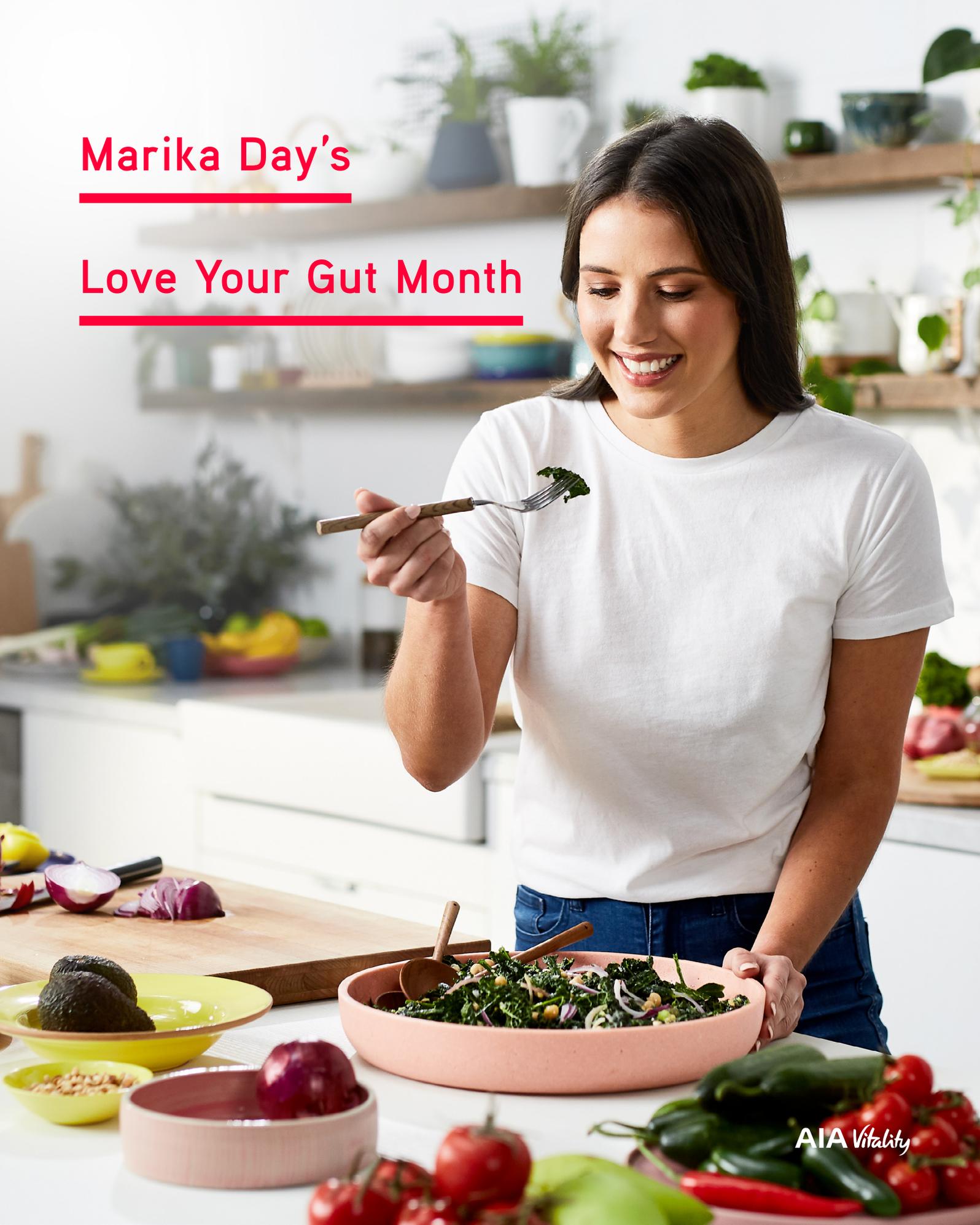


# Marika Day's

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# Love Your Gut Month

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Welcome to the first instalment of Love Your Gut Month. This week, we'll be looking at the crucial role that fruit and veg play in your overall gut health.

