THIS MONTH: How what we eat becomes a powerful symbol of who we are; Prof Jennie Brand-Miller on why some oatmeal porridges have a high GI and others low; New GI values for nutritional shakes; Dr Alan Barclay puts weight loss formulas in perspective; Nicole Senior on cabbage, sauerkraut and coleslaw; Chrissy’s pulled pork and black bean sliders, Dr Joanna’s wonton pot stickers and Anneka’s amazing rhubarb, apple and strawberry oat crumble.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

10 home truths about food and eating

We cherry-picked these home truths (with permission) from Prof Robin Fox’s paper, *Food and Eating: An Anthropological Perspective*, that was published some twenty years ago and is as relevant today – possibly even more so.

1. We have to eat; we like to eat; eating makes us feel good; it is more important than sex. To ensure genetic survival the sex urge need only be satisfied a few times in a lifetime; the hunger urge must be satisfied every day.

2. Since everyone must eat, what we eat becomes a most powerful symbol of who we are.

3. To set yourself apart from others by what you will and will not eat is a social barrier almost as powerful as the incest taboo, which tells us with whom we may or may not have sex. Some cultures equate the two ...

4. We are not only what we eat, but how well we eat. Next to showing off military hardware, showing off food is the best way to impress the “outsider”.

5. Just as clothes indicate our trendiness, so does food. Once foods become plentiful and varied, fashion takes over, and the lure of novelty, “the trendy,” is often disguised as concern for nutrition.

6. Food fashion thrives on change; it demands it. The vast industry can only survive if people’s tastes are constantly induced to change.

7. Diets are a major part of the food-fashion industry. Diets have replaced the weather as the basic item of polite conversation.

8. The business of how not to eat too much food has paradoxically turned into one of the biggest food industries.

9. In the pursuit of perfection, to be on a diet illustrates you are a worthy and serious person. The Puritan Ethic applied to food.

10. The search for the perfect life comes to embrace the search for the perfect food and, like other utopianisms, this easily tips over into fanaticism.
Robin Fox is an anthropologist, poet, essayist and historian of ideas, currently University Professor of Social Theory at Rutgers University, where he founded the Department of Anthropology in 1967. Possibly best known for his work with Lionel Tiger, especially *The Imperial Animal*, on the significance of evolution for an understanding of human behavior and society, he explores the implications for the human future of our knowledge of the evolutionary past, using not only science (although primarily that) but verse, drama, dialogue, satire, and more ... You can download *Food and Eating: An Anthropological Perspective* [HERE](#).

And if you want to get back to the real joy of eating good food, check out Alan Levinovitz’s *The Gluten Lie and Other Myths About What You Eat*. Peter Gibson, MD, Director of Gastroenterology at the Alfred Hospital & Monash University describes it as “essential reading.” Brian Wansink, PhD, author of *Slim by Design and Mindless Eating* says: “In the world of food fears, this is a landmark book.”

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**NEWS BRIEFS**

Starting the day with porridge reaps healthy rewards; Dr Joanna shares her family’s favourite oatmeal porridge recipes; New GI values for nutritional supplements.

**Kids benefit from oatmeal for brekkie**

For a high-energy breakfast that sticks to your ribs, warms you up on a crisp day and keeps you firing till lunchtime, it’s hard to go past porridge made with traditional oats – a good source of soluble fibre, B vitamins, vitamin E, iron and zinc. Elite running quarterback Andrew Luck seems to agree: “Whether I’m on or off the field, I know the importance of getting enough sleep and starting the day with a wholesome breakfast like oatmeal made with milk and fruit.” A recent study in *Food & Nutrition Research* found that: “Consumption of oatmeal by children [aged two to eighteen years] was associated with better nutrient intake, diet quality, and reduced risk for central adiposity and obesity.” We aren’t surprised. “Oatmeal for breakfast could be simply a marker or it could be real cause-and-effect. We don’t know. One would expect that parents who buy oatmeal (steel-cut, rolled or instant) rather than Coco Pops® and serve it up for breakfast to their children are likely to be health-conscious parents and therefore their whole life is health conscious. The opposite of the soft drink story,” says Prof Jennie Brand-Miller.

