

FOOD WE AVOID



Probably the worst of the processed foods are found in the aisle of products marketed to our children.

Thousands of hours spent listening to podcasts and reading articles by many doctors, nutritionists, dieticians, scientists and more has lead me to believe that we (humans) should avoid the items set out below.

Consumption of the substances referred to below appears to have a negative effect on our metabolism and/or causes significant and systemic inflammation in the human body.

Of course, some of what I think I know may not stand the test of time (as I spoke about in my post [Some Thoughts About Food](#)). I try to be mindful of this and of course remain open to new knowledge and research. But, for the time being and based on my current knowledge, I try as best I can for our family to avoid the following foods.

WHAT WE AVOID IF AT ALL POSSIBLE:

Processed Foods

Yes. I know. **It's not easy to avoid these in today's world.** But I believe its really important for the health and wellbeing of you and your family to minimise these foods to the greatest extent possible. Particularly those items based on **refined wheat and/or added sugars and vegetable oils.**

The reality is that anything found in the middle aisle of the supermarket and sold to you in brightly coloured plastic or cardboard is very unlikely to be a healthy choice. **Don't panic though!** Keep reading and keep making steps towards a mostly processed-food free life!

Seriously when I first contemplated ditching practically all processed foods it seemed an impossibly large task. But I just started removing things from the pantry, fridge and freezer or not buying them again when we ran out.* And you know what - most things I can honestly say I've never missed at all.

* We do have some products from this list lurking around still. They're the property of my husband. Who most certainly has not "gone Paleo" and would not be at all happy if I chucked his beloved HP Sauce. It's one of my main missions to "convert" him. It's like an addiction in a way this desire to convert a close family member. Even though I know I shouldn't do it I can't seem to help myself from trying. You can follow my attempts to make changes to his diet (some moderately successful many complete failures) on the blog under [Ditching Processed Foods](#).

Added Sugar + Artificial Sweeteners

Sugar is sugar is sugar. Or perhaps more accurately fructose is fructose is fructose. This is the unfortunate generalisation we can make. Of course we tell ourselves that raw coconut sugar or maple syrup or honey are not as refined and therefore "better" for us. And to an extent I believe this is true in that they have other additional beneficial qualities. But, at the end of the day, the less added sugar (or whatever type) you can have in your diet the better.

We generally avoid added sugar but we do still include some sweetener options in our treats (or "special occasionals" as Dom calls them). I really enjoy the whole process of baking and making treats and these do tend to have sugar in them even if it is only a small amount when you

consider portion sizes. Something to bear in mind when you see these recipes on our blog is that **we give away a fair amount of the more sweetened foods and what we do keep is usually stored in the freezer to be eaten over several weeks.** (So, just for example, one of our banana loaves will last 3-4 weeks if it is just Dom and me.) I know a lot of people do use artificial sweeteners but I do my best to avoid them. On pure **Stevia** I need to learn more about it but certainly I am not a fan of products that are Stevia based but contain other ingredients. A lot of people say it has a strange aftertaste. In the future we will probably experiment more with this plant but to date we have not. My aim is to reduce our sugar consumption further than its current amount by crowding out with the better sugar free options. I'm going to revisit some of our more popular recipes and try reducing the sugar content – I'm sure that now we've been eating low sugar for a while that even less sugar will still taste great.

Grains

I try to **avoid all grains**. Even those so called “healthy whole grains” you've been told about ad infinitum over the years such as wheat, rye, barley, oats, millet, corn and brown rice as well as the three major pseudograins (also called pseudocereals) – amaranth, buckwheat, and quinoa. And in case you're not sure it definitely means we don't eat wheat based breads, tortillas, pasta and cereals.

From everything I've read and heard from experts I trust, **the evidence is saying that grains are responsible for a heck of lot of problems going on with us humans, all traced back to inflammation going on in our bodies when we eat these substances. And so for that reason I avoid grains if at all possible.** That said, I can agree that there's a big difference between the most prevalent grains available and being consumed and those grains (especially the ancient grains and pseudo-grains) prepared using traditional techniques. Notwithstanding this, I simply don't crave grains or find it that hard to avoid them and I certainly don't have the motivation to do the requisite preparation etc. Hence it's just easier for me to simply avoid them all as much as possible.

For reasons of practicality when out and about (and in the absence (to date) of any major reactions from small amounts of exposure to gluten free grains) we do occasionally eat gluten free bread.

It's important to note here that avoiding grains is not the same as avoiding carbohydrates. We eat plenty of the latter but in form of starchy vegetables not refined wheat and its cohorts.

Processed Vegetable + Seed Oils

This one is easy people! **Please listen up here!** Even if going without grains is just not going to

happen (at least not for now) I cannot emphasise enough how much benefit you will be doing to yourself by **getting rid of industrially produced vegetable oils.** Did you know that basic vegetable oil isn't made from vegetables at all! We're talking here about processed peanut, canola (and rapeseed), rice-bran, sunflower, safflower, soybean, grape-seed and corn oils. These oils are processed with hexane in order to remove offending odours and flavours. They're also high in omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids and highly susceptible to oxidation and rancidity. Get them out of your system and your immune system will thank you for it.

SOME GREY AREAS...

Legumes

Legumes are one of those grey area foods. We're talking here about beans – black, kidney, pinto, white and chickpeas – as well as lentil, peas and peanuts (and peanut butter). I understand that if you properly prepare the legumes (soak, sprout, cook and ferment them) then they are probably OK for majority of us. But I also understand that for many they are likely to cause digestive issues (and therefore stop you from getting to the best health you can be). As well their nutrients are not as bio-available to our bodies as other food sources. Finally, legumes do not offer me anything nutrient-wise that I cannot get elsewhere for less trouble. So for the latter reason alone **I do not go out of my way to eat them and day to day I very rarely find myself needing to avoid them as they're simply not on offer to me.**

However **soy** is another issue. I believe that in some situations where it is fermented it may have health benefits. But the manner in which most of us are likely to be exposed to it would be as a drink or in processed products as soybean oil. **I make a point to avoid soy in all its forms.** Commercially available soy is typically genetically modified and contains isoflavones that may disrupt normal endocrine function. (Legumes like green beans, snap peas and snow peas are OK because they're more like pod than bean.)

If you are particularly passionate and desiring of eating legumes then I would still try a period without to see how your body handles them on re-introduction. Preferable work with a health professional on this experiment.

Alcohol

This is the list of what we generally avoid. Obviously Chef Dom doesn't drink so it's a non issue. For myself, I never used to be a big drinker but I did find after having Dom that I got into the habit of drinking a glass of red wine nearly every evening. Then it started to creep up to two glasses when stress levels rose with juggling full time work, a baby and moving countries.

For me it's been the right thing to do to practically eliminate alcohol. I very rarely miss it. It's a cost-benefit analysis really – **you need to work out what's working for you about having it and what's not and then be honest with yourself and make a personal decision based on that.**

When I'm in a good space and I want to have a glass in a social situation then I may choose to have a glass and that's no issue. But I very rarely do now because the fact is that once you stop drinking you notice the effects so much more when you do – and they're not that pleasant to put it mildly.

On the subject of vegetable oils, I love this clip from the wonderful **Alexx Stuart** (www.alexstuart.com) and her little guy – pure gold: