

You are a caveman. At least your body still thinks so. The human body is pretty darn similar to the bodies of the earliest humans. Culturally and socially, we exist in a rapidly changing 21st century, but our bodies have not changed much compared to the bodies of earliest humans.¹ The truth is, we are all Paleolithic.

As a species, humans have been around for a very long time.² For nearly all of human history, our ancestors lived off the land. They hunted wild game and gathered fruits, vegetables and roots. As they ate what was available to them, their bodies adapted. For example, their stomachs got used to digesting whole, natural foods like onions, apples, and wild rice; their cells became accustomed to being bathed in plant-based chemicals; and their teeth adapted to better grind and chew food. Our bodies inherited these abilities from those who preceded us. We have been prepared since time began to hunt, gather, and eat wholesome food just like our ancient ancestors. But we no longer share the same diet. Cavemen did not consume Hostess Twinkies™, Kellogg's Sugar Frosted Flakes™, or diet Dr. Pepper™. We've changed.

White sugar has only been part of our diet for about 200 years. White flour has only been publicly available for about 150 years. The most widely consumed sweetener, high-fructose corn syrup, has only been around for about 45 years.³⁻⁵ White sugar, white flour and, high-fructose cornsyrup are dietary newbies. In fact, if all of human history were contained in a single day, then white flour would have been part of our diet for about two minutes.

What you see in stores today are modern foods. Most did not exist 100 years ago. It is hard to imagine that 99.9 percent of all humans ever born never tasted Reese's Puffs™ Breakfast Cereal.

The foods largely available today resulted from the industrial revolution and our free market system. Modern food is abundant, inexpensive and not as compatible with our ancient bodies. Early humans did not eat cheese, butter, sugars, syrups, refined flours, vegetable oils, shortening, margarine or added salt.⁶ They did eat meat, but not the kind we eat. Today, 99% of all beef is produced from grain-fed, feedlot cattle. This meat is not as healthy as meat that comes from animals that have been allowed to free range.⁷

It is true that ancient humans suffered from many illnesses and diseases that we no longer experience. They worked hard and typically died young. Yet, despite these health challenges, it appears that they did not have type II diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and other now-common chronic diseases.⁸ This is why I wrote this guide:

Most of the chronic diseases that afflict the industrial world are caused by a diet and lifestyle that is inconsistent with the ancient bodies we inherited from our ancestors.

Still Not Convinced?

Here is what we know from the best available science. Many scientists from around the world have tried to identify the ideal diet by studying the relationship between the foods people eat and the diseases they get later in life. After decades of research on thousands and thousands of people, they have identified two dietary patterns that either cause or prevent chronic diseases. The diet that is the most unhealthy has been called “The Western diet.” People that eat a Western diet typically live in industrialized countries that are “Westernized” or more like America—and not in a good way! This Western diet includes lots of red meat, french fries, refined flours, butter, processed meats, high-fat dairy products, sweets, desserts, few fruits, and even fewer vegetables.

The dietary pattern that is associated with good health is called “The Prudent diet.” The Prudent diet contains mostly whole grains, plant oils, vegetables, fruits, and legumes as illustrated in the pyramid below.



Healthy Eating Pyramid

The Prudent Diet Pattern

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource>

Used with permission.

The foods on the bottom of the pyramid should be the primary source of energy. The foods on the top of the pyramid should be eaten sparingly. The Prudent diet is based on whole foods that are either in or very close to their natural state. These are foods that would have been part of any human diet since day one. Interestingly, if the pyramid were flipped upside down it would very accurately depict the Western diet.

