

Food News

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Welcome to Food News. This months edition of Food News looks to bust the puzzle of whether food can help you to live longer.

Following on from the Commonwealth Games, we also thought it was apt to discuss the importance of physical activity and how everyone should get involved.

As always, we will also take a look at what foods are in season and what's news in social media.



Inside this issue:

Truth or Myth 2-3
Food for longevity

Physical Activity: 3-4
It's for everyone!

In season 5

Social media - 6
Boris said no to
Sugar & Salt Tax

Warwickshire Food Forum

Food News

is produced by the education & choice sub-group of Warwickshire Food forum

The forum is a multi-agency partnership aiming to improve food choices for

people in Warwickshire.

The focus is on making food affordable, sustainable and providing information to help people make healthy

choices. The group will also ensure that there is Warwickshire wide help for people who have difficulty affording food.

Truth or Myth

Can food help us to live a longer, healthier life?

TRUE! Sardinia (Italy), Okinawa (Japan), Loma Linda (California- USA), Ikaria Island (Greece) and Nicoya Peninsula (Costa Rica) all have something in common; they are areas with the highest number of people living healthy, active lives over the age of 100. They are known as **Blue Zones**.

Although Blue Zones aren't all close geographically, they share some lifestyle patterns which are believed to be major contributors to living long and healthy lives, including; healthy diets, close families and integrated communities, frequent social activities, avoidance of smoking and daily moderate physical activity.

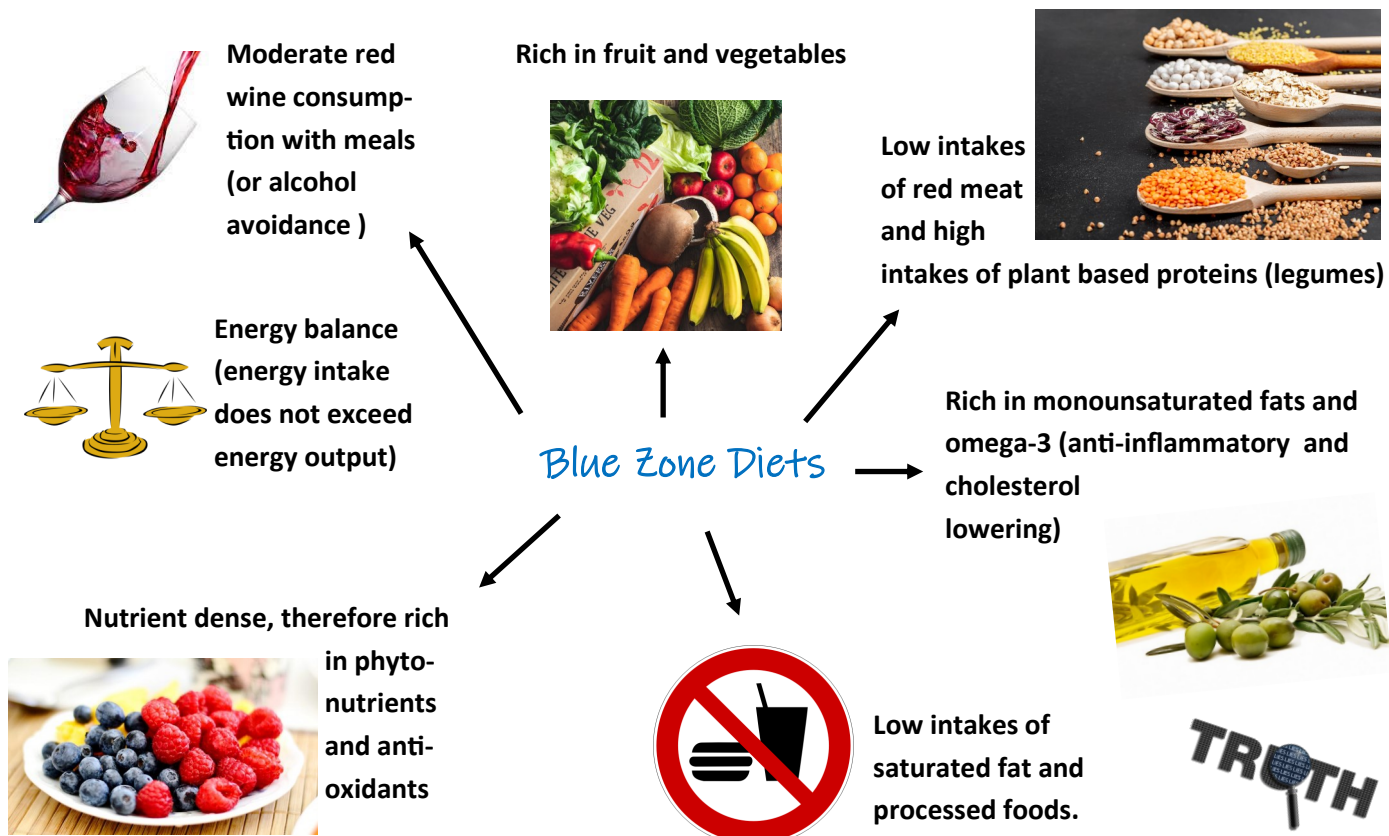
So lets look at the diets and why they help people to live longer and healthier lives;