**Oats for brekkie**

“I love oatmeal. To me, it’s not boring. I agree that ordinary oatmeal is very boring, but not the steel-cut Irish kind - the kind that pops in your mouth when you bite into it in little glorious bursts like a sort of gummy champagne.” - Alan Alda.

Dr Joanna McMillan has always had oatmeal for breakfast. It’s a family tradition. Here’s her Mum’s traditional Scottish recipe. “Mum makes it with steel cut oats that she soaks in water overnight – boils in morning with only salt and pepper then you have in a bowl with a separate small bowl of milk. You then take a spoonful of porridge & dip it in milk (i.e. making a mix of porridge & milk on your spoon). This stops your porridge going cold in the bowl! I have been converted by the Aussie style. So make mine with rolled oats – but only because steel cut were hard to find until recently. I did use them the other day and they do make much better porridge. I soak them in milk overnight in fridge then simmer for 10 minutes (only 5 for rolled) then I top them with spoonful of natural yoghurt, berries or other fresh fruit and almonds toasted in non-stick frying pan then crushed in mortar and pestle. My kids have a drizzle of honey too.”
### New GI values from SUGiRS

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**About SUGiRS** Sydney University GI Research Service (SUGiRS) celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. It was established in 1995 to provide a reliable commercial GI testing laboratory for the food industry.

**About GI testing** The GI value is determined following the international standard method by feeding 10 or more healthy people a portion of the test food containing 50 grams of available carbohydrate (total carbohydrate minus dietary fibre) and then measuring the effect on their blood glucose levels over the next two hours. For each person, the incremental area under their two-hour blood glucose response (glucose iAUC) for this food is then calculated. On another occasion, the same 10 people consume an equal-carbohydrate portion of glucose (the reference food) and their two-hour blood glucose response is also determined (the reference food is tested three times by each person). A GI value for the test food is then calculated for each person by dividing their glucose iAUC for the test food by their average glucose iAUC for the reference food. The final GI value for the test food is the average GI value for the 10 people.

**Contact** For information about GI testing at the University of Sydney, email: Fiona Atkinson PhD, sugirs.manager@sydney.edu.au
What you need to know about weight loss formulas

We all know that being physically active, buying fresh ingredients and cooking healthy homemade foods is the best recipe for long-term weight loss and maintenance. However, despite our best efforts, we don’t always have the time or inclination. Are there any real alternatives if you need to lose a significant amount of weight?

The answer is a qualified yes. Very low energy diets (VLEDs) or very low calorie diets (VLCD) as they are also known, are special “weight loss formulas” that can be used under certain circumstances for relatively short periods of time to help you to lose weight rapidly.

VLED/VLCDs (diets providing fewer than 3300 kilojoules a day or 800 calories) can help you lose more weight than regular healthy diets in the short-medium term (less than 1 year). This can be very useful if you need to lose weight rapidly for surgery, or to help alleviate another acute health problem such as severe joint pain. There is little evidence that they are any better for long-term (1–5 year) weight management, however.

They are designed to produce rapid weight loss while preserving lean body mass (muscles and organs). This is accomplished by providing relatively large amounts of protein, typically 70–100g a day. The protein is usually from milk, soy, or egg-based powders, which you mix with water or skim milk and drink as a “shake”. Depending on the formulation, typical VLED/VLCDs provide between 45–90g of carbohydrate a day and 2–20g of fat. Most provide 100% of the recommended daily allowance for most vitamins and minerals.

On top of this you need to drink 2 litres (8 cups) water, black tea/coffee, diet soft drinks, etc. – fluids without any calories), and preferably eat 2 cups of non-starchy vegetables such as greens and salad veggies – no potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, pumpkin, sweet corn, peas, carrots, beetroot, and parsnip.

VLED/VLCDs are generally only recommended for people who have a body mass index (BMI) greater than 30kg/m².

