



paleo vegan



**plant-based
primal recipes**

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Whether their goal is to become healthy, lose weight, or simply eat more naturally, creative paleos have developed a cuisine to be reckoned with by using unrefined foods. And like any good thing, this eating style attracts others—paleo newbies who are either taking the full plunge or keeping their current diets and assimilating parts of the paleo philosophy. Like so many others, vegans are finding that with a few adjustments (including sidestepping the meat, of course), the paleo way of eating can add to the quality that’s already on their plates.

WHAT IS A PALEO DIET?

Imagine this is the Paleolithic era. You emerge from your cave midmorning, charged with the responsibility of getting some food on the slab *pronto*. So will it be hunting or gathering today? Talk about a no-brainer! Even if you do spot an animal, catching and killing it would be anything but a cakewalk. Ah, but foraging. You’re an expert at that. Leafy vegetables, grasses, berries, nuts—they’re all yours for the taking, and these foods will sustain your family.

If only those cave folk knew the story today! Many of the dietary habits that were defined by their place and time are precisely the habits some modern paleos choose and can’t live without. Naturally, current-day paleos have more options than our ancient relatives had. Here’s a basic idea of what a modern paleo menu calls for:

- Whole, unprocessed foods
- Lean meats (from grass-fed or free-range animals) and seafood
- Low-carbohydrate foods that are high in fiber and potassium
- Healthy fats
- No grains, legumes, potatoes, dairy products, added salt, refined sugar, or refined vegetable oils

The Paleo Point of View

We all know processed foods lack sufficient nutrition compared with whole foods. What they *don’t* lack are a bunch of additives and preservatives. So paleos are right on that point; refined foods are just a bum deal. Vegans may also feel that way about meat, but paleos stand their ground here, because a diet that includes lean meats, healthy fats, and fewer carbs is known to help in dropping pounds in the short run. And let’s face it, a lot of people want that.

Now for the F-word. Fats are certainly necessary for us, but what we’re seeing today is *trans*-fat mania. Margarine and other refined vegetable oils are full of the stuff, and if hearts could speak, they’d be shouting at us to knock it off! As for

omega fats, the paleo diet instructs us to significantly decrease our omega-6 fatty acid intake, particularly from oils, such as corn and safflower oils. The paleo diet also encourages eating more foods high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as fish, so we can bring these fats into the same healthy ratio that Paleolithic people likely experienced. It's simple: too much omega-6 promotes the chronic diseases that omega-3 helps suppress. Vegans have a good source of omega-3 fatty acids in nuts and seeds, especially chia seeds, flaxseeds, and walnuts, and therefore never need to consume fish oil to get this essential fat.

Let's turn our attention to grains, legumes, and potatoes, which are the kind of "optional cheats" I talk about for vegans. These certainly are natural foods, and you might think a paleo would welcome them. But because they are the products of agriculture and can be difficult for some people to digest, the typical paleo passes on them. But that's not to say paleos aren't keen on other high-fiber, high-potassium foods, such as artichokes, bananas, and broccoli, to name a few. After all, fiber helps regulate cholesterol and blood sugar levels, and potassium is no slouch either. Just try running your kidneys or firing up a few nerves without enough of that baby in the tank!

That brings us to added salt and refined sugar. Most of us don't have to be given reasons for eliminating, or at least seriously decreasing, these little devils from our diets. An excess of sodium in the body is a time bomb for many people. Cutting out table salt while adding foods high in potassium helps to defuse this danger; otherwise, the body's natural acid levels get out of whack, and all sorts of disorders and diseases can set in. Refined sugar, which has no vitamins, minerals, or fiber, is another ticket to illness that nobody should be traveling on.

Benefits of Paleo Diets

Like other high-protein diets, paleo diets help people lose weight fast, which is a big reason they're so popular. Also, many health benefits are linked to eliminating processed foods—including the refined carbohydrates that contribute to obesity—and eating only whole, nutrient-dense foods in their natural state. These benefits include improved insulin response, a better acid-alkaline balance, and in-sync electrolytes.

People who are very active, including professional athletes, get certain advantages from the paleo diet too. In fact, certain well-known athletes praise the results they're getting from paleo diets that combine high protein, healthy fats, and minimal carbs. This is because, after adapting, the body switches from carbs to fat as its main fuel source during strenuous activity, conserving its glucose stores as much as possible. The kicker is that athletic performance may remain the same—or even improve. But also note that there are plenty of plant-guzzling athletes who have super performances on diets composed of 60–80 percent complex carbs. In fact, Kenyan marathoners report that their diets fall in this range.

