

## Time to lighten up

Healthy eating doesn't have to mean boring food, says Mark Hix. Beat the New Year blues by putting colour and variety on your plate

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1- After we've stuffed ourselves rotten and probably gone way over our booze quota too, it's time to give our bodies a bit of a break. I always love the idea of a healthy living regime. And that - the idea stage - is about as far as it goes with me, I'm afraid. I'd hate to give the impression that I turn over a new leaf after Christmas. In fact, those of you who know me will be laughing into your beers while you read this. But that's OK. Beer, like wine, in moderation doesn't do any harm.

5 - So I'm not suggesting dieting or even detoxing, but just including some more of those super healthy foods into the diet. We all know we should eat a balanced diet, but we're also told that certain ingredients like tomatoes, broccoli, oily fish, nuts and 10 - whole grains are extra important for good health and protection from diseases.

Unlike our ancestors we have so much choice when it comes to food that it's easy to succumb to snacks between meals or just pick up ready meals or junk. But if you take the time to choose your food and cook it, and eat regular meals of fresh, nutritious ingredients you'll probably find you're dieting without thinking about it.

15 - Don't think healthy food has to be drab and worthy, either. And don't think you need to pop handfuls of pills to get the right nutrients. One of the many theories about good nutrition is that it helps to eat a rainbow diet, picking brightly coloured foods which contain beta carotene (carrots), lycopene (tomatoes and other red fruit and vegetables) and anthocyanin, the pigment that gives blueberries and beetroot their 20 - colour and, like the others, makes these coloured foods such good antioxidants.

So make it a glass of red wine and beetroot crisps all round. Resolve to put a bit of colour in your New Year's food, and it should put some colour in your cheeks too.

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