

THE PALEO DIET



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The Paleo Diet

The paleo diet is one of the most intriguing diets that have come out in recent years. Its revelations may seem new, but the formulation is actually based on the eating patterns of our most ancient hunter gatherer ancestors — the early humans of the paleolithic (stone age) period, who roamed the earth millions of years ago.

Over the course of human evolution (until around 10,000 years ago), all hunter gatherers had the same dietary approach – they consumed only those foods provided and available by nature. They obtained their food from hunting wild game and gathering diverse fruits, vegetables, plants, nuts, and seeds available over the seasons of the year.

The foods our ancestors consumed remain to be the foods best adapted to our metabolisms today. Human genes have not changed enough over the last few thousand years to adapt to our new agriculture-based diet. In fact, our present genes are still 99.99% identical in makeup to those of our paleolithic ancestors.

Research findings provide ample indications that hunter gatherers were very healthy. They were taller, had better builds and bigger brains. Although their life expectancy was shorter, deaths were often caused by outside factors such as extreme weather conditions, accidents, infections, and predatory animals. They did not suffer from chronic or degenerative diseases such as diabetes, cancer or heart disease. These diseases emerged only when we shifted to agriculture - modern diseases are the consequence of civilization, the result of a mismatch of our genetic makeup and our lifestyle.

Our ancestors were always physically active – hunting and gathering for food. Their physical challenges were extreme, as they raced to hunt wild game. Some hunter gatherers would walk approximately 19km (12 miles) a day on average looking for prey, including bursts of quick activity and running speeds when game was spotted.

Humans have evolved to meet the challenges and opportunities of our natural environment. Our ancestors bodies were fueled by healthy primal foods which allowed their bodies to work at peak efficiency all the time. Their bodies were perfectly adapted to the food they ate, not for the foods modern technology brings.

The dietary habits of our ancient ancestors have been thoroughly studied in recent years. The phenomenal abilities of our ancestors are rooted in the diet they consumed and the lifestyle they lived.

Meat from wild game as well as fish gave them proteins and essential fatty acids. Nuts and seeds provided oils and other essential fatty acids; fruits and berries for low GI carbohydrates and nutrients. They did not have any dairy products, grains or processed foods, as these came only with agriculture and the domestication of animals.

According to nutrition experts specializing in the eating patterns of the paleolithic period, the average hunting-gathering tribe had a diet that very likely consisted of one-third hunted food and two-thirds gathered food.

Meat comprised of 65% of our ancestors total energy intake. There is a key difference in the energy and nutrient content from the meat of wild game and the meat we commonly consume from our domesticated animals today. Wild animals produce meat that contains less than 10% total fat on the average - our current domesticated cattle average about 30% total fat. There is also a quality difference in the fatty acid makeup of the animal - domesticated animals contain mostly fully saturated fats, whereas wild game has a higher proportion of polyunsaturated fat.

As a result, our dietary choices today result in us having four times less omega-3 fatty acids compared to our ancestors and 1.5 times less monounsaturated fat. Some of the nuts and seeds our ancestors consumed also contained omega-3 fatty acids, while they were consumed in raw form, the retention of these heat-sensitive fats was maximized.

Paleolithic nutrition researcher Dr. Loren Cordain, PhD, provides the following comparative daily nutritional intake of our ancestors and the common western diet.

(% of diet)	Paleolithic Diet	Average Western Diet
Protein	31	16
Fats	38	35
Carbohydrates	31	49

[From *The Paleo Diet* (2002) by Loren Cordain]

The availability of meat our ancestors had was dependent on hunting success and the season. Since animal supply was not steady year round, the greater part of the food consumed often came from uncultivated vegetable foods gathered from the wild, such as berries, bulbs, seeds, fruits, flowers, melons, nuts, leaves, roots, stalks.

One important part about the diet of our ancestors is the fact that their foods could not be stored for a long time, so food was distributed and consumed fresh after foraging or after the hunt.

Food was very diverse and varied widely with the changing of the seasons and by the locality where our ancestors lived, allowing them to consume a great variety of foods.

The paleo diet can be further characterized by the following:

- Caloric intake (around 65%), came from eating all the edible parts of vertebrate animals (wild game and fish).
- A significant part of our ancestors diet consisted of fresh fruits, plants, nuts, seeds, flowers, leaves, and bulbs. These were all consumed raw, which maximized the retention of nutrient rich content and disease-preventing compounds.
- Grains were never present in any significant quantity. Even though they were around, the grains and small seeds were never milled or ground into fine particles and cooked in order to be consumed safely.
- Sodium salt, when present, was in very minimal amounts.

