FOOD WE FOCUS ON

Well – it's quite simple really. We just eat REAL FOOD. Fresh, natural food like meat, vegetables and fruit. Foods that are nutrient-dense, with lots of naturally occurring vitamins and minerals, rather than foods that have more calories but less nutrition. And food quality is important – I'm mindful about about where our meat, seafood, eggs, vegetables and fruit come from, and try to buy organic local produce as often as possible.

Of course, if I mention that we (Dom and I) don't eat grains I get more than a few raised eyebrows. Many people definitely perceive the dietary choices I'm making for us as being extreme or some weird fad or at the very least some kind of hardship. Their first question is usually along the lines of "If you're not eating bread/grains what do you eat?" To which I can reply "Everything else!".

The way we eat does tend naturally to work out to be lower carb than the standard western diet (but I would say more because the latter is high carb than because we are eating low carb). We also tend to eat much more (healthy) fat that is standard.

But the thing is – this is NOT a "diet".

We eat as much as we need to maintain strength, energy, activity levels and a healthy body weight. We're not lacking carbohydrates – we just get them from vegetables and fruits instead of bread, cereal or pasta. It's basically eating nutrient dense foods: moderate amounts of animal based protein, loads of vegetables, good quality natural fats and smaller amounts of fruit and nuts.*

So you could describe what we eat as being Paleo or Primal or LCHF (Low Carb, High (Healthy) Fat). Or, in other words, we just real eat food!

SO WHAT DO WE EAT?!

Animal Protein

We eat moderate amounts of animal protein. Predominantly we eat this in the form of beef, lamb, poultry, pork, seafood and chicken's eggs although we love to try other less popular choices such as wild game and duck eggs. We've yet to try insect protein (like crickets which is gaining popularity in the States) but I'm keen to give it a go. We're also experimenting with different cuts of meats and are strong advocates of nose to tail eating.

I try to ensure that the meat we eat is organic, humanly raised, 100% pasture-fed and finished (in case of lamb and beef) and that the fish is wild line caught. Sometimes it seems like all this is a bit over the top. And for sure there are often days that for one reason or another I end up buying items that don't conform to these ideals. But the more I read on this topic the more I believe it is the way we need to go. Certainly, it is generally more expensive, but we counter that in part because we eat less animal protein than before – quality over quantity.

Vegetables

"More vegetables than a vegetarian" – so goes the popular Paleo hashtag. And it's true that when you switch to a real food way of eating you will eat SO many more vegetables than ever you thought possible. When we first started eating this way I didn't pay too much attention to the source of our vegetables and whether they were organic or not. Now I try to always buy local (and therefore seasonal) and where possible choose organic.

Healthy Fats

For cooking we use rendered animal fats (lard and tallow), coconut oil, macadamia nut oil, extra-virgin olive oil. I would use duck fat and ghee but so far whenever I've tasted these I've not liked them so much. We also use butter especially with vegetables. The fats I use cold are coconut oil, macadamia nut oil, extra-virgin olive oil and avocado oil.

Full Fat Dairy

A lot of people do not tolerate dairy well and this likely depends on factors such as the status of their gut barrier, whether or not they have SIBO or IBS, or are gluten intolerant and whether we're talking about eating raw or pasteurized dairy. If you're not sure where you stand with dairy, the best approach is to remove it for at least 30 days and then reintroduce and see what happens.

We're currently experimenting with dairy. That is to say that I'm an advocate of full fat dairy products when tolerated. I haven't personally eaten dairy except for butter for over a year as I find my skin is much clearer without it and I don't miss it. For Dom I'm still figuring things out. It seemed he might be reacting to it so we had cut down but lately we did some testing and I think he's OK with it. Of course is much more convenient if he can tolerate dairy as yoghurt and cheese are such handy options for the lunchbox.

Fermented Foods

One of the most significant changes I've made to the foods we eat is to introduce fermented foods. We now eat sauerkraut, kombucha, kimchi and coconut kefir on a regular basis. Put very simply fermented foods are essential to good gut health. I don't think it can be that hard to make

these ourselves but I seem have created a bit of a mental block with myself on getting started. That, and the fact that there are some great options to purchase ready made! But definitely the next mission is to start making some sauerkraut and kombucha.

Herbs & Spices

Herbs and spices can make all the difference to your real food meals. I used to be really intimidated by all the options. Actually I still am a bit. But I finally got a decent herb and spice chart and got around to organising my herbs and spices and then just started using them. Once you've tried cooking with these extras you'll never want to go back to food without.

Fresh Herbs At The Supermarket. Or Better Still Grow Your Own.

