


5 easy Paleo diet hacks

I have been adhering to a “Whole30” version of the Paleo diet for three months now, and I’m enjoying the results. (Read more about my experience with the Whole30 here, or listen to this *Intelligent Medicine* podcast.)

I feel clearer and more energetic; my workouts are off the hook, and my recovery times much-accelerated. My sleep quality is excellent—I wake up uniformly refreshed at sun-up. My allergies—nasal congestion is frequently a problem with spring pollens—have vanished. And my productivity is through the roof. Although it was not my original intent, I’ve also trimmed down; my muscles are better-defined with distinctly less subcutaneous fat. 

I must admit that Paleo takes more time in terms of food shopping and preparation, but using some of the Paleo diet hacks I’ll be sharing with you in this article has streamlined the process. Because I’ve had to exclude “quick fix” foods like rice, hot cereal, gluten-free toast and crackers, corn tacos, popcorn, and peanut butter, I’ve been forced to consume more fresh fruits and vegetables and to explore new cooking methods and ingredients.

I eat more nutrient-rich avocados, winter squash, cauliflower, and cooked greens; I’ve banished poor-quality soy and canola oils that lurk in many condiments like commercial dressings and mayonnaise; I’ve scrupulously avoided the sugar that sweetened my 70 or 85 percent dark chocolate. My liquor bills are non-existent.

Here are a few of my personal Paleo diet hacks . . .

1. Salad variations. Tired of the same old romaine with tomatoes with olive oil and vinegar? Here are some variations you might try. I’ve broken them down into 4 categories:

- 1) *Beyond lettuce:* Try subbing for boring romaine with any combo of baby kale, arugula, basil, purslane, radicchio, endive, or spinach leaves
- 2) *Garnishes:* Instead of tomatoes, try beet roots, roasted peppers, avocados, hearts of palm, crunchy water chestnuts, shredded red cabbage, grated carrots, radish or kohlrabi slices, braised or marinated asparagus, apple crescents, Brussels sprouts (halved), artichoke hearts, raw or blanched crumbled cauliflower or broccoli florets, or citrus wedges.
- 3) *Tangy Sprinkles:* crispy uncured bacon bits, chopped dried tomatoes, toasted pistachios, walnut bits, almond slivers, roasted sunflower seeds, anchovies
- 4) *Dressing options:* Try subbing walnut or avocado oil for traditional olive oil; citrus juice or coconut vinegar for regular vinegar. Or make a creamy Paleo Green Goddess dressing with ingredients like avocado, fresh garlic, olive oil and a dash of cilantro in a blender. Or try a Middle Eastern tahini dressing made with tahini diluted with some water to which you add olive oil, lemon juice, fresh garlic and a sprinkle of cumin.

2. Chocolate: Hankering for your chocolate polyphenol fix, but discouraged by the Paleo admonition against any form of added sugar? You CAN have chocolate on Paleo, but you’ll have to cultivate a more discerning palate for cocoa, which, without emulsifiers and sugars, is bitter, like rich black espresso. You’ll find that a few small squares will prove a satisfying coda to your Paleo meals. Try these: **Pure 7 Dark Chocolate** or **Lindt 99% dark chocolate**.

As an alternative, dip your fresh strawberries or apple or pear slices in a

“chocolate spread” made of equal parts raw macadamia butter and 100% cocoa powder.

3. “Bread” and crackers. Since nut butters (except peanut, which is actually a legume), guacamole, and salsa are permitted on the Paleo diet, you may hanker for something to spread them on, other than crudité’s like raw carrots, celery, radishes, or peppers. Consider “**Wrap**” Organic Gluten-Free Bread, made of organic zucchini, flax seeds, coconut and spices. No, it’s not the equivalent of a freshly-baked French baguette, but it’s a great platform for **Sunbutter** sunflower spread. My favorite Paleo cracker is the “**Paleo Thin**” made of blanched almond flour, cassava flour, flax, and spices.

4. Breakfast: My favorite Paleo breakfast (pictured above) is Mexican-inspired. You start with 2 pasture-raised eggs, beat them, then pour them into a medium-sized stainless steel pan greased with a Tbsp of ghee or duck fat. Cook at medium heat, about 2 minutes, until eggs begin to solidify, then add down the middle 1/4 cup shredded cooked chicken, some thin avocado slices, and top with a couple Tbsps of salsa (spicy or mild, to taste). Fold over the edges of the omelette, cover and cook for a couple additional minutes until eggs are firm (but not rubbery). Salt and pepper to taste, or add Chipotle seasoning. Serve with a side of bacon fat-fried potatoes, or coconut oil-sautéed sweet potatoes.

5. Dessert: The austerity of Paleo need not dictate dessert-deprivation! My favorite concoction starts with a cup or so of fresh or frozen berries (blue, rasp-, boysen-, or straw-) in a bowl. You can add some kiwi or pineapple chunks for variety. Add a half cup of light, unsweetened coconut milk. Top with some toasted flaxseed or sunflower seeds and some unsweetened grated coconut for a Paleo “sundae” with sprinkles. For additional sweetness, spoon in a generous dollop of coconut manna.

Notice something missing? None of the above are meat dishes. How could that be, since the Paleo diet is notorious for its supposed emphasis on animal protein? Well, it doesn’t have to be. I have found that, with the wealth of non-meat Paleo options like those above that I’ve just shared with you, there’s little need for huge tranches of red meat at every meal. And contrary to stereotypes, it’s likely that the genuine Caveman Diet wasn’t your typical American steakhouse fare. Yes, meat is allowed, and even encouraged, but I’ve never before eaten as many vegetables as I have lately while adhering to the Whole30.

Resources:

Many of the above products/ingredients can be obtained online at [Thrive Market](#)

Learn about the Whole30 Diet at [Whole30.com](#)

Find more Paleo recipes at [PaleoLeap.com](#)