- If you have diabetes, your diabetes medications/insulin may need to be reduced to prevent hypoglycaemia, because they can be relatively low in carbohydrate.

- If you have kidney disease, the high protein content of VLED/VLCDs may put a strain on your kidneys.

For these reasons, it is very important if you have any pre-existing medical condition, that you discuss using a VLED/VLCD with your doctor and dietitian before purchasing them.

Once they were only found behind the counter of your local pharmacy, now some VLED/VLCDs formulas can be found in the “health food” aisle of your local supermarket. Originally they only came in the form of “shakes”, but now there are alternatives like bars, soups and even desserts. Depending on the formulation and where you buy them from, good quality VLED/VLCDs cost AUD$45.00 + per week for one person. Typically, you will need to consume the VLED/VLCD exclusively for a 3-month period, and then progressively reduce your use of the “shakes” and replace them with regular healthy meals over the course of a few weeks-to-months (depending on the particular program).

The potential downside VLED/VLCDs don’t teach you how to buy and prepare healthy and appetising meals yourself. They are designed for individuals – not families – and if you are the main grocery buyer/cook in your household, you will most likely have to prepare regular meals for the rest of the family which may be inconvenient and can also create tension within the family. Consequently, they are not long-term weight management solutions.

Alan Barclay PhD is a consultant dietitian and Chief Scientific Officer at the Glycemic Index Foundation. He worked for Diabetes Australia (NSW) from 1998-2014 and is a member of the editorial board of Diabetes Australia’s health professional magazine, Diabetes Management Journal. Alan has authored or co-authored over 30 scientific publications, is co-author of The Low GI Diet: Diabetes Handbook, The Low GI Diet: Managing Type 2 Diabetes, and The Ultimate Guide to Sugars and Sweeteners, and presents at conferences around the globe.

Contact: alan.barclay@gisymbol.com
Cabbage - a cruciferous classic

Rich in vitamin C, vitamin K, folate and cancer-fighting phytochemicals, cabbage is one of those veggies you can enjoy in many different ways. Here are a couple of favourites.

**Sauerkraut**
Fermented foods are really hot right now and one of the most well known fermented foods is sauerkraut: fermented cabbage. The word *sauerkraut* is German but it's popular throughout Eastern Europe, and the Dutch and French also have their own versions. It is traditionally eaten with pork or German sausage and is commonly consumed today in hot dogs. It is used as a filling in dumplings in Russia, Ukraine and Poland. Fermenting cabbage was traditionally used to preserve a glut of cabbage without refrigeration and has become popular again with a trend toward more wholesome, home-made, natural foods, as well as food preserving. The recipe is very simple and the flavour comes from the magic that happens when lactic acid bacteria have their way with shredded cabbage – a process similar to making yoghurt from milk. Sauerkraut is basically cabbage that has been left to stew in its own juice. The result is sour, a bit salty and marvellously complex. Making sauerkraut is pretty simple as it only requires salt and a bit of elbow grease. Simply bruise shredded cabbage, add salt, weigh the cabbage down with something heavy and fill with water. You could add some spices such as juniper berries to the water, or mix in some red cabbage to make pink sauerkraut. You need to leave it about a month.

‘Slaw
Pulled pork and ‘slaw is popular dish with the hipster crowd; fancy that! ‘Slaw is short for coleslaw, also known as cabbage salad and is a recipe as old as the hills and used to be as uncool as they come. It just goes to show everything old can be new again. I was delighted this salad classic is having its moment in the sun. I was amazed to discover that ‘slaw was not invented by the Australian Country Women's Association (an amazing group of strong, resourceful rural women famous for their food skills), but rather it is quite cosmopolitan in its provenance. The American classic is made with mayonnaise rather than vinaigrette dressing; the German version *krautsalad* often has apple; the Italians have one called *capricciosa*; the Swedes have *pizzasallad* (and they eat it with pizza); and the British version has carrot and red onion (and this is the one I grew up with). The ‘slaw I make most often now is Asian style with cabbage, carrot, spring onion, fried noodles and sesame oil vinaigrette- yum. ‘Slaw adds colour, crunch, flavour and health to rolls, wraps and sandwiches, and makes a smashing side to grilled meats or fish.

**Jumping Jack Flash...**
It's a gas, gas, gas. Yep, cabbage is famous for causing profuse bottom burps high on the malodorous meter. The gas is due to high fibre and FODMAP content and the whiff is caused by a sulphurous compound called sulforaphane. FODMAPs (an acronym for Fructose, Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides And Polyols) are essentially poorly absorbed sugars and polyols (sugar alcohols) that ferment in the bowel and create gases that are actually beneficial but can also cause misery in people with IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) who tend to be sensitive to FODMAPs. The prominent sugar in cabbage is called raffinose. Cabbage is most aggressive when raw and is tamed by cooking and particularly by fermenting; another bonus for this ancient preservation method. Cabbage can become stinky even before you eat it but you can prevent this by not over cooking it. I love it stir-fried with sliced onion and finished with a dash of balsamic or raspberry vinegar.

Nicole Senior is an Accredited Nutritionist, author and consultant who strives to make healthy food taste terrific. You can follow her on [Twitter](https://twitter.com), [Facebook](https://facebook.com) or checkout her [website](#).
WHAT I EAT: MILENA KATZ FROM BELARUS

Nicole Senior talks to Milena Katz, an Accredited Practising Dietitian, qualified high school science teacher and founder of Ahead In Health, a Sydney-based private practice and nutrition consultancy.

What is your cultural background? It has been just over 25 years since I migrated to Australia from Belarus, a small country bordering Poland and Russia. When we left in 1989 it was still a part of the USSR and the main language was Russian. The food culture was strong and thriving even though people were quite poor and did not have access to a wide variety of fresh ingredients. Food is at the heart of the hospitable nature of Belarussians. They will always invite people for tea even if they have not had time to prepare anything.

I was born in Minsk, the capital of Belarus and most people lived in small government owned apartments in high rises. The city was almost completely re-built after being bombed in World War 2. Many people had weekend homes called Dacha – small houses often made from wooden logs about 1–1½ hours drive from the city. They had gardens, but sometimes no running water or electricity. We grew Dutch carrots, potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes, raspberries, strawberries and gooseberries in ours. Family and friends planted the garden in spring after the snow melted and maintained it for months until the harvest in autumn. We preserved and pickled the vegetables to use through winter – dill-pickled cucumbers, tomatoes and sauerkraut. The berries would be made into jams which were really great to mix with farm cheese and eaten with rye bread for breakfast.

What does a typical day’s food look like? The focus of Russian cuisine is dairy products, grains like buckwheat and rye, and protein rich foods such as eggs, chicken and veal. Chicken livers and beef tongue are prized ingredients delivering nutrition and taste!

Breakfast: Rye bread with butter and cheese/salami/cottage cheese or cooked buckwheat with milk and tea or coffee with milk.

Lunch: Eaten around 1–2pm, lunch is the main meal of the day. It usually has an entrée of a vegetable and meat soup like borsch, followed by a main of meat or chicken such as chicken meatballs served with fried or mashed potatoes, rice or pasta and served with pickled or fresh vegetables.

Dinner: A light meal is usually served. Possibly a grain dish with a dairy food like cottage cheese, or leftovers from lunch, or a salad or sandwich with cold or smoked meat or fish. Desserts are usually a compote made from berries or a baked apple cake. Buttermilk is a favoured non alcoholic drink made at home using a starter culture and enjoyed all year round.

What are 3 ingredients this cuisine couldn’t do without? The top 3 ingredients are potatoes, beetroot and sour cream. These ingredients are used every day in a variety of ways (soups, salads etc.) and are available all year.

What is your favourite dish? A favourite dish of mine is called pod shuboi which translates into ‘under a fur coat’ (dressed herring salad in English). It is very popular especially during celebrations and is the dish that my mother often makes for our family and friends. It is a layered salad composed of diced salted herring covered with layers of grated boiled vegetables (potatoes, carrots, beetroots), chopped onions, and mayonnaise. Grated boiled beetroot covered with mayonnaise is the final layer and gives the salad a rich purple colour. It is often decorated with grated boiled eggs (whites, yolks, or both).