FOODS WE EAT IN MODERATION

Fruit

Now don't freak out! Of course fruit is amazing. But I put it in the moderation section because that is where I believe it belongs. I know this is not a popular view but I say it for a number of reasons:

First because fruit is just not how it used to be: It's much larger and sweeter (in general – many varieties are breed to be less bitter) and less nutritious. It's often been sprayed with chemicals. Second, because if you're eating a lot of fruit then you're likely to be doing that in place of eating more vegetables. Third, high fruit intake – particularly of the more high fructose fruits like bananas and apples- will keep your taste buds primed for sweetness. And finally, because the high fructose content of many fruits may spike insulin levels to the point where it can cause ongoing serious health issues.

Now fruit is probably better for you than others foods with high fructose because it comes in a package as nature intended and because the natural fibres slow the digestion down somewhat. But I just don't think we should kid ourselves that fructose in fruit is some kind of magic non-insulin impacting substance. Be mindful of your fruit consumption and listen to your body. And eat locally and seasonally – which will likely mean more fruit in summer and less in winter. And yes this goes for our children as well.

For myself I tend not to eat fruit except in baking or our Paleo breakfast concoctions or the occasional handful of berries. I don't restrict myself – it's just not something I make a point of eating and this has been the case for over a decade. It's a hangover from my bodybuilding days when I did purposely remove most fruit. At the present time Dom usually has two pieces of fruit a day – a handful of blueberries and a mandarin/kiwifruit/pear would be typical. However any time other people are around feeding him this is likely to increase because most people are just of the opinion that children cannot eat too much fruit. But I'll leave that here as people feeding other people's children is a subject for another .

Nuts & Seeds

Nuts and seeds are in our moderate basket because they're relatively high in omega 6 and also because they're one of those "real foods" that are very easy to over eat. And as well they should be "activated" (soaked, sprouted – if relevant- and dehydrated) before you eat them which is a bit of a hassle.

Now "activating" your nuts sounds weird doesn't it! And I have to admit that I've not been doing this consistently. But it is important and just means you soak (for a certain time dependent on the various nuts) and dehydrate. Easy peasy really not sure why I don't "just do it". We've been eating more nuts than I consider optimal recently so I'm looking to cut down and to "activate" them when we do eat them.

Natural Sweeteners

We use sweeteners that are as natural as possible but I don't kid myself that at the end of the day

they’re not sugar plain and simple in so far as the end effect they have on our bodies. So we do use coconut sugar, honey and maple syrup in our baking (but not agave or rice malt syrup) but I’m mindful when we do and don’t go overboard with them.

Here’s an example of some REAL FOOD nutrition guidelines. What I like about this is that it references other aspects of wellbeing like sleep, water and real life.

NUTRITION

EAT **MEAT** & **VEGETABLES**, NUTS & SEEDS, SOME FRUIT, LITTLE STARCH AND **NO SUGAR**.

KEEP INTAKE TO **LEVELS** THAT WILL **SUPPORT EXERCISE** BUT NOT BODY FAT.

START HERE

FACT:

FOOD **DOESN'T HAVE** LABELS
PRODUCTS **HAVE** LABELS

X NOT HERE

FOOD INC.

PROTEIN

VEGGIES (CARBS)

EAT PLENTY OF **THESE**

FATS

INCLUDE **SMALL** PORTIONS OF THESE:
OILS • SEEDS • NUTS
LOOK FOR "GOOD FATS" THAT ARE HIGH IN OMEGA 3

OCCASIONALLY:

SOME WHOLE **FRESH FRUIT** AND **BERRIES**

COFFEE

IMPROVES **BRAIN** ACTIVITY & PERFORMANCE, AND MAKES YOU MORE **AWESOME OVERALL**

YOUR PLATE SHOULD **LOOK LIKE THIS**
PALM SIZE PROTEIN
SURROUNDED BY
VEGGIES & **SALAD**
2 THUMB SIZED FAT
IN ANY COMBO

AVOID THE CHEMICAL S#!T STORM

SUGAR & **CHEMICAL** SUBSTITUTES
DIET AND **FAT FREE** PRODUCTS
AND **ANYTHING PROCESSED**

GRAINS

- PROCESSING
- EMPTY CALORIES
- SPIKE INSULIN LEVELS
- STORED AS BODY FAT

SLEEP 7.5-9 HRS PER NIGHT

SLEEP IS IMPERATIVE LACK OF SLEEP WILL DASH **YOUR EFFORTS** FOR HEALTH AND FAT LOSS AND PUT YOUR BODY IN AN **INSULIN RESISTANT STATE.**

ZZZ

WATER

LIVE

DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP - **ENJOY IT**
IF YOU EAT RIGHT AND INDULGE IN THESE SPORADICALLY

ESSENTIALS

ROOTED FITNESS
CrossFit

WWW.ROOTEDFITNESSCROSSFIT.COM

Nutrition Chart (reproduced courtesy of Rooted Fitness Crossfit).

* Parts of my “What We Eat” summary is based on Whole 9’s “Nutrition in 60 seconds”. Find out more at http://whole9life.com.