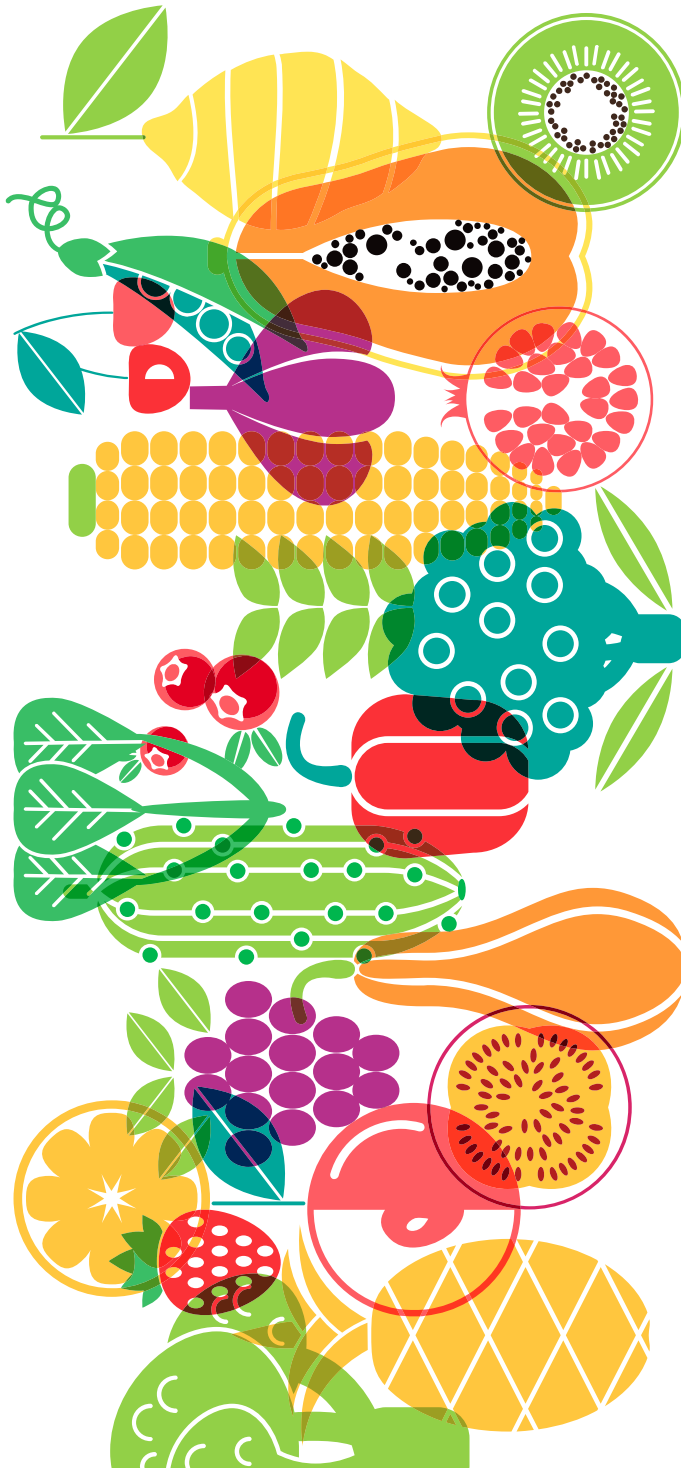


IT'S JUICING TIME

One of our editors takes the plunge with a 3-day juice cleanse

BY MICHAEL A. MILLER



recently decided to do some spring cleaning. No, I wasn't ousting tattered clothes from my dresser drawers or banishing dust from once-shiny surfaces. I decided to go on a three-day juice fast to clean and renew my body from the inside out. My apartment may be more hovel than palace, but my body is 100-percent temple.

Pesticides and herbicides litter our bodies. Endocrine disruptors wreak havoc on our hormones and reproductive systems. Carcinogens lurk behind every corner, from car exhaust to particulate ash from the fireplaces that illuminated long winter nights. Even our mitochondria—the metabolic energy factories in our cells—take damage from free radicals in the absence of antioxidant-heavy fruits and veggies.

I consider myself a healthful omnivore, with a colorful diet that includes the occasional cut of red meat. But I wanted to see what a hardcore plant-based cleanse could do.

I picked Raw Generation as my Sherpa through 72 hours of solid-food abstinence. I chose their protein cleanse to offset the sugar from so many extra servings of fruit. In the interest of journalistic transparency, they sent me a free cleanse, and I agreed to write about my experience. According to Raw Generation's website, "by rejecting the artificial foods that have sabotaged our health, and choosing to consume raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds, we give our bodies the nutrients [they need] to repair, renew, and shed unwanted pounds—regaining control of our [bodies], our health, and our lives." Sign me up!