### Meet your microbiome

The gut microbiome is composed of trillions of microorganisms that live inside your intestinal tract. Your microbiome is unique, and it can be altered by factors like diet, exercise, environment and stress.

Think of your microbiome as an ecosystem like the Great Barrier Reef: it thrives on diversity.

### Caring for the microbiome

The more diverse your diet is, the more beneficial it is for your microbiome. That means making sure you get enough fibre, omega-3s, polyphenols, and limited amounts of protein and saturated fats.

### Feeding the microbiome

In terms of fruits and veg, the ideal way to feed your gut flora is by eating 30 different plants each week. That may seem daunting, but it is very doable. Six plants in a soup recipe, eight plants in a salad. Very soon they all add up to a happy gut.

#### Glossary

**Omega-3s:** a family of essential fatty acids found in foods like salmon, chia seeds and walnuts.

**Polyphenols:** micronutrients found in plant-based foods like cloves, blueberries and artichokes.

**Proteins:** macronutrients needed for body growth, maintenance and fuel – can be sourced from animal- or plant-based foods.

**Saturated fats:** fats that are solid at room temperature and have been linked with high blood cholesterol levels – usually found in animal products like butter, cheese and fatty meat.

**Do you stack up?**

The typical Western diet is low in fibre and omega-3s, but high in saturated fat and animal protein – pretty much the opposite to an ideal eating plan for good gut health.

Most of us have a little room to improve, but there's good news. The gut microbiome is extremely responsive to diet. In fact, you can affect your gut within just 24 hours of making dietary changes.

**List the meals you ate yesterday** (go on, you can be honest):

How many plants are in these meals? If you're eating four or more per day, you're already on track to hit the ideal of 30 per week. If it's fewer, then you've got a goal to aim for.

Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch \_\_\_\_\_

Dinner \_\_\_\_\_

Snacks \_\_\_\_\_

**What's in a serving size?**



**Peas**  
half a cup



**Strawberries**  
one cup



**Green beans**  
half a cup



**Mango**  
one cheek



**Sweet potato**  
a fist-sized piece



**Avocado**  
one third



**Apricot**  
two (or three small ones)



**Lettuce**  
one cup

### Fibre feeds you, and your gut

The different microbes in your gut feed on the different types of fibre that you eat. The Australian Government's dietary guidelines recommend that people consume 30 grams of fibre per day, but the average Aussie's intake is around 20 to 25 grams.

### Take a small step

Adding a piece of fruit and some nuts to your diet is a simple way to boost your fibre intake by 10 grams.

Fibre bulks out your stool and helps keep you regular.  
Thanks, fibre.

### Fibre helps reduce the risk of:

- Colon cancer
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Diabetes
- Obesity

### Fibre also improves:

- Blood sugar control
- Hyperlipidaemia
- Bowel regularity
- Appetite control
- Mood regulation
- Inflammation
- Immunity

### Glossary

**Inflammatory bowel disease:** ongoing inflammation causing damage to parts of the digestive tract.

**Hyperlipidaemia:** a medical term for abnormally high levels of fats ('lipids') in the blood.

**If you're currently eating**

little to no fruit and veg...



**Try this:**

Think about how you currently eat plants, and do more of it!

Do you sometimes have tomato in your sandwich?

Make it a habit.

Nibble on the occasional apple?

Try one daily.

**If you're currently eating**

the same fruit and veg week after week...



**Try this:**

Add something new from the produce section to your shopping cart each week.

And challenge yourself to eat at least three different-coloured plants at each meal.

**If you're currently eating**

a pretty good selection of fruit and veg...



**Try this:**

Set yourself the goal of getting to 30 different plants each week. This can include frozen fruits and vegetables as well as dry pantry staples like rice and beans.