Health Benefits of the Paleo Diet

Agriculture has introduced wide-sweeping changes in the way we eat today, yet our genes have not changed as rapidly. Our bodies are still designed for the high-protein, low-carbohydrate food consumption pattern of our hunter gatherer ancestors. This means we are genetically ill-equipped to handle the high-carbohydrate, low-protein diet of modern times.

This state of better health is true even among the indigenous cultures that have survived into the present day and continue to follow a diet of foods available to them in their natural surroundings. When anthropologists compare these primitive, hunting-gathering peoples with their modernized, grain-eating neighbors, the close association between diet and disease is very clear. You will not find heart disease, cancer, diabetes, arthritis or other “diseases of civilization” among the hunter gatherers. But all these conditions exist among their modernized relatives, with their diets of grain products, sugar laden and processed foods.

Modifying our diet so it becomes closer and more similar to the dietary patterns of our paleolithic ancestors, who ate only natural — not manufactured — foods, our body will be healthier and we will be at lower risk of suffering from the many illnesses and diseases in society today.

The paleo diet provides the body with healthy low-GI carbohydrates from natural food sources, while avoiding our modern diet’s over-consumption of highly processed carbohydrates. Our bodies are not genetically equipped to handle processed carbohydrates, let alone an excess of them. Yet, we are often consuming excessive amounts which can result in a weakened immune system, diabetes, obesity and many other chronic illnesses.

Excessive carbohydrate consumption is rare with the paleo diet. The main source of carbohydrates is fruits and vegetables — the same way it was for our ancestors. Fruits and vegetables generally have a much lower glycemic response than cereal grains and dairy products while providing plenty of antioxidants and assorted phytochemicals which protect against free-radical damage and the carbohydrate need for the body on a daily basis.

The paleo diet will provide the body with a higher proportion of fat than the average Western diet which provides for an additional health benefit as this is the body’s preferred energy source and is what will help the body perform optimally. The fat sources found in our modern diet is generally unhealthy; consisting largely of trans fats. It is important to realize that the human body needs a certain level and quality of fat to enable many body processes, for example; fat-soluble nutrients such as vitamins A, D, E, and K and the coenzyme CoQ10 cannot be absorbed without fat, and each of these vitamins (and many more) are extremely important in order for the body to avoid nutrient deficiencies.

Our ancestors evolved with omega-3 fatty acids, and many fundamental biochemical processes in our bodies still require this fatty acid. The consumption of omega-3 fatty acids in the modern diet is substantially lower than that of omega-6 fatty acids; another family of polyunsaturated fatty acids. The diet of our ancestors showed a 1:1 ratio for omega-3 to omega-6. The modern diet has a much lower ratio of 1:20, or even less.

Omega-3's are known to benefit the human body in many ways. Cordain believes omega-3 fatty acids were key factors in increasing the brain size. They provided the dietary support that allowed the formation of brain tissue. They are essential in maintaining structural functions, such as creating the membranes in your cells to keep tissues healthy, as well as in supporting biochemical processes and body metabolism. A favorable omega-3:omega-6 ratio is important for physical as well as mental health, including but not limited to immune system strength, cardiovascular system strength and a healthy digestive system.

The modern diet, with its excessive consumption of sugar and simple carbohydrates and dangerous fats upsets the natural balance of the bodies ecosystem.

One of the most effective dietary solutions to the health problems we face today can be found within the power within the paleo diet. It is necessary for good health to restore the high-protein, high-fat, and low-carbohydrate balance and to regain the quality of the nutrients which has been lost in modern day food processing and farming. By striving to duplicate the nutritional intake of our hunter gatherer ancestors, the paleo diet enables us to have a clear path towards transforming physical and internal health.



Fruits and Vegetables

It is not always easy to determine which foods fit in the paleo diet. For purist followers of the diet, the rule is to eat only those foods that our ancient ancestors had available to them, however, we are now at an advantage greater than our ancestors in that we have the ability to consume a greater range of nutritionally rich fruits and vegetables and use them to create a nutritionally rich meal.

It's important to note however, that starchy tubers usually are not recommended for inclusion in the paleo diet as they are toxic when not-cooked, hold a high-glycemic index, are low in phytosterols, while also containing enzyme blockers and lectins. Sweet potatoes (yams) hold a higher nutritional value to that of potatoes and some other tubers and are recommended as an alternative food source for nutritionally deprived high carbohydrates when needed – such as for athletes.

