Billy Simmonds

world’s first vegan Mr Universe

Heart health game changers

The latest on heart smart nutrients

Health benefits of hemp

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MAY HELP TO SUPPORT NORMAL BLOOD PRESSURE IN HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS

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Go Vita is proud to be celebrating our 30 year birthday this year. From humble beginnings where a handful of health food stores met and swapped product from the boot of their cars, to Go Vita today, the leading health food group in Australia; we have seen many changes over this time.

Health stores 30 years ago had lost the ‘hippy’ reputation of the 70s and were destinations to go for all things relating to natural health especially vitamin and nutritional supplements and hard to find niche health foods that and natural personal care products. While the product mix has continued to grow and change over the years, Go Vita has always recognised the need to keep up with on-trend products in the health and wellness space, and has ensured customers have access to new and innovative products.

With stores all around Australia, Go Vita has worked hard to ensure that each store maintains its individuality but at the same time delivers on the national Go Vita promise of providing personalised honest health advice and value for money.

Many of the brands ranged in our stores have a story behind them. The truth is - at Go Vita, we love an inspirational story! And Billy Simmonds’ story on page 2 is just that! Former Mr Universe and founder of PRANA ON, Billy was literally forced into creating his own product because what he needed didn’t exist. We hope you enjoy Billy’s story and all our articles in this Spring birthday issue!

Yours in good health,
Ann Cattelan BSc
Editor

Cover photography
(of Billy Simmonds) by Dimity Davis
From being an athlete powered by plants, to starting Australia’s leading vegan protein company, Billy Simmonds reflects on the journey to creating PRANA ON.

There’s growing evidence to support the shift to plant-based diets from animal welfare and sustainability, to reducing the risks of a host of health conditions, from diabetes and heart disease to high cholesterol and dementia.

But for Billy Simmonds, former Mr Universe champion and founder of PRANA ON, the journey to a plant-based diet began with performance.

“Believe it or not, my nutrition ideas were formed working at Go Vita. I worked at the Southport store when I was about 16 and met an amazing group of people with an abundance of energy; they ate healthy, nutrient dense foods, superfoods and different types of supplements. I thought, ‘Wow this is really interesting.’ Now the very store I worked in is one of our biggest supporters.”

“Once I left home [about 17 years ago] and started to put food on my own table, I became a vegetarian and later stopped eating animal products all together,” he said.

“I started from the perspective of looking to improve my own performance. I had good bio-feedback, felt really energetic and I could train for a lot longer. I started to think about what I was eating and where it came from, and I wasn’t happy with what I’d seen of animal agriculture.”

Billy didn’t know any other vegetarians and flew under the radar with his nutritional approach, but taking out the Mr Universe title in Hollywood was a game changer. “People were coming up to me afterwards saying, ‘Wow, here’s a guy on a plant-based diet who’s done this!’”

“I started to research nutrition more and my education kept growing. Mr Universe was a big achievement; I was also a power lifter setting a couple of world records; I’ve had a really interesting athletic background and all on a plant-based diet,” Billy said.

“There was nothing on the market with a full, clean plant-based range that met my needs as a body builder and power lifter. I became a student of nutrition to understand how all these supplements worked and I thought, ‘This is something I’m going to have to do myself.’”

Billy started selling a single product out of the boot of his car to friends, fans and followers in about 2012.

“I had one flavour, in one size. It was infused with amino acids and formulated for performance to support muscle growth and repair. They were getting great results and it just spread really quickly,” he said.

“I wanted to make products I could believe in, you could trust were 100 per cent plant-based, with great flavours, great textures and would really take plant-based nutrition to the mainstream.”

PRANA ON is a fusion of natural plant-based wholefoods and superfoods formulated specifically for fitness and active lifestyles. It offers a full range of ‘tools of the trade’ designed to work together for optimum performance. “We’ve got 18 exciting flavours across four different types of plant protein, and some reformulations on the way.” These include organic protein and muscle gainers; paleo...
protein; and blends for metabolic support; peak performance and endurance; and to cleanse, detoxify, and nourish.

