

# [The volume of it all. i hated that](https://assignbuster.com/the-volume-of-it-all-i-hated-that/)

The first column of a brave new year. I am an eternal optimist, a believer in new beginnings: we can turn over new leaves and wave goodbye to things that no longer serve us. When it comes to food, new beginnings can be useful – sometimes. But, before you turn the page, don’t worry: I’m not about to preach the holy virtues of spirulina or detoxing; I’m not into that.

About eight years ago, I was a recipe developer working in an office with a kitchen in every corner (in fact, it was more kitchen than office). Each day those kitchens were filled with us cooks making dishes from every corner of the world. We had to refine the recipes for home cooks; each had to be tested and tasted. I was the taster too. It was a wonderful education in food, but by the end of each day I felt jaded with eating, overwhelmed by the volume of it all. I hated that feeling – after all, food had always motivated me – but there is vulgarity in having too much food all the time. It felt a bit like I’d had a Christmas dinner every day.

I decided I needed to start afresh, letting what I eat revolve around vegetables, fruit, pulses and whole grains. And I’ve kept it up: not far-out healthy eating, but keeping plants at the core of what I eat, cooking them with care and layering them with flavour so they are downright delicious. This is nothing new or particularly remarkable, but it did change my life. That’s the thing I like about new beginnings: just one small change can trigger an unfolding of events we could never have imagined. For a lot of us, I think January is the time when we are most open to change, especially when it comes to eating. These broths are warming, purging bowls of food to nourish new beginnings in any realm you choose. Both are particularly good when you are feeling off-colour.

Green peppercorn and lemongrass coconut broth (main picture)Made creamy with coconut milk and sweetened with squash, this highly spiced broth feels especially restorative if you’re fighting off a cold. Turmeric, ginger and garlic are all immune-boosting ingredients, while fiery green chillies will blow away your cobwebs for the new year. I use green peppercorns, as I love the grassy punch they give: seek them out fresh if you can; if not, the brined ones in jars will do just fine. Serves 44 tbsp coconut oilA thumb of ginger (about 50g), peeled and roughly chopped2 garlic cloves, peeled1-2 small green chillies, destemmed4 spring onions, trimmed and roughly choppedA small bunch of coriander, leaves and stalksA few sprigs of mint1 heaped tsp ground turmeric15 green peppercorns, fresh or brined2 x 400ml tins coconut milk2 limes1 tbsp vegetable stock powder or ½ vegetable stock cube1 tbsp tamari or soy sauceA stalk of lemongrass½ butternut squash, peeled100g spinach or winter greens100g brown rice noodles1 tbsp honey 1.

Fill the kettle and put it on to boil. Gently warm the coconut oil over a low flame until it just melts. Put the ginger, garlic and chillies (the amount you use and whether you keep the seeds in depends on how hot you like things) into your food processor with the spring onions, almost all of the coriander and mint leaves. Add the melted coconut oil, then blitz for 30 seconds, or until you have a smooth, deep green paste. Scrape into a small bowl, cover with clingfilm and refrigerate until you are ready to use it. 2 Put a deep, medium-sized pan over a moderate heat and add the herb and spice paste, stirring it for a minute while it warms. Stir in the turmeric, peppercorns, both tins of coconut milk, the juice of one of the limes, the veg stock powder and the soy sauce. 3 Fill one of the tins one and a half times with hot water from the kettle and add it to the pan.

Use a rolling pin or pestle, smash the lemongrass so it splinters but remains together, then tuck it into the pan. Bring to the boil then lower the heat and leave it to simmer, bubbling gently. 4 Meanwhile finely slice the butternut squash and add this to the pan too.

5 Shred the greens. Put the noodles into a heatproof bowl and pour over enough of the boiling water from the kettle to cover them. 6 Once the squash is cooked through, add the greens to the soup and allow it to come to a simmer again. Check the seasoning of the soup, adding the honey if it needs some sweetness and more lime and salt as needed. 7 Drain the noodles, then divide them between four deep soup bowls. Ladle over the soup and vegetables, adding a generous squeeze of lime juice and, if you like, a few extra coriander and mint leaves.