

WHAT IS THE PRIMAL / PALEO LIFESTYLE, PART 2 – REAL FOOD

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I promised in my [first installment on the subject](#) (yes it's been over a year) to do a follow up with more emphasis on food. I keep making references to 'real' food on the blog. So am I saying the rest of the stuff is fake? Or is it some new health fad that I'm referring to?

Well, real food is just what the name suggests. Actual food, that exists in nature.

Anything that exists in nature is not a fad diet. By realizing that a lot of food we put into our bodies is toxic and is actually not suited for human consumption (like hydrogenated vegetable oils) we are doing ourselves a big favour. This is the real crux of the [paleo lifestyle](#). But I believe anyone (including vegetarians) can loosely base their diets on the paleo/ primal principles and be on the way to a more healthful life by eating good real food. (Though eggs and good quality dairy is a must – Vegans be gone)

Never before has food had such a place in our lives as it does now. Emotional eating, counting calories, food as reward, binge eating, eating because you're happy, eating because you're depressed, pretty looking pink and blue food, it's all new and it's all humbug. **Most of this food is not even food. The ingredients are not even edible and they've been highly processed in order to make them edible. Think about it. It's a slow poisoning of your body.**

So what's really food then? Just to put some context into this post, think about this. **For 99% of human evolutionary history, agriculture did not exist. Humans were nomads and they followed their food as opposed to growing it. There was no grain and no sugar!** Cut to today. Not only is grains and sugar part of the diet, they comprise 70 to 80% of energy source for a lot of people.

Call it SOLE (Sustainable, organic, local, ethical) food, primal food, traditional food, ancestral food, REAL food. That's what I'm talking about here.

In this post I'm going to try and break it down into different food groups that all of us understand that fall into the category of 'Real' Food.

1) Believe it or not, the king of satiating good quality foods is FATS!

Saturated fats, the kind that exist in nature, that's good quality calories right there. When I began to eat a lot of fats like ghee, butter, egg yolks, animal fats, I began to lose weight and gain energy. I burnt fat for my energy.

Eating real foods means embracing fats. The alternative is eating toxic chemicals in packages labeled – Low fat.

This is how it works:

Fats have more than double the calories per gram than their macronutrient friends, protein and carbohydrates, at 9 calories per gram as compared to 4 calories per gram for the latter two. This is why they get a bad rep. If it was just the question of calorie in, calorie out then we could all shun fats, eat low fat nutritionally bereft foods, run for an hour a day, eat whole grains and be healthy. Oh wait! That's what a lot of us do, and it's clearly not working.

But food's primary function is about building and repairing tissues and cells and not purely to provide energy. Nutritious real food helps to replenish and heal tissue and can guard against

disease. Our body needs the right kind of fuel. For example, say you pick up one of those "100 calorie packs." And say you even try to find a low-fat or no-fat version (because you are trying to be healthy). Those 100 calories of processed food offers you little (if any) nutritional value. In other words, you just ate a worthless 100 calories.

Let's say that instead you grabbed a hard-boiled egg for about 70 calories (with a good deal of fat). Instead of an empty 100 calories, you will have just consumed some awesome nutrients that can help heal your body.

Ultimately your body enjoys burning fat over burning carbohydrates for energy. **Carbs burn up quickly leaving you groggy and depleted of energy with a need to tank up every few hours. When you switch to burning fat for energy (by eating low carb and yummy saturated fat) your body will go on endlessly with a whole lot of energy.** Another thing that happens when you eat fats is that when burning energy, your body does not differentiate between stored fat and the fat that has just entered your body, as a result, magically that stored fat which has just sat there forever is now in the line of fire!

Remember, your body craves nutrient dense food. Give it rich nutrients, it will thank you and stop craving the trash masquerading as food. Currently we are over fed and under nourished. This is the crux of the obesity epidemic.

