

The clean eating fad is daft and dangerous

OF ALL the diets that have enjoyed recent popularity, the 'clean eating' fad really gets my goat. Thankfully, I'm not alone and a backlash has begun.

This week, Ruth Rogers, a hugely respected restaurateur and founder of the trendy River Cafe restaurant in London, spoke out about the pressure 'clean eating' puts on women.

I'd go much further. As a doctor working in eating disorders, I'm horrified by this dangerous craze.

The very notion of 'clean' eating suggests that some food is dirty or bad, which simply isn't the case.

For those with a propensity to develop eating disorders, this is exactly the kind of tripe that triggers problematic attitudes towards food.

It can encourage people to feel guilty and scared about food, rather than learning to eat a rich and varied diet, with nothing off-limits.

For millennia, mankind has known there are healthy and unhealthy quantities of different types of food.

In my clinics, I've noticed that the phrase 'clean eating' is being increasingly used to justify worryingly disordered and damaging eating patterns among youngsters, such as excluding vital food groups.

In addition, many of those who are promoting these diets have no training, and much of the 'science' they spout is utter quackery.

Some claim to be 'nutritionists' — but this term is meaningless. Unlike the word 'dietitian', which can only be used by someone who is properly qualified, anyone can call themselves a 'nutritionist'.

I know of several people, keen for a slice of this commercial enterprise, who write blogs about 'clean eating', yet have a diagnosed eating disorder themselves which they do not admit to.

To be frank, 'clean eating' is a disgraceful misnomer — and is fundamentally unhealthy.