



NO SWEAT

Kit that looks good and feels good

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A NEW PLANT-BASED RECIPE BOOK BY GEMMA OGSTON AIMS AT BOOSTING OUR WELLBEING THROUGH SIMPLE, HEALTHY EATING, DISCOVERS SUSAN GRIFFIN

ENTILS, granola, overnight oats, ramen – none of these are my typical go-tos. It's not that I subsist on a diet of fast food but the world of plant-based food has so far passed me by. I'm clearly trailing behind.

According to last year's Plant Based World Conference & Expo in New York, the UK is Europe's largest market for plant-based foods, valued at £470million, reflecting the growing number of people adopting a plant-based lifestyle. But like starting anything new, it's about knowing where to begin.

Gemma Ogston's new book, *The Self-Care Cookbook*, is a great introduction. Billed as the first of its kind, it's a holistic approach to self-care and is filled with simple plant-based recipes that don't require hours of dedication or a hefty salary to concoct. Indeed, it's as much about making decisions that make you feel better as anything else.

I'm not going to say the recipes cure an illness but by eating well you're taking control and whether it's the placebo effect or whatever, it works.

The main thing for me is to enjoy food,' says 41-year-old Gemma, who suffered from an eating disorder as a teenager.

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Gemma's Dreamy Brownies

INGREDIENTS

150g pecans or walnuts
150g dates, soaked in hot water for 10minutes
6tbsp cacao powder
5tbsp desiccated coconut
3tbsp honey or maple syrup
Pinch of sea salt

ICING

150g dates, soaked in hot water for 10mins (save the water after soaking)
4tbsp raw cocoa powder
2tbsp coconut oil

METHOD

Blitz the nuts in a food processor until crumbly. Add the dates and blitz again until the mixture sticks together. Add the remaining ingredients and blend.

Line a 20cm square cake tin with baking paper and spoon the mixture into it, pressing down firmly.

For the icing, put all the ingredients in a food processor or blender with 50ml of the reserved, date-soaking liquid and blitz for a few minutes until smooth and velvety. Add water if needed. Using a spatula, spread the icing on top of the brownie mix and top with any decorations you're using, then chill in the fridge until ready to serve.

TRENDS

STYLE // WELLBEING // CELEBRITY

I'M BRINGING LOVE BACK INTO FOOD



A big dill: Gemma Ogston runs a plant-based home delivery service

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'Luckily, in my 20s I got over that but I was partying a lot and not eating well.' The turning point came in her early 30s after she suffered four late miscarriages.

I was desperate to have a baby and that's when I started reading about how much better for your health plant-based food can be – and for your mood as well because I was quite down,' she says.

Brighton-based Gemma now has two children, seven and nine, and runs plant-based home delivery service Gem's Wholesome Kitchen.

'The book was always going to be about food to boost your mood as well as your health because I think people forget that,' she says. 'This is about choosing ingredients that are colourful, bright and healthy. It's about bringing love back into making your food.'

While there are similarities to vegan food, Gemma notes that about 90 per cent of her customers aren't vegan and neither is she.

'I think people presume vegan is automatically really healthy but if you look at the ingredients, it can be very processed,' she says. 'Plant-based whole food is more natural – it's eating a diet with plants, fruit, veggies, whole grains and pulses. It's not eating meat,

fish and dairy but if you want to add them to the recipes, that's fine. I don't want to dictate how you should eat. I just want to give people inspiration.'

The book has themed chapters – restore, rebalance, reflect, renew and TLC – that show us creating and consuming healthy food not only improves your physical state but positively impacts your emotional and mental wellbeing too.

There are lots of practical self-care tips too. Within the restore chapter, Gemma suggests ways to rest and get cosy in order to revive flagging energy levels. You'll find recipes like 'sleepy rice pud with camomile' and 'calming miso pasta' to benefit your gut, and sections on breathing, mindful cooking and getting a better night's sleep to feel calm and more in control of chaotic lives.

The rebalance section addresses the need to take stock of what you're doing too much, or too little, of and making time for friends and family so there are dishes to share and food that 'makes you happy just looking at it'.

Reflection explores what it means to give yourself the time and space to think about what's going on in your life. 'And permission to question yourself in a positive way, even ten minutes with a cup of tea,' says Gemma.