Can you suggest a hero ingredient? Cabbage! We had a huge wooden barrel in our tiny apartment right next to the bathtub where my father would make huge quantity of sauerkraut and it would take 3 weeks to ferment and become yummy. It would be served with onion and a drizzle of oil as a side dish for everything.

Dietitian Milena Katz BSc (Nutrition) (Hons) BTeach, APD AN has an interest in women’s health, food and evolution, complementary medicine and anti-ageing and is particularly passionate about the nutrition status of older adults especially those in aged care facilities. You can contact Milena here: www.aheadinhealth.com.au
IN THE GI NEWS KITCHEN THIS MONTH

Anneka Manning’s Family Baking

Rhubarb, apple and strawberry oat crumble

If you haven’t put these winter fruits together before, you’re in for a treat. They pair up beautifully in this warming crumble, with the slightly tart flavour offset perfectly by the sweet, cinnamon-infused topping. This is one of my favourite crumbles and I usually make it in individual dishes, but you can also cook it in a 6-cup ovenproof dish for 50–60 minutes. The recipe is from my book, Mastering the Art of Baking, published by Murdoch Books.

Serves 6.

600g (1lb 5oz) granny smith apples
2 teaspoons lemon juice
350g (12oz) trimmed rhubarb
250g (8oz) strawberries, hulled, large berries halved
1 vanilla bean, split lengthways and seeds scraped
2/3 cup sugar

Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F. • Peel the apples and cut into 1.5–2cm (½–¾in) pieces. Toss the apples and lemon juice together in a large bowl. Cut the rhubarb into 2.5cm (1in) lengths. Add to the apple with the strawberries, vanilla seeds and sugar and toss to combine. Transfer to six 1-cup heatproof ramekins or dishes. • To make the crumble topping, put the oats, flour, sugar and cinnamon in a medium bowl and mix to combine. Use your fingertips to rub in the butter until well combined. Sprinkle the crumble topping evenly over the fruit in the ramekins or dishes. • Bake for 30–35 minutes, until golden and bubbling. Cover with foil if the topping is browning too quickly. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

Per serve
1780kJ/ 425 calories; 5g protein; 14g fat (includes 8g saturated fat; saturated : unsaturated fat ratio 1.33); 70g available carbs (includes 53g sugars and 17g starch); 6g fibre; 120mg sodium

What’s for dinner with Dr Joanna

Pot stickers 3 ways

These delectable little parcels are a favourite with our sons – both my food editor Mel’s and mine. I make these with my boys and with us all wrapping up the parcels it takes no time at all. We make each variety a different shape so we can tell them apart when serving them up. Each filling is enough to make 24 wontons – enough to feed 4 people with 6 pot stickers each. Once one batch is cooked you can keep them warm in a low oven while you cook the others. Serve with stir-fried or steamed Asian greens.

**Pork & cabbage:** 1½ cups Lombok cabbage, blitzed in a food processor • 1 garlic clove, minced • ½ small red onion, finely diced • ½ tsp white pepper • 1 tbsp (20ml) soy sauce • 200g (7oz) free-range pork mince • 24 wonton wrappers • 1 tbsp (15ml) extra virgin olive oil

**Prawn, garlic & spinach:** 2 garlic cloves, minced • 150g (5oz) spinach leaves • 50g (1¾oz) water chestnuts, finely chopped • ½ tsp white pepper • 200g (7oz) peeled raw prawns, chopped or minced • 24 wonton wrappers • 2 tbsp (40ml) extra virgin olive oil • 1 tsp sesame oil

