

Guilt-Free Hot Chocolate

When it's cold outside and you want to warm up your insides, all you need is a guilt-free hot chocolate.

- 1/2 cup raw cashew nuts, soaked in water for 20 minutes
- 2 cups water (1 cup room temperature, 1 cup boiling)
- 4 dates, pitted
- 1 tablespoon raw cacao powder

Drain and rinse the cashews. Blend all the ingredients in a blender until smooth. Add the boiling water and pulse until combined. Drink it while it's hot!

What I learned about my health in 2013...

We all eat, all day and every day, yet for some reason so many people are confused about food. What fascinates me about being a health coach is seeing how we truly are what we eat and how the key to health is each person's individual needs. What I noticed this year with my Smart Life clients is the more they improve their health, the more empowered they feel to pursue the life they want to live.

As I reflect back over the year, I'm inspired by all the changes and epiphanies my clients have shared with me as they've begun to live a Smart Life. I've shared some below and hopefully they'll inspire you, too, as you set new challenges for yourself in 2014.

What I learned about my health in 2013 ...

"... That I have much more control over my health than I ever imagined! I also learned that prioritizing my health truly does make a difference in other areas of my life."

"... A radical new way to look at food. This year I turned 59 and there was no way I wanted to enter my sixth decade as a fat, tired woman. With Ronit's help, I've tried new foods and adopted different diet strategies. Not only have I lost weight, but I have gained so much valuable information on how to eat healthier. I'm eating "smarter" today than ever."

"... To say goodbye to my Weight Watchers app and stop counting calories! I learned to eat healthy whole foods and not only did I finally lose the weight, I also gained freedom from the annoyance of counting points and calories."

" ... Small changes add up to big results. Adopting a healthier lifestyle can seem daunting and impossible, but adding just one simple change every week adds up over the course of a year. I've made small changes in my diet and exercise routines one step at a time. It's been as simple as adding 10 minutes to my workout, choosing to reduce the amount of animal protein I consume in a week or switching to organic produce. Just one change per week allowed me to embrace a healthier lifestyle. The physical changes were enormous. I look better, but more important, I'm much healthier than I was two years ago with more energy and stamina than I had 10 years ago!"

" ... How much health and happiness go hand in hand. When I made smarter choices about my diet, my mood changed drastically. I felt better about myself and that confidence improved my relationships and my productivity at work. Those little successes kept me motivated to stick with it. The better I felt the healthier I wanted to be."

" ... Staying connected to people who inspire me is important in keeping my goals top of mind. Being part of the Smart Life

community not only empowers me but it holds me responsible to me and reminds me to put myself first.”

“...2013 has been a wake up call for me.... I learned that the most important thing in life is to take care of myself. With Ronit’s help, I learned how to nourish my body with whole foods and plenty of fresh vegetables. Trying new spices, herbs and simpler ways of cooking made choosing new foods a breeze. Bring on 2014...I am ready!!!”

9 Ways to Get Organized for Fall

Early fall is the perfect time to get organized. With the end of lazy summer days and the beginning of a new school year, my family, possibly like yours, needs to get its act together. As I prepare to send one daughter off to college and another to a new grade in middle school, I like to gain control of my home before we all get very busy and life gets less manageable.

Let’s start with the kitchen. Try these 9 fast tips for prepping your refrigerator, freezer and pantry for autumn:

1. **Multitask shopping trips.** While shopping with your kids for school supplies, grab a few extra items, like folders, organizers and office supplies, that will make shopping, menu planning and meal prep a snap this season.

