

# THE NEW DIET YOUR GUT WILL LOVE

**Turns out a small African tribe have the link between food choices and belly bacteria nailed. Discover easy ways to reap the benefits right here**

By Alex Davies

We're always hungry for diet inspiration from around the globe. Now for the latest health-boosting addition to the list: the Hadza approach. Say what? The subject of research fresh out of Stanford University, it's based on the eating habits of the Hadza people in Tanzania, one of the world's few remaining traditional hunter-gatherer populations. After spending time studying them, a clever Stanford team discovered how diverse the gut ecosystem of the Hadza is compared with those in industrialised countries. What that means for you? "The idea is to have as much variety in our microbiome as we possibly can, to establish a healthy gut profile. We consider that to have protective effects in the body," explains Charlene Grosse, an accredited practising dietitian with Specialised Nutrition Care in Perth. "Dysbiosis, or an imbalance of the gut microbiota, has been associated with conditions like inflammatory bowel disease. Microbiota is also integral to immune function." Ready to boost your bugs? Here's how - no hunting required.

## LOVE THE F WORD

The Hadza clock up about 100g of fibre daily via the likes of tubers and fruits. And while guidelines encourage us to aim for 25-30g, it's thought only four in 10 Aussies get that much, according to the CSIRO. "Fibre creates a more diverse and healthy gut flora," says Fiona Tuck, nutritional medicine practitioner and author of *The Forensic Nutritionist*. "So many people don't have enough in their diets. We're having so much processed food, [so] we're losing valuable fibre and having more gut issues." No one's asking you to aim for 100g like the Hadza though. "We'd probably all be hospitalised with abdominal pain if we did that," clarifies Grosse. "The microbiota profile of an average Western person is very different [from the Hadza] and we wouldn't be able to digest and manage those amounts." But we could all benefit from getting closer to that 25-30g target. Eating enough of the F stuff is "linked with [a reduced risk of] bowel disorders, as well as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity", adds Grosse. "It also helps to reduce the amount of toxins and inflammation in the bowel." Go for fibre gold with the simple equation to the right...

½ cup of wholegrain cereal

2 slices of wholegrain bread

2 fruits (leave the skin on that apple)

2 cups raw vegies or salad

¾ cup baked beans

=  
about 27.5g fibre

## REPEAT OFFENDER

Reality check before you knock back a second serve of toast: there's more than one type of fibre. Score them all by keeping your plate varied. "There's insoluble fibre in nuts, seeds, grains and the skins on fruit and vegetables," says Grosse. "Meanwhile, soluble fibre is in oats, lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans and fruit flesh. Then there's resistant starch in things such as just-ripe bananas and rice or potato that's been cooked then cooled, like in a potato salad." Tuck's easy tip? Switch up at least one meal daily to bring some variety. If you love porridge, play around with toppings; or swap the vegies in your usual salad (you're already over lettuce and tomato on repeat, right?). She also highlights the value of prebiotic foods, which "act like a fertiliser for probiotics or good gut bacteria. Great sources are Jerusalem artichoke, leek, onion and fennel. You can also buy supplements of the [prebiotic fibre] inulin." Win!

## TAP A SUPERFRUIT

Introducing baobab - a Hadza staple and kick-arse fibre source. Sound familiar? Chances are you've spotted powdered versions of the African fruit in health food stores. "If you had 4.5g of the powder, that'd give you 2g of fibre, which is thought to be the prebiotic kind," says Grosse. Baobab also packs heavyweights such as calcium, vitamin C, potassium, magnesium and zinc. Worth forking out for? "It can be one way to boost your fibre intake, but we can quite easily get that through wholegrains, nuts, vegetables, legumes and more natural sources in our environment," says Grosse. Still intrigued? Enjoy the powder in smoothies, breakfast or straight in a glass of water. Bottoms up.

## EAT SEASONALLY

The Stanford lot saw the Hadza's diet vary with the seasons - and, with that, corresponding changes in their gut microbiota. So, if we stick to what's naturally around in summer, winter et al, would our bellies be as happy as our wallets? "There's good validity in terms of eating seasonally," says Grosse. "Fruit and vegetables are in their prime, so you're getting good quality rather than foods that have been stored for months in refrigerators or processing places. It'll be easier on your digestion." Not to mention that tweaking your diet every few months constantly introduces more food variety. Consider it a winner. **WH**

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**Vege-trouble for our fibre quota: only this percentage of Aussie women eat the recommended five veg and two fruits a day.**

Source: CSIRO