



BALANCED
BITES

**30-DAY PALEO
CHALLENGE**

GYM GUIDE

This guide will help your gym to organize a 30-Day Paleo Challenge in conjunction with the Balanced Bites Nutrition Guide. Participants should be following the nutritional information and advice within that guide – available for free via Balanced Bites (www.balancedbites.com/nutritionguide). We highly recommend you place an easy link to the guide into your gym’s blog or website via an html widget – it’s free, and when it lives on your site, it’s easily accessible at all times!



PRE-CHALLENGE SESSION – KICK-OFF MEETING

Review: what do you eat on a Paleo Diet? AKA: “YES” foods.

When presenting this information, be sure to focus on what members CAN eat and why those foods are so great! There are so many options within these categories – there is no real loss, just NEW doors opened. Frame the discussion around OWNING the right and privilege to nourish their bodies with the best foods possible – the foods that have ALWAYS been food, and that don’t require a factory or an advertising budget to get to their plates! Added benefits: these foods won’t just make them look better – they will make them FEEL better.

- Meat & eggs – preferably grass-fed, pastured, organic – if conventional, opt for leaner cuts. Why? Because healthy animal fats come from *healthy grass-fed animals*; while the protein itself is equally healthful whether from grass-fed or conventional.
- If you opt for leaner cuts of meat, make sure to get adequate fats from grass-fed butter (KerryGold is cheap) or plants like coconut, olive, and avocado.
- Seafood – preferably wild-caught/sustainable. Tip: canned salmon is almost always wild-caught – so it’s a great option!
- Vegetables, non-starchy – eat a variety of leafy and crunchy, cooked and raw. Always serve with a dollop of healthy fat to ensure nutrients are absorbed!
- Vegetables, starchy – mainly sweet potatoes, yams, yucca, taro root, winter squash, carrots. Again, serve with a healthy fat to enhance nutrient absorption!
- Nuts & seeds – preferably raw, organic. Check labels – sometimes nut blends have sketchy ingredients! Also, be sure not to overeat – eat only as many nuts as you think you could shell yourself. A handful each day or less is appropriate and a natural proportion!
- Fruit – remember, fruits have been selectively bred for sweetness, so they pack a bigger sugar punch than fruits of the past! This means they’re a great choice for the occasional treat or dessert, or as a garnish rather than the bulk of a meal. Focus on seasonal fruits when possible, and aim for MORE veggies than fruits in the daily diet!
- Fats & oils – fats from coconut (including oil), avocado, and olives (including oil) can be enjoyed liberally. Lard and tallow from pastured animals is great too. Grass-fed butter and ghee are excellent choices. Another acceptable option is sesame oil, because it contains a unique protective anti-oxidant called *sesamin*.

What is not part of a Paleo Diet? AKA: “NO” foods.

When presenting this information, treat it as a declaration of independence from foods that have been keeping people down! These foods won't rule anyone's lives any more; they're free and clear of the nutrient-poor, processed food lifestyle so many people have lived for far too long. This is a great chance to emphasize why CALORIES don't matter as much as QUALITY. You may want to compare a portion of, say, Kashi Cereal to an equal serving of sweet potato when it comes to number of ingredients and nutrient content. Teach your people to read labels, but NOT the calorie/carb/fat part. Have them read INGREDIENTS: if there are more than a few basic, simple ingredients; if there are any ingredients they can't pronounce or sound like laboratory experiments, AVOID!

- Refined foods – anything popped, puffed, flaked, floured, shredded or instant has been refined (exception: coconut flakes/shreds). Rule of thumb: anything in a box, bag or package is PROCESSED!
- Grains (whole, half, or otherwise). To emphasize why “whole grains” are a processed food, read the label to a package of “whole wheat” bread. How many ingredients are in this carbohydrate source? And how many ingredients are in a *whole food carbohydrate source* – like a sweet potato?
- Legumes and “secret grains” (beans, peanuts, rice and corn) The point here is not to be neurotic, but to be AWARE. Many people don't realize that soybeans aren't vegetables or that corn is a grain. Picking these out of a crowd is a great exercise in awareness. Remember, green beans are acceptable as they're more vegetable than bean!
- Dairy. ALMOST all dairy is out for the challenge - with the exception of grass-fed butter and ghee (KerryGold and Pure Indian Foods - online - are great brands, or they can make their own ghee by clarifying butter). This is a great teaching moment: the nutrients in grass-fed butter and ghee are very valuable, and most folks aren't intolerant to dairy fat - so it's a Paleo “grey area” that may benefit some to keep in the rotation. Use this as a reminder: this is NOT about Paleo Dogma or a historical re-enactment! There *are* considerations for good, grass-fed, full-fat dairy.
- Vegetable/seed oils – NEVER use canola, soybean, corn, or cottonseed oil! Showing the youtube video “Canola oil: how it's made” is a great way to show just how processed these oils are.
- Sugar, sweeteners & artificial sweeteners: these are a no-go for the duration of the challenge! The idea is to break addiction to any isolated sugar.
- Alcohol – we're not saying it's bad for everyone, all the time – but it's important to give it up for the challenge.
- Other “processed” drinks. No Gatorade, no soda, and no juice. These are either full of unnecessary chemicals, gnarly artificial sweeteners, refined sugar, or refined sugar PRETENDING to be a healthy choice! Vegetable juice questions? Tell them: just eat the vegetables!