Fruits are acceptable for inclusion in the paleo diet, however should be consumed sparingly to avoid a high carbohydrate intake as well as providing the body with an overload of fructose/sugars and a daily carbohydrate excess.

Nuts and seeds should be consumed sparingly, as they would have been for our hunter gatherers.



Consuming a Modern Day Paleo Diet

Interview with Greg Battaglia

Greg Battaglia is a Certified Level I Crossfit trainer and a Dietetics student at Immaculata University who is passionate about constantly exploring ways to improve human health and performance and helping others to achieve their health and fitness goals.

The paleo diet is defined by eating meat, fish, vegetables, fruits, plants, nuts and seeds. But should we be concerned, or at least aware of the modern modifications we often implement to create a meal? Are we eating paleo with too many modifications, or do we hold the ability to create an even more nutritiously dense meal and obtain better health than our ancestors? What if we could find out the exact foods our closest genetic ancestors ate and mimicked that to our diet as close as possible, would we obtain the same good health our ancestors had, or has our environment changed too much that our bodies now require more?

To obtain a better insight I spoke with Greg Battaglia.

The paleo or paleolithic diet is one which bases the concept of the foods available to our hunter gatherer ancestors, which ultimately breaks down to foods provided and found in nature, without the necessity or addition of modern food techniques, chemicals, preservatives or processing. The fundamentals of the paleo diet provide us with the basic guidelines and principles we should apply to our diets and lifestyle today; not necessarily the exact foods available to our ancestors within their environment.

But the question then arises, are we ultimately in a position now where we are fortunate enough to have a large range of food sources we can choose from - and have the ability to achieve even greater health than our ancestors because of this. Or should we possibly be avoiding many of the food sources our ancestors wouldn't have had available and/or in the amount they would have had available, because our genes are still adapted from the more minimal food sources our ancestors consumed and had available?

It is known that our ancestors had good health and didn't suffer from chronic illness as we do today. Ultimately the diet of our ancestors varied somewhat depending on where they lived, their environmental climates as well as other factors.

Ancestors living around Canada would live mostly of fresh salmon, deer, elk, berries and plants. Whereas ancestors living around Africa would have lived on plant roots and animals. And then there are the Aboriginals in Australia who live off the land who eat animals, bugs, plants, native nuts and honey.

But research shows all our ancestors had good health - because they were eating natural food sources available. But if this changed, and Aboriginals suddenly lived in Canada, eating salmon and berries, and ancestors in Africa suddenly lived in the outback of Australia - would they all still have vibrant health?

This is a great question that I've pondered myself self many times. I can't say that I have an exact answer. I personally look at paleo as an explanation for why certain dietary strategies work rather than a prescription, per se. For instance, the fact that many people are gluten intolerant can be explained using the paleo model. If gluten didn't cause any problems we wouldn't tell people to not eat grains simply because our ancestors didn't. I guess what I'm saying is that the paleo model can guide our ideas, but ultimately solid science must be there to confirm it.

In terms of diets differing based on geographic locating, there is some evidence that isolated groups develop adaptations to certain foods. For instance, the people on the island of Okinawa have developed a salivary enzyme that is used specifically for breaking down starches contained in rice, whereas people of European descent do not have this specific enzyme. This is obviously due to the fact that Okinawans have been eating a lot of rice for a long time and somehow were able to develop some adaptations to it.

I think it's also important to consider that probably not all of our ancestors in the Paleolithic were necessarily healthy. Some probably had to survive long periods on limited food sources and indeed developed deficiencies. Others probably survived in a lush environment with a wide variety of nutrient dense foods and flourished with excellent health. I think at the end of the day the goal is this:

1. Get all essential nutrients needed
2. Avoid things that cause problems (possibly grains, dairy, legumes)

Whether all of our ancestors were able to do this or not is irrelevant to our modern needs. The fact that the Australian Aboriginals, the Inuit, and the Kalahari Bushmen were able to survive for so long suggests that all of their diets met the 2 previous requirements. If they didn't, they would have died off pretty fast, as I'm sure happened to plenty of cultures that failed to thrive. I think the main reason that paleo works so well is because it simply removes the stuff that we know to cause problems. Whether you eat lots of fish, broccoli, spinach, and collard greens or lots of beef, cauliflower, carrots, and sweet potatoes (not saying that you can eat just those foods and meet all nutritional requirements) and end up meeting all your macro and micronutrient and calorie needs you'll be healthy since you met your needs and avoided the stuff that's going to cause damage in the first place.