NUTS AND SEEDS

Humans have been eating nuts and seeds since the dawn of time. Historically, these foods often provided a source of sustenance during winter because they could be stored easily. As hunter-gatherers, our ancient relatives most likely subsisted on what was available nearby and met their protein needs by accumulating and consuming these tiny but mighty morsels.

Nuts and seeds often get a bad rap because they're high in fat. But Mother Nature, in her infinite wisdom, encapsulated them in hard shells that often take time to open. This cracking and opening procedure slows down consumption and discourages excessive caloric intake unless, of course, you liberate the little buggers from their shells all at once and start devouring them!

FRUITS

There's no question that fruits were part of the original paleo pickings. For instance, archaeological digs in northern Israel have revealed ancient figs, olives, pears, and plums. In addition, remnants of grapes from seven million years ago were found in Tennessee. Remains found at other ancient sites confirmed the early consumption of fruit, so we can reasonably assume that a Paleolithic person wouldn't have set up shop where fruits weren't abundant. Today, the list of preferred paleo fruits is quite extensive, with dark berries claiming the top position.

COLORFUL VEGETABLES

Green vegetables are the powerhouses of a vegan diet, and the paleo diet follows suit by including a wide variety of these essentials. In addition, both diets call for foods rich in antioxidants, which are plant chemicals that protect against such illnesses as cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. In fact, antioxidants combat inflammation and oxidative stress, which can lead to many kinds of degenerative, chronic disease. The easiest way to load up on these healthful plant chemicals is to choose colorful vegetables, because antioxidants, such as anthocyanidins, carotenoids, catechins, and flavones, give vegetables their hues.

Just like us, modern vegetables are different from their progenitors. This is because, even before the official dawn of agriculture, vegetables were “genetically altered.” This simply means that in Paleolithic times, early humans encouraged the best-tasting seedlings to partner up with each other. For example, brassica vegetables, such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, and kohlrabi, are all thought to have evolved from one prehistoric plant.

HEALTHY FATS

Our paleo ancestors probably didn't stomp on olives or other foods to squeeze out their oils. Rather, Paleolithic people in the Middle East, where civilization may have originated and where olives have long been abundant, probably just foraged and ate olives in their natural state.

All plant-based foods contain some amount of fat, even if only a minuscule amount, and paleos and vegans agree that these naturally occurring fats are healthy. However, when it comes to rendered, extracted, and added fats, the recommended kinds and quantities vary across interpretations. The motley paleo diets present interesting contradictions and paradoxes. For example, some authors include butter, lard, and even tallow on their lists of healthy fats. Of course, my paleo-vegan interpretation doesn't include these fats. Consistent with my vegan bent, I'll stick with plant-based foods to get nutritious fats and oils.

We all care about our weight, so of course it's wise to pay attention to calorie intake. Maybe our paleo ancestors ran around enough to get away with consuming a high percentage of fat, but most of us—except, perhaps, marathoners and sumo wrestlers—need to keep some distance from those nut-butter balls! Fats, including oils, have 9 calories per gram, versus 4 calories for proteins and 4 calories for carbohydrates. Adding oils can pile on the calories faster than you can devour a butter-laden potato. Just one tablespoon of butter weighs 14 grams, which equals 102 calories. To get flavor without the fat, you can skip the butter and top a baked potato with chopped green onions and tomatoes, sliced almonds, and steamed broccoli florets.

By avoiding added fat, you can eat loads of fruits and vegetables and not fret much about calories. You can also enjoy raw, unsalted nuts and seeds, particularly if you have to shell them. Taking time to remove the shells gives your brain the needed fifteen to twenty minutes to get the signal that your stomach is filling up. Not only that, you won't need to eat a lot, because whole nuts and seeds are packed with nutrients, which makes them real hunger busters.

RAW VERSUS COOKED FOODS

A traditional paleo diet dovetails nicely with a raw vegan diet, which focuses on whole, unprocessed foods as they're found in nature. Like paleo diets and whole-food, plant-based diets in general, raw vegan diets have been shown to protect against cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. They can help you lose weight too.

If you're into the raw vegan approach, you can blend, sprout, or dehydrate certain foods to liven up your dishes. Not surprisingly, raw enthusiasts turn away

FOODS BOTH VEGANS AND PALEOS CAN ENJOY

Let's look at how much overlap there is between paleo and vegan foods. There are certainly enough options to keep you happy, healthy, and full of energy. Here's a composite of the approved foods on some popular paleo shopping lists.

