

Blood sugar levels are the key to giving up

GASTRONOMY

A publishing record was claimed in Britain this month as a new book sold 500,000 copies in less than a week.

Even more surprisingly, it was a book on cooking, a subject for which the English are traditionally derided. But perhaps the secret of television cookery presenter Delia Smith's success is that she has brought a continental flavour to a national palate sated with boiled cabbage and pasties. Shops, used to laying in extra stocks when Smith recommends

a new vital ingredient, are now rushing to procure dried porcini mushrooms, which are championed in the new book, *Delia Smith's Winter Collection* (BBC Books, £16.99), as 'an edible work of art'.

However, Smith has also reintroduced English cooks to the once fine art of British cooking, persuading them to abandon pork pies for pork in cider vinegar sauce.

In her winter collection she rediscovers 'good old-fashioned parsley sauce' and steak and kidney pie.

HEALTH

A Norwegian treatment based on Chinese herbs is helping to cure smokers, reports **Tessa Thomas**

SMOKING is getting more difficult. This year new laws have further restricted smokers in Finland and Italy, and many countries now ban smoking in planes and restaurants.

The European Bureau for Action on Smoking Prevention predicts that the restrictions are likely to spread to traditionally more lenient countries, such as Greece, over the next two years.

But even under such pressure, giving up smoking is still notoriously difficult. A recent survey by the World Health Organisation found that 93 per cent of smokers had tried to give up at some time. Nicotine patches, gum or nasal sprays can help, but they are little more than 60 per cent effective.

Smokers keen to give up can now try a method with the highest success rate officially recorded. An independent US survey suggests that the Dr Kimo Concept, developed by a Norwegian, Kimo Karkash, has more than a 90 per cent success rate after six months. Most smokers give up completely within three days of starting the treatment.

"I wasn't convinced by it but I went along anyway," says Lina Beck, an Oslo teacher. She had been smoking for 25 years and was up to 20 a day. Three days later she smoked her last cigarette. "It was incredibly easy. I wasn't even that motivated," she says.

"Giving up is the easy bit - it's remaining a non-smoker that is difficult. Experience shows that willpower is not enough," says Karkash.

So what is the magic ingredient in the new treatment?

There are 72 of them, and they are all herbs. Prepared by traditional Chinese methods, they have been mixed into six formulations, each for a different aspect of the addiction and its withdrawal symptoms.

"One thing that makes giving up smoking most difficult is that the blood sugar level is not maintained," says Karkash. Cigarettes raise the level of sugar in the blood in the same way that eating does, because nicotine acts like adrenaline, stimulating the liver to release sugar.

When the blood sugar level is up, you feel relaxed and focused. Lower it, and you feel irritable, sluggish and have difficulty concentrating. Ex-smokers suffer more than dieters because their livers have been artificially stimulated to produce insulin to counteract high blood sugar for so long that they automatically produce insulin even when it is not needed. That lowers the blood sugar even further. The results are mood swings and increased appetite for food or tobacco.

One of Karkash herbal preparations keeps the blood sugar level up so that neither of these happens. After a month, the body stops over-producing insulin and sugar levels go back to normal.

A similar thing happens with nicotine in the body. After stopping smoking, the

body still has a store of nicotine which it keeps releasing. This stimulates adrenaline production and maintains cravings until the mechanism winds down, which takes up to six months. Another of the herbal formulas, which were seven years in development, releases 80 per cent of the nicotine in eight to ten days.

Another dramatic consequence of stopping smoking is a change in the body's acid balance. Nicotine increases the acidity level, and although it returns to normal after quitting, the change has unpleasant side-effects: restlessness, irritability, numbness in the muscles and skin. Again, herbs are used to restore the body's pH balance more gently.

The fourth key herbal preparation heightens the ex-smokers' senses of smell and taste, so that they react to tobacco and smoke as non-smokers do. "On the third day of the treatment Kimo blew smoke into our faces, which was really horrible," says Beck. She describes a cigarette being lit as "real torture".

"If ex-smokers are to keep it up, you have to create a negative reaction to tobacco," says Karkash. "For instance,

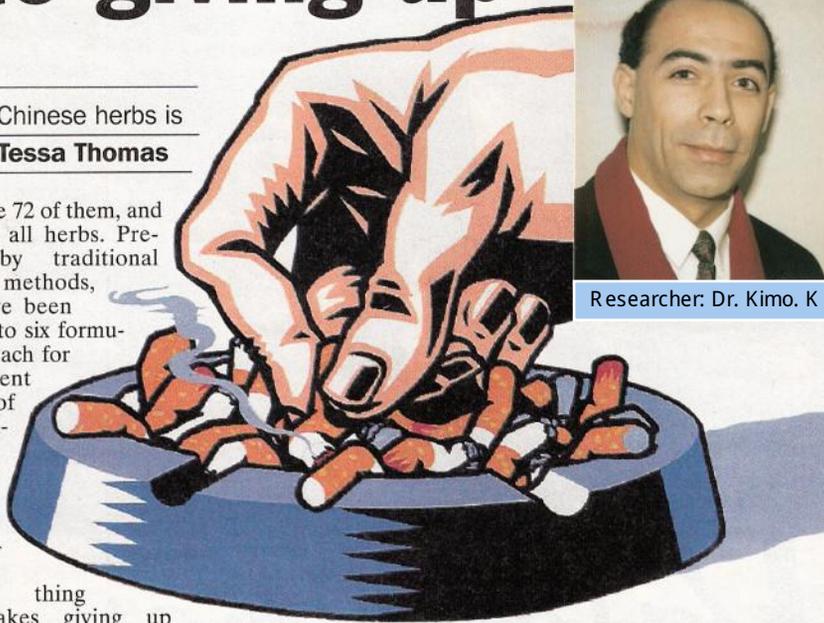
there are special cigarettes that the person can inhale, through the nose, when they get a really bad craving at a party or something. When you have finished one, you feel as if you have smoked 25 cigarettes - dreadful."

No side-effects have been documented to date. The US survey concluded that the method is effective but that the ex-smokers should be followed up for a year rather than just six months.

Large employers are beginning to use the treatment. The Bergensen shipping company offered the treatment to employees, in preparation for moving into non-smoking offices. Most of the smokers took up the offer, and more than 90 per cent are still non-smokers.

Siemens, the German electronics company, has paid for the treatment for any staff at its Norwegian branch who want to try it. Its research showed that it was cheaper to pay for the treatment than let employees carry on smoking.

A new Kimo clinic has opened in Gothenburg; centres in London and Stockholm follow early next year. The treatment, which lasts nine months including follow-up, costs NKr3,550 (\$540)



Researcher: Dr. Kimo. K

ILLUSTRATION: NAN ALLEN

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