

MEDIA RELEASE

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New research: Cooking shows kick goals

As celebrity cooking shows gear up for more ratings wins in 2017, dietitians are encouraging Aussies to buy into the hype, with Australian-first research showing they could be a powerful weapon in motivating people to eat more vegetables.

The call comes as the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) prepares to launch Australia's Healthy Weight Week (13-19 February), which aims to get people back into the kitchen, cooking more meals at home.

Food insights and strategy professional and researcher Dr Reetika Rekhy and her colleagues Professor Robyn McConchie (University of Sydney) and Dr Aila Khan (University of Western Sydney) surveyed more than 500 people in New South Wales and found those who watched a video of a celebrity chef cooking with vegetables said they were more likely to buy vegetables and use them in cooking.

According to Dr Rekhy, from the School of Life and Environmental Sciences (University of Sydney), after watching the TV cooking show, 44 per cent of respondents said they intended to try new ways of preparing meals using vegetables, compared with just 29 per cent in a control group that did not watch the cooking segment.

And 42 per cent said they were more likely to buy vegetables at their next grocery shop, compared with 28 per cent in the control group.

In Australia, just seven per cent of adults eat enough vegetables to meet the recommended five or more serves a day, helping to protect them from cardiovascular disease and certain cancers.

“The popularity of TV cooking shows and celebrity chefs means there's huge potential to sway viewers towards healthier habits, in terms of cooking at home and using vegetables,” said Dr Rekhy.

But the research showed that intentions did not translate into sustained action in terms of higher vegetable consumption in the experimental group one week after watching the cooking show, compared to the control group.

Dr Rekhy said the positive intentions fostered by the cooking shows needed to be reinforced with health campaigns that encourage people to eat more vegetables.

Her research also highlighted that children are a good target group for programs promoting fruit and vegetables as they carry their healthy eating habits into adulthood.

“Women do better than men in terms of their cooking confidence, knowledge and attitudes towards vegetable intake and are the primary shoppers in most households.

“Tailoring interventions to those who eat less vegetables, such as males, those younger than 45 years and people from non-English speaking backgrounds, would assist. Linking public health experts such as dietitians with celebrity chefs, perceived as cultural culinary ambassadors, would help in reinforcing the message further,” said Dr Rekhy.

She added that studies show that people who regularly cook at home have better overall diets.

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Since taking part in the series two finale of MasterChef in 2010, which at the time was reported as Australia's most watched non-sporting program on TV since ratings began, cook Callum Hann has used his celebrity status to inspire healthy cooking.

Callum, who has formed Sprout with Accredited Practising Dietitian Themis Chryssidis, said: "At Sprout we are dedicated to helping people feel more confident in the kitchen. We are focused on inspiring people to use and enjoy fresh, local and seasonal produce.

"Marrying cooking and nutrition simply makes sense. We don't tell people to eat things because they are healthy, we make healthy food delicious and people want to eat it. We discuss cooking skills and techniques as well as nutrition principles. If you have the cooking skills and the nutrition knowledge you can make fresh, healthy food delicious.

"I'd like to think we have positively influenced many people's diets over the six years we have been offering cooking classes to the public," said Callum.

Callum and Themis will support DAA's Australia's Healthy Weight Week campaign for the third year running, educating Australians about healthy home cooking.

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For further information or to organise an interview with Dr Rekhy, Callum Hann or Themis Chryssidis, contact Maree Hall, DAA, on 0408 482 581.

Background

Australia's Healthy Weight Week (AHWW), run by the Dietitians Association of Australia from 13-19 February 2017, is the perfect time to kick-start healthy eating habits.

In 2017, dietitians will be educating Australians that there's a healthy weight that's right for them, whilst raising awareness of the support that Accredited Practising Dietitians can offer in inspiring good health.

The week will focus on getting Australians cooking more meals at home and eating the right foods, in the right portions, as smart ways to help achieve the best weight possible.

Award-winning celebrity cook, Callum Hann, and Accredited Practising Dietitian, Themis Chryssidis (both from Sprout), are supporting AHWW in 2017. Sprout will be urging all Australians to be healthy and confident cooks in their own kitchen. Dr Andrew Rochford, medical expert and media personality, is also an ambassador of AHWW.

For more information, including the AHWW Instagram Cooking Challenge and the new bumper edition AHWW cookbook, plus nutrition tips, recipes, event details and a social media toolkit, see the AHWW website at healthyweightweek.com.au and follow AHWW at www.twitter.com/DAA_feed and use #AHWW2017.

AHWW 2017 will kick-off with a launch event in Sydney on Monday 13 February.

Note: Australia's Healthy Weight Week 2017 is proudly supported by Meat and Livestock Australia, Healthy Food Guide, CanPrint, Australian Mushroom Growers Association, Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Xyris, McKenzie's Foods, and Almond Board of Australia.

Lamb with ratatouille and mint pesto

Ingredients: (Serves 4)

1 ½ tablespoons olive oil
1 brown onion, diced
3 squash, diced
1 zucchini, diced
1 long red chilli, finely sliced
4 cloves garlic, finely sliced
1 red capsicum, sliced
1 yellow capsicum, sliced
1 tablespoon fennel seeds
700g jar tomato passata
2 x 200g lamb backstraps or leg steaks
2 cups cooked quinoa, to serve

Mint Pesto:

1 Bunch mint, leaves picked
1 Bunch basil
Zest and juice of two lemons
¼ Cup pine nuts, toasted
1 Clove garlic
1 Tablespoon olive oil

Method:

1. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large pot. Add the onion, squash and zucchini. Cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened. Add the chilli, garlic, capsicum and fennel seeds. Cook for a further minute before adding the passata. Bring to the boil, turn down heat to medium and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until ratatouille thickens slightly.
2. Meanwhile, make the mint pesto. Combine mint (reserve a few leaves for serving), basil, lemon zest and juice, pine nuts, garlic and olive oil in a food processor. Blend until finely chopped.
3. Heat a heavy based frying pan over high heat with remaining ½ tablespoon oil. Add lamb and cook for 2-3 minutes each side or until cooked to your liking. Remove from pan, allow to rest then slice thinly.
4. Divide ratatouille and quinoa between serving bowls. Top with lamb, pesto and reserved mint leaves to serve.

Recipe developed by Sprout as part of the AHWV digital cookbook [Everyday Healthy Bumper Edition](#)

Recipe image available on request by contacting Maree Hall on prmanager@daa.asn.au