Why eliminate refined foods, sugar, grains, legumes, most dairy & seed oils?!

You've already discussed how some foods are processed. It's an easy sell to "give up processed foods." But it goes deeper than a food having too many ingredients or too few nutrients. It also comes down to the physical structure of "no" foods AND the way they work in the body. Knowledge is power!

- Blood sugar regulation is manipulated by high-carb refined foods, because they spike insulin but provide very little nutrition. Grains, legumes and sugar can do the same thing. Good blood sugar regulation is critical to managing hunger and feeling GREAT on a Real Food challenge!
- Anti-nutrients are present in most grains and legumes in high concentrations. Anti-nutrients are substances that "steal" nutrients and keep your body from using them. Why? Because, in the plant world - since plants don't have feet to run or fists to fight - the way they protect themselves and their ability to reproduce is through Anti-nutrients. (Imagine a plant saying "don't eat me - I'll hurt you!") These anti-nutrients can irritate the gut, leading to inflammation; AND they can cause nutrient deficiency. Three main categories of anti-nutrients:
Phytates: these bind to minerals like zinc and magnesium, keeping the body from using them;
Lectins: these are sugar-binding substances that can lead to poor digestion;
Saponins: these break down the gut lining and are found in quinoa, beans, root beer, and potato skins.
- Dairy that comes from conventional factory farms can cause allergies, post-nasal drip, runny nose, or mucous excess. Anyone suffering from allergies or frequent infections should quit conventional dairy ASAP! Many people are sensitive to lactose and casein - and the only way to find out is to eliminate for 30 days and see how you feel.
- Seed oils: the refining process damages delicate fats (view on YouTube: "Canola Oil: How it's made") - this process is the same for all seed oils (also corn, soybean, "vegetable oil").

Why should we care about digestion?

At this point, your members will understand that this is more than just eliminating processed foods. It's also about healing and optimizing digestion! "Digestion" includes how you break down the food you eat, how you use the nutrients in it, and even how your blood sugar is regulated as a result of your food choices. We can't forget digestion! It's step 2 of the puzzle. Step one is WHAT you eat, step two is WHAT YOUR BODY DOES WITH IT.

- Remind your gym members that health begins in the gut. Foods that irritate - as in, foods with anti-nutrient properties - cause *inflammation*, which simply means IRRITATION, or any surprising, frustrating, confusing, chronic, sudden, acute or unexpected pain, redness, swelling, or loss of function. Yes, inflammation can occur anywhere, at any time, and usually as a result of the food we eat!
- Foods we can't digest well cause INTERNAL inflammation and dysfunction. This is often called "gut irritation," but it can also manifest itself in joint problems, any autoimmune disease, gluten intolerance, dairy intolerance, celiac disease, poor immunity, and stalled weight loss or strength & performance gains.
- If you are not digesting/absorbing food, you can't get nutrients you're eating!

What strategies can I use to help myself digest AND manage blood sugar better?

There are many practical strategies that fit easily into every day life that will help your folks digest better. Here are a few.

- Digestion starts in the BRAIN! Digestive juices start flowing when you THINK about your food. Practice mindful eating – ask yourself, where did this food come from? How will it make me healthy?
- Sit down to eat. Don't eat on the run!
- CHEW! Chewing food well breaks it down and primes it for effective digestion. Chew, chew, chew!
- Don't drink too much water around meals. It can dilute digestive juices. Give a 30-minute window before and after meals to let your digestive juices do the work.
- Don't fall for that old myth about eating multiple, small meals each day. That's just a recipe for chronic blood sugar problems! Eat approximately 3 meals each day (start with a healthy breakfast) rich in healthy protein and fats with carbohydrate from vegetables and watch your blood sugar come into balance naturally.

