

Take a leaf out of Jason Bourne's book — get your Grab Bag ready

Robert Crampton



This Snowden chap flying hither and thither — Hong Kong to Moscow, probably to Quito — has prompted me to review my own plans, should the need to do a runner ever arise. It's as well to be prepared, if only so you don't end up stuck in the Ecuadorian Embassy in Knightsbridge, sharing digs with the palpably creepy Julian Assange. Say what you like about what he did (personally, I'm not impressed), Assange doesn't look like a lot of fun as a room-mate. Although maybe he's better value — to be fair, I've never had the pleasure of a visit — than being stranded in metropolitan Ecuador itself, trying to make conversation with Edward Snowden.

Most men, I suspect, harbour a fugitive fantasy. If they don't, then they should. The Grab Bag — full of false passports, bundles of cash in varying currencies, airline ticket, cunning disguise, not forgetting the handgun and the spare ammo for when things go belly up, as they so often do — we've all got one of those, haven't we?

I know I have — leaving aside the fake ID, the money, the flight credentials and the shooter. If you aren't similarly equipped, then shame

Never give up hope of SW19 glory

I'm conflicted over Andy Murray's admission that he may never win Wimbledon and, hey, that's cool, no big deal. On one hand, I think: "Fair enough, that's commendably honest, not to mention

statistically realistic." Murray has, after all, only four or five years left at the top and is up against three of the greatest players in tennis history.

What's more, as a strategy to reduce immense pressure, to say you might not achieve something, in the hope that making this very statement will help you achieve it, is reasonable.

But then part of me thinks: "How dare he?" Murray is 26, in his prime and, as things stand, ranked the second-best tennis player in the world. By way of comparison, Crampton is 48 (coming on 49), overweight, unfit, quite often drunk, not especially good at tennis, and yet, if he hasn't given up hope of winning Wimbledon, why should Murray?



Bourne, the go-to guy for quick exits

on you. Jason Bourne's got all this clobber and more, and in these situations, Bourne is my go-to guy. Still, I'm confident that most sensible blokes have the sense to maintain a Grab Bag, whether it's stashed in a safety deposit in Zurich or hidden under the floorboards, it doesn't matter much, so long as you've got access.

The point is, a chap knows he's got to be ready to leave his current life at a moment's notice, or certainly within 30 seconds, maximum, like Robert de Niro acknowledges in *Heat*. Except, of course, the de Niro character cocks it up: he goes back for the girl, the idiot.

No disrespect to whoever we happen to be currently emotionally involved with, it's no reflection on you, it's just that when we guys have gotta split, then we gotta split, that's the way it is. It's biology pure and simple. Check out everything David Attenborough has ever produced if you doubt it.

And, leaving Sir David to one side, when you examine catastrophes such as 9/11 — or the Blitz, or earthquakes or fires or aeroplane crashes, there are always a few people — and when I say "people" I mean "men" — who, via whatever carnage, chaos and confusion provides, take the opportunity to go missing. Abscond. Check out. Bugger off.

That is, through their silence, a number of men pretend they've perished in whatever inferno they can reasonably claim some involvement. There were a few of these cases in the twin towers, and there have been a steady stream of them before — like John Stonehouse and Reggie Perrin, although to be fair I admit that Reggie was a fictional character — and since, like that fella with his canoe. In South America. Or somewhere.

I don't condone it. I merely note that this Snowden type-behaviour is not unusual. Yet the way that he is going about it is not impressive.

The hidden sugar timebomb — and a sweet habit that got out of control

Would you live without sugar if you knew what it does to your health and appearance? Yes, says Nicole Mowbray, who tried the sugar detox diet

There are guilty pleasures, and there are toxic pleasures. Cigarettes, we all know, are the latter. In small quantities, alcohol may be the former, otherwise it's toxic.

But cupcakes? An afternoon chocolate bar? These, surely, are just a bit naughty? Yet increasingly scientists are declaring sugar the enemy — not just of your waistline, but of your health. When does something you enjoy become a problem?

A serious sugar addiction can be deadly. It wrecks your skin, causes premature ageing, disturbs your sleep, causes mood swings, ruins your teeth, saps your energy and often leads to obesity. And the complications associated with obesity kill. Not only that, but it's hidden in many foods that you might not think of as sugary.

The perils of the white stuff are being laid bare in a new book called *The Sugar Detox*, which is taking America by storm. The nutritionist Brooke Alpert and the dermatologist Patricia Farris have teamed up to develop a revolutionary quick-start programme to rid our systems of sugar. Follow it, and the pair say you'll be less likely to suffer disease and look younger with generally better skin, sounder sleep and a slimmer and more energetic body.

Forget fat, salt or carbohydrates; they claim it's the sweet stuff that is the real villain in our kitchen cupboards. Alpert and Farris believe that a diet high in sugar not only leads to weight gain, heart disease and type 2 diabetes but also hardening of the arteries, Alzheimer's, cataracts and premature skin ageing. They say, "In short, sugar is compromising our health, making us fat, lazy, and ugly."