NUTS AND SEEDS

Almonds	Hazelnuts	Pecans	Pistachios	Sesame seeds	Walnuts
Brazil nuts	Macadamia nuts	Pine nuts	Pumpkin seeds	Sunflower seeds	

PREFERRED FRUITS

Blackberries	Blueberries	Boysenberries	Cranberries	Gooseberries	Raspberries
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OTHER FRUITS

Apple	Fig	Kiwifruit	Nectarine	Pear	Rhubarb
Apricot	Goji berries	Lemon	Orange	Persimmon	Star fruit
Banana	Grapefruit	Lime	Papaya	Pineapple	Strawberries
Cantaloupe	Grapes	Lychee	Passion fruit	Plum	Tangerine
Cherries	Guava	Mango	Peach	Pomegranate	Watermelon
Coconut	Honeydew melon				

SPICES AND HERBS

Anise	Chiles, ground	Cumin	Mint	Paprika	Sage
Basil	Cilantro	Dill	Mustard seeds	Parsley	Tarragon
Black pepper	Cinnamon	Fennel	Nutmeg	Peppermint	Thyme
Cayenne	Cloves	Ginger	Oregano	Rosemary	Turmeric
Chiles, dried	Coriander seeds				

VEGETABLES

Artichoke	Broccoli	Chile	Green beans	Olives	Sea vegetables
Arugula	Broccoli rabe	Collard greens	Jerusalem artichoke	Onion	Spinach
Asparagus	Brussels sprouts	Cucumber	Jicama	Parsnip	Squash
Avocado	Cabbage	Eggplant	Kale	Pumpkin	Swiss chard
Beets	Carrot	Endive	Kohlrabi	Purslane	Tomato
Beet greens	Cauliflower	Fennel	Leek	Radish	Turnip greens
Bell pepper	Celery	Fiddlehead fern	Mushrooms	Romaine lettuce	Watercress
Bok choy	Celery root	Garlic	Mustard greens	Rutabaga	

FOODS FOR MODERATE CONSUMPTION

Amaranth	Cassava	Potato	Sweet potato	Wild rice	Yam
Buckwheat	Hempseeds	Quinoa	Taro		

HEALTHY FATS AND OILS TO BE USED SPARINGLY

Avocado oil	Coconut oil	Olive oil	Sesame oil	Walnut oil
Coconut milk	Macadamia oil	Palm oil, unprocessed		

OTHER ITEMS

Coffee	Dark chocolate	Tamari	Tea	Vinegar
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If you've never had mustard greens, this dish will be a special treat—and you'll have plenty of homemade blackberry vinegar left over for other adventures! Mustard greens are slightly spicy, with an unusual texture. The ginger in the vinaigrette adds to the exotic effect, as do the mixed peppercorns. The macadamia nuts provide a calming, buttery crunch.

mustard greens WITH GINGER-BLACKBERRY VINAIGRETTE

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

- 1 cup fresh or frozen **blackberries**
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup **coconut vinegar or white wine vinegar**
- 1 (2-inch) piece fresh **ginger**, peeled
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon **sea salt**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground **black pepper**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **walnut oil**
- 1 large bunch very fresh **mustard greens** (leaves only; about 12 cups)
- 1 tablespoon **pink peppercorns**, lightly crushed (optional; see Foraging for Flavor)
- 1 cup coarsely chopped raw **macadamia nuts**, for garnish

To make the blackberry vinegar, put the blackberries in a medium non-reactive saucepan (such as stainless steel, glass, or enameled cast iron) and crush lightly with a potato masher or silicone spatula. Stir in the vinegar and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Remove from the heat and let cool. Transfer to a blender and process just until the fruit has broken down but the seeds remain mostly whole. Be careful not to blend the seeds or the vinegar will turn bitter. Pour through a strainer into a glass and let settle for a minimum of 20 minutes or preferably 24 hours. Pour through a piece of cheesecloth or a fine-mesh strainer into a jar or bottle, taking care to leave any foam behind. Stored in a tightly sealed jar or bottle, the blackberry vinegar will keep indefinitely.

Slice the ginger as thinly as possible across the grain into coins. Arrange the coins in little stacks on a cutting board. Cut the stacks into thin, tiny matchsticks.

To make the vinaigrette, put $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the blackberry vinegar in a medium bowl. Add the ginger, salt, and pepper and whisk until combined. To allow the flavors to develop, let the mixture sit for 10 minutes. Begin whisking again, adding the oil in a thin stream, whisking constantly until emulsified.

