

Food News

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Welcome to Food News. In this months edition of Food News we will explore why plant-based diets *may not* be nutritionally complete and also give some useful tips for living life with a common symptom of Long Covid Syndrome: distorted smell and taste.

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



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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

**“I get everything I need from a plant-based diet”.
The forgotten nutrient: Iodine**

The popularity of plant-based diets has seen a sharp rise over recent years with health and environmental benefits being popular driving forces. However, a plant based diet doesn't always mean a nutritionally complete diet, and **here's why**.



Foods from animal sources (especially **milk, dairy products, eggs and fish**) provide the majority of iodine in UK diets. Meanwhile, the iodine content in plant-based foods is very low. Unfortunately, the UK, unlike a lot of other countries, does not have an iodine-fortification programme, so intake depends on dietary choice.

Iodine is required for the production of thyroid hormones, which control metabolism, growth and development and is particularly essential for brain and neurological development during pregnancy and the first few years of life. As a result, adequate iodine intake is particularly important for women of childbearing age, as deficiency is associated with low birth weight, lower IQ and reading ability in school-aged children.



Recommendations are 150µg/day for non-pregnant adults and 200µg/day



during pregnancy and lactation, values that are easily met with regular consumption of animal-based foods, but can become tricky on a plant-based diet. As the main sources of iodine in the UK are milk, dairy, fish and eggs, individuals who follow a vegan/plant-based diet may experience low iodine intakes. Goitres have even been observed in some vegans in the UK (as shown left).

With the popularity of milk-alternative products increasing, many brands began fortifying their products with calcium, vitamin D and vitamin B12 to match the content of cows milk, but iodine is not always remembered and some milk-alternatives are as low as 2% of the value of cows milk. Whilst some brands don't fortify their milk-alternative products with iodine at all (many supermarket own brands), other brands may only fortify some of their products, therefore **it is always important to check!** Other dairy alternatives (such as yoghurt, cheese, cream) are also often not fortified, so don't assume you're covered by eating these products.

So what can I do?

If avoiding milk then try having other sources of iodine such as eggs or fish, but if you are vegan or predominantly plant-based then take a bit more time when shopping and look for iodine-fortified milk-alternatives. This might be mentioned on the front of packaging but will otherwise be listed in the ingredients or shown in the nutritional content information.

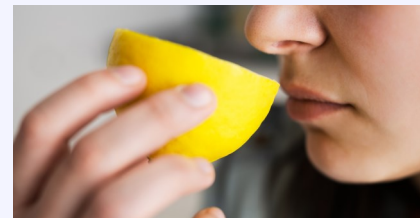


Seaweed is often referenced as a high iodine source but this is not routinely eaten in the UK and contents are highly variable, therefore it is not a reliable source. Some species also contain extremely high levels which could lead to intakes above the safe-upper limit (namely kelp) and therefore regular intakes are not advised. Seaweed supplements should also be avoided, if supplementation is required then this should be in the form of potassium iodide/potassium iodate with a dose of no more than 150µ/day.

COVID-19 and it's lingering symptom: distorted smell

Distorted or reduced sense of smell has been well reported as a symptom of COVID-19, with up to half of people experiencing it. It is thought to be when the coronavirus infects cells that support neurons in the nose and possibly through an inflammatory process. Most people (72% has been reported) recover their sense of smell after 1 month, however, for some, distorted smell can last for several months or up to a year.

Long Covid Syndrome has made us all more aware of distorted smell (known as parosmia) but other causes, such as sinonasal diseases, post-infectious loss, head trauma and neurological conditions (Parkinson's or Alzheimer's) were around pre-pandemic and will continue on after it.



Distorted smell can influence flavour perception, making foods taste differently. True loss of taste is believed to be less common, but it is possible that receptors on the tongue which are involved in detecting the five elements of taste perception: saltiness, sourness, bitterness, sweetness, umami could also be distorted.

Changes in smell and taste can have a major impact on nutritional intake and enjoyment of food. Some sufferers report the smell to be like sewage or faeces, which is understandably very off-putting. This can result in diets becoming very restricted leading to energy and/or nutrient deficiency or may result in less healthy foods being chosen, due to improved tolerance or comfort.