What happens to those who follow the Prudent diet and the Western diet? Through large studies with hundreds of thousands of participants, researchers have determined important differences between those who follow both diets. Those who follow the Prudent diet lower their risk of diabetes by 16% and heart disease by 34%. By contrast, those who eat a Western diet increase their risk of diabetes by 59%,⁹⁻¹⁰ and heart disease by 64%.¹¹⁻¹³ These two diet patterns are associated in the same way with other chronic diseases such as colon cancer,¹⁴ stroke,¹⁵ Parkinson's Disease, breast cancer, stomach cancer, asthma, and obesity.¹⁶⁻²⁰ Bottom line? Eat like a caveman (a Prudent diet) to reduce your risk of chronic disease.

The research is clear. Eating whole foods is the best way to maintain a healthy weight and avoid chronic diseases.

How this Guide Will Help You Eat like a Caveman.

To have really good health and avoid most chronic diseases, you should eat whole foods—foods that are in or close to their natural form. For example, fresh produce is whole food. It is in its natural form. It was grown, cleaned, packed, and sent to the store or market for purchase. Produce is an example of a basic whole food that humans have been eating for thousands of years. They are easy to identify and everyone knows they are good for you. But what about all the other foods in the grocery store? How can you tell if a food is close to its natural form? Take Quaker™ oatmeal for example. Quaker Old Fashion Oatmeal is a pretty basic food. It is not quite in its natural form, but it is close. Most oatmeal we purchase has been processed with a big roller that flattens the oat kernels. It is still an oat kernel, just flat. Quaker Old Fashion Oatmeal is an example of a grocery store food that is close to its original form and is good for you.

What about Quaker Dinosaur Eggs Brown Sugar Oatmeal? Do you think this is really a whole food? If you said, “No,” you were correct. Oatmeal is listed as an ingredient alright, but it is not even close to its natural form. It has been processed until it is unrecognizable. But kids still love it because it has a cool name.

The word “processed” refers to all the changes that food can undergo before it actually ends up on your plate. Some of this processing is actually good. Foods can be sterilized, pasteurized, chopped up, dehydrated, or frozen. These processes can make food safer and more nutritious.

But there is a dark side to food processing. Let’s talk about oatmeal again. Do you remember Lucky Charms™ breakfast cereal? Lucky Charms cereal is made from oats, but you wouldn’t know it unless you carefully examined the ingredients. General Mills, the manufacturer of Lucky Charms, calls them a whole grain, frosted oats cereal and boasts that they are “magically delicious.”

Here are the ingredients of Lucky Charms:

Oat flour, marshmallow bits (sugar, modified corn starch, corn syrup, dextrose, gelatin, calcium carbonate, yellow 5&6, blue 1, red 40, artificial flavor), sugar, corn syrup, corn starch, salt, calcium carbonate, color added, trisodium phosphate, zinc and iron (mineral nutrients), vitamin C (sodium ascorbate), a B vitamin (niacinamide), artificial flavor, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B1 (thiamin mononitrate), vitamin A (palmitate), a B vitamin (folic acid), vitamin B12, vitamin D, wheat starch, vitamin E (mixed tocopherols) added to preserve freshness.

Even though the few oats that are in Lucky Charms are actually whole oats (the shell, germ, and starch of the oat kernel), this cereal is far from being a whole food. Even worse, it presents a real challenge to our ancient physiology and our overall good health.

Can you imagine what the early cavemen would do if they found a box of Lucky Charms cereal with colorful marshmallow bits? Lucky Charms is a good example of a food that has undergone so much processing that it can no longer be considered a food that contributes to good health. General Mills Lucky Charms are coded “red” in this guide as a warning that they should be avoided or eaten very sparingly. The truth is, eating a box of Lucky Charms cereal will not kill you. But if most of your diet consists of processed foods like Lucky Charms, your risk of getting a chronic disease is probably higher.

Let’s be honest. It is really hard to choose foods that are healthy. Food producers know this and are not interested in helping you make healthy choices. They are more interested in profits than they are in your health. In fact, they have a financial motive to sell as much food as possible. To do so, they will try to convince you that their processed foods are healthy by using marketing tactics that are deceptive at best and big fat lies at worst. Don’t be fooled.