Yet consumption of it is at an all-time high (the average Briton consumes 238 teaspoons of it a week). Aside from the sweet stuff we know we're eating — the teaspoons we add to our tea or coffee, the icing we lick off those cupcakes — diabeticians are increasingly concerned about the hidden sugars we don't know we're eating. A 1.5 litre bottle of lemon-and-lime flavoured natural mineral water contains 16 sugar cubes. A plain bagel has one cube of sugar.

"Low-fat" products are also loaded with sugar or sweeteners to improve their taste. Sweeteners fuel our sweet teeth. Fructose and sucrose (other forms of sugar) are also put into

Avoid the secret sugar trap

White rice
It's like sugar in a bowl. White rice is high on the glycaemic-index scale, and causes a sugar spike when eaten.

Bread
Wheat also contains a substance called amylopectin A, which raises blood sugar more than just about any other carbohydrate.

Starchy vegetables
Corn, potatoes, squash and beetroot are high in dietary starches. If you want the quickest results, lose these.

Pineapples, bananas and watermelon
They are all high in sugar. Opt for low sugar fruits such as apples or some berries.

Dried fruit
The drying process removes water from the fruit, making it more condensed with more sugar.

Fizzy drinks
Diet drinks are just as bad as regular fizzy drinks when it comes to insulin and blood sugar levels. Artificial sweeteners are up to seven times sweeter than regular sugar.

Sweetened dairy products
Choose only cottage cheese, cheese, milk and yoghurt, or non-dairy substitutes that have no added sugars.

processed foods and ready meals to make them more palatable. Scientists at the University of California, San Francisco are so worried about the effects of this excess sugar that they have recommended the use of it be regulated in the same way as alcohol and tobacco.

"Sugar truly is addictive," Alpert and Farris write in the book. "Your body reacts to it like a drug and craves it constantly. . . . What we're asking you to do is to quit cold turkey." The pair have developed a three-day sugar-fix eating plan (see panel, right), to help you break free immediately from a sugar dependence.

They are not lying about it being tough. A year ago, I ditched sugar completely, and became something of a sugar-free evangelist. Then, I was two stone heavier, I had spots and red blotches on my face, which, at age 33, was something I thought I'd left behind. Despite exercising regularly, I couldn't shift weight, and slept fitfully, leaving me tired all the time. As *The Sugar Detox* explains, these are classic symptoms of needing to kick the habit.

Although I have always considered myself a balanced eater — plenty of fruit, sushi, salad (OK, with a bit of dressing) and smoothies — I was horrified to realise more than 50 per cent of what I ate was sugar-based. *The Sugar Detox* tells you going sugar-free is hard: it calls it "a withdrawal". I was dreading it. But I jumped in head-first. If you're considering it, prepare to say goodbye to alcohol and chocolate. It also meant no more spoonfuls of honey from the jar. Thai food is out too. Ready meals and everything processed. Cake, bread and juices are contraband. Puddings must be given the heave-ho, and even fruit is a thing of the past.

Two days in, I stayed in bed all day, hobbled by headaches and a lack of energy. I fantasised about elderflower cordial, had visions of violet creams and craved a mojito with an inch-thick layer of muscovado at the bottom. Popcorn! Pistachio ice cream! Only knowing I never wanted to feel this bad again kept me on the wagon. My one daily contraband treat was a small latte.

Friends were sceptical, then aghast. I was "no fun any more". I worried that the Nicole who no longer indulged in a glass or three of champagne (vodka and soda is now my tiple of choice) would end up a skinny 108-year-old spinster, home alone with a mung bean salad



and several cats. Those first few weeks, I didn't go out. I rarely stayed awake past 10pm before descending into a fitful sleep. My regimen made others self-conscious. "Life is too short to be so restrictive," said one, as I munched an outcake by the pool in Croatia, while she devoured an ice cream.

But four weeks in, I'd lost a stone (dropping from a size 14 to a 12). The broken sleep I'd been suffering abated. People noted how the whites of my eyes were brighter, that my skin looked better. I felt energised, and enlisted the trainer and nutritionist Holly Pannett to target the excess weight in the area around my bra strap and waist. She told me of the relationship between our sugar consumption, the body's production of the hormone insulin and an excess of the stress hormone cortisol too much of which is responsible for the dreaded muffin top.

Within two months, my emotional rollercoaster of sugar highs and lows had disappeared. I felt fuller, quicker and for longer. I felt in control of my diet, rather than it controlling me.

But I still felt deprived. Sweet foods are used as a "reward" by our parents, grandparents, doctors and dentists, so it becomes psychologically addictive.

The *Sugar Detox* notes excessive sugar consumption is partly responsible for our extrinsic ageing, "which occurs mostly because of our own bad behaviour".