Top tips for adjusting to smell and taste distortions:

- Become aware of your trigger foods and try to recognise alternative foods or ingredients that you could use instead. Common triggers: **coffee, onions, chocolate, garlic, eggs, and foods being roasted and grilled** as these cooking methods release more odours. Examples of switches include: herbal tea instead of coffee, flavour foods with chilli, fennel or celeriac, instead of onion and garlic, use fortified milk-alternatives in place of cows milk or plant-based alternatives instead of dairy products, swap meat for vegetarian sources of protein such as lentils or beans.

- Add strong flavours that don't taste differently to foods that have a taste distortion. Try adding cinnamon, chilli or chilli oil, pepper or peppercorn sauce, horseradish or ginger, as well as experimenting with extra herbs and spices that you might not normally use.



- Alternatively, some people prefer to opt for blander foods so that there is less taste variation.

- Choose dishes that look appealing as you may need to rely more heavily on visual appetite. Present meals nicely on a plate and try to include a variety of bright colours.

- Try and keep cooking time to a minimum and open doors and windows to ventilate the kitchen.

- Smelling foods in supermarkets may make you feel unwell so try doing shopping online or ask a friend to help.

- Make eating a social experience, this may distract you from feeling nauseous and generally improve the eating experience.



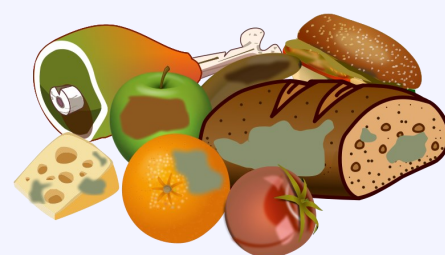
COVID-19 and it's lingering symptom: distorted smell (continued)

• Foods may not be as enjoyable or as exciting as they normally are and you may find yourself become bored whilst eating, so try to include a variety of textures (gooey, crumbly, crunchy, soft) and temperatures (hot and cold—like ice cream with hot apple crumble) into your meals.



• If finishing a full meal is hard work, eat little and often instead, having regular snacks and more frequent but smaller meals can be really helpful for meeting your energy and nutrient needs.

• Nostalgic foods can be helpful as they may help you to remember what a food tastes like enough to enjoy it, but this may also just remind you of how different it actually tastes and be more off-putting. See what works for you.



• The first few mouthful of a meal may be the worst and then the rest of the meal might become more tolerable so try to persevere.

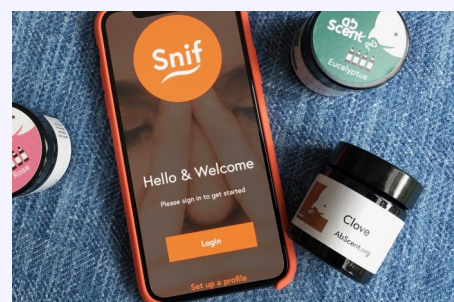
• Check that your food is still safe to eat, as you may be less aware of spoiled food if it already tastes unusual.

• Be aware that triggers might not be from food, cleaning products, petrol or perfume may also be triggers so avoid these smells when you are planning to eat.

Extra tips for overcoming smell and taste distortions:

• There are online communities for peer support which can be accessed through the UK charities Fifth Sense and AbScent.

• Smell training by sniffing the same four scents every day and spending around 20 seconds on each scent can exercise your smell sense. 'Snif' is smell training web-based app, which can provided guidance on appropriate smell training.



What's in Season?

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

Fruit	Vegetables
Apples, Blackberries, Elderberries, Pears	Aubergine, Beetroot, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Butternut Squash, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Chestnuts, Chicory, Chillies, Courgette, Cucumber, Kale, Leeks, Lettuce, Marrow, Onions, Parsnips, Peas, Potatoes, Pumpkin, Radishes, Rocket, Runner Beans, Spinach, Spring Greens, Spring Onions, Summer Squash, Swede, Sweetcorn, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes, Turnips, Watercress, Wild Mushrooms, Winter Squash

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 to try.