2. **Create a recipe file folder.** Buy an extra accordion folder and label the tabs with Poultry, Fish, Beef, Vegetarian, Smoothies, Breakfast, Vegetarian, Dessert and Snacks. Whenever you come across a recipe in a magazine that you want to try, print or tear out the page and slip it into the folder. Check out your options before you go grocery shopping for new ideas and shopping lists.
3. **Protect your favorites from wear and tear.** Use a few extra sheet protectors to keep your go-to recipes safe from liquids or foods. I keep my signature salad dressing recipes in these easy-to-clean sheets in the same cabinet where I keep my spices, oils and vinegars. No more hunting for my recipes, and no more destroying the pages when I cook!
4. **Become a smart labeler.** It starts with extra colorful masking tape (you know, the kind you never knew what to do with). My favorite trick is to use it to label mason jars stored in the freezer with extra smoothies. Include the date it was stored and the contents on the tape. If you've got a big family, you can even mark whose smoothie it is. The same masking tape is also useful for party guests to tag their wine glasses.
5. **Purge your fridge and freezer.** During the summer months, when the days are longer and schedules are more flexible, I find that dinner plans often change last minute – we travel, go out for the day and never make it home until late, or get last minute invitations – and I end up throwing things in my freezer. Now is the perfect time to toss anything from pre-summer months that you never got around to using, or anything that's been frozen and forgotten. This includes all those opened jars or packages with no clear purchase or expiration date.
6. **Hunt for suspicious freezer items.** Examine frozen foods for freezer burn or packed ice crystals and check expiration dates. Use all the items that are about to

expire the earliest and toss out expired items. Any mystery items? They get tossed, too.

7. **Be a pantry sleuth.** Dig through the shelves (yes all the way in the back) and check expiration dates on all canned or jar foods and spices. Trash the ones too old to use and move the items about-to-expire to the front. Bonus points if you add recipes to your weekly menu plan that use these ingredients.
 8. **Recycle your food containers.** Instead of throwing out used glass food jars, wash and reuse them. These can become great containers for smoothies, nuts and seeds. They can also be used to carry a healthy snack to work or school. Trim celery or carrots into sticks that fit right within the jar. Place with almond or pumpkin seed butter on the bottom as “glue” to keep the veggie sticks in place.
 9. **Stay inspired.** Don’t let all this de-cluttering go to waste. Buy a clear picture frame with magnets. Print motivating quotes and insert in the frame. Place on your fridge or your office bulletin board. Keep changing the quote to keep yourself on track and making smart choices, especially when you’re reaching into the fridge. I can always get myself going by looking at the logo of my health coaching company which reads, “I live the Smart Life!”.
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What is a Smart Life?

Many of you have asked me why I started Smart Life. The essence of this brand stems from my overall approach to health and how my family and I live. Each component is represented in the vibrant, energetic colors of the Smart Life logo, as well as the entire design process behind the brand by TLVD.

Hopefully, you'll feel as vibrant and energetic when living this way, too. Follow the link above to see The Smart Life journey unfold conceptually, much like it will in your own life.

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Fresh + Healthy + Nourishing

The Smart Life logo is shown through primary colors. Their vividness represents the energy found in naturally bright, antioxidant-filled foods that produce those same effects in your body: bold, colorful and high-energy. The soft gradients remind us that the nourishing food plays into other areas in our life, keeping us strong, focused, powerful and happy. Whether it's fresh organic foods from a variety of food groups, exercise that makes you sweat, or relationships that bring you joy, pursue what feeds you. That's a Smart Life.

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Natural transformation

Natural and whole foods as they appear in nature, superfoods that change your mind and body, workouts that actually work. No chemicals, gimmicks, tricks, false promises or fads. When you nourish your body with real whole foods, support it with vitamins and minerals found in nature, and stay active every day, change happens gradually and proportionally allowing you to achieve balance.

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Balance

The Smart Life refers to the simple math behind balancing all areas of your life. When all the components of your health – food, fitness and lifestyle – work together in harmony and unison, the result is strength, energy, and vibrancy in perfect proportions. When life is in balance, change happens naturally.

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Cycle of Life

The Cycle of Life is the perfect symbol for our core 6 Months to a Smart Life program. Like the Cycle of Life, you become more vibrant and energetic the longer you stay in the program. We've used each month as a milestone, represented in the six golden ratio spirals in a circular arrangement. These reflect the changes you will go through as we work together each week over the course of 6 months, or 24 weeks. And like in nature, you will see your body flourish in response to your efforts.