Sardinia and Ikaria—The Mediterranean diet; rich in olive oil (monounsaturated (healthy) fat), fruit, vegetables, plant proteins (legumes), low intakes of meat, and a moderate intake of red wine which is locally produced and believed to have 2-3 times more flavonoids than standard wine. Diets contain around 9 portions of fruit and vegetables per day. They have high energy intakes but daily physical activity to create energy balance.

Okinawa – High intake of plant and soya bean products. Intakes significantly exceed the UKs recommendations of 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day. Particularly rich in sweet potato and green leafy vegetables. Low in fat, meat and dairy and generally low in energy, however food consumed is nutrient dense, and particularly rich in antioxidants and flavonoids. Intakes of fibre are higher in this part of Japan than elsewhere.

Nicoya Peninsula – Abundant in fruit, vegetables, legumes (particularly black beans), rice, corn and wholegrains, whilst low in animal products and fat. Interestingly, the local water has a particularly high calcium content .

Loma Linda (Seventh Day Adventists) - Vegetarian diets, rich in fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and wholegrains. Diets are low in dairy, sugar, salt and refined grains and alcohol is avoided. Regular, moderate exercise.



Can food help us to live a longer, healthier life? (continued)

Being in a positive energy balance (eating more calories than are used) can result in weight gain and chronic diseases, so reducing calorific food portions or increasing activity to create a **neutral energy balance** can prevent the development of chronic diseases such as diabetes, atherosclerosis, cancers and kidney diseases.

Blue Zone diets are rich in ingredients that are anti-inflammatory and have antioxidant properties making them cardio-protective and immunity optimising. They are also rich in fibre and low in saturated fats, which helps to lower cholesterol and maintain a healthy bowel and heart, which can prevent bowel cancers and the development of heart disease.



Remember, there is no *one* super food. Longevity results from a **consistently healthy diet** alongside healthy lifestyle practices, not just adding in a few healthy foods on top of a diet rich in processed foods and low physical activity.

Daily Physical Activity—Getting active after the Commonwealth Games

As mentioned above, Blue Zone areas share lifestyle factors that when combined contribute to healthy longevity. One of these factors is **moderate, daily physical activity** and with the recent Commonwealth Games happening right on our doorsteps you may have been inspired to take up a new sport, or simply just get a little fitter.

