



She Says...

New Year, New...We?

It's January, which means it's resolution time again, but Aoife Stuart-Madge explains that turning over a healthy new leaf is a not as easy, now that she's a married woman

It's January, which can only mean one thing: New Year's resolutions. Admittedly, I've had pretty much the same stock New Year to-do list every January since I hit 25 (when my metabolism slowed down and I started paying a heftier price for my festive indulgences), which is as follows: 1. Lose weight. 2. Get fit.

The fact that every January, I have the same two-point plan would indicate that, inevitably, I never manage to achieve these New Year goals. These resolutions go in one year and out the other, as laziness and the constant distraction of a social life all conspire to sully my shiny new leaf before I've even got the chance to attempt anything from the *Easy, Healthy Cookbook* I picked up in the January sales about five years ago.

And now that I'm facing my first January as a married woman, I seem to have hit an even bigger road block on the highway to fabulousness: a husband. As loving and supportive as he is, I'm finding it nearly impossible to achieve my healthy-new-me list with him around. Firstly, food envy makes me cave on my diet before he's even managed to scoff his first leftover cold turkey and stuffing sandwich. And secondly, when he offers to bring me to West 14th for date night, I can't *not* have the white chocolate cheesecake. I mean, why bother? (Besides which, I'm forced to admit, my willpower is currently at an all-time low, now that we're married and he's contractually obliged to love me, lumps and bumps and all.)

Two's A Dieting Crowd

Last year, I tried encouraging my other half to partake in my sporadic dieting ritual, too (it was in the run-up to our wedding and we both wanted to shed a few pounds). But as someone who's always preferred to wing it when it comes to healthy eating rules, I immediately hit turbulence when I was charged with a dieting co-pilot. For starters, I don't exactly live by hard and fast dieting 'rules', per se: the rule book goes out the window. To quote those crazy kids at Thunder Road, "Rules are, there are no rules."

In fact, if I'm being honest, I've pretty much made up every diet I've ever been on as I go along, usually according

to what I fancy eating at any a given time (makes it easier to stick too, you see). For example, if I want a fry-up for breakfast, I'm on the Atkins; but if I want cereal, I'm on a low GI plan or Weight Watchers (whichever affords a bigger portion)... you get the picture. Problem is, it doesn't exactly stand up to scrutiny when a third party gets involved.

Cue a series of questions from him like, "Why are we not allowed bread today when we had sandwiches yesterday?" "Is pasta allowed if it's brown?" The plague of dieting questions even followed me to the cinema ("Does popcorn have carbs?") It got worse when he began to clock that I was moving the dieting goalposts. "Should you really be having mash if we're not eating carbs?" *Gab! I shouldn't have told him mash was a carb.* Only I'm supposed to know when I'm cheating on my diet.

Things got worse when it transpired that his willpower was infinitely stronger than mine. As he sailed into his third week, blissfully content without carbs, I was waking up in cold sweats after a fitful night's sleep spent dreaming of a potato sandwich with a side of fries. I could barely stand it and would have given up by the third week had it not been for the looming fear of fitting into my wedding dress. But by the honeymoon, our stupidly expensive gym membership and makeshift 'diet' had both fallen by the wayside. In part, due to the utterly gripping new boxsets we'd picked up on our travels, but also because, well, with an album full of pretty pictures of me looking thin, I'd satisfied my inner dieting slave for a while.

"Despite all the past New Year vows to better myself, every January, I've forgotten one key thing: to have fun. So stuff the January detox. I don't lose weight; I lose my sanity!"

Resolve To Behave Badly

So this January, I've decided to abandon to my usual destined-to-fail resolutions. I've been asking myself, if it was stuff I really wanted to do, why would I wait until January to do it? Most of the time, New Year's resolutions are more about stuff you *think* you should do, not what you actually *want* to do. So, really, what's the point?

With the foresight to see that my usual New Year list is destined to be a flop, this year, I've resolved to avoid the interminable sense of failure that comes with paying for an annual gym membership I use for just one day; the agonising guilt that comes with succumbing to a cupcake on day two of a diet. So instead, I've decided to come up with a brand new list for 2012, one that will avoid competitive dieting with my husband; one that is packed with stuff we genuinely want to do, and one that is a little less, well, boring. You see, what I've realised is that despite all the past New Year lists and vows to better myself, every January, I've forgotten one key thing: to have fun. So stuff the January detox: I don't lose weight, I lose my sanity! Instead of resolving to be better behaved, I've resolved to be happy – that way, I figure my resolution should be a cinch to keep. I'm going to make 2012 a year of wanton abandon, throwing caution to the wind and generally having a good time.

I don't mean rolling Lindsay Lohan-style, but small, subtle changes designed to enjoy every moment of married life (without risking ending up in jail or hospital). In short, we are ready to Carpe the heck out of this Diem. We'll start with saying no to things we don't want to do (the gym, for starters) to make more time for the fun stuff like travelling and spending time with friends. I'm also going to try and do something every day that's a little bit naughty and that my mother wouldn't approve of (pretzels for breakfast, anyone?). Not forgetting the last thing on my agenda: to stop feeling guilty when we don't live up to the unachievable perfection of our usual resolutions. After all, what is life without white chocolate cheesecake? I'm still coming up with the others, but I've always found the best rules are the one you make up as you go along, don't you? In the meantime, if anyone needs me, I'll be in West 14th. ■

PHOTOGRAPH: JULIET DUNNE/ITP. MAKE-UP: INGLOT. ILLUSTRATION: EMILY NOOROLLAHI. TOP: REISS. SHOES: KURT GEIGER