The company evolved to employ 60 staff and manufacture all of its products with 100 per cent green energy in Australia. It’s now vegan certified by Vegan.org, which means its processes and ingredients are audited.

“I live and breathe a plant-based lifestyle as we do in our company, from having our staff educated in plant-based nutrition to contributing to various animal welfare projects and events, and Animals Australia for awareness campaigns. For me, this is what I believe in. You don’t have to be a vegan, but I wanted the brand to be a vessel to educate people about plant-based nutrition. It’s a really inclusive brand for everyone looking for healthier options, equally loved by those following paleo or keto approaches.”

And what’s in a name? “Prana means the breath of life; a source of energy. It’s an acronym for ‘plant-based, raw, alkaline, natural and organic nutrients’. PRANA ON is what it is, and [turning] prana on is what it does.”

“I wanted to introduce a word of consciousness into the fitness community; it can be very egocentric. For me it’s been really important to understand energy and vibrations. We use sacred geometry on our packaging and each product represents one of the different chakras.”

Lisa Crawford-Jones is an award-winning journalist and consultant to healthy brands.
Complementary nutrients like vitamin K2, coenzyme Q10 and magnesium can be game-changers for those seeking to improve their cardiovascular health. Leading cardiologist, Dr Ross Walker investigates.

Smart supplements can help keep your heart healthy, reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and heart attack.

Cardiovascular disease claims more than 17 million lives annually throughout the world.

In Australia someone has a heart attack every 10 minutes, with one-third of men and half of women having at least one risk factor for heart disease.

The great news is one-third of deaths from cardiovascular disease are preventable. Exercising for at least 30 minutes daily; maintaining a healthy diet and reducing destructive daily habits, such as smoking or drinking, all count towards keeping our hearts healthy.

A diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains can help protect your heart. Look for lean meats, fish high in omega-3 such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring and trout, and avoid too much salt and sugar.

Smart supplements: Seeking out smart supplements also plays an integral role in maintaining heart health with many good options you can navigate with your health practitioner.

Recently another promising nutrient emerged. Long known for its role as a coagulant, researchers have discovered a specific version of vitamin K, vitamin K2 as MK-7, is a strong cardiovascular ally.

Research has shown vitamin K2 as MK-7 helps maintain and use calcium in the bones. Calcium not used by bone-building cells can accumulate in the arteries and soft tissues, contributing to cardiovascular disease.

Vitamin K2 as MK-7 helps put calcium where it belongs. Think of MK-7 as the body’s light switch. It activates or “turns on” important proteins in the body, such as osteocalcin for strong bones and the matrix Gla protein (MGP) for heart health. By activating these K-dependent proteins, vitamin K2 helps keep calcium in the bones and away from your arteries.

Amid the bounty of recent research on MK-7, one 2015 study stands out. Researchers at Maastricht University in the Netherlands monitored 244 healthy post-menopausal women for three years using pulse wave velocity and ultrasound techniques. The participants, aged 55-65 years, were randomly assigned to take a nutritional dose (180mcg) of a specific form of vitamin K2 as MK-7, called MenaQ7®, daily for three years, or placebo capsules.

After three years, the outcome was amazing. Vitamin K2 as MK-7 not only inhibited age-related stiffening of the artery walls, it improved vascular elasticity. The Stiffness Index in the MK-7 group decreased.

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significantly compared to the slight increase in the placebo group.

Results confirmed vitamin K2 intake is linked to cardiovascular risk and a nutritional dose of vitamin K2 does promote cardiovascular health.

Vitamin K2 delivers vital cardiovascular support, and in a recent study that used MenaQ7®, the MK-7 worked well with other nutrients, including magnesium and vitamin C. This is important since taking a variety of supplements improves our prospects for cardiovascular health. Two options to consider are magnesium and ubiquinol.