It's All About the Money

Are you still reading this? If so, I must have your full attention. Would you like to know what I really think? Here it is. I have spent most of my adult life trying to help people live a more healthy life. I have spent a lot of time thinking about why it is so hard to eat healthy foods and I've come to a few conclusions. Here is one: We eat unhealthy foods because we are easily fooled by the marketing efforts and messages of food producers.

Food producers want to make money. Period. Take a look at a box of Cocoa Puffs™ Cereal. Look on the side panel and you'll see the heart shaped label of the American Heart Association (AHA). This American Heart Association label means that the food manufacturer has met some sort of nutrition recommendation. It also means that the food manufacturer has given the AHA thousands of dollars. In essence, the food producers have purchased the blessing of the AHA. The food producers will sell more product with the official blessing of the AHA and the AHA makes millions of dollars each year in labeling fees. This situation is a win-win,—lose. The food producers win. The AHA wins. The consumer loses.

The nutrition labeling approach to food marketing is a common practice and it is a big business. Remember, it's all about the money. Food producers know that you will make purchasing decisions based on these labels. For example, the Whole Grain Council came up with some simple food rules for a Whole Grain Stamp. Any food producer that meets the rules and pays their fee, \$1,000–\$10,000 per year, gets the right to use the Whole Grain Stamp. Some foods that carry this stamp are actually healthy but many are not. Pepsico™ thumbed its nose at all the other labels and started their own called Smart Spot. Over 250 Pepsico™ products now carry the Smart Spot label. Some of the nation's biggest food producers, General Mills, Kellogg, Kraft Foods, and others got together and created their own label called Smart Choices.

The foods you see in grocery stores are now plastered with these self-serving labels and stamps. It is the food producer equivalent of "keeping up with the Jones." Each is trying to beat the competition with bigger and bolder health claims and labels. But what do the claims really mean? They mean that the consumer will buy more. They mean that you will often pay more. But they do not mean you will be healthier. In fact, eating cleverly disguised unhealthy food will lead to just as much weight gain, chronic disease, and premature death as obviously unhealthy food like donuts. Nobody would dare slap a healthy label on a donut would they?

How this Guide Can Help

The purpose of this guide is to help you purchase and eat more whole foods. There are over 300,000 different foods that can be purchased in grocery stores. It was simply impossible to include all of them in this guide. To keep this guide at a manageable size, it has been limited to the top selling 3,500 foods in the U.S. The nutrition information for each food was then added into a food database. Finally, each of these foods was placed into one of 14 food categories. These categories are the same ones grocery stores use to organize and display foods. The categories include:

Baked Goods & Doughs	Condiments & Sauces	Packaged Dinners
Baking Items	Dairy	Pasta and Rice
Beverages	Frozen Foods	Produce
Breakfast Foods	Meats	Snacks
Canned Goods	Packaged Desserts	

To find a food, go to the category in which the food is normally found. The foods are listed alphabetically by brand within each category. If you can't find your food, look in the index at the end of the book to make sure you are looking in the right category. If you still can't find your food, it is possible the food is not in the guide. In this case, just use the five simple rules suggested by Michael Pollan in his book, "In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto."

1. Don't eat anything your great grandmother wouldn't recognize as food. (Or don't eat anything that doesn't rot).
2. Avoid food products containing ingredients that are a) unfamiliar, b) unpronounceable, c) more than five in number, or include d) high-fructose corn syrup.
3. Avoid food products that make health claims.
4. Shop the peripheries of the supermarket and stay out of the middle.
5. Get out of the supermarket whenever possible—shake the hand that feeds you.

I like these rules, they can help you choose well when the guide does not.

