



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF NUTRITION STUDENT TRISTEN VAN DE KLEY

We recently got together with Tristen Van De Kley from [Tris Alexander Nutrition](#) to talk about life as a full-time student, food blogger and lover of wholefoods and healthy living. Tristen is one of our regular contributors on the [Affordable Wholefoods blog](#) sharing inspiring articles and recipes. Here's what she had to say....

How do you like to start your day on waking?

The first thing I do after waking up is drink a glass of warm water with either the juice of 1/2 lemon or a tablespoon of Apple Cider Vinegar. Not only does it rehydrate you after an overnight fast, but the warm water stimulates the vagus nerve (which extends from the brain to the heart, stomach and intestines), to increase blood circulation and promotes digestion. The ACV or lemon helps to flush toxins, maintain healthy pH levels and improve insulin sensitivity, and both are a good source of potassium.

What's your idea of a healthy breakfast?

A healthy nourishing breakfast really impacts your energy, mood and hunger for the day. I always aim to include a serve of veggies or at least fruit in my breakfast for fibre, vitamins and minerals. I'll also include healthy fats such as whole eggs, avocado or seeds and nuts to keep my blood sugar stable and feeling fuller for longer. I often exercise first thing in the morning (before breakfast) so I'll either have a pre-prepared veggie packed omelette or frittata and include sweet potato or a piece of gluten free toast if I have exercised, or an oat or quinoa porridge or muesli with berries, cinnamon and some grated zucchini (it sounds weird but trust me it's delicious!).

What types of foods do you feel support you in times when the pressure is on with exams or assessments?

Aside from following my usual whole foods diet I really try to avoid sugary foods during study periods and exams, even though this is often a time where we crave sugar due to stress. If I'm really craving sweets I'll enjoy a few squares of dark chocolate. I'll often aim for a lower carb higher fat diet to sustain energy and focus, and have also experimented with a ketogenic diet to improve mental clarity and focus during exams, although this is something I would only recommend under the supervision of a qualified nutritionist/dietitian.

How do you like to relax or unwind?

Watching a movie, taking a relaxing walk in nature and a little meditation. Anything that helps me to stop, sit still or switch off my mind.

Do you have any dietary advice you could offer anyone who is looking to start studying at College or University?

It can be difficult to juggle student life (and budgets) particularly when you've just started, so keep it simple and plan and prepare ahead so you're not skipping meals or grabbing processed foods when you're pressed for time. Focus on a whole foods diet to get a variety of nutrients and eat regular balanced meals to sustain energy and focus. Whole food staples like oats, legumes, veggies and fruit are relatively inexpensive, particularly when you buy in-season. Cook a few extra serves of dinner that can be eaten for lunches over the next few days. Meals like vegetarian legume stews, one-tray roasted fish/chicken/meat with veg, frittatas and salads bulked out with chickpeas and chicken or tuna are easy to make ahead. Nuts and seeds are a great snack to take to uni with you as the protein and healthy fats sustain energy. Prioritise your nutrition as it plays a huge impact on energy, sleep and focus, all of which are so important as a student.

Here are some of the fabulous contributions from Tristen on our blog.

For the raw foodie or health nut – **No Bake Paleo Bars**

The winter dreamer – **Pumpkin, Carrot & Ginger Soup (GF/DF/V)**

The Vegetarian lover – **Quinoa & Lentil Burgers with Turmeric Tahini Sauce**

The bruncher with a sweet tooth – **Banana Berry Breakfast Loaf**

and last but not least, those with a keen interest in the **Health Benefits of Herbs & Spices**