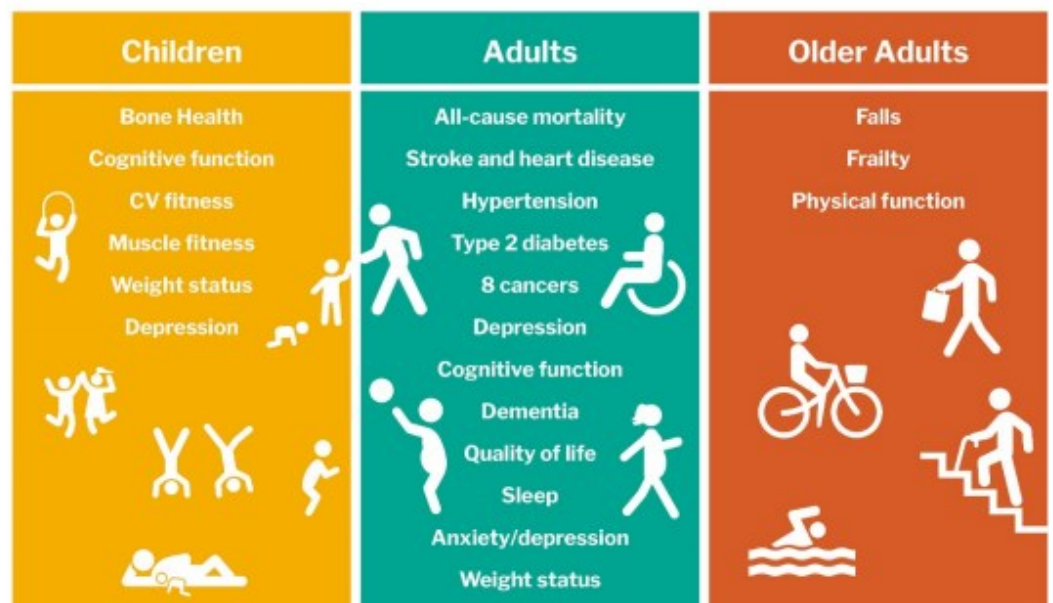
However, “I’m too big to do that”, “I’m worried about what people think” and “I need to lose weight before I... [join that club/gym/go for a run]” may be things you tell yourself or hear friends say when discussing getting fit. **Well, lets discuss whether weight, size or disabilities should be a barrier to getting fitter.**

Simply put, no! Most activities can be enjoyed by all through adapting them to fit your capabilities. You don’t need to sign up to run a marathon in less than 4 hours, start with trying to achieve 5,000—10,000 steps per day: walking, jogging, running... whatever you can do. Similarly, you don’t need to be competing against local swimmer Adam Peaty in the swimming pool, but 30 minutes of gentle swimming twice a week is a good start to your fitness journey.

Moderate or strong evidence for health benefit

Making positive changes to your diet and lifestyle, even if it doesn’t result in weight loss, will have a beneficial impact on health. The infographic shows the health benefits of physical activity across the ages.

Remember, it’s never too late. **Making changes today can improve your health for tomorrow** and every day after that.





The governments physical activity guidelines state that every minute counts, “**any activity is better than none, and more is better still**”. The full guidelines, infographic shown above, found on the government website, also state “there is little evidence to suggest that physical activity is unsafe for anyone when performed at an intensity and in a manner appropriate to an individual’s current activity level, health status and physical function” including for disabled, pregnant and post-partum people. Starting at low durations and intensities and building up over time as the body adjusts is the safest way to progress from inactivity to meeting the above recommendations.

The guidelines also include **building strength**, but this doesn’t necessarily mean joining a gym, it can include carrying heavy shopping, resistance exercise using resistance bands at home, heavy gardening, using body weight or free weights for exercise, wheeling your wheelchair or lifting and carrying your children. Also, you can include a combination of moderate, vigorous and very vigorous activities to make up your weekly targets.



As well as eating a healthy diet, another way to improve your health and making achievable lifestyle changes to is **minimising sedentary time**. Think about work; can you stand at a desk instead of sitting, or make a makeshift standing desk in your home office/kitchen. Or at home; whilst watching TV get up every ad break and stretch your legs or perhaps swap that extra TV program for a walk or some yoga time.

Finally, in addition to improving physical health, participating in activities may provide further opportunities to meet new people and feel **part of a community**, which is another feature in the Blue Zone lifestyle factors. So, **don’t let size, weight, fitness level or perceived disability stop you from increasing your physical activity, do it today!**

What's in Season?

Here is a list of what fruit and veg are in season in August

Fruit	Vegetables
Blackberries, Blackcurrants, Cherries, Damsons, Greengages, Loganberries, Plums, Raspberries, Redcurrants, Rhubarb, Strawberries.	Aubergine, Beetroot, Broad Beans, Broccoli, Carrots, Cauliflower, Chicory, Chillies, Courgettes, Cucumber, Fennel, French Beans, Garlic, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mangetout, Marrow, Mushrooms, Parsnips, Peas, Peppers, Potatoes, Pumpkin, Radishes, Rocket, Runner Beans, Samphire, Sorrel, Spring Greens, Spring Onions, Summer Squash, Sweetcorn, Swish Chard, Tomatoes, Watercress

Cooking in season You'll notice these ingredients are more abundant in supermarkets and market stalls this month, so here is a tasty seasonal recipe and some facts about damson fruits.