BakeClub founder Anneka Manning shares her delicious better-for-you recipes for snacks, desserts and treats the whole family will love. Through both her writing and cooking school, Anneka teaches home cooks to bake in practical and approachable yet inspiring ways that assure success in the kitchen. You can follow her on Twitter, Facebook or check out her website.
Tofu, cabbage & shiitake: 1½ cups lombok cabbage, blitzed in a food processor • 1 garlic clove, minced • 1 tsp ginger, minced • ½ small onion, finely diced • 100g (3½oz) frozen peas • 50g (1¾oz) water chestnuts, finely chopped • 1 tbsp (20ml) soy sauce • ½ cup firm tofu, crumbled • 24 wonton wrappers • 2 tbsp (40ml) extra virgin olive oil • 1 tsp sesame oil

To make pork & cabbage pot stickers • Heat a frying pan with 1 tsp extra virgin olive oil over medium heat and sauté the cabbage, onion and garlic. Stir the mixture until the liquid has absorbed and the onion and cabbage softened but not coloured. Set aside to cool. • In a medium sized mixing bowl, combine the pork mince, pepper and soy sauce. Add the cooled cabbage mixture and mix well. • To assemble: On a clean work bench, have a small bowl of water and pastry brush (or I just use my finger). Line up 6 wonton wrappers and place a small teaspoon of mixture in the centre of the wrapper. Brush 2 sides or half of the wonton wrappers edges with a little water (this helps seal the wonton sides together). Fold over the sides, so the wrapper is a triangle or rectangle (your choice) and gently squeeze out any air bubbles caught around the meat. This is an important step as if there are air pockets the potstickers will burst when steaming. • Line a container or plate with greaseproof paper and then place the wontons on top, making sure to space them out. • When ready to cook, heat a frying pan with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Place the wonton down flat on one side. This is the side you are wanting to fry and brown. Once browned, approximately 2 minutes, add a ¼ cup of water and quickly cover the frying pan to trap the steam. Steam the potstickers for 3–4 minutes to cook through. Serve immediately with soy sauce.

To make prawn, garlic and spinach pot stickers • Heat a frying pan with half a teaspoon of olive oil, add the garlic and spinach. Gently fry the spinach releasing the liquid and allowing the spinach to wilt. Remove from the heat and squeeze any residual liquid. Cool, then roughly chop the spinach. • In a medium size bowl, place the spinach and the remaining ingredients and mix to combine. Assemble and cook, repeating the same process as for the pork and cabbage potstickers.

To make the vegetarian pot stickers • Heat a frying pan with a teaspoon of extra virgin olive oil. Gently sauté the cabbage, garlic, onion and ginger until the liquid has evaporated and the vegetables have softened. Add the tofu, peas, shiitake mushrooms and water chestnuts and continue to stir over the heat for another minute. Remove from heat. • Add the sauces and the spring onion to the mixture, stir again to combine and season with salt and pepper to taste. Assemble and cook, repeating the same process as for the pork and cabbage potstickers.

Per serving (6 pot stickers)
Energy 815kJ, Protein 18g, Fat 13g (including 2g saturated fat; saturated : unsaturated fat ratio 0.18), Carbohydrate 32g, Fibre 3g

Joanna McMillan PhD is a qualified dietitian and nutritionist. She is director of nutrition consultancy company Dr Joanna, and founder of Get Lean – the online healthy lifestyle system. She is a popular media spokesperson in Australia with regular TV and radio appearances, writes for several magazines and blogs, and has authored several books including The Low GI Diet (with Prof Jennie Brand-Miller). Joanna is a proud ambassador for Diabetes Australia and The Skin and Cancer Foundation. She is also a former fitness instructor and continuing exercise enthusiast which she juggles with being Mum to two very energetic boys. You can follow her on Twitter, Facebook or check out her website.
Bean me up Chrissy!

Pulled pork and black bean sliders with green chilli salsa

Black beans, also known as black turtle beans, are used extensively in South American and Cajun cuisines and are a key ingredient in Mexican (and Tex-Mex) fare such as burritos, quesadillas and tacos. You can cook them from scratch or buy the canned versions – both are rich in phytotenurients as well as all the other goodies beans bring to the table.