Our current environment and lifestyle is far different from that which our ancestors had. What other aspects of our hunter gatherer's lifestyle should we consider to implement in addition to following the paleo diet food principles, which could ultimately enhance our health even further?

I think an area that is majorly lacking in many discussions of evolutionary fitness (but certainly not all) is the psychological aspect of evolutionary fitness. We often hear about what we should eat, how we should exercise, how many hours of sleep to get each night, what supplements to take, and other tangibles. But what we don't often address is the primal mind and how our evolutionary environment has shaped our minds and way to optimize the function of mind to adapt to industrial living while remaining happy and healthy.

Something that I've noticed and I say this out of compassion, not criticism, is that we sometimes adopt a primal lifestyle in the tangible sense but do nothing to change our mind-set. We still attach our identity to material things and seek happiness and gratification from external things like shopping, watching TV, drinking, and possessions. We even identify ourselves by how much money we make, or what cloths we wear and attempt to use this as an

attempt to attain fulfillment. Contrast this with our hunter-gatherer ancestors who had few possessions and lived a nomadic existence. The only things they needed for happiness were food and shelter, social interaction with their tribe and intimate relationships. Now don't get me wrong, I fall into these same materialistic and consumerist holes sometimes, and I'm certainly not perfect, but I do feel that it is critical to take some measures to take a step back and make note of what is really important in our lives and put our main focus on those things. Indeed, research has shown that money only improves happiness to the extent that it helps one achieve their basic needs of living and comfort, whereas health is a much more accurate indicator of happiness.

So, in essence, the take-home message of this is that our mental perspectives should, ideally, be focused on the things that really matter in life, like health, family, friends, and what we're passionate about. That's not to say we should all just go live in shack somewhere and not make money, but that we should not lose sight of what is most important and not sacrifice quality of life just to make more money that is not really needed for happiness.

A good way of improving our primal minds that our ancestors didn't have to use is meditating. Our ancestors certainly weren't sitting around meditating or practicing strategies to become more present-minded- they had enough down time during their daily activities to not need any stress relief techniques to keep their stress response in check- but meditation has been supported by scientific findings to lower the stress response, promote a stronger immune system, decrease blood pressure, reduce chronic pain, improve cognitive function, and improve sleep quality. The good news is that you don't have to sit around with your legs crossed like a Buddhist monk to get the benefits of meditation (unless you want to, of course). The following are some great ways to "meditate":

1. Focus on your breath. When you feel stressed and are thinking about a million things just slow down and focus on your breathing. Do this for at least a minute and focus on breathing in deeply and then imagine that every breath out is a release of all the built up tension in your body. Be completely aware of your body.....feel your body, so to speak, and feel it become relaxed and loose. This can be very helpful.
2. Become more aware of your body and surroundings. A good quote by the famous psychologist Erik Erikson's wife, Joan Erikson is "Get out of your mind and into your body." What this means is that you focus on your senses. Most people in western societies have so many responsibilities that our minds are always active to the point where the body goes into autopilot and we completely lose touch with the present moment. We become completely focused on, and worried about, what we have to do for the future or dwelling on things that happened in the past rather than focusing solely on the present moment. The key to taking a break from all this constant thinking is to focus on our senses. What do we see, hear, feel, smell, or taste at this moment? Focus on it and you'll be present.
3. Practice flow. Flow is a mental state in which a person is completely immersed in an activity that they are currently doing and any concept of time has been stripped away. It is an intensely enjoyable state to be in and everyone has felt this at one time or another. The key to activating it is to do any activity that you enjoy but that also offers a challenge, but not so much of a challenge that it stresses you out..
4. Accept fully whatever circumstances arise in your life at any point in time. That's not to say that you don't try to change undesirable circumstances if you're capable of doing so, it just means that you don't complain or worry about whatever is happening in reality. For instance, let's say you set up a picnic and tell all of your friends to come because there's supposed to be

nice weather. You get everything set up, bring your grill, a Frisbee for some fun afterward, etc. Before you know it starts pouring rain as soon as everyone shows up. The natural instinct is to flip out or complain, get agitated, feel like a victim, etc. But this does nothing but make the situation worse. Instead, if we simply accept the situation for what it is and take action to fix it as best possible we will avoid much suffering.