**Magnesium:** Consider a 2009 study, where 79 patients with severe congestive heart failure received either magnesium orotate (6,000mg for a month period and 3,000mg for about 11 months) or placebo. After a year of treatment, 75 per cent of the 40 people who took magnesium orotate survived, compared to 51 per cent of those on the placebo. Symptoms also improved for 38 per cent of people taking magnesium orotate, whereas they deteriorated in 56 per cent of people on the placebo.

**Ubiquinol:** Ubiquinol is a more advanced form of coenzymeQ10, the heart’s energy source. Research shows the body can absorb ubiquinol five to eight times more readily than supplemental CoQ10.

Ubiquinol is also proving promising as an additional therapy for people with cardiac complaints as well as those taking statins. While statins are commonly prescribed for cholesterol issues, they can induce myopathy, a condition featuring muscle tension, weakness and pain.

One study found taking statins and ubiquinol together reduced muscle pain by up to 54 per cent and muscle weakness by 44 per cent. Another study on the effect of ubiquinol supplementation on lipoprotein cholesterol plasma levels, found both a reduction in LDL (bad) cholesterol and an increase in CoQ10 levels within the body of each person.

Talk to your health practitioner about the right options for you. And remember, lack of exercise, a poor diet and other unhealthy habits can take their toll over the years.

Dr Ross Walker is an eminent practicing cardiologist, author of seven books and a regular presenter on TV and radio in Australia.

References are available on request.

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**Hayfever Control Formula** contains natural herbal ingredients that help relieve the symptoms of hayfever.

Build your immunity and help yourself ease the symptoms of hayfever!

After all it makes sense, that nature helps clear the problem it creates in the first place.

*Ki Hayfever is a natural formula. It contains natural active ingredients and excipients derived from natural sources. Available from selected health food stores and pharmacies. Always read the label and use only as directed. If symptoms persist see your doctor/healthcare professional.
Your immune system is so much more than a barrier between you and the common cold, with research showing that low immunity and inflammation may be at the root of most disease.

Many of us have heard the statistic that the microbial cells in our body outnumber our own cells by up to 10 to one, but did you know that genetically speaking, microbes contribute around 99 per cent of gene expression and your own cells only one per cent! The huge number of microbial cells which make up the microbiome, in the form of bacteria, yeast, parasites, viruses and protozoa, have an overwhelmingly significant impact on the health outcomes you experience each and every single day, particularly the immune system.

Our immune system goes through crucial stages of development in the early stages of life. Much of this is dependent on the microbiome a baby receives from its mother in the womb and at birth. As the baby moves through the vaginal canal, he or she picks up a sort of ‘seedling sample’ of mum’s microbiome. These initial microbes begin to inhabit baby’s skin and most importantly enter the mouth and gut.

In 2015, 32 per cent of Australian children were delivered via caesarean section (much higher than the World Health Organisation recommended 10-15 per cent), which studies show poses higher risks for babies of allergies, asthma and being overweight. This is probably due to the fact that babies born this way receive very little, if any, of mum’s microbiome.

The birthing process is an essential part of immune development. Mum’s microbiome is a reflection of her environment; for instance, she may have certain parasites and viruses that help her thrive against other microbes that may be present in the area or food supply. These are passed on to baby, presumably, help baby thrive in that same environment. After birth, the colostrum in mum’s breast milk will also contribute important information for the

Kale Brock investigates how taking care of your gut bugs may be the key to avoiding spring coughs and colds.
immune system and gastrointestinal tract, and will slowly increase in sugar content to provide nourishment for the gut microbes. Amazingly, specific cells in mum’s body will carry microbes from her gut into her breast tissue, and these will also be passed on to baby during breastfeeding - how amazing is that!