Butternut squash, radish, chickpea and feta salad

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp harissa
- 1 butternut squash, skin on, seeds removed and cut into large wedges
- 2 x 400g can chickpeas, drained
- 2 tbsp sherry vinegar
- 200g mixed radishes, cut into pieces
- 80g feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 small pack dill, chopped
- 2 tbsp pumpkin seeds, toasted

Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Mix the oil with the harissa, then toss with the butternut squash and some seasoning in a large roasting tray. Roast for 30 mins. Add the chickpeas, toss together, then cook for a further 20 mins.

Heat the sherry vinegar in a saucepan with a big pinch of sugar and salt with 1 tbsp water. Bring to a simmer, then remove from the heat and add the radishes. Mix and set aside.

Pile the butternut and chickpeas onto a platter, mix through most of the feta and dill, then scatter over the pickled radishes and their juice. Top with the remaining feta, dill and pumpkin seeds.



Damsons

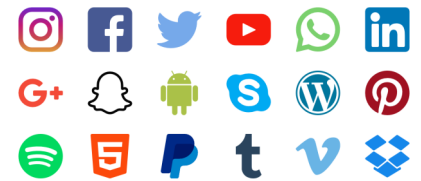
Damsons are a subspecies of the plum and similarly are a drupaceous (stone) fruit. They are small, oval shaped fruits, and are mostly a rich, blue-purple colour, but "white damsons" also exist which are a yellow-green colour.

brought to Great Britain by the Romans. Remnants of damsons have been found in Roman archaeology sites.

Damsons can be used to make jam, fruit butters, chutney, crumbles, various puddings, syrups and even liquor, such as Damson Gin.



It is believed that the Damson tree was originally from Syria, taking its name from the city of Damascus, and



Bye-bye Boris but what about Sugar and Salt Tax?

Just before his resignation, Prime Minister, Boris Johnson rejected the key recommendation of The government-commissioned **National Food Strategy**, drawn up by restaurateur, Henry Dimbleby. The report makes a series of recommendations to improve food culture and eating habits across The United Kingdom, but most notable is the suggestion to impose a levy on sugar and salt used in processed food, restaurants and catering. The proposed £3 billion raised from the additional tax would be used to expand free school meals and wider work on the country's food culture, including providing healthy food to low-income families.



A similar levy on soft drinks introduced in 2018 saw a number of products reformulated to reduce sugar contents, meaning prices for consumers did not rise. Dimbleby said that the UK populations "malfunctioning" appetites and poor diets, which are fuelled by consumer and manufacturer's reliance on processed food, creates a unsustainable burden on the NHS and contributes to 64,000 deaths each year. The idea of the sugar and salt tax is to force manufacturers to reduce the amount of sugar and salt in their products and discourage people from purchasing processed foods to shift the national food culture.

Boris Johnson rejected the idea stating that he was not attracted to the idea of increasing taxes of hardworking people. Downing street had proposed an idea to ban junk food advertising online and before 9pm on TV from 2023, however this is yet to be confirmed.

Dimbleby defends the National Food Strategy stating that "there are two parts to the strategy: one is about changing our long-term culture, making us eat more fresh, nutritious food, and the other is about reducing the harm of that processed food and reducing the addictive nature of it."



The most effective ways to do this will always be a matter of different opinions, but what is for sure is that in the UK our current diets and eating habits must change and ministers have an integral part to play in the leadership of accelerating that change to meet UK targets on health, climate and nature. The report states that the population need to reduce intakes of fat, sugar and salt by 25%!



Warwickshire eating and drinking for health group.

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If you have an interest in food ,
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Forum, please contact the editor.

If you would like more information
about any of the articles in this
newsletter, please contact the editor
who will pass this on to the author of
the article.

References, further reading and resources

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What's in season

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/butternut-chickpea-feta-pickled-radish-salad>

<https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damson>

Social Media Know How

<https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org>

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