

Recipes to spice up your sex life

Clodagh Finn

THE timing of Joanne Faulkner's new book is exquisite. Launched last night, on the eve of Valentine's Day, *Good Food: Better Sex* is a guide to intimacy that uses traditional Chinese medicine and food as its tools.

As the author puts it: "This is a cookbook with a difference that guides you from the kitchen table to the bedroom with over 100 recipes that have sexual health benefits."

On the day that's in it, you might be tempted to dive in at the section entitled "Aphrodisiac" with its tantalising recipes for "kissable vanilla dusting powder" and "lickable chocolate body paint". By all means try them out, but this is a book that is about far more than the passing titillation of one day in mid-February.

"You can use the book as a delicious, accessible, health-focused cookbook, to delve deeper into Tantric and Taoist exercises, or to address specific conditions such as low libido, fertility, post-baby blues, menopause and more," says Joanne Faulkner, a Dublin-based shiatsu practitioner.

She first discovered the transformative and energetic properties of food during her shiatsu training in 1999 when she tasted a salty paste in the kitchen of Lios Dána retreat centre in Inch, Co Kerry, and felt the muscles across her chest ease.

"My whole nervous system was calmer than it had been for weeks. At that moment, I understood that food was more than just fuel; it was medicine," she tells *Feelgood*.

That discovery prompted her to follow postgraduate studies in Chinese medicine to learn how each food — its season, colour and flavour — correspond to a body part, a sensory organ or an emotion.

She used that knowledge to help her own shiatsu clients and, in 2013, began giving conscious cooking classes to help people understand the connection between physical symptoms, emotional conditions, and the food we eat.

Ask her how it has worked in her own life and this is what she says: "I'm in my 50s and I have yet to enter menopause, and my sexual energy is better than ever. I put it down to using food as medicine and the five elements system of traditional Chinese medicine."

But she adds, being human is really messy, and love and intimacy are far removed from the cupid hearts that mark Valentine's Day.

"In my life, I have experienced heart-break, panic attacks, low libido, hormonal spins and the hot flushes of peri-menopause but I am alive and very well without medication or trips to the doctor," she says.

Ultimately, though, these difficulties helped her to find shiatsu and the healing power of food. "You are responsible for your feelings, emotions, reactions, satisfaction and happiness," she says.

Her first book, *Shiatsu and the Art of Conscious Cooking* published in 2014, introduced readers to healing recipes, meditations, acupressure points and traditional Chinese medicine.

This book tackles the myth that love is



SEXUAL HEALING: Joanne Faulkner's new book 'Good Food: Better Sex' is a guide to intimacy that uses traditional Chinese medicine and food as its tools.

neat and predictable. Indeed, you don't even need to have a partner to experience love, says the author. "You can empower, love and cherish yourself with food," she says.

There is more good news: In Chinese medicine, there are no superfoods and no bad foods; just food that suits where you are now. That might mean chilli pesto to reduce inflammation and pain or garlic and apple slices to help a low libido, or beetroot, pear and feta salad, which stimulates blood flow to help erectile dysfunction.

But, as the recipe makes clear, you'd have to eat an awful lot of beetroot to get the same

instant hit as Viagra. This is not a book about quick fixes. It is about using food to talk about and remedy sexual problems; understand and boost sexual energy and deepen the connection with yourself and others.

It is also beautifully produced and includes meditations, poetry, a guide to acupressure points and a selection of Joanne Faulkner's own paintings.

■ *Good Food: Better Sex* costs €22 plus p&p and is available from www.joannefaulkner.ie

Not so healthy

Gluten-free snacks are not as healthy as people think — Safefood found that over three-quarters of those surveyed were high in fat and sugar. The study also found the vast majority of Irish people turning to gluten-free snacks (92%) do not have a gluten-related disorder. Dr Catherine Conlon, director of human health and nutrition, Safefood, said: "For those people who have coeliac disease or a gluten-related disorder, avoiding gluten is an absolute must. However, we would have a concern that some of these snack foods have an unhealthy nutritional profile. Snacking on foods such as fruit and vegetables, unsalted plain nuts and gluten-free rice cakes and cheese, are healthier options for us all."



Weight watchers

Here are two books to watch out for if you are looking for a way to cook yourself slim. In March, *The Daly Dish* (Gill Books) chronicles how Gina and Karol Daly lost almost ten stone between them. It includes over 100 of the recipes — complete with slimming tweaks — that made the couple a hit with their 100,000-plus followers on Instagram.

In May, in *Trisha's Transformation* (also Gill Books), chef Trisha Lewis will share how she lost eight stone by using recipes that help you to beat the bulge but still indulge.



Cooking prize

The people at Innocent Drinks have joined forces with the food blogger Roz Purcell to find Ireland's best dairy-free cook.

Entrants can make any dish they like but it has to include one Innocent dairy-free product. You have four to choose from — oat, almond, hazelnut or coconut.

Post a picture of your dairy-free creation on Instagram and tag both @innocentireland and @rozannapurcell. Five finalists will be invited to take part in a dairy-free cook-off at Airfield Estate in Dublin on February 29. The winner will be presented with a Taste of Ballymaloe, which includes an overnight stay and a cookery course at the famous Cork cookery school.

Top dinners

Meat and two veg is still tops at Irish dinner tables, according to new Bord Bia research.

In 2019, some 11% of adults chose the classic combination, followed closely by chicken dishes and pasta-with-sauce meals, such as spaghetti bolognese.

For children, pasta and sauce was the favourite dish, accounting for 14% of all evening meals, an in-depth national survey into evening meal habits found.

Health and wellness are key concerns but most households complained of being "time-poor".