

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.

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.