



For the long run

Setting yourself fitness goals for the new year? Experts offer advice on how to stick to your plan

BY RUTH DSOUZA PRABHU



It is that time of the year again when heads are scratched over New Year resolutions. Popular on the list are those related to food habits and eating patterns. Losing weight, eating healthy and exercising have been common annual promises that sometimes last all of 48 hours, at best. One of the prime reasons for our failure to stick to what we want to do, is that the goals are based on half-baked information or are beyond our ability.

Why some resolutions just don't work

Shalini Manglani is a nutrition and weight management consultant based in Bengaluru. She says that a resolution is valuable and will see the desired results only if it lasts. "The common 'resolutions' I come across are food-group bans, detoxes and 'Jan-gymming'," says Shalini, who elaborates on why these common resolutions don't last:

Banning some food groups entirely and leaning too heavily on the other is impractical and leaves the body short on energy. It is wiser to choose lighter carbohydrates in the form of vegetables and combine them with small bites of protein. Subscribing to a high-protein diet or only meat protein for days might deliver the weight loss but it can leave one with skin issues and constipation. Smaller, well-balanced meals are the answer here. If one must ban a food group, processed food, junk and alcohol should be the categories to banish.

People commonly opt for detoxes, usually without expert advice. Unless planned well and done under supervision, perhaps once a week on a restful day, juice detoxes are most often unsuccessful. It is impractical to put your body through the perils of feasting and fasting. Weight boomerangs in the days to follow and causes undue emotional stress. A resolution of moderation and balance is a good antidote and replacing other beverages with small quantities of vegetable juices, both green and coloured, in the morning and later in the day, can be



Punjabi pakorewali kadhi

(Onion and fenugreek dumplings in spicy yoghurt sauce)

Ingredients

For pakoras

- Bengal gram flour (besan): 250gm
- Onion, chopped finely: 125gm
- Fenugreek leaves (methi), chopped: ¼ cup
- Ginger grated: 15gm
- Green chillies deseeded and finely chopped: 2
- Carom seeds (ajwain): 6gm
- Red chilli powder: 4gm
- Salt: to taste
- Water: 60ml
- Oil: to deep fry

For kadhi

- Sour yoghurt/ curd: 300gm
- Water: 700ml or as required
- Bengal gram flour (besan): 50gm
- Turmeric powder: 2gm

- Salt to taste

For Tempering

- Mustard oil: 10ml
- Asafoetida (hing): a pinch
- Curry leaves: 1 sprig
- Fenugreek seeds: 2gm
- Cumin seeds: 4gm
- Dried red chillies, broken: 2
- Ginger chopped: 5gm
- Garlic chopped: 5gm
- Red chilli powder: 2gm

For garnish

- Whole red chillies/ Boria chillies, fried: 2

Method

- For the pakoras, put the Bengal gram flour in a bowl. Mix in the onion, fenugreek leaves, ginger, green chillies, carom seeds, red chilli powder and salt. Add water and mix well.
- Heat oil in a non-stick kadai; drop small portions of the mixture into the hot oil

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very refreshing.

Jan-gymming and over-training are perhaps the most common of New Year resolutions, believes Shalini. Many people sign up for gym memberships in January and don't make it to February. She says that it is best to sign up for any form of exercise, but it is important to pace it well to keep at it through the year. Increasing exercise to undesired limits in a race to shed kilos can lead to injuries.

Staying focused

Swati Raman, an IT professional and food entrepreneur in Bengaluru, always seemed to be on the wrong side of the scale. "Every five years I would add another 5kg and this would be like a wake-up alarm to get things right," she says. "At one point, I crossed the 80kg mark and was also grieving a loss, which made things all the more difficult for me. But I knew things had to change and that intermittent exercise and dieting was not going to help. A change in lifestyle was what I needed."

What Swati did as a New Year resolution at the beginning of 2016 paid dividends and she plans to continue it. "Being someone who makes and craves sweet dishes, I decided to be disciplined in my portion sizes," she says. "Running was something I was interested in, having done a few 5km runs with colleagues. It took a while to get into the flow of things and soon it was an addiction. In three months of running, I could do up to 19km at a stretch, but realised it was not doing much in the weight-loss department."

"I moved to a low-carb diet, not a drastic one, but one that was portion-regulated. I love rice and was not about to give that up. I now have one or two

spoons of rice, a maximum of twice a week. But, I ensured that I stayed away from carbs for dinner completely. I loaded up on vegetables and lentils as well as fresh salads and dry fruits. For hunger pangs, I kept trail mixes handy. Combined with the running I was doing, I have managed to lose 12kg in a short span."

