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February 16, 2011

## Natural Foodie: Artist offers a fresh perspective on raw vegan foods

By Avery Yale Kamila [akamila@mainetoday.com](mailto:akamila@mainetoday.com)  
Staff Writer

Inside her Munjoy Hill demonstration kitchen, Elizabeth Fraser adds soaked almonds, whole vanilla beans, Medjool dates, a pinch of cinnamon and water to her Vitamix blender. After less than five minutes of mixing, the blender contains a white, frothy liquid.

Fraser pours the mixture into a special mesh bag positioned over a bowl.

"You kind of milk it like a cow," she says as she squeezes all the liquid from the bag, leaving behind the almond pulp, which will be dried and used in desserts and crackers.

Then she presents me with a glass of the freshest, most delicious almond milk I've ever tasted.

The ease with which she made the almond milk coupled with its flavor was like a health food revelation to me. But to Fraser, it was just another day in the life of the Girl Gone Raw.

That's the name of her raw vegan chef business, which offers classes, private parties and food coaching from her Munjoy Hill studio to groups and individuals.

Fraser started off our visit by whipping up one of her signature green smoothies. While it tastes like a regular fruit smoothie, this beverage packs an extra nutritional punch in the form of fresh kale leaves.

"Kale can be a little bitter," Fraser cautioned, as she added it to the blender along with blackberries, blueberries, bananas, cinnamon and water. "So if you're new to



Elizabeth Fraser creates a smoothie from kale, blackberries, blueberries, bananas, cinnamon and water in her Munjoy Hill demonstration kitchen. [click image to enlarge](#)

Photos by Avery Yale Kamila/Staff Writer



Some of Elizabeth Fraser's raw vegan dishes include cashew cilantro burgers, parsnip stir-fry, flaxseed crackers with cashew cheese, whoopie pies and carob candies. [click image to enlarge](#)

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### GIRL GONE RAW

**WHERE:** 81 Congress St., Portland



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green smoothies, go with spinach."

Raw, leafy greens are a key to good health, Fraser said, and everyone could benefit from eating more of them.

"By breaking down the greens (in the blender) you get all the nutrients they have to offer," she said.

The smoothies, along with all the other foods in a raw diet, aim to improve health. Those who consume a large percentage of raw food do so because they want to benefit from the living enzymes available in food that hasn't been heated above 120 degrees.

Fraser said common health benefits of eating a lot of raw foods include increased energy, weight loss, clear skin and mental clarity.

"It's really important to switch up your greens," said Fraser, suggesting Swiss chard, dandelion greens, arugula and cress as alternatives to kale.

In general, she recommends a ratio of 40 percent greens to 60 percent fruit in the smoothies. However, for folks who want a more savory smoothie, she advises cutting the fruit and adding in ingredients such as cucumbers, cilantro or parsley. This is also a better option for diabetics and people on low-sugar diets.

In addition to the drinks, Fraser presented me with an attractive and delicious spread, which included cashew cilantro burgers, parsnip stir-fry, flaxseed crackers with cashew cheese, whoopie pies and carob candies. Not only did it look gorgeous, but every dish was bursting with flavor and texture.

Fraser started down the road that would lead her to raw cuisine more than 20 years ago.

"My mom passed away from breast cancer when I was 18," Fraser told me. "I became really aware of health."

She adopted a pescatarian diet, which is a vegetarian diet that includes fish. Around the same time, she developed arthritis in her right hip and had to give up her passion for running. As a result, she began to gain weight.

"Three years ago, I decided to go vegan," Fraser said. "I felt a lot better, but I still had struggles with weight."

While making the switch to vegan eating, Fraser kept hearing about the health benefits of raw foods. So she trained with Kittery-based raw chef Alissa Cohen, the internationally renowned author of "Raw Food for Everyone" and "Living on Live Food."

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- Nut-Free Raw Foods, 6 to 8:15 p.m. Feb. 24; \$65
- Green Smoothie Bliss, 6 to 7:30 p.m. March 1; \$25
- Festive Raw D'oeuvres, 6 to 8:15 p.m. March 8; \$65

**JOIN A 30-DAY Green Smoothie Challenge:**

The next challenge begins March 7. Find details at [www.girlgoneraw.com](http://www.girlgoneraw.com).

**GIRL GONE RAW'S CASHEW CILANTRO BURGERS**

- 1 cup raw cashews
  - 5 to 6 sundried tomatoes, soaked in water 1 to 2 hours
  - 1 handful fresh cilantro
  - 1 teaspoon olive oil
  - Sea salt to taste
- Place ingredients in food processor and blend until everything clumps together. Shape into four patties and serve on a leafy green with fresh tomato, basil and avocado.



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