Pumpkin, spinach and nutmeg cannelloni

Ingredients:

- 250g of cannelloni tubes
- 100g of Emmental, grated
- 125g toasted pumpkin seeds

Filling:

- 700g pumpkin, peeled and diced
- 1 dash of vegetable oil
- 500g of spinach
- 40g of low fat cream cheese
- 2 pinches of ground nutmeg
- Salt and pepper

White sauce:

- ½ onion, peeled
- 1 garlic clove
- 6 cloves
- 600ml of skimmed milk
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 bay leaves
- 25g of unsalted butter
- 3 tbsp of plain flour

Tomato sauce:

- 1 dash of vegetable oil
- ½ onion, finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbsp of balsamic vinegar
- 500g of passata, sieved
- 4 tbsp of tomato purée
- 1 tbsp of caster sugar
- ¼ bunch of fresh thyme
- Salt and pepper

•Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4. For the pumpkin filling, toss the pumpkin with the vegetable oil and salt and pepper in a bowl. Transfer to a roasting dish and bake for 20-25 minutes. Once cooked, transfer to a bowl and mash until lump-free. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.

•To make a white sauce, stud the onion and garlic with cloves and add to a saucepan along with the milk, salt and bay leaves. Simmer gently for 10 minutes. In a separate saucepan over a medium heat, melt the butter then add the flour, mixing well to form a paste. Cook for 2 minutes then slowly strain in the infused milk, whisking continuously. Cook over a low heat until it thickens enough to easily coat the back of a spoon.

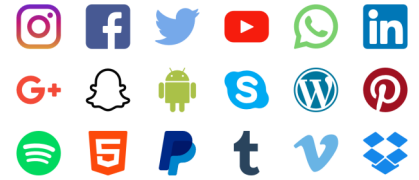
•To make the spinach filling, bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Blanch the spinach for 30 seconds, strain and then transfer to a colander. Once cool, squeeze the spinach to remove excess water, chop into small pieces and mix with the cream cheese and nutmeg in a bowl and set aside.

•For the tomato sauce, place a medium-sized pan over a medium heat and add oil. Once the oil is hot, add the garlic and onion and cook until browned slightly. De-glaze the pan with the vinegar and then add the rest of the ingredients, leave to simmer for 5 minutes.

•Prepare 2 piping bags fitted with large round nozzles. Fill 1 bag with pumpkin mash and the other bag with the spinach mix. Pipe equal amounts of both mixtures into each cannelloni tube.

•Lay the cannelloni in a baking dish and pour over the tomato sauce, then the white sauce, Emmental and pumpkin seeds. Bake for 45-60 minutes, or until the pasta is just cooked through.





The Carnivore Diet- Sounds questionable? Rightly so!

The Paleo Diet has been doing the rounds over recent years, but what if you take it a few steps further... you get the carnivore diet. That's right, a diet based on meat, and pretty much only meat. "But surely, that can't be healthy" I hear you ask. You're right, it most likely isn't!

The Carnivore Diet has been endorsed by a small group of athletes, celebrities and alarmingly some health care professionals who claim that this high protein diet has done wonders for their health. Whilst some more nutritionally-balanced, high-protein diets do have health benefits, there is zero evidence supporting The Carnivore Diet. The Paleo diet and Ketogenic diets allow a small amount of carbohydrates, whilst the Carnivore Diet allows none. It's short list of permitted foods include meat, poultry, fish, offal, full fat milk, eggs, butter/lard, bone broth, meat drippings, salt, pepper, and water. Some variations may include tea, coffee, small amounts of hard cheese and full fat cream and yoghurt, but not all. The Carnivore Diet does not allow vegetables, fruit, seeds, nuts, any plant-based meat substitutes, legumes, bread, pasta, grains, alcohol or anything else not on the list above.



