

Reduce Inflammation: Eat the PalmLeaf Way

by Jeanette Mascarenas, wife of Ramon Mascarenas, LMT

1. Eat more plants. Plant foods reduce inflammation, fight pain and prevent or improve an astounding number of diseases including heart disease, diabetes, many cancers and many autoimmune diseases. Animal foods do the opposite. Take a vitamin B-12 supplement. B-12 is the only nutrient you cannot get from plants.

2. Eat more fiber. Fiber is only found in plant foods, never in animal foods. Fiber lowers cholesterol and reduces constipation. Eat more of these:

Beans, lentils and peas provide fiber plus protein for growth and wound healing

Whole grains provide fiber plus carbohydrates (starches) for clean-burning energy

Fruits and vegetables provide fiber plus *phytonutrients that fight inflammation, pain and disease*

3. Eat less sugar. Sugar increases inflammation, pain and wrinkles. Refined sugars like white sugar, brown sugar and high-fructose corn syrup don't provide vitamins and minerals, they take nutrients out of your body. Here are some healthier ways to satisfy your sweet tooth. Just don't go crazy; they still raise your blood sugar.

- Fresh or dried fruit
- Evaporated cane juice still contains some of the sugar cane's nutrients (brand names are Rapidura and Sucanat)
- Molasses is high in iron and other minerals
- Honey
- Brown rice syrup
- Maple syrup
- Sweet potatoes and yams

4. Eat more variety. The more different kinds of foods you eat, the more likely it is that you are getting all the nutrients you need. Colors represent nutrients. Eat as many different colors each day as you can.

5. Eat more traditional foods. Traditional food processing increases nutrient content and/or makes nutrients easier to absorb. Modern food processing removes nutrients to extend shelf life. Examples of traditional processing include, fermented foods like yogurt, sauerkraut and soy sauce, wheat made into yeast bread, boiled potatoes and stir-fried vegetables.

6. Eat less fat. I'm not saying never eat fat, just cut way down. Too much fat puts a heavy toll on your system. (Note: If you experience pain/diarrhea after eating a high-fat meal, you may have a dysfunctional gallbladder—or no gallbladder. Try cutting way down on fat and when eating a higher fat food combine it with a high fiber food.)

These foods are high in fat:

- Animal foods, including things labeled “low-fat”
- Restaurant foods and fast food
- Fried foods, including stir-fried foods
- Olives, olive oil
- Margarine, shortening and all oils
- Mayo, salad dressings
- Coconut, coconut oil, coconut milk, inc. light
- Cheese, including non-dairy varieties
- Avocado and guacamole
- Chocolate, cocoa
- Coffee with creamer
- Ice cream, including non-dairy varieties
- Donuts, pastries and most desserts
- Peanuts, peanut butter
- Nuts, nut butters and seeds

Resources: **Forks Over Knives**, available on Netflix; **The China Study**, by T. Colin Campbell, PhD.;

Dr. McDougall's Digestive Tune-up, by Dr. John McDougall; **Dr. Dean Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart**

Disease, by Dr. Dean Ornish; **Dr. Neal Barnard's Program for Reversing Diabetes**, by Dr. Neal Barnard;

PCRM.org (Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine), founded by Dr. Neal Barnard; **HappyCow.net**,

veg-friendly restaurant finder. Just Google “vegan recipes” or “vegan” plus whatever you like to eat.

FAQs

by Jeanette Mascarenas

What is vegan? The exact definition varies depending on who you ask. I just try to minimize my use of animal products as much as possible.

How long have you been vegan? I have been vegan since 1993 and vegetarian since 1989. Ramon has been vegan at home as long as he's been with me (since 2011). He self identifies as "80/20 mixitarian".

Why are you vegan? There is too much suffering in the world and I do not want to add to it in any way. I didn't really feel healthy until I switched to a whole-foods, plant-based diet. Plant-based food production uses less water and gives off less green-house gasses.

What do you eat if you don't eat meat? Bean burritos, vegetable lasagna, veggie burgers, curried lentils and rice, vegetarian chili, roasted vegetable pizza with non-dairy cheese, falafal pita sandwiches, hummus, minestrone soup, spaghetti with mock meatballs, biscuits with mock sausage gravy, to name a few.

Where do you get protein? Beans, lentils, peas, tofu, soy milk, soy yogurt, peanut butter, nuts and mock meats all contain lots of protein.

Don't you have to combine foods to get a "complete protein"? Just eat the high protein foods listed above with whole grains for a balanced protein profile. A "complete" or "perfect" protein is a myth anyway.

Isn't it expensive? It's less expensive than drugs and hospital bills.

Isn't it time consuming? Like anything worth doing, it takes a commitment. The more you do it, the easier it gets. Make a list of the reasons why you are changing your diet—things like getting off prescription meds, seeing your grandchildren grow up or being healthy enough to complete a bucket list item.

What do you think of Paleo? Don't forget, cave dwellers were lucky to live to 30. Overwhelming research shows that eating little or no animal products is the healthiest diet for the long haul.

Is gluten unhealthy? Most people can eat gluten with no problem. However, the gut may become damaged from years of poor nutrition and going gluten free for a time may help the gut heal. Most products marketed as gluten free products are very low in fiber though.

What products do you recommend?

All these have passed the "Ramon" test.

Non-dairy

Cheese—Diaya, Teese, Tofutti

Ice cream—So Delicious, Soy Dream, Tofutti

Margarine—Earth Balance

Soy milk—Silk, Whole Foods 365, Earth Balance, Meijer

Soy yogurt—Silk, Whole Soy

Prepared items

Canned soups—Amy's

Frozen burritos—Amy's

Frozen entrées—Amy's

Frozen pizza—Diaya

Veggie burgers—Boca, Amy's

Mock meats

Bacon—Tofurkey, Fakin' Bacon

Chicken—Gardein, Beyond Meat

Cold cuts—Tofurkey, Smart

Fish—Gardein

Ground beef—Smart

Meatballs—Whole Foods 365

Sausages—Tofurkey, Field Roast

Turkey—Gardein, Tofurkey

Misc.

Non-aluminum baking powder—Rumford

Bouillon cubes—Edward and Sons

Eggless mayo—Veganise

Soap—Dr. Bronner's Magic All One (liquid and bars)

Whole wheat pastry flour—Whole Foods 365, Arrowhead Mills

Coffee substitute—Ramon loves Dandy

Non-dairy chocolate—Sunspire, CocoaVia

Restaurant food

Asian—Buddha's delight, vegetable chow fun, vegetable lo mein, vegetable chop suey, vegetarian sushi, Pad

Thai made without egg and fish sauce

Taco Bell—Bean burrito without cheese, 7-layer burrito without cheese or sour cream

Burger King—Veggie burger without mayo

Chipotle—Black bean or sofritas burrito with guacamole, chips and salsa

Indian and Ethiopian—ask about lentil dishes

Italian—Spaghetti with marinara sauce

McDonald's—Oatmeal without creamer

Mediterranean—Hummus, falafal, baba ghanoush, tabouli, stuffed grape leaves

Starbucks—Coffee with soymilk, soy chai latte, oatmeal

Subway—Veggie delight without cheese, veggie patty