For three to five years the baby’s microbiome will fluctuate and be a little unstable as it learns and adapts to changes in diet and environment. If antibiotics are taken, there will be a significant reduction in microbiome diversity (a key marker of microbiome health) and some species may be lost forever (see Dr Martin Blaser’s work). During this time the microbiome is digesting baby’s food, providing essential nutrition elements and, according to Dr Natasha-Campbell McBride, is an essential factor for healthy neural and immunological development.

Your microbiome is in constant communication with your immune system. Your microbiome can activate, perpetuate and deactivate inflammation throughout the body to the point where even diseases like diabetes and Alzheimer’s are being attributed to the gut. As you may have heard, around 80 to 90 per cent of the immune cells are located around the gut - the gut-associated lymphoid tissue. Presumably, through complex communication pathways and a process called Quorum sensing, the microbiome acts as a messenger for the body’s own immune cells, indicating what is happening in the person’s environment. For example, what food is available, how much food is available, and of course if there are toxins entering the system.

Studies have shown specific microbes have specific effects on the immune system. Asthma in mice can be reversed through the use of probiotic supplementation, for instance. Autoimmune conditions such as psoriasis and arthritis are heavily attributed to the gut. In an interview with microbiologist John Ellerman, he explained when the gut is ‘too leaky’, macro food molecules enter the bloodstream and stimulate the production of antibodies which, through a process called molecular mimicry (where identical proteins are present in both the food and the body part), can cause the body to attack itself.

These antibodies might attack the thyroid, skin or joints, which we translate as Hashimoto’s, psoriasis or arthritis. Essentially this is the autoimmune disease process.

Professor Mimi Tang at the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute has recently had success in reversing peanut allergies in children using probiotic therapy, capitalising on the immuno-modulating effects of probiotics. But is it a case of simply switching over from the traditional pharmaceuticals to probiotic pills? Or should we be more focused on a holistic approach? As Professor Andrew Holmes at Sydney University says about the microbiome, ‘It’s more like a rainforest restoration. You don’t restore a complex system by adding or subtracting a few species.’

This is where the application of a good gut nourishing diet and a holistic microbiome approach has become paramount in the immune system picture. Avoiding unnecessary use of antibiotics, consuming an unprocessed, wholefoods, gut-nourishing diet (like the one I outline in The Gut Healing Protocol) and taking probiotic supplements is a fantastic way to start. When we provide these ideal conditions for the body, a natural state of homeostasis is much more likely to be discovered.

The gut and the immune system are intricately linked, so to keep on top of your health this spring start looking after your tummy.

Kale Brock is a journalist and researcher in gut health and primal living. A qualified health and exercise coach, Kale has worked alongside some of the best naturopaths and health personalities in Australia.
Discover the goodness of Aloe Vera!

Aloe vera has been used internally and externally for thousands of years for its multiple healing properties. Drinking the inner leaf juice of the plant has traditionally been used to assist with digestion, cleanse and detoxify, stimulate the immune system and alkalise the body. Aloe vera has more than 200 different constituents, including 75 medicinally active compounds in the leaf such as vitamins, minerals, amino acids, enzymes and polysaccharides. Range includes Aloe Juice Natural, Aloe Juice Pulp and Aloe Juice + 20 herbs, Aloe Wellbeing (cleanse), Aloe Repair (digestion), Aloe Recovery (immune) and Aloe Restore (vitality). All products are 100 per cent pure Australian organic aloe vera, preservative free and packaged in glass.

Orgran Vegan Easy Egg

At last a vegetable based egg-free alternative that tastes just like egg!! Use it to make scrambled eggs, quiche, frittata and omelette recipes. Vegan Easy Egg is a good source of fibre, contains 7.5g of protein per serve and is low in fat. Dairy free, egg free, gluten free, GMO free, Kosher, no added MSG, nut free, soy free, vegan, wheat free and yeast free!

Cheeki Coffee Mugs

Say no to single-use plastic disposables and pick up a Cheeki Insulated Water Bottle, Coffee Mug and Food Jar instead.