Roasted Golden Quinoa Pilaf

INGREDIENTS

Glug of olive oil
1 onion, peeled and chopped
2 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
150g butternut squash, peeled and cut into small chunks
150g chestnut mushrooms, sliced
200g vacuum-packed chestnuts, chopped
100g quinoa

2tsp paprika and oregano
2tbsp tamari
500ml veggie stock
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
Zest and juice of one lemon
Bunch of parsley, finely chopped
100g dried cranberries
100g dried apricots, chopped
150g mixed nuts, chopped

METHOD

Heat some olive oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, squash and fry for 5 to 10mins. Add the mushrooms and fry for a 2 mins. Add the chestnuts, quinoa, paprika and pepper and simmer for 15mins. Remove the pan from the heat and stir through the lemon zest juice, tamari, parsley, dried fruit and nuts.

In the renew chapter there are mood-boosting recipes such as energy balls, rich ragu and magic chilli, as well as tips on how to embrace new beginnings for when your life needs a bit of a shake-up. Finally, we get to the chapter titled TLC.

There are times when you just feel rubbish and need a little extra TLC so there are dishes like super green nourish soup, which I swear by to reduce tiredness and help you recharge,' says Gemma. 'And the hearty stew with sweet-potato mash boosts energy and lifts your mood,

which is great for this time of year when you just want to get cosy.'

The simplicity of the dishes is inspiring, especially for plant-based novices like me. Since our chat, I've made the hearty stew, which took a grand total of ten minutes to prepare. I didn't miss the meat and it's hard not to feel virtuous looking at the heap of vegetables while the medley of colour lifts your mood. I've got my eye on the 'dreamy brownies' to satisfy those mid-afternoon cravings, and a vat of super green soup is planned for the weekend. Who knows,

perhaps I'll be making a Buddha bowl before the year's out.

'I wanted to create a positive book that'll make people feel happy,' says Gemma. 'It's a reminder to slow down, give yourself some nourishment and the permission to say no to things that aren't serving you well – because we all deserve it.'



The Self-Care Cookbook by Gemma Ogston (Vermilion) is out now

Divorce Day isn't merry but it can be cordial

AWARD-WINNING FAMILY LAWYER AND AUTHOR **LAURA NASER** EXPLAINS HOW TO HAVE A MORE AMICABLE SEPARATION AHEAD OF DIVORCE MONDAY

IF YOUR marriage is on the rocks, now is likely to be crunch time. Statistics show the highest number of divorce petitions are issued the first working Monday after Christmas. But the good news is that separation needn't get nasty and you don't have to go to court.

The key to a more amicable separation is information. The earlier you can set your expectations reasonably for appropriate arrangements for your children, your financial separation and any necessary formalities from the outset, the better.

Information is power. It will enable you to approach discussions with reason and confidence, if you add in some kindness then you are on the right track.

You may think that's easier said than done but a good start is to focus on your communication – what you are saying, the tone you use, the timing of it and your chosen method. Don't air your dirty laundry on social media, don't send a message in rage or retaliation and avoid raising your voice. Pick your battles and know when to remove yourself from escalating exchanges.



BE MINDFUL OF DISPUTE LANGUAGE

'MY LAWYER SAYS...'

Legal advice is privileged between solicitor and client so you shouldn't tell your ex what your lawyer is advising you. However, it's rare that what is said after these words is the truth and it's usually taken out of the context of legal caveats.

'I'M GOING TO SEE MY LAWYER'

I encourage this – both of you being informed with decent legal advice is the best grounding to

a more amicable separation so this isn't a threat to be feared. You can't both see the same solicitor due to the potential for conflict – the advice you receive will be what's best for you, not what's best for your ex.

'I'LL SEE YOU IN COURT'

Don't threaten this as it's not helpful and will do damage. Court is the last resort and means you're asking a judge to decide for you. This takes autonomy over the outcome of your dispute out of your hands – you roll the dice that a judge may or may not agree with you.

Check yourself constantly by asking 'am I being reasonable?' and, if you have children, 'is this in their best interests?' (that's how a judge would decide a children's issue).

If you're struggling to communicate with your ex directly consider using non-court dispute resolution options such as solicitor negotiations, mediation, collaborative law or arbitration.

The costs of separation can mount up so it's in your financial interests to resolve matters amicably, in addition to the savings on emotions, stress and time. Also, be mindful of the phrases we've highlighted in the box (left).

Laura's book *The Family Lawyer's Guide To Separation And Divorce* (Vermilion) is out now