If something goes wrong we simply take action to fix it if possible, or if we can't fix it, completely accept it for what it is. If we emotionally resist a situation that cannot be changed it only causes unneeded stress that accomplishes nothing other than to decrease our quality of life and health. If we complain or feel bad for ourselves it only intensifies our negative perception of the situation. This sounds like common sense, but we humans can be highly irrational beings, and this resistance to whatever the circumstances currently are in life is widespread in western culture.

Another great way to improve your health that isn't always mentioned by proponents of Primal living is by fostering good relationships and compassion for other human beings. In our technologically advanced societies it becomes increasingly easy and tempting to just throw on the TV, computer, ipod, or whatever other distractions are available and ignore other people. In fact, many people do just this on a daily basis and have minimal interaction with other human beings, at least on any sort of compassionate level. Instead, turn that stuff off and talk to a friend, family member, or just spark random conversation with interesting people that you meet. Do things with people, stay socially active, laugh, smile, compliment people and go with the flow. People will sense this and good relationships will be born.

Also, I know this response is a bit philosophical in nature overall, but another good one that our ancestors probably didn't think about, or didn't have to at least, was what their purpose was in life. Having a purpose in life is something that can propel us forward and keeps us happy and motivated in day-to-day living. Many people in our society are told what's important to them, how they should think and act, and what aspirations they should have in life. Most people go to a job everyday that they hate just to pay the bills. They use their job as a means for making money only, and don't enjoy the process. On Monday they can't wait until the weekend because of their undesirable circumstances. This is another cause of the lack of present-mindedness mentioned above.

Our hunter-gatherer ancestors likely found purpose in their daily hunting and other activities and enjoyed the process. In our culture we need to think about it and develop an honest idea of what's important to us in life and then embrace it fully and put all of our heart into it. I truly believe that is a major key to both health and happiness throughout the lifespan.

On a more tangible note, something else that I think is good for people living in more northern climates is a light box. Some people in northern climates literally do not see a significant amount of bright sunlight for weeks or months depending on the location and season. A 10,000 lux light box can be used to simulate the effects of sunlight and has been well-researched and shown to have proven benefits in improving mood and preventing/treating depression. The great part is that some insurance plans cover these things if your doctor prescribes it. It can be turned on in the morning while eating breakfast and stimulates sensors in the eyes that help to regulate circadian rhythm, resulting in more alertness and energy during the day and an easier time falling asleep at night.

I promise this is the last one, but I think recreational dancing is a great addition to a primal lifestyle. Our ancestors had ritualistic dance ceremonies around camp fires during the night to entertain themselves and honor their gods. I'm personally a terrible dancer and it's not

something I even take seriously (It doesn't really need to be for our purposes anyway), but if I go out to a bar with a group of friends and music is playing I'll often dance around and have a good time just to sort of joke around and have a good laugh. It's great exercise, it makes me laugh, and my friends get a kick out of my terrible dancing skills, which ties in with the whole social aspect of primal living. I don't think this one is necessary, but for people who are more outgoing it's definitely something fun and is actually really good, pump up exercise that gets the circulation going.

With all the outside environmental factors we are faced with on a daily basis which impacts on our health negatively, i.e. stress, pollution and radiation, we are in a positive position where we have the ability to take extra nutrition through supplementation which can be a means of helping to balance out the negative impact our environment has on our body. What supplements should we consider to add into our diets to help increase our nutrition? Fish oil seems to be a big one.

When it comes to health, I believe that supplements should be kept to a minimum. The main purpose of any supplement within the context of primal/paleo eating is to put something back into your diet that you would be getting if you were eating an optimal paleo diet based on all of the highest quality foods like pastured animal products and organic plant foods.

Unfortunately, not all of us can manage to do that and inevitably some supplements will be needed to optimize health. Like you mentioned, fish oil is an excellent one that every paleo dieter should be taking if they aren't eating all pastured animal products. 3g per day is what most studies have found to have the health benefits of taking fish oils.

Another one that has worked well for many people is a high quality probiotic. Our paleo ancestors consumed the organ meats of the wild animals that they hunted and the beneficial bacteria that came along with the certain organs like the small intestines. They also consumed adequate dietary fiber from non-cereal plant foods and never had a chance to consume refined sugar, which can disrupt the balance of intestinal bacteria.