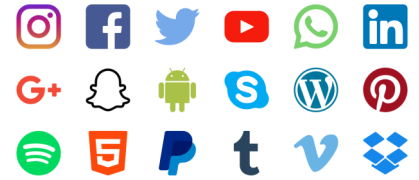
The main (non-evidenced based) claims for The Carnivore Diet is that it is effective for weight loss, the management of auto-immune diseases (rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis), reducing depression and improving symptoms of food intolerances. But let me reiterate, **none of these claims are based on scientific evidence** and are purely anecdotal.

Let's look at how the Carnivore Diet *may* exert these benefits:

Weight loss- High protein diets are generally highly satiating, meaning they make you feel fuller for longer, which can result in fewer calories consumed over a 24 hour period. This will result in weight loss, but with this diet it will also result in fewer nutrients and fibre, leading to nutrient deficiencies and poorer gut health. The restrictive nature of the diet is likely to reduce overall calorie intake due to being monotonous and curbing mindless snacking, however much less restrictive, yet nutritionally-complete, diets can also have the same result.

Improving symptoms of auto-immune diseases- The claims seems to suggest that The Carnivore Diet is anti-inflammatory, subsequently reducing inflammation and reducing symptoms of some autoimmune diseases. It is true that oily fish (such as salmon, fresh tuna, mackerel and sardines), which are allowed on this diet, are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and have anti-inflammatory properties. However, high intakes of saturated fat from red meats, butter and full fat dairy are known to have pro-inflammatory effects, therefore likely counteracting any anti-inflammatory benefit. In addition, proven anti-inflammatory diets tend to be largely plant-based or at least very well-balanced, such as the Mediterranean diet, which promotes regular intakes of wholegrains, fruits and vegetables.





Social Media Know-how

The Carnivore Diet- Sounds questionable? Rightly so!

(continued...)

Improving symptoms of food intolerances– Through eliminating a wide range of foods and therefore the food being poorly tolerated, symptoms of nausea, bloating, abdominal discomfort and diarrhoea may improve. However, much less restrictive elimination diets can be used to identify the triggering food or ingredient, which will not have such detrimental effects on health. It is extremely unlikely in any case that eliminating all but one food group is required.

Reducing incidence of depression– In theory, if in the short term you feel happy about dropping a few pounds or having less symptoms of food intolerances, sure, you may feel the diet has cured your depression. However, in the long term the impact this diet can have on social life, the repetitiveness of the diet and the potential long term side effects of nutrient deficiencies and impact on the gut-brain axis is likely to have an overall detrimental effect on mental health and wellbeing.

The long term risks of following the Carnivore diet

So we have looked at the potential benefits, now let's look at the potential long term risks of following this meat focused diet.

Nutrient deficiencies- Humans need to eat a varied diet, including plants, to obtain a nutritionally-complete diet. Without this we become deprived of essential vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients. The singer, James Blunt, is a perfect example of this, as he revealed that after following the Carnivore diet he developed scurvy, a condition caused by vitamin C deficiency.

Lack of fibre- The carnivore diet is completely fibre free. Fibre is required for a healthy bowel, maintaining regular bowel movements (preventing constipation) and reducing the amount of time potentially harmful chemicals are present in the bowel (reducing the risk of colon cancers). In addition, fibre is needed to maintain healthy gut microbiome, which plays major roles in immunity, bowel health and the gut-brain axis, which has shown some promising evidence to improving mental health and wellbeing. As well as maintaining blood sugar levels, fibre also binds to cholesterol so that it can be excreted, therefore it also plays important roles in lowering cholesterol levels to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and preventing or improving the management of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus.



High fat– The Carnivore diet includes high amounts of saturated fat from fatty meats and butter, which if followed long term, increases the risk of heart disease. Foods high in saturated fats are proven to increase cholesterol levels and together with the lack of fibre, this is a real concern for people following this diet for any prolonged period of time.

So to sum it all up, The Carnivore Diet may be a quick, temporary fix but **there is no scientific evidence linking the carnivore diet with good health and plenty of evidence to suggest it is bad for long term health.**



Warwickshire eating and drinking for health group

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If you have an interest in food , hydration and health, and would like to join the Warwickshire Food 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.

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Social Media Know How

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