It's time for a little modern-day foraging. If you have an Asian market near you, make a trip and see if you can find both oyster mushrooms and the very small Szechuan-style baby bok choy, which are sold in clusters about the size of an apple. While you're there, you'll also want to look for a panang curry paste that does not contain shrimp.

oyster mushroom and baby bok choy CURRY

See photo facing page 74.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

- 12 ounces **firm tofu**, cut into ½-inch cubes (optional)
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium **tamari** (optional)
- 1 pound **oyster mushrooms**
- 8 ounces **baby bok choy**
- 2 tablespoons **extra-virgin coconut oil**
- 2 tablespoons **panang or red curry paste**
- 1 can (15 ounces) full-fat **coconut milk**
- ½ cup coarsely chopped **fresh cilantro**
- 4 **scallions**, thinly sliced on a sharp diagonal, for garnish

Put the optional tofu and optional tamari in a medium bowl and toss gently. Set aside.

Quarter the mushrooms lengthwise. If the bok choy clusters are very small, they may be left whole or quartered lengthwise; otherwise, cut them crosswise into slices about ½-inch wide.

Put a large saucepan over high heat and add the oil. Tilt the saucepan back and forth until the oil melts and is evenly distributed. Add the mushrooms and bok choy. Stir briskly to prevent sticking until the bok choy wilts, about 1 minute. Stir in the curry paste until well distributed. Add the coconut milk and stir until well combined. Bring to a boil, decrease the heat to medium, and simmer until the mushrooms are tender, about 4 minutes. Add the tofu, if using, and warm through, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the cilantro.

Divide among four bowls and garnish generously with the scallions. Serve at once.

Per serving: 241 calories, 6 g protein, 18 g fat (16 g sat), 14 g carbohydrates, 428 mg sodium, 217 mg calcium, 4 g fiber

The mere addition of roasted hazelnuts and a little spice takes butternut squash from humdrum to extraordinary. The nuts provide an unexpected crunch that is so alluring, you won't want to stop eating. And the Aleppo pepper intertwines with the allspice to deliver a mysterious, barely perceptible Middle Eastern undertone.

butternut squash WITH HAZELNUTS

See photo facing page.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

- 1 medium **butternut squash**
(about 3½ pounds)
- 1 teaspoon **extra-virgin coconut oil**
- ¼ cup **flax oil**
- ½ teaspoon ground **allspice**
- ¼ teaspoon **sea salt**
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground **black pepper**
- ¼ teaspoon crushed **Aleppo pepper**
(optional; see Foraging for Flavor)
- 1 cup **hazelnuts**, roasted, peeled, and coarsely chopped (see sidebar, page 61)
- 1 tablespoon snipped fresh **chives**, for garnish

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.

Cut the squash in half lengthwise. Rub a sheet of parchment paper with the coconut oil and put the parchment on a baking sheet, oil-side up. Put the squash on the parchment, cut-side down. Bake for 45 minutes. Decrease the oven temperature to 325 degrees F and continue baking for 30 minutes. Scoop out the seeds with a spoon and discard. Scoop the flesh into a large bowl and mash with a potato masher or silicone spatula. Add the flax oil, allspice, salt, pepper, and optional Aleppo pepper and stir until well combined. Reserve ¼ cup of the hazelnuts and stir the remaining ¾ cup of hazelnuts into the squash until well distributed.

Divide the squash among four bowls. Sprinkle with the reserved hazelnuts and garnish with the chives. Serve at once.

Per serving: 500 calories, 8 g protein, 36 g fat (4 g sat), 47 g carbohydrates, 155 mg sodium, 206 mg calcium, 10 g fiber

FORAGING FOR FLAVOR

Aleppo pepper imparts a very complex note to this dish. If the more exotic Aleppo pepper isn't available, cayenne would certainly suffice to add heat.



Butternut Squash with Hazelnuts, *page 107*



Can a bean-eating, plant-loving vegan find uncompromised joy in a meat-filled, carb-avoiding paleo diet? Absolutely!

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Alan Roettinger is a writer, food designer, blogger, and public speaker. The author of *Extraordinary Vegan*, *Speed Vegan*, and *Omega-3 Cuisine*, his recipes showcase his ability to bring health and pleasure together in a wide range of dishes that are simultaneously sophisticated and accessible for the home cook. To keep up with Alan's adventures, visit him at alanroettinger.com.

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