• Preparation time: 25 minutes
• Cooking time: 2 hours 15 minutes
• Makes 12 sliders

1 tbsp (20ml) olive oil
1kg (2lb 4oz) piece free-range pork scotch fillet (pork neck)
2 onions, coarsely chopped
2 long red chillies, seeded and finely chopped
4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
2 tsp sweet paprika
2 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground coriander
2 cups (500ml) tomato passata
1 tbsp (20ml) balsamic vinegar
1 tbsp (20ml) maple syrup
1 fresh bay leaf
400g (14oz) can black beans, drained and rinsed

To serve
12 low GI sourdough or grainy bread rolls, warmed
Butter lettuce leaves

Preheat the oven to 160°C (315°F). • Heat 2 teaspoons of the oil in a large flameproof casserole dish over high heat. Add the pork and cook for 1–2 minutes each side or until browned all over. Remove from the dish and set aside. • Return the dish to medium heat, add the remaining oil and the onion, chilli and garlic and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes or until softened. Add the paprika, cumin and coriander and cook, stirring, for 1 minute or until fragrant. Return the pork to the pan with the tomato passata, balsamic vinegar, maple syrup, bay leaf and 250 ml (9 fl oz/1 cup) water. Stir to combine and bring to the boil. Cover, transfer to the oven and bake for 2 hours or until the pork is very tender. • Meanwhile, to make the green chilli salsa, process the coriander, parsley and chillies in a food processor until finely chopped. Add the lime juice and olive oil and process until well combined and season to taste with salt if desired. • Remove the pork from the dish and set aside to cool slightly. Use two forks to shred the meat. Return the pork to the dish with the black beans and simmer over medium heat for 5 minutes or until heated through. Serve the pork and black beans in warm grainy rolls with the salsa and butter lettuce leaves.

Per serving (1 slider)
330 calories/1390kJ; 25g protein; 8g fat (includes 2g saturated fat; saturated : unsaturated fat ratio = 0.33); 35g available carbs (includes 8g sugars and 27g starch); 7g fibre; 590mg sodium

Green chilli salsa
½ cup coriander (cilantro) leaves
½ cup flat-leaf (Italian) parsley leaves
2 long green chillies, seeded and coarsely chopped
1 tbsp (20ml) lime juice
1 tbsp (20ml) olive oil

Chrissy Freer, author of Supergrains and now Superlegumes (both published by Murdoch Books), creates delicious recipes with a holistic health focus. She has contributed to countless magazines and books as a recipe developer, nutrition writer, food editor, and stylist. You can find out more about Chrissy here.
GLYCEMIC INDEX FOUNDATION NEWS

Make mine muesli

I know many people skip it, but here at GI News we are great believers in it. What? Breakfast. We think it’s important and we recently covered a range of studies about its benefits in GI News. I certainly do the “mum” thing and tell my two that they need to eat breakfast before they dash out the door to school so that they have the energy to get them through the morning and perform at their best.

Prof Jennie Brand-Miller backs me up. “Breakfast” she says “is the most important meal of the day, contributing substantially to daily nutrient intake and energy needs. For children and teens, eating a low GI breakfast has been associated with learning and better school performance. It provides a more constant level of blood glucose compared with the fluctuating glycemic response to a high GI breakfast, resulting in a smaller decline in concentration.”

Here’s a link to the research that has shown that breakfast eaters perform better than those who regularly skip breakfast. In particular, children and teens that eat a low GI breakfast have shown improved cognitive skills in the classroom compared to those that skip it. Our brains run only on glucose, and have essentially no reserves, so it is absolutely essential that a constant supply of glucose is provided to our brains.

The benefits of breakfast eating and more specifically breakfast cereal also holds true for adults as people who regularly eat breakfast cereal are more likely to have a healthier diet, to weigh less, and are less likely to develop cardiovascular disease or diabetes.

My regular go-to breakfast to kickstart my metabolism is natural-style muesli. Most are low GI (check out the Shopper’s Guide to GI Values or the database at www.glycemicindex.com for your favourite brand). And there’s a bonus with muesli. You can have a small bowl for breakfast, lunch or for a quick dinner (if there is nothing else in the cupboard) and my new favourite time as an afternoon or after dinner snack. There is nothing nicer than a bowl of your favourite muesli topped with low fat Greek yoghurt and fruit.