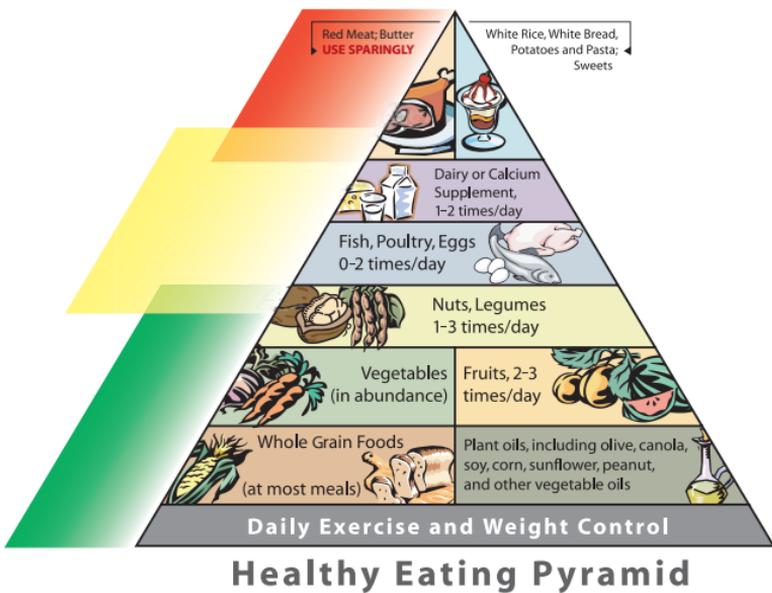
Just Follow the Colors

With the assistance of a team of nutrition experts, a set of rules and guidelines was created to classify foods according to nutritional value. These classifications are based on the nutrition information from each food. There is nothing magical about these rules except that they give some indication as to whether or not a food is close

to, or far from, its original form. From these rules, a red, yellow and green color coding process was developed.

Because of space constraints, there was a limit to the amount of nutrition information that could be included in this guide. **It is important to note that the color coding is based on much more than just the nutrition information shown in the guide.**

There is an easier way to think about the color coding rules. By using the Prudent diet pyramid discussed earlier, foods can be coded according to where they are located on the pyramid. Healthy green-coded foods would be those on the bottom of the pyramid; yellow towards the middle; and red foods, which should be eaten sparingly, located on the top.



The red, yellow, and green color coding system is simple. Anyone can use the guide to make healthier choices. Here are three easy rules to help you use this system to make healthy food choices:

Rule #1: Avoid the red foods.

Rule #2: Go easy on the yellow foods.

Rule #3: Eat healthy with the green foods.

Red foods = Hit the brakes!

Foods that are colored red earn this color because they are considered to be the least healthy within a food category. They may contain a lot

of sodium, trans fats, saturated fat, refined flour, sugars, or a lot of additional processing. Just over 60% of the foods in this guide are colored red. That's because a majority of the most popular grocery store foods are not very healthy.

Yellow foods = Exercise caution!

Foods that are coded yellow are better than the red ones, but fall short of being considered a green food. About 20% of the foods in this guide are coded yellow.

Green foods = You're eatin' healthy!

Green foods are the best and should be the primary source of dietary intake. Obviously fresh produce, nuts, seeds, and whole grains are coded green, but so are foods made with substantial whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and healthy oils. Green-coded foods include vegetable pizza, many frozen foods, canned foods, and prepared dinners with ample whole foods such as vegetable stir-fry. Green foods are low in saturated and trans fats, they don't contain excessive amounts of sodium or cholesterol, and they are relatively low in calories compared to yellow and red foods. They are actually good for you and should be eaten every day.

In this guide all of the best-selling foods are color coded. With the color coding it is possible to identify the best and worst food brands. Here are the top-ten best and worst brands.

Top 10 brands with the most green foods:

Barilla	Green Giant
Bird's Eye	Hunt's
Dannon	Minute Maid/Tropicana (similar)
Del Monte	Progresso
Dole	Ragu

Top 10 brands with the most red foods:

Betty Crocker	Kellogg's
Campbell's	Kraft
Dreyer's/Edy's	Nabisco
Entenmann's	Pillsbury
General Mills	Stouffer's

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