modified foods.

“Overeating and eating poor combinations of foods leads to residue and build-up.”

EAT YOUR WAY TO A HEALTHIER LIFE

A busy lifestyle can make it difficult to stick to a healthy eating plan. Punch Detox suggests following these simple steps for two weeks to help fight cravings for junk food:

* **Eat a banana for breakfast:** a lot of busy executives say they don't have time for breakfast, but we say it's the most important meal. If you're on the run, grab a piece of fruit.

* **Fool your bodies with better a form of caffeine:** instead of five cups of coffee a week, switch to green tea. It will give you a little caffeine boost and healthy antioxidants.

* **Eat "real" junk food:** if you want a burger, get one from a real restaurant. If you want fries, get fries cooked by a chef. Don't eat food made from a production line.

* **Make good choices:** wine is better than beer, crisps are better than fat fries, grilled salmon is better than an 8oz steak, fruit sorbet is better than chocolate cake, clear soup is better than cream soup, and if you are really, really hungry - start your meal with a salad.

* **Eat clean and smart:** when you are not busy or travelling, so you can relax a little during crunch time. Don't obsess over daily food intake; it will drive you mad. Instead, focus on what you eat over a week's time.



Periodic cleansing and moving back toward a wholefood, plant-based diet is necessary for optimal health," she says. "Also, many of today's foods are devoid of minerals and vitamins. In order to get more we believe in juicing to get the most nutrition out of food with the least amount of effort."

Cheung says stress also creates more destructive free radicals. "I think our bodies are doing their utmost to survive and our liver is the most uncomplaining organ - it even regenerates itself. But we need to provide our body with what it takes to detoxify completely, while at the same time reduce toxin intake."

"It's like giving your body a rest so it can heal and do what it's supposed to do," adds Punch Detox's Cha. "And the beauty of drinking healthy nutritious juices for three days is that you will gain mental clarity and not crave for a fast-food burger anymore - at least not for a while."

Some critics associate detoxing with dubious "crash diets", implying that weight will bounce back quickly afterwards. Cha says that

weight loss should not be the goal of doing a detox. "Our cleanse provides a nice kick-start to a healthier lifestyle and frame of mind. Your body and palette will be cleansed," she says. "You will be able to appreciate and enjoy real food. You will feel fresh and light. In fact, the weight loss really comes after the cleanse as your lifestyle changes for the better."

"Crash-diet detox is not the kind of detox we do here," says i-Detox's Cheung. "People can lose weight dramatically by fasting but the body quickly learns to run on less and metabolism slows, making it harder to lose weight. Our focus is to help people upgrade their diet to nutritionally dense superfoods and follow a healthy lifestyle and rhythm so the body's metabolism is optimised."

For many of us, a busy lifestyle makes it hard to stick to an ideal meal plan, no matter how noble our intentions. Organic Avenue's Mari says a good first step is to invest in raw-vegan recipe books and healthy-eating books such as *Skinny Bitch*, and watching documentaries like *Earthlings* to educate yourself on



SUPPLEMENTS:

BARLEAN'S GREENS ↓

Brand: Barlean's

Claim: This superfood powder is an easy way to get all your greens in one go. Mix it into tea, water or smoothies to support the cleansing of vital organs, body tissues and blood supply. It provides a blend of land and sea greens, vitamins and minerals, phytonutrients, fibre and antioxidants.

Price: HK\$388, available at *i-Detox*



DETOX HEALTH DROPS ↑

Brand: Functionalab

Claim: For those days when you're too busy to juice, these convenient little drops can be added to whatever you're sipping. They include dandelion extract, magnolia bark, cactus leaf and kudzu, to support the body's natural detoxification process and liver function.

Price: HK\$275, available at *Joyce Beauty*

ALIBI ACTIVE PRETOX DRINK ↓

Brand: Alibi

Claim: This differs from the typical detox approach in that it prepares your body for those unavoidable moments of stress and excess in advance. "It's unlike sugar-laden energy drinks and has none of the 'crash' experienced after," says Alibi's managing director Oliver Bolton. Made from natural ingredients, Alibi Original Citrus tastes of Californian grapefruits and Tuscan limes while the Pomegranate offers additional antioxidant benefits.

Price: HK\$15 per can, available at *ThreeSixty and Oliver's*.



RAW VEGAN PROTEIN ↑

Brand: Sunwarrior

Claim: Many vegans struggle to maintain a source of high-quality protein. This easily absorbed powder is made with a sprouting process that doubles its amino acids. The starchy part of the brown rice is then removed without destroying the quality of the nutrients, resulting in 85 per cent pure protein. People of all ages and health conditions can use it, and it's also recommended for cancer patients.

Price: HK\$545 for 1kg, available at *i-Detox*. Tessa Chan

society's treatment of animals. "Investigate local vegan or raw food support groups and potlucks," she says. "If they don't exist in your area, start one! And you can also join our on-line community for free, and ask all the questions you need."

"Invest in a superfood breakfast," adds Cheung. "Make it fulfilling and nutritious. You can pre-wash fruits the night before. Put all your superfood ingredients into a blender with fresh fruits and let it help your teeth and stomach break down your meal."

This year, *i-Detox* is launching overseas retreats, and focusing on group programs that provide education on healthy fast food for busy people.

"We have found that when our body's metabolism is restored and we genuinely enjoy our food, a healthy lifestyle and diet is sustainable," says Cheung.

"Life after detox is at least as important, if not more important as the 'detox diet' itself. It's what we do habitually that determines our health, not what we do occasionally." ❑