Another supplement that is an absolute must in my book (along with fish oil) is vitamin D. Indoor living has dramatically reduced our exposure to sunlight and consequently results in low serum vitamin D levels. 2000 IU's/day is a safe upper limit for vitamin D supplementation if you haven't had a blood test to measure your vitamin D status. However, for some people 2000 IU's will not be enough to bring serum level into the optimum range. That being said, I highly suggest that all people taking vitamin D get their blood levels tested periodically to determine the dosage that is appropriate for them.

Other than that, there are a few supplements that are optional but could be very beneficial for some people. One of these is ZMA, which should be taken 30 minutes prior to bedtime. It helps to improve quality of sleep and recovery from exercise, which is very useful for highly active individuals and athletes.

L-glutamine is an amino acid that can be taken during the transition phase from a typical western diet to a lower carbohydrate paleo diet. The body can use L-glutamine to fuel the brain during the adaptation period to fat metabolism, while blood glucose level will be low and cognition will suffer. It basically helps to ease the symptoms experienced while switching to being a fat burner instead of a sugar burner.

Creatine monohydrate can be used to improve work capacity within an anaerobic domain and has some nice research to back it up. It also may have other health benefits like improved cardiac function and cognition.

Although our ancestors wouldn't have combined foods, we are now able to eat more than one nutritious food source at any one time. Additionally, combining certain foods can help the synergy of nutrients and help with digestibility. With that in mind, should we be concerned with high calorie meals, high carb meals or liquid meals even if 100% of the ingredients are paleo friendly? And does this ultimately begin to go outside the basic principles of the paleo diet?

When it comes to food combining, I keep a very simple rule: never eat a meal that is both high in fat and carbs. All meals should be either high in fat and protein or high in protein and carbs, but never high in both fat and carbs. The reason for this is that the insulin spike that follows carb consumption signals for fat molecules to be stored at the nearest adipose sites. If blood insulin levels and blood fat levels are simultaneously elevated body composition will suffer along with performance, as the body will be running on glucose rather than the more consistent burning fat.

Don't get me wrong, calories still count when it comes to fat loss and body composition, but so do macronutrients ratios and combinations. However, it's also important to understand when to consume a protein/carb meal. The best time is post-workout if you have a performance goal. If I don't workout on a particular day I keep all of my meals high in protein and fat and low in carbs, since my muscle didn't need any glycogen to be replaced, hence the absence of a post workout meal containing starchy carbs.

Here would be my recommendation:

For general health/longevity: 90% of the time eat high protein/high fat meals, even post workout. Eat meals higher in paleo carbs occasionally to re-calibrate insulin sensitivity.

For performance goals: Eat a high-carb(starchy paleo carbs such as sweet potatoes, squash, yams, etc.)/high protein meal post workout after metabolic conditioning workouts, but not after strength work. The rest of your meals should be high protein/high fat/low carb.

For fat loss: Keep it low-carb and zig-zag your calorie intake. For instance, if you need to consume 1500 calories per day to lose weight you would eat 1000 kcals one and then 2000 kcals the next day to "trick" your metabolism and hang onto muscle while still losing fat. This actually has worked very well for me in the past and I highly recommend it. When I keep my calorie intake the same everyday while cutting I start to notice problems with water retention, and indication of excessive cortisol production. I also tend to lose muscle mass with that method. On the zig-zag approach I lose fat and keep muscle much easier.

When it comes to liquid meals and higher carb paleo meals the above suggestion should be considered. It really depends on your goals. From a health perspective liquid meals are to be avoided due to insulin spikes, and like I said higher carb paleo meals from solid food should be kept occasional. Some people can benefit from liquid post workout meals, but others will still present signs of hypoglycemia and hyperinsulinemia. That being said, whole food is always best, unless your running a marathon or some other long-distance death grind that requires high calorie/carb intake on the go that doesn't require tons of digestion.

I think it's important to understand that everything is goal-dependent. If you want to live really long and be super healthy you're going to have a different plan than if you want to run a marathon and a different plan than if you want to become super strong. However, since the paleo lifestyle is one based on health, longevity, and quality of life I think it's key to stay with the basics.

Eat whole paleo foods, keep carb and fat meals separate, moderate calorie intake and don't gorge, load up on veggies and pastured meats, incorporate some intelligent intermittent fasting, develop some stress reducing techniques, exercise just enough to get the benefits, but not enough to get injured or cause long-term wear and tear. When you have goals that go beyond that, such as performance or body composition goals, you have to stretch the paleo concept and make some compromises with your lifestyle and sometimes with your health and longevity.

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