Double-walled vacuum insulation keeps contents hot for up to 12 hours and cold for up to 24 hours. Coffee Mugs feature your favourite pop-up lid!

Cheeki is recyclable, BPA and toxic free and all products come with leak-proof/spill-proof lids.

Fun colours and a range of sizes means there is a family favourite for everyone.

Refill and reuse with pride and keep your Cheeki for life.

Hay fever can be hell!

Finding relief from hay fever has eluded many, that’s until now! Australian Harvest Organic Horseradish Vinegar combines two organically grown herbs – horseradish and garlic – with certified organic Bio-Curcumin 95%, a concentrated extract of the anti-inflammatory curcumoids from turmeric and the OPC-rich Bio-Grape grape seed extract. The combination of these therapeutic herbs is made into a beautiful tasting herb vinegar by using certified organic apple cider vinegar as the extraction base. It helps to dry your sinuses and reduce inflammation helping you breathe more freely. Take three teaspoons daily or use as the base for a delicious salad dressing.

Green Path Organics

100% Australian grown Hemp Protein

- Vegan
- Paleo
- Dairy free
- Non-GMO
- Non THC
- Kosher and Halal friendly
- Non allergen
Organic Road new products

Organic Road has added three new pantry staples to its range: Organic Road Raw Honey, Organic Road Pepitas and Organic Road Chia Seeds. All products are from certified organic sources.

Grant's natural toothpaste

Grants is the original Australian natural oral care brand. Since 1984, Grants have provided a natural way to fight plaque, prevent cavities and freshen breath. From their family to yours Grants are proud to provide healthy and effective products that are made from natural ingredients, vegan certified and completely free from nasties (no fluoride, no parabens, no artificial colours or flavours, no preservatives, no sugar and no sulphates). The toothpaste range includes Mild Mint, Fresh Mint, Cinnamon Zest, Xylitol and Kids Blueberry Burst and is complemented by their Xylitol Natural Mouthwash.

Origin Chocolate

Australian made, certified organic, fairly traded Origin Chocolate will tantalise your taste buds with exotic flavours from around the world!

The bean-to-bar chocolate makers are devoted to producing the best quality dark chocolate. Origin Chocolate sources cacao beans from eight countries; Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Madagascar, Dominican Republic, Uganda and Ghana. Each chocolate bar is unique to its origin, maintaining the unique natural flavour of the region. You will be surprised to taste just how different and distinctive the flavours are!

Vegan friendly, dairy free, lactose free, soy free, gluten free and cholesterol free.

Organic Road has added three new pantry staples to its range: Organic Road Raw Honey, Organic Road Pepitas and Organic Road Chia Seeds. All products are from certified organic sources.

Organic Road Australian Raw Honey is unpasteurised and unprocessed and in this unadulterated state contains natural healthful nutrients that ensure not only the best possible taste but also a high quality product. It’s a great source of carbohydrates – both fructose and glucose, providing both instant and sustained energy for the body. Best of all it is produced without the use of pesticides or high heat – it’s honey just as nature intended!

Organic Road Chia Seeds are a rich plant source of omega 3 fatty acids, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals and are one of the best sources of complete protein containing 18 essential amino acids. Originating from the central Americas, chia seeds have been prized by the Aztecs for centuries – so much so they were even used as a currency! We can now easily enjoy the health benefits of this superfood by simply adding them to our everyday diet. Add them to salads, muesli, stir fries, smoothies, raw treats and baking.

Organic Road Pepitas are basically the inner kernels of pumpkin seeds. They have a wide range of nutrients, including B group vitamins, minerals, fibre, essential fatty acids and phytoestrogens. Sprinkle them over breakfast cereal or salad, use them in baking or stir fries. They have a buttery flavour and a crunchy texture, making them the perfect seed to snack on – we love them lightly roasted in the oven sprinkled with paprika and Himalayan salt.