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Smart + Active + Engaged

When you actively take charge of your health, your mind and body respond. Whether this is upping your workouts, cooking more at home, organizing your kitchen or involving your family in healthy activities, being proactive about health means success. For all of you. This concept is represented in our logo through dimension and depth with abstract highlighting and shadowing. The circular motion and 24 segments show that a Smart Life is about staying engaged and active, not just on the surface, but by making good choices all the time.

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Smart Life's commitment is to be your personal health champion, showing you exactly what good choices look like and how to make them moment by moment. Whether teaching you proven diet strategies, arming you with new fitness tools, or sharing secrets for balancing work and play, my 6 Months to a Smart Life program will help you learn to live a life you love. Book a FREE one-hour consultation with me today and see how one call can change your life.

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Smart Life Stays Inspired, Too!

In May 2013, I attended my first IIN Live Event in NYC. This event brings together current IIN students for an inspiring, motivational and educational weekend. Joshua Rosenthal, the founder of Integrative Nutrition, brings together nutrition and health experts from all areas of wellness and health. Joshua's inspirational exercises and discussions were woven among lectures from guest experts, almost magically transforming students into health coaches!

I left this conference even more excited about my decision to evolve my psychology career into health coaching. From Andrew Weil and Dan Buettner to Donna Gates and Joe Cross, each speaker inspired me to spread the knowledge of how the way we nourish our bodies can heal us, transform us and help us achieve our goals and prevent illness. I felt blessed to be surrounded by so many caring, soul-centered people who share my vision to transform the world by transforming our lifestyle. At IIN live, I was touched by a "...ripple effect to transform the world!" I'm ready to share that ripple effect with you!

S.H.E. Motivates!

Last month, I attended the S.H.E. Summit in New York City. This two-day event was organized by women's leadership and lifestyle expert Claudia Chan. The conference was attended by women of all age groups, ethnicities and professional backgrounds. The speakers included 40 women in successful positions who reflected upon their achievements and shared practical leadership advice about how women can grow their business or career, make shifts in their life to achieve greater balance and happiness, and expand their networking with other amazing women. The "sisterhood is powerful," said one speaker, an observation that resonated through the attendees and experts.

High off the energy of thousands of women who participated in the S.H.E. Summit, who gathered to celebrate, collaborate and share, I was particularly inspired by Dondeena Bradley, VP of design and development, nutrition ventures, at Pepsico, who said, "Your best self requires your whole self." Often women feel guilty about cultivating their careers, business, family, health or spirituality. It is as if devoting time to our personal goals is somehow overindulgent. What I learned from my experiences as a mother, spouse and career woman is that I am at my best when I attend to all my goals, all my needs and all my aspirations.

I am at my best when I am everything I need to be me. Lubov Azria, chief creative officer at BCBGMAXAZRIA, said, "Inspire people to be better than they can imagine for themselves."

This is my goal at Smart Life Health Coaching. I want to inspire you to be your best, to be your whole self! I can imagine that. And I hope you can imagine that for yourself, too. You deserve it.

Society for Research on Child Development

SRCD Biennial Meeting in Seattle, WA, April 19-20, 2013.

The SRCD Biennial meeting provides an opportunity for thousands of child development professionals and researchers worldwide to share the latest findings about the field. Participants present multidisciplinary research in the area of human development based on empirical research, intervention and teaching. Many of the topics addressed this year were relevant to child health and obesity.

Two of my presentations focused on emotional development in ethnically diverse children. My research showed that the development of emotion understanding in young toddlers and the parenting strategies used to scaffold these emotional skills vary across ethnic groups and reflect the unique cultural values and goals of each group. What can we learn this type of information? One important lesson is how the design and implementation of programs designed to impact a child's emotional, social and overall health must fit his ethnic diversity. One message or strategy will not fit all kids. Similarly, when designing successful health-related programs that address overweight and obese children, we need to consider their unique cultural background.

SRCD Presentation Titles:

Kahana-Kalman R., et al. (2013). Mother's Regulation Strategies in Response to Children's Disappointment in Ethnically Diverse Groups.

Shee, E., Kahana-Kalman, R. & Tamis-LeMonda, C. (2013). The

Development of Emotion Understanding in Ethnically Diverse Children.