**Fruit and veg skins are generally loaded with fibre and other nutrients. Eat them when you can!**

- Apple
- Pear



- Kiwifruit
- Potato



- Carrot
- Cucumber



- Eggplant
- Pumpkin

**Breakfast:** The perfect gut-loving omelette (serves 1)

**Ingredients:**

- 2 eggs
- 1 tbsp milk of choice
- 5 mushrooms, diced
- 1/4 red capsicum, diced
- 1 tsp extra virgin olive oil

**Directions:**

- 1 Whisk eggs together with milk and season with salt and pepper.
- 2 Heat olive oil in a small frypan over medium-high heat.
- 3 Add capsicum and mushrooms and cook for 1 minute.
- 4 Pour in egg mixture and cook for a further three minutes.
- 5 Fold omelette in half and cook for a further minute.
- 6 Serve as is or with a side of wholegrain bread.

**Lunch: Nutritious wholegrain wrap (serves 1)**

**Ingredients:**

- 1 wholegrain wrap
- 1 handful baby spinach
- 1/4 avocado
- 2 slices beetroot
- 3 slices tomato
- 1/4 cup grated carrot
- 1 tbsp sauerkraut
- 100g grilled tofu or shredded chicken, or other protein

**Directions:**

- 1 Spread avocado on the middle of the wholegrain wrap. Top with all other ingredients and roll into a wrap.



**Dinner: Quick and easy stir fry (serves 2)****Ingredients:**

- 300g protein of choice
- 1–2 tbsp corn flour
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 tbsp ginger, grated
- 3 tbsp soy sauce
- 1/4 cup oyster sauce
- 1/2 small head broccoli, cut into florets
- 1/2 red onion, sliced
- 1 cup shredded cabbage
- 1 large handful of snow peas, trimmed
- Cooked rice, quinoa or noodles to serve

**Directions:**

- 1 Dice protein and toss in corn flour.
- 2 In a small bowl combine garlic, ginger and sauces. Whisk well.
- 3 Heat olive oil in a pan or wok to medium-high heat. Add protein and cook for four minutes or until browned. Remove from pan and set aside.
- 4 Add vegetables to pan and stir fry for three minutes, or until they begin to cook through.
- 5 Return protein to pan and add sauce.
- 6 Cook for a further three minutes, or until protein is cooked through.
- 7 Serve with rice, quinoa or noodles.



### Marika's four-and-a-bit salad (serves 1)

#### Ingredients:

- 1 bunch kale, separated from stem
- 1/2 avocado, scooped and cubed
- 1/2 400g tin of chickpeas, drained
- 1/2 red onion, sliced
- 1/3 cup pine nuts, toasted
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp lemon juice

#### Directions:

- 1 In a pan, dry roast pine nuts until golden brown.
- 2 Make dressing by combining olive oil and lemon in a bowl. Season to taste.
- 3 Tear up kale into bite-sized pieces and add to a salad bowl with avocado, chickpeas, red onion and pine nuts. Add dressing and toss.

### What's a polyphenol, anyway?

Many plant-based foods are packed with polyphenols – a type of antioxidant that plays a big role in gut health.

A good way of incorporating more polyphenols in your diet is by eating a variety of brightly coloured fruits and veg.

- 1 A piece of fruit (the classic!) 
- 2 Veggie sticks with hummus 
- 3 Berries and yoghurt 
- 4 A small dish of olives 
- 5 Tomato, avo and cottage cheese on grainy crackers 

### Pop these on the shopping list

- Kiwifruit** handy as a snack – eat the skin as well
- Oranges** use juice in salad dressings or freeze into icy poles
- Bananas** blend in a smoothie or eat with muesli
- Pears** team with cheese for a satisfying snack
- Raspberries** sprinkle on your breakfast cereal
- Avocado** chop into a salad or add to a smoothie
- Peas** add to salads, soups and side dishes, or try smashed peas on toast
- Corn** boil or barbecue ears of corn, and use kernels for salads and salsas
- Brussels sprouts** steam, roast or add to a stir fry
- Potatoes** (regular or sweet) use in soups and stews, or old-fashioned mash

For specific government dietary recommendations, see [nrv.gov.au](http://nrv.gov.au)