

Fast and Furious

When beauty ed Marianne pitched a story on detox for this issue, I was intrigued. Not because I want to lose weight, but because I've been imbibing one too many flutes of bubbly and dinners at burger joint Fatboys. Plus, I was keen to improve my sleeping habits — I don't like relying on the odd anti-histamine to knock me out. As with everything else I do, I figured if I'm gonna do it, I might as well be 100 per cent obsessive. It's a full-on cleanse or nothing at all.

Short of a colonic, the Neera Detox sounded comprehensive enough. And there's no need to invest in a \$2,000 juicer or personal chef to execute it, just a diet of Madal Bal Natural Tea Syrup (a blend of organic tree syrup from the sap of palm trees and the maple tree), lemon juice, cayenne pepper and distilled water for a recommended three to five days.

The mixture, upon first taste, was almost delectable. It reminded me of a syrupy *gula melaka* drink, not bad especially if you, like me, have a weakness for ultra-rich *chenolol*. And as stomach-churning as the combination sounds, the slight peppery kick and hint of tartness from the cayenne pepper and lemons managed to balance out the intense sweetness of the syrup.

I was advised to start on the regimen on the weekend because one might feel tired during the detox. But due to the impending story deadline, I went on the liquid diet on a Monday. Although my stomach was growling at around 11.30am, I took a few gulps of the mixture and felt surprisingly satiated.

Throughout the day, I would sip on the concoction, which I had pre-mixed the day before. It tasted a lot

better straight out of the fridge like a refreshing mocktail, and I was able to last through dinner. But by 8pm, I started thinking about food. It wasn't so much about filling my stomach but the notion of chewing on anything suddenly became very appealing. When I looked at my pet husky lying next to my desk, I suddenly became afraid that I might start picturing his plump doggy thigh as a fried chicken leg!

By 9.30pm, I was asleep. And I slept on for nine hours like a baby. But rather than a miracle cure for insomnia, I figure my body was trying to conserve energy from the lack of calories, plunging into hibernation mode. Nonetheless, I felt pleasantly refreshed when I woke the next day — at 6.30am. While I normally would have gone for a jog at that hour, I had been told to stay away from workouts if I were on the programme for the first time. Detoxing on a weekday was probably a good idea as I could distract myself from food obsessions with work.

The next morning, a public holiday, was the biggest challenge I had to face. I had made plans with friends to check out the Tree Top Walk at MacRitchie, which spans over 10km; being no marathon

runner, I found myself gripping the handrails as I walked down the steps from the bridge. I didn't feel faint but was certainly working my body too hard for my recent caloric intake — a typical daily intake of 10 glasses provides about 528 calories, compared to the 1,266 calories that a woman my age and proportions should consume. I decided I had to eat, so we trooped over to a café. It is recommended that one breaks the fast with fruits and juices, followed by a vegetable broth or purée by the end of the day. So I settled for an order of minestrone soup, salad and fresh orange juice.

So would I do it again? After just over 48 hours of fasting, I didn't lose an ounce. But I would be worried if my waistband became suddenly looser because quick-loss diets are nothing more than gimmicks. I did feel more energetic and "cleansed", so placebo or not, the Neera Detox might be something I'll try once a week or so. — May Yip