Here in Australia we have a number of muesli products that carry the GI Symbol to make it easy to choose a healthy option. These include: Morning Sun® Natural Style Muesli Range (GI=49); and Coles®Vanilla Flavoured Oat Clusters (GI=54), Apricot Date & Almond Muesli (GI=44) and Summer Fruits Muesli (GI=54).

If these brands aren’t available where you live, simply look for natural style options that include traditional grains such as rolled oats, pearl barley, and quinoa; bran; seeds and some dried fruit and nuts.

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Q&A WITH JENNIE BRAND-MILLER

Why are some oatmeal porridges low GI and others high?

Oats make great porridge, becoming deliciously thick and creamy when you cook them thanks partly to their soluble fibre. We have tested various porridge oats over the years here at SUGiRS and we find they can range from low GI to rather high. Why the difference? It’s all in the processing.

After harvesting, raw oats are cleaned and hulled. Oat groats or whole oats are the de-hulled oat grain (they have not been GI tested but we would guesstimate they would have a low GI value similar to steel cut oats). You can use them in salads, pilafs and soups instead of pearl barley or spelt. Oat groats are processed to produce a range of products to make your breakfast porridge including:

- Steel-cut oats (also called pin-head or Irish oats) are groats that have been chopped up with a steel blade (GI 42–52 depending on the brand).
- Scottish oats are stone-ground oat groats.
- Traditional rolled oats (old-fashioned oatmeal) are groats that are steamed (to soften) then rolled to produce flakes (GI 57)
- Instant oats (quick oats) are very fine oat flakes milled from steamed steel-cut oats or groats (GI 82). Some brands are pre-cooked so you just add hot water to make porridge. Some have flavourings and sweeteners added.

If you want to serve your porridge with oat milk (GI 69), this is made from steamed or heat-treated oat flakes or oat flour.

How processing grains affects starch digestion. It’s worth remembering that one of the most important ways in which our diet differs from that of our ancestors is the speed of carbohydrate digestion and the resulting effect on our blood glucose and hence every cell in our bodies.

Beginning about 10,000 years ago, when the first groups of hunter-gatherers adopted farming, our diet changed in many ways. For the first time, starch became the dominant source of calories. Large quantities of harvested cereal grains tipped our diet from being more animal to more plant. Those plants were what we would now call wholegrain cereals (wheat, rye, barley, oats, corn/maize and rice). Food preparation was simple back then: grinding food between stones and cooking it over the heat of an open fire. The result was that although we were eating a higher carbohydrate diet, the carbs were digested and absorbed slowly and the effects on our BGLs minimal.

This diet was ideal for hard working farmers because it provided slow-release energy that helped to delay hunger pangs and provided fuel for working muscles long after a meal had been eaten. It was also easy on the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas. As far as we can tell, diabetes was rare.

Over time however, we developed the technology to grind grains more and more finely, and to separate bran completely from flour. Finally, with the advent of high-speed roller mills in the 19th century, it was possible to produce flour so fine that it resembled talcum powder in appearance and texture. These fine white flours were – and are – highly prized because they make soft bread and delicious, airy cakes and pastries. Then something we didn’t expect happened, too – blood glucose rises after a meal became higher and more prolonged, stimulating the pancreas to produce more insulin. As a result of these developments, we not only experienced higher blood glucose spikes after a meal, but we also experienced greater insulin secretion. We now know that excessively high glucose and insulin levels are among the key factors responsible for diabetes, heart disease and hypertension. And because insulin also influences the way we metabolise foods, it ultimately determines fat storage around the body.

Professor Jennie Brand-Miller (AM, PhD, FAIFST, FNSA, MAICD) is an internationally recognised authority on carbohydrates and the glycemic index with over 250 scientific publications. She holds a Personal Chair in Human Nutrition in the Boden Institute of Obesity, Nutrition, Exercise and Eating Disorders and Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney. She is the co-author of many books for the consumer on the glycemic index and health.