



WORDS MARISA CUTILLAS PHOTOGRAPHY KEVIN HORN

# Eco-licious

## BRINGING GOURMET RAW VEGAN CUISINE TO YOUR TABLE

**If you thought raw cuisine was plain, boring and made up of little more than a couple of unappetising vegetables thrown together in a salad bowl, then it's definitely time to wake up and smell the raw cacao. Eco-licious is the brainchild of dynamic duo, Michelle Julian (nutritionist) and her husband Jim (raw food Chef extraordinaire), a couple whose passion for delicious, raw recipes knows no bounds. Its aim is to show that raw food is not only the most healthy option for those seeking to keep heart disease, inflammation and premature ageing at bay; it is also the most delicious.**

**M**ichelle, who hails from Australia, is the foremost expert on the Coast on essential oils and raw foods. For years, she has been leading a group of loyal followers of the movement on a path to health and wellbeing through her 'cooking' workshops – which are actually 'food preparation' workshops, since every dish is raw and vegan.

### WHY RAW?

When we cook fruits and vegetables, they lose many vital enzymes, which are necessary for breaking up nutrients and enabling our body to absorb them. Raw foods are also 'living foods'; they are rich in a plethora of vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals, which contain a kind of life energy that helps stave off disease. Raw food is high in fibre, which means that you need much less to feel full; since you eat less, you can cut down costs on food in the long run, even when

you purchase organic, seasonal produce. Finally, the raw vegan lifestyle is about compassion for all living things; about feeling more connected to the earth and all sentient beings.

### ECO-LICIOUS

Eco-licious is many things for many people; for one, it is a meal service: every Tuesday, Jim whips up three different meals that you can take home and enjoy with your family.

On the day Michelle and Jim visited **essential** for our interview, they brought along a veritable feast that the entire office eliminated in a matter of minutes... it was quite funny to see certain colleagues, who aren't exactly veggie lovers, oohing and aahing and asking to have another portion from dishes like Jim's to-die-for vegan quiche. Creamy, cheesy and so filling... we simply could not believe it when he told us that it contained NO egg and NO dairy.

Jim and Michelle also brought us raw wraps (the secret to these amazing meatless wraps lies in the sauce – think Thai ingredients like ginger and sesame oil...); then there was the lovely raw salad, filled with grated veg, nuts and an amazing Thai seasoning. Another dish that highlights the full extent of the excellence of raw food recipes is the curry 'pasta' – Raw food does not permit cooking beyond 104°, so how did Jim cook the 'pasta', you might ask? – easy! His noodles aren't pasta, they are made from zucchini, yet bear an identical texture to vermicelli noodles.

We ended the meal on a sweet note – with Michelle's raw chocolate creations. Once again, these aren't your run-of-the-mill, bland chocolates. Think Chunky monkey (made with raw banana and nuts) or her Reese-inspired creation, comprising a light chocolate exterior which gives way to a

luscious (homemade, raw) peanut butter interior. Michelle is the dulce to Jim's 'salao', and as you can imagine, she rules the roost when it comes to raw food desserts.

### WHAT'S THE SECRET TO ECO-LICIOUSNESS?

There is no doubt that gourmet food of the style made by Jim and Michelle is time consuming. It involves everything from soaking and preparing nut butters to creating one's own flour-free crust (using ingredients like grains and previously soaked nuts) and dehydrating vegetables for hours. Of course, not all raw food recipes are difficult; if you are curious, do a quick Internet search and you will find many amazing meals you can whip up in no time at all.

### RAW BEGINNINGS

If you are new to the raw food movement, chances are you will need a helping hand. One thing we strongly recommend is signing up for one of Michelle's classes. Secondly, try an Eco-licious meal, to comprehend how delicious this type of food can be. Finally, if you need help with particular ingredients, give Michelle and Jim a call; they sell various ingredients such as raw vegan pizza crusts (just add your own topping!), stone-ground chocolate and nut creams (just add a spoonful of water and you'll have a glass of creamy nut milk).

### SAY YES! TRY IT!

Earlier in this article, we mentioned the positive connection that comes from consuming an animal-free diet; the sensation of preparing and bringing food to your family that is flavourful, sustainable and kind, is inimitable. If you need any more convincing, it's time to try Eco-licious.

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