This is something I have realized that people who want to embrace the principles of the primal blueprint have the hardest time wrapping their heads around. So many of those who read my blog tell me proudly, 'I've gone low-carb, I stopped eating chapatti with my meals.' But on digging deeper I realize the concept of carbs and fats are so easily interchanged. They think they are eating low carb but are inadvertently eating low fat too (by buying slim milk). This is a sure step towards failure as it's just not sustainable in the long run.

When you buy store bought stuff and the label reads: Low Fat on something that is naturally high in fat (like milk), drop it and run. Avoid rancid vegetable oils like soy, safflower, rice bran oil, canola oil, to name a few. They're not real; they're heavily processed in order to be edible.

Here are real sources of fats: beef, lamb, fish oils, nuts like almonds and hazelnuts, ghee, butter, [cream, good quality cheese](#), avocado, coconut and all it's products, olive oil, fatty fish, fish oil, chicken, coconut oil, full fat yoghurt, eggs.

Phew this post is turning out to be long and my fingers are tired.

Moving on...

Carbohydrates.

Go to any registered nutritionist and she'll tell you your calories need to come from 60% carbs, 10 to 15% from protein and less than 30% from fats. [This entire counting calories nonsense](#) though, means nothing if you're eating real food.

When you're eating real food your carbs content comes from vegetables and fruits. You can eat all the greens and then some and you still won't be eating more than 150 grams of carbs per day and

you will be effortlessly losing weight or maintaining a healthy weight.

But where do you get energy from? From fats (read above).

But what about cholesterol? If you want the long story, read [this](#) and [this](#). The short story without going into the science is this: Saturated fat and cholesterol got a bad rep in modern times and have been singled out to be killers. In the same span of time that heart disease has been linked to cholesterol and has risen sharply, consumption of grains and vegetable oils have also shot up. Before this level of processed carbohydrates and processed vegetable oils came into the picture, pure unadulterated saturated fats were abundant in all diets in traditional societies. They ate food rich in animal fat and thrived. Then why does cholesterol get a bad reputation today? Read [this](#) to give you an idea about skewed research done on lab rats.

The truth is that cholesterol is not only good, but it is vital for life to exist. It's only when you bring in unhealthy heavily processed food into the fray do you land up with clogged arteries, which are the result of the over abundance of 'bad' cholesterol (LDL and vLDL cholesterol), which is created thanks to free radical oxidation caused by glucose in the bloodstream.

If you still think cholesterol is evil, [read this story](#).

But aren't [whole grains healthy](#)? Umm. Not really. Grains were technically living once and being immobile the only way to fight off predators was to produce lectins, which continue fighting in our insides causing leaky gut syndrome, gluten sensitivities, celiac disease and [inflammation](#) the bane of our modern existence.

And honestly, grains are totally unnecessary. I mean, what unique nutrients do they provide? If you want fiber, eat your vegetables, if you want antioxidants eat colorful produce, eat berries, drink some wine, if you want carbs eat fruits and sweet potatoes, if you want energy eat fats. They do more harm than good. **DITCH THEM DITCH THEM!**

Like I mentioned earlier, human beings got along exceptionally well without them for [99% of our existence](#). Why this madness about 60% of our calories coming from grains then?

Proteins.

Nothing bad can be written about proteins. They are after all the building blocks of life and build lean muscle mass.

Eat REAL sources of proteins though. Do not eat processed protein like Tofu, soya and the likes. Again they do more harm than good.

Here are some real sources of proteins: Eggs, good quality cheese, good quality yoghurt, *paneer*, nuts, seeds, chicken, meat, fish.

Legumes are not real good and they fall into the same category as grains. (out with the daal). This started out being an all-encompassing post on primal foods / real foods / paleo foods, but I've just scratched the surface. I've just categorized foods into protein, carbs and fats and I've not talked about how to choose good quality real food. Stay tuned for that one. In my [next post on](#)

[primal/paleo/real food](#), I'll also try to clarify what your particular day in terms of what you eat should look like.

Do write to me in the comments. I understand this post shatters conventional wisdom in all ways (which is the purpose of this blog) so hit me up if you have any questions.

Thanks for reading this long post! Hope you enjoyed it as much as I enjoyed writing it!

