



GIZZI ERSKINE

The power of soil

Many start the year trialling new diets, but Gizzi Erskine suggests looking back to our farming past. **Words: Anna Evdokimou**

There's an agricultural-health movement taking shape in 2024, but it isn't really new at all. When you hear the phrase 'regenerative farming', you might think this is a method of tackling climate change. But in fact, this development is all about taking farming back to its roots, and, according to Gizzi Erskine, its benefits span more than just the environment.

"If you want your diet to become healthier, filled with more nutrients, while protecting the Earth, then we need to revert to growing our food in a classic, holistic way," says Gizzi. The chef and food writer is an avid soil health activist, and will be taking to social media this January to discuss the movement, and why it's important that people get clued up on how their produce is grown.

Regenerative farming focuses on rebuilding soil health without depending on machinery and chemicals, instead using livestock to re-nourish the soil in a sustainable way. "If the soil is healthy, the whole food chain benefits," explains Gizzi. "Through regenerative agriculture, the vegetables that we eat will be higher in nutrients, as will the meat from cattle, sheep and poultry."

So, it's clear that the movement is beneficial for those looking to

eat in a more eco-conscious way, while providing themselves with higher-quality produce with better ingredients. But how can we input this into our daily lives?

Firstly, Gizzi rates 'box-shopping' over supermarkets. One example is The Ethical Butcher, which uses regenerative farming to restore the land and produce its meat. Shoppers can select one of its boxes, filled with either beef or lamb (or both) and can spread out the produce over a long period through freezing. For those committed to Veganuary (going vegan for the month of January), Riverford Organic Farmers should be your go-to. It produces

organic vegetable and fruit boxes grown without artificial pesticides, genetically modified ingredients or preservatives.

"When people think about farm-to-table shopping, it's conceived as a practice reserved for those with disposable incomes, that it's a luxury not everyone can afford. But the reality is you're more likely to be getting high-end quality food that's more affordable in the long run."

If box-shopping isn't for you, Gizzi suggests making simple swaps in a food shop that can add up to make a big difference. "Opt for organic dairy from supermarkets," she suggests. "Brands like Yeo Valley produce organic milk and butter that's cheaper than its alternatives due to having no import costs attached."

Within her 'Reganuary' series on social media, Gizzi will also be showing people how slow cooking can make a little bit go a long way. "I'll be kicking off the series with a stew packed with loads of nutrients and vegetables. When it comes to the new year, people sometimes turn to these super diets as a way to better protect their wellbeing and the world around them. But the truth is that you don't need to go to extremes to look after your health, your body and the environment."



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