One step at a time

Nikhilesh Murthy, marketing executive and a food and music enthusiast in Bengaluru, says that as soon as he started out as a food blogger, there was a strong guilt that while he was getting to savour a variety of dishes, he wasn't doing enough to take care of his health.

"There was an inherent fear that I may be forced to stop relishing even basic cooking if I kept this up," he says. "Going cold turkey was not an option because it always failed in the past. Hence, every year, I take up one diet-related resolution and stick to it. My very first resolution, about three years ago, was to cut out sugar from my copious amount of filter coffee. I also ensured that I curtailed my consumption of aerated drinks and packaged juices. Last year, I added a salad of some sort to every meal I ate. From a simple fruit salad before breakfast, or diced vegetables during lunch or dinner, a salad is now a must."

"There are two things I want to try and change this year. The first and biggest challenge would be to start exercising at least six times a week, even if it means uncomplicated things like going for a 45-minute walk. Carving time out from my daily work schedule would be a challenge. Why, even sitting for 10-12 hours a day is one of the worst things I am doing to my back and

and deep-fry till golden brown. Drain on absorbent paper to remove excess oil and set aside.

- For the kadhi, whisk the yoghurt/ curd well. Add the gram flour and whisk thoroughly till smooth. Add turmeric powder, salt and water and mix well. The kadhi mixture must not have lumps. Set aside.
- Heat oil in a non-stick kadai. Add the asafoetida, curry leaves, fenugreek seeds, cumin seeds, and red chillies. Let them crackle. Add the ginger and sauté for a minute, add garlic and sauté till light golden brown. Stir in the yoghurt mixture, bring to a boil and cook on low flame for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the red chilli powder and fried pakore, and allow to simmer for three to four minutes.
- Serve hot, garnished with fried whole red chillies/ Boria chillies. Best paired with steamed rice and phulkas.

Recipe by Chef Reetu Uday Kugaji

PHOTO: CHEF REETU UDAY KUGAJI



PHOTO: SHALINI MANGLANI

Balanced Bowl Meal (Serves 1)

Ingredients

- Cooked rice (brown or white/ oats/ quinoa): 0.75 cup/ 50gm
- Garlic, chopped: 1 clove OR mustard seeds
- Egg: 1 OR peanuts: 2 tablespoons
- Mixed veggies (spring onion, celery, beans, carrot): 0.5 cup
- Ghee/ oil: 1 teaspoon
- Salt to taste

Method

- Heat a pan, add half teaspoon ghee/ oil in it. Quickly drop the egg (or the peanuts) into it and scramble/ mix it and push it to one side of the pan.
- Add the remaining ghee/ oil into the pan, add the garlic or the mustard seeds and then sauté the veggies in it. Cover and cook with a little water if needed. Finally, add the cooked grain, mix and serve.

Recipe by Shalini Manglani

body. Exercise would definitely help. The second would definitely be to cut out processed food from my diet.”

Eating out

Eating out is now a part of our social and professional lives and there is no denying that, according to Chef Reetu Uday Kugaji of Navi Mumbai. She works with the Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, and the Institute of Hotel Management, Nerul, Navi Mumbai. “I usually see people give up on their resolutions within a few days of the New Year, with the justification that life is short and let us eat what we love. Fatty food, cheese, butter and chocolates easily find their way back into diets. When eating out, I suggest staying away from empty calories. Opt for fresh fruit juice with no sugar added, say no to tea and coffee, indulge in salads without cream, mayonnaise and cheesy dressings. If you are a non-vegetarian, then eat lots of steamed fish, poached egg white, chicken with pepper and stir-fried in a little olive oil. And if you are a vegetarian then sprouts, salads, soya and cottage cheese should figure in your choices.”

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to sticking to a resolution is temptation. Staying focused and disciplined, no matter what is placed before you, is essential. Dealing with peers and their constant jibes at your diet may be tiring. But staying focused will send across a strong message and soon you will find them supporting you.

Shalini suggests three simple steps to see you through your diet resolutions:

Staying in your ‘happy weight range’ through the year: Know the ideal weight range and work towards sticking to it.

Plan your everyday meal: Ideally, do this with a professional and factor in your lifestyle and your tastes.

Lead an active life: Bring in exercise in some form or the other and do your best not to miss it at all. A sport would be great. It is never too late to get active. □