Mica Engel, an aesthetic doctor at

The supermodel Elle Macpherson, who helped her figure by cutting out sugar



the Waterhouse Young Clinic, in London, says: "Excess glucose [from too much sugar] binds to collagen and elastin — the things which make youthful complexions appear plump and doughy — and turns them brittle and stiff. Wrinkles and sagging skin then appear prematurely. Over time, skin constantly appears dull and aged."

Cell inflammation depletes the body's vitamins and minerals, and compromises our immune systems. Oncologists believe consuming too much sugar is contributing to the growth in cancers. Links are also being found between high sugar intake and mental illness — depression, anxiety and aggression.

Although eliminating sugary treats leaves a hole in your life, I haven't looked back. Friends now accept my diet as part of my personality, although many still find my choices deathly dull.

There are times when I buckle and have a glass of red wine, or an ice cream, but I don't beat myself up about it. My hair and nails have never looked better. My sleep is sound and my skin is clear. Getting here has been a slog, but the benefits are certainly sweet.

Panel © Brooke Alpert MS RD and Patricia Farris MD 2013. Extracted from *The Sugar Detox: Lose Weight, Feel Great, and Look Years Younger* published today by Da Capo Lifelong Books at £16.99. To buy this book for £14.99, with free p&p, visit thetimes.co.uk/bookshop or call 0845 2712134

The 3-day sugar detox

Our three-day sugar fix is simple: no dairy; no fruit aside from lemon or lime; no wheat or starches; and no added sugars. As you'll soon see, the plan is also pretty basic — we keep the list of approved foods the same across the three days to make your detox as clear and simple as possible.

We wanted to give you some freedom, so if you prefer your breakfast eggs poached, great. If you want to scramble them with veggies, that's fine too. We just ask that you adhere to this list of foods... but within those parameters, feel free to get creative.

Here are the guidelines for all three days (yes, they really are that simple).

What to eat on the detox

■ 1 cup black coffee per day

■ Green and/or herbal tea, unlimited amounts

■ Minimum 1.9 litres of water daily (sodium-free sparkling water or soda water is OK)



■ **Protein** Lean red meat, pork, chicken, turkey, fish, shellfish, eggs, tofu or legumes

■ **Vegetables**

Approved veggies in unlimited amounts — rocket, tomatoes, asparagus, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage (Chinese, red, or green), cauliflower, celery, cucumber, kale, lettuce



(romaine, red leaf or green leaf), mushrooms, peppers, spinach and courgette. You can eat avocado but as it is also counted as a fat, do not eat more than half an avocado a day.

■ **Fruits** Lemon or lime

■ **Nuts** A 30g serving of nuts or seeds raw or roasted, ideally unsalted, may be eaten up to twice daily as a snack. Approved varieties include almonds, cashews, chia seeds, flax seeds, hemp seeds, macadamias, peanuts, pecans, pistachios and walnuts.

■ **Condiments and cooking oil** Red wine vinegar, balsamic vinegar or apple cider vinegar; and olive oil, coconut oil or butter for cooking

■ **Herbs and spices** Unlimited amounts

What not to eat on the detox

■ Artificial sweeteners of any kind — and that includes diet drinks

■ Alcohol

■ Dairy (except a little butter for cooking)

■ Wheat or other starches, such as pasta, cereal, bread, rice or quinoa

■ Added sugar of any kind

■ Fruit (except lemon or lime)

Daily Menus

Up to 170g protein at lunch
Up to 225g protein at dinner



Day 1

Breakfast Three scrambled eggs with a pinch of dried rosemary; green tea with lemon; a large glass of water with lime

Snack Nuts

Lunch Poached chicken breast, mixed baby greens and ½ sliced avocado with herbs, olive oil and red wine vinegar

Snack Sliced red and green bell peppers with 30g spinach hoummos; a large glass of water with lime

Dinner ½ cup of edamame; salmon with stir-fried broccoli and mushrooms



Day 2

Breakfast Three eggs scrambled with sautéed spinach

Snack 14g roasted almonds;

unsweetened iced green tea with lemon
Lunch Tuna Niçoise: canned tuna or a sautéed fresh tuna steak over a bed of mixed greens, one sliced hard-boiled egg and steamed haricots verts, dressed with vinaigrette

Snack Sliced peppers with hoummos

Dinner Rosemary pork tenderloin, sautéed brussel sprouts and mushrooms seasoned with salt, pepper and fresh garlic; chopped romaine salad with avocado dressed with lemon and extra-virgin olive oil



Day 3

Breakfast Three-egg omelette with shrimp, sautéed spinach and tarragon

Snack 30g cashews

Lunch Grilled turkey burger with sliced heritage tomatoes, lettuce and sautéed mushrooms; kale chips

Snack Sliced peppers with hoummos

Dinner Baked tilapia over bok choy and cherry tomatoes; mixed greens with sugar-free vinaigrette