Paleo lifestyle – more than food.

Remind your participants that there is MUCH more to getting healthy, losing weight, and achieving goals than just food. It's also about digestion (we talked about that) and sleep, fun, play, and stress management. Encourage them to work these into every day as well – and journal if they like!

- Sleep! 8-9 hours in a DARK room. Practice deep breathing to help you fall asleep.
- Stress: manage it! If you are stressed, you will NOT lose weight. Don't over-exercise, over-worry, or over-obsess over food. Enjoy the process, and enjoy some relaxation time!
- Challenge: build relaxation time or conscientious deep breathing for a few minutes each day.
- Activity: working out... be smart. Go hard when you are well rested and fed, monitor your output if you are feeling run-down/depleted/under-slept or under-fed.
- How do you FEEL before the workout? Did you sleep well? Eat well? Are you stressed out?!
- Are you having fun? What activity in your daily life do you do for pure enjoyment?

Approaches to a Paleo Diet for...

- **Fat Loss:** SLEEP! Ensure digestive integrity by focusing on strategies for good digestion and blood sugar regulation. Eat at least 1g of protein/lb of bodyweight. Avoid nuts and seeds (nut & seed butters, too!) and focus on fats from quality meats and coconut instead (animal fats provide vitamin A, which is helpful in fat loss and performance; and coconut oil is a good source of non-carbohydrate quick energy). Eat thoughtfully; don't restrict calories but be conscious of what you're taking in if over-eating has been a struggle in the past. Eliminate fruit and eat starchy veggies pre/post workout only - enough to fuel activity and not crash, but not so much that your body has an excess of sugar to burn. While a fat loss plan requires dedication and focus, try NOT to let it become neurotic! Keep your own sanity in mind.
- **Mass Gain or performance:** SLEEP! Ensure digestive integrity by focusing on strategies for good digestion and blood sugar regulation. Eat 1.5-2g protein/lb of bodyweight, and don't skimp on the calories! Eat more than you think you need. Make use of coconut milk, especially in curries, which is a great calorie and nutrient-dense meal option. Jerky & macadamia nuts, avocado, and coconut for snacks, and plenty of starchy carbs from yams/sweet potatoes. Some fruit with fat like coconut, or even apples or plantains sautéed in butter.

Practical Tips for Eating Paleo

This isn't rocket science! It's a small shift in paradigm that becomes easy and second nature if you're WILLING. Everyone has the tools to succeed - they just have to be ready to use them!

- Lettuce wraps are a fantastic bread-substitute. Or just use a fork!
- You don't have to eat salads all the time! Enjoy soups, stews, stir-frys and skillet hash!
- Bake, roast, broil and braise meats.
- Make hard-boiled eggs or home made jerky for snacks. (But remember: often NEEDING a snack means you ACTUALLY need to eat more at mealtime!)
- Check restaurant menus ahead of time to know what you want to order - get healthy things as extra side-orders, like double meat, extra veggies or extra guacamole instead of fillers like rice, bread or pasta.
- Coffee: drink it black, with full-fat coconut milk only, and make sure the caffeine doesn't disrupt your sleep! 1-2 cups per day before lunch should be plenty of Joe.

FAQs

What about artificial sweeteners?

Because part of the aim of this lifestyle is to end dependence on sugar and sugar-laden foods, it can be counter-productive to rely on artificial sweeteners in any way. Evidence suggests that certain artificial sweeteners - maltitol in particular, a common additive in "low carb" treats - elicits a similar insulin response to glucose. Aspartame is extremely toxic. Bottom line - you can't pull the wool over Mother Nature's eyes. If you're still allowing yourself an artificial indulgence, you may experience problems down the road.

If you're going to have a rare, gluten-free treat on a special occasion, it may be appropriate to use honey or dates to sweeten. (If you're gonna do it - do it right!)

What about Sodium?

In some texts, much ado is made about eliminating salt. This may not be necessary, however; the dietary ideals outlined in this guide are entirely free of those salt-laden processed foods which overload many Americans (and people around the world) with undue amounts of salt. In reality, salt likely only causes problems for those with a pre-existing sensitivity; a pinch of Celtic Sea Salt is both mineral and electrolyte-rich, healthy and delicious.

What about Canola Oil?

