3 Dangerous Ingredients in Your Paleo Diet

Could the Nation’s Hottest Diet Make You Fat & Sick?
The 3 Dangerous Ingredient in Your Paleo Diet

By Kelley Herring & the Editors of Healing Gourmet®

© 2007-2014. Copyright Health-e Enterprises, LLC.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. IT IS ILLEGAL TO COPY OR FORWARD THIS E-BOOK TO OTHERS

DISCLAIMER: This publication does not provide medical advice. Always consult your doctor.
Maple syrup... honey... figs... dates...

Sure they’re sweet. And technically speaking, they’re considered “Paleo.”

But let’s face it: Most so-called Paleo desserts and snack foods with these ingredients contain more sugar in one serving than our Paleo ancestors ate in an average month.

And if you make these foods a regular part of your diet, that can be bad news for your health and waistline. In fact, research shows that as sugar consumption goes up longevity goes down. Worse still, as your consumption of sugar goes up, your risk for chronic diseases, obesity and physical aging rises in parallel.

The Whitehall Study, which spanned 33 years and evaluated 451,787 people, found that all-cause, cardiovascular, and respiratory mortality were significantly higher among individuals with elevated blood sugar levels. This study also showed that sugar intake and mortality were dose-dependent. In other words, the more sugar you eat, the higher your risk.

And it makes little difference whether that sugar comes in the form of a soft drink, a syrup-sweetened dessert, or a food bar filled with dates.

**Sugar: The Not-So-Sweet Drug**

While enjoying a sugary dessert *once in a while* isn’t likely to do much harm, the issue lies in sugar’s addictive qualities. This makes it difficult to stop eating sugary foods once you start.

**Make no mistake, sugar is a drug. And a powerful one, at that.**

Eating sugar stimulates physiological reactions that cause the release of *adrenaline*. This is the same hormone responsible for the “high” you might feel after riding a roller coaster. Sugar also triggers the production of your brain’s natural *opioids* – one of the key factors in addiction.

In fact, a recent study published in *PlosOne* found that sugar is more addictive than cocaine. The researchers believe that the receptors on our tongue that taste “sweet” evolved in ancestral times when our diets were very low in sugar (5 pounds per year versus the 175 pounds we consume on average today).

These receptors have not yet adapted to our Neolithic levels of sugar consumption. And stimulating these receptors creates excessive reward signals in the brain. The result: Our normal self-control mechanisms are overridden, leading to addiction.

And if that’s not enough, sugar also decreases your body’s production of the appetite control hormone *leptin*... while simultaneously increasing levels of *ghrelin*, an appetite-boosting hormone.
In short, eating sugar causes an increase in hunger... the desire for sugary foods... the hormones that contribute to weight gain... and the key risk factors for chronic disease.

But what about Paleo sources of sugar? Aren’t they a better alternative, and more suitable to our genetic makeup?

**Fructose: The Un-friendly Sweetener Found in Fruit**

Many people mistakenly believe that sugar from fruit is better than other kinds of sugar. Fruit is healthy, right? Not so fast...

In fact, the sugar found in fruit – called fructose – is a particularly damaging form of sugar. Fructose has been found to:

- Cause digestive distress in sensitive individuals with dietary fructose intolerance (DFI) – roughly 33% of the population
- Raise ghrelin levels – a hormone that boosts appetite
- Deplete mineral levels in the body
- Tax the liver and contribute to fatty liver disease
- Increase uric acid levels – raising blood pressure, insulin production and impairing kidney function
- Increase triglyceride and oxidized LDL levels – key factors in heart disease and metabolic syndrome
- Damage neurons, contributing to memory loss and cognitive decline
- Promote glycation – the binding of sugar to protein which causes both inflammation and oxidation – key factors in every chronic disease

It’s not that fruit is inherently bad. In fact, if you consumed fructose as our ancestors did - from vegetables and fruits, packaged along with fiber, vitamins, minerals and enzymes - you’d only be consuming around 15 grams per day.

But the average adolescent gets 73 grams of fructose per day... from sweetened drinks alone!

We have taken fructose out of its evolutionary context. And in doing so are suffering a set of metabolic consequences that our Paleo ancestors never did. For those of us following a Paleo diet, enjoying a date-sweetened truffle or maple syrup brownies may seem like an innocent indulgence. And if it is only occasional, then it is innocent.

But many people are operating under the assumption that these are “free foods” to be eaten as often as desired. Dates and maple syrup are mainstays many “Paleo” grocery lists. But as your consumption of these foods goes up, so does your intake of fructose.

To put your average fructose consumption in perspective, consider the amounts in these common foods:
- Figs, 1 cup - 23 g
- Raisins, 1/4 cup - 12 g
- Apple, 1 medium - 10 g
- Banana, 1 medium - 7 g
- Date (medjool, 1 medium) - 8 g
- Blueberries, 1 cup - 7 g
- Blackberries, 1 cup – 3.5 g
- Cranberries, 1 cup – 0.7 g
- Grapefruit, medium – 8.6 g
- Maple syrup, 1 Tbsp. – 6 g
- Honey, 1 Tbsp. – 12 g

It’s easy to see how using concentrated sources of sweetness – like dried fruits, maple syrup and honey – in “Paleo” dessert recipes can quickly drive fructose intake to unhealthy levels.

**A Low Sugar Diet = A Longer, Healthier Life**

When reaching for fructose-containing foods – weigh the benefits. For example, a cup of dark berries is a better choice than a cup of melon, as it is rich in powerful antioxidants and lower in fructose. Similarly, raw honey - in small amounts - provides antioxidant benefits.

For natural sweetening power in your baking, consider creating a low sugar, low fructose blend of the following:

- **Coconut Sugar** - Produced from the nectar of coconut flower buds, coconut sugar is 70-80% sucrose, of which half is fructose. Per tablespoon, coconut sugar contains 12 grams of sugar and 6 grams of fructose. Use sparingly - 1 Tbsp. per 12 servings.

- **Coconut Nectar** – Also produced from coconut flower buds, coconut nectar gives a rich caramel flavor to desserts. Per tablespoon, coconut nectar contains 13 grams of sugar and 6.5 grams of fructose. Use sparingly - 1 Tbsp. per 12 servings.

- **Organic Molasses** – Rich in minerals, a small amount of molasses can add a rich flavor to baked goods. Per tablespoon, molasses contains 14 grams of sugar and 7 grams of fructose. Use sparingly - 1 Tbsp. per 12 servings.

- **Non-GMO or Organic Erythritol** – A zero calorie, zero glycemic sugar alcohol sweetener found in common foods like pears, watermelon and soy sauce. It has antioxidant properties and can be used in baking, cup for cup, just like sugar. Choose non-GMO and organic varieties.
• **Stevia** – A potent sweet herb that is best combined with erythritol to boost sweetness levels. Contains zero calories and zero sugar.

• **Luo Han Guo** – Derived from a super-sweet melon, this potent sweetener has no calories or sugar and is best used with erythritol.

For optimum health, enjoy the native foods our ancestors did - filling your plate with nutrient-dense grass-fed beef, pastured poultry, wild fish and colorful vegetables – while keeping total daily sugars and fructose low (25 grams and 15 grams, respectively).

**REFERENCES**