Eighteen bottles of liquid sustenance arrived in a neatly packed box with smoky dry ice and an instructional pamphlet. Raw Generation's juice is flash-frozen to preserve the vitamins, minerals, and live digestive and anti-inflammatory enzymes, and they never use damaging processes involving heat, pressurization, or pasteurization, which kill off B vitamins and advantageous microflora. I put the juice in the freezer, except for two bottles which went in the fridge to thaw by morning.

DAY 1:

It took me 70 minutes to commute to work and every second gnawed at me, each hunger pang more ravenous than the last. Immediately upon arrival I downed my first juice in a single swallow and victoriously crushed the bottle with my forehead...or I would have if it had completely thawed. The thaw times were finicky, and I found myself waiting on a partial popsicle. So I sat at my desk poking and prodding at the slender bottle, willing its contents to unfreeze now like a juice Jedi.

When I was finally able to drink my breakfast around 10 a.m., I decided to go all in with a Slim and Strong. Glorified beet juice, I thought. Wondering if I'd have to plug my nose, I steeled myself for an earthy swig. Not bad. Surprisingly, quite good. The accompanying carrots, lemons, and oranges brought enough citrusy firepower to save the day, and I was not only satiated but excited. With a tasty beet juice in their repertoire, drinking the rest of Raw Generation's cold-pressed concoctions would be easy.

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My hunger pangs returned within an hour and I knew the only way forward was to drink more juice. I downed five more bottles throughout the day, and

semi-artfully ignored my stomach's intermittent protests. Each new flavor was refreshing and clean, yet I admittedly felt tired and a little out of it... Ok, I felt like a space case from Mars. My co-workers might as well have been speaking español. At home, I flopped into bed like a wet sponge and fell asleep to the howling of my stomach, but I was proud to have survived day one and intrigued for the two to follow.

DAY 2:

I woke up ready to toss my body back into the gauntlet. What could today throw at me that yesterday hadn't? Apparently, nothing. The first day was the hardest, and I was significantly less hungry during day two. I cheerfully sipped a green juice and a coconut hemp milk during the long morning commute and made them last the entire way. Feeling lighter and less hungry, I found the ability to strike tasks from my agenda with unprecedented focus. I picked a Slim and Strong and a Satisfy and Sustain for my lunch slushies (still not thawing correctly), because who doesn't want to be satisfied and sustained during the midday slouch? I was rewarded with enough energy for an inter-office power walk between bottles.

Maintaining the regimen was becoming more achievable, and my confidence was well fed (don't tell my stomach). I still had less energy than usual and felt a little loopy, but there was a pervading clarity to my craziness. It was a strange juxtaposition of caloric deprivation and mental focus, egged on by fierce determination to succeed. I even changed my attitude about the

frozen juice. I was no longer a raccoon helplessly clawing at a jar of shiny treasure. Instead I saw it as an opportunity to space out my nourishment

for the day. I loved the simplification of eating. I didn't have to wonder what I would make for dinner much less fuss over healthy food preparation.

DAY 3:

I sprung out of bed, giddy that I made it through two days without so much as reaching for solid food, only to be met with crippling hunger after about 15 minutes. Glass after glass of water slid down my throat in slow motion as I scraped myself together and dragged myself into the car with my breakfast juice. Making it through the day was far from child's play, but I already came so far and nothing would stop me now. I tore the cap off the green beverage (labeled Energy and Endurance) and drank it fast. I felt better immediately despite sacrificing a few pulpy calories that stuck at the bottom of their vessel. The rest of the day passed much like the second, with a satisfying floaty feeling punctuated by bites of hunger.

As I weened myself off liquids on the fourth morning with a small turkey sandwich, I felt connected with my food. It was a foreign enterprise of sensory stimulation, and to my surprise, I was quickly full. I'd planned a celebratory feast with a filet mignon at its climax, but my body was satisfied after a few bites of sandwich. In lieu of continuing in disregard of my body's messages, juicing helped me slow down and notice what my body has been telling me all along.

I lost three pounds, but some of this might be water weight that could easily find its way back. For me, juice fasting wasn't about shedding pounds so much as preparing for the larger journey ahead. It awakened a determination and willpower I hadn't used in a long time, and renewed my persistence in stocking up on raw nutrients. This juicing journey was an excellent catalyst for eliminating the habit of comfort eating, and I believe the psychological boost is as important as the physical detoxification. For a three-day blip in time, I was the master of my appetite. Food bowed down to me. **en**