Canola oil was originally recommended by Dr. Loren Cordain because its Omega 3:Omega 6 profile matched that of our evolutionary heritage. We now understand that the processing and fragile polyunsaturated fatty acids in Canola Oil are not optimal; the fatty acids are more likely to oxidize, and oxidized fats are extremely dangerous. See page the main Balanced Bites Nutrition Guide for a rundown on healthy fats.

Can't you give me some more "rules?"

No. This is about learning, trusting your instinct and freeing yourself from the "guru-seeking" mentality so common in diet-land these days. There is no finger-wagging and no neuroses allowed. You possess the innate intelligence to make conscientious decisions with the information provided!

What are healthy snacks?

Healthy snack ideas: Hard-boiled eggs, yesterday's leftovers, coconut flakes, macadamia nuts, olives, avocado (portable!) fruit, home-dehydrated vegetable chips, quality jerky (homemade or StevesOriginal.com), chopped raw veggies, Sea Snax (store.seasnax.com).

Can I eat bacon?

Yes.

Does this way of eating furnish enough Calcium?

Yes. Even absent quality dairy products, there are many ways to ensure Calcium intake and retention. Leafy green vegetables are rich in calcium; as is homemade bone broth. Most importantly, it is calcium co-factors that determine the health of our skeletal system; things like systemic pH, hormonal balance, hydration, mineral balance, fatty acid balance, vitamin sufficiency, digestive health, and exercise.

Don't we need Whole Grains for fiber?

No. In fact, Whole Grains – which provide insoluble fiber – can be irritating to the digestive tract. They also contain phytates that, when consumed *in amounts typical to the Standard American Diet*, bind to ingested minerals, keeping the body from absorbing them. Vegetables and fruits also provide insoluble fiber in addition to highly bio-available vitamins and minerals; as well as the gut-healing, probiotic-nourishing soluble fiber - important for good health.

Isn't this way of eating expensive?

It doesn't have to be. The best way to keep it affordable and easy is to first be willing to make the paradigm shift. You won't be able to fit old shopping habits or eating behaviors into a shiny new "Real Food" box. You'll need to explore local options (resources on page 5), meal plan to ensure healthy, delicious veggies don't spoil or go to waste, and get used to taking care of yourself differently by adopting the behaviors that get you there.

What about dairy?

We know that many traditional, indigenous cultures across the world have enjoyed excellent health while using raw, sometimes fermented, dairy products; but we also know that many people in the modernized world do not tolerate dairy well. The key is quality, as well as assessing dairy's affect on you by considering an "elimination" protocol: Eliminate dairy for 3-6 weeks, then re-introduce to evaluate its effect on your body. The caveat: Dairy should be grass-fed (raw if it's legal in your state and you have a reputable, pasture-based source) and full-fat; and never supplemented with added hormones.

Recipes & Resources

- Balanced Bites: www.balancedbites.com, [Practical Paleo](#) – The Balanced Bites Podcast – available weekly for free! connect on Facebook and Twitter!
- Cave Girl Eats: www.cavegirleats.com
- The Food Lovers Kitchen: www.beta.primal-palate.com, "Make it Paleo"
- Nom Nom Paleo: www.nomnompaleo.com
- Robb Wolf: www.robbwolf.com, "The Paleo Solution" – free weekly podcast
- Mark Sisson: Mark's Daily Apple, www.marksdailyapple.com, "The Primal Blueprint"
- Chris Kresser: www.chriskresser.com - more in-depth info on specific health conditions/concerns

NOTES:

CHALLENGE SESSION #1: FUELING FOR EXERCISE

Carbohydrate timing

- Post workout- approx. ½ cup of starchy veggie for high-performing women, 1 cup for men. (See guide on balancedbites.com) – a second serving of the same size later in the evening for those not looking to lean out, but maintain performance as their primary goal. Remember: this is for a performance-oriented athlete. If the goal is weight loss, or the individual is a “weekend warrior” rather than daily hard-charger, post-workout nutrition may be unnecessary!
- If training in the morning, some fruit or starch with or after dinner is good- same quantity as above.

Carbohydrate options

- Refer to the guide to: dense sources of carbs - <http://balancedbites.com/practical-paleo-tear-out-guides>
- Starchy tubers, sweet potatoes, yams, cassava, taro, yucca, butternut squash, acorn/kabocha/delicata squash – banana in a pinch as a starchier-than-others fruit
- Fruit – ideally in a pre-workout meal or as a dessert – use portion recommendations as guides - portions = 1 small piece, ½ cup tropical fruit (mango/pineapple), 1 cup of berries

Recipes & resources:

- Refer to the guide to: dense sources of carbs from [Practical Paleo](http://balancedbites.com/practical-paleo-tear-out-guides) – also free to download here > <http://balancedbites.com/practical-paleo-tear-out-guides>
- *Sweet Potato Power* - book by Ashley Tudor
- PaleOMG.com – for sweet potato recipes – look for the tag #21DSD or 21-Day Sugar Detox and you'll find recipes without added sweeteners

Notes:

CHALLENGE SESSION #2: DINING OUT & ON-THE-GO

RESTAURANTS

Ask questions (discuss examples of ways to find out if you can modify a meal or if there are any ingredients in them you do not want to eat):

- EX: “Is any part of what I’m ordering breaded or dusted with flour of any kind?”

Navigating the menu (discuss examples of menu items you’d order at each of the following types of restaurants):

Italian:

Mexican:

Japanese/Sushi:

Indian:

Thai:

Pizza:

Chinese:

PARTIES:

CHALLENGE SESSION #3: AFFECTING CHANGE WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS

Sometimes you can't make every single lifestyle change all at once. It's important to exercise compassion, and realize that you can't force change on others either. Lead by example first and foremost, and others will often become curious, and even jump on board. Other people will be willing to make small changes with you, and that's ok - these are usually followed by MORE changes for the better! Here are a few examples of how to "make over" a meal with a loved one - how to make a meal BETTER without completely shaking up their world.

(discuss & make notes about how you can or have talked with friends/family in different scenarios)

CHALLENGE SESSION #4: AFTER THE CHALLENGE

Often the last few days of the challenge leave you wondering how you'll ease back into your "normal" life, or what foods you want to splurge on now that the restrictions are over. Here's OUR take on how to approach re-introducing foods after your challenge has come to an end.

If you were avoiding certain foods (typically gluten, dairy, soy, peanuts, legumes, etc.) but are truly curious about how adding them back will affect you...

Then you'll need to very carefully re-introduce them one at a time.

Here's what you'll need to do:

- The day after your program ends, choose one food to eat again - typically this will be the food you missed the most!
- Eat that food at all three meals along with whatever other foods you had been including in the elimination - meaning you **ONLY** re-introduce one potentially problematic food at a time
- **DO NOT** eat that food again for the following two days.
- Note any changes in the following **FOR A FULL 72-HOURS AFTER EATING THE FOOD**: mood, energy, appetite, digestive function like bloating, gas, loose stool or diarrhea, headaches, inflammation, and brain fog or mental clarity.
- Your notes will be some of the best guides you have as to whether or not you are sensitive to the food you just re-introduced. Food sensitivity reactions can happen immediately or can have delayed-onset for up to around 72hrs (3 days!).
- **NOTE:** We don't actually recommend **EVER** re-introducing **gluten containing grains** like wheat, barley, rye or oats (often cross-contaminated with gluten) into your diet, nor do we recommend making pasteurized dairy, processed oils from corn, soy, canola or cottonseed, or unfermented soy products (tofu, soy sauce) any regular part of your life. These are in the "processed foods" camp, and are really never necessary! These foods are shown to contribute to a myriad of health problems and, typically, tend to crowd-out much more health promoting options like vegetables, **well-raised meat & eggs** and **healthy, naturally occurring fats** in the diet.

If you were on a plan to be *more* strict about avoiding food additives, sweeteners and other slightly processed foods (a strict Paleo challenge would fall into this category)...

Then you'll want to think about the following before jumping off the deep-end and burying yourself in a pile of grain-free baked goods or a bottle of wine:

- How do you feel now that you've changed your food?
- How do you think you'll feel if you eat something you estimate is less-than-healthy for you?
- If you think you'll feel less-than-optimal, how long will that feeling last?
- Will the ill-health effects of the foods you want to eat again last more than a couple of hours? More than a day? More than a week?
- What will you be disrupting with the foods: blood sugar or digestive function?
- Has the time and energy commitment that's gone into avoiding the food(s) added more stress to your life than it alleviated signs and symptoms of ill health?

Ultimately it's up to you to choose what and how often you'll add certain foods back into your regularly scheduled food programming, but considering the above questions is a good idea. You'll become a lot more **MINDFUL** of your choices, rather than allowing them to become defaults simply because they are habits or they represent the easy way out. I tend to think that a food that initiates an acute blood sugar spike in an otherwise even situation day in and day out is less deleterious in the long term than foods that disrupt digestive function that may perpetuate for days or weeks on end and interfere with immunity in a more intense way.