

# EAT THE YOLKS

discover Paleo, fight food lies,  
and reclaim your health



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*For Spence.*

*Here's to a lifetime of adventures.*

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# foreword

At some point in our nutrition-and-health improvement journeys, which I presume you are on simply by the fact that you've picked up this book, we've likely figured out that we were misled or misguided somewhere along the way. Make no mistake about it, I too fell victim to the hype. You know what I'm talking about here, right? I'm talking about the "eating fat will make you fat" / "you need eleven servings of heart-healthy whole grains daily" / "anything made from soy is a health food" hype. If you didn't know that was hype before, you will now.

I was right there with you for many years, chowing down cereal made of seven whole grains on a mission (to kill you) with soy milk (it must be healthy, right?!), fat-free yogurt (sweetened with aspartame), nonstick cooking sprays (but they're low-fat!), and calorie-free sweeteners (that were "naturally" sweet). That is, until I saw the light.

For each of us, that "light" comes in a different form. If that light hasn't already been turned on for you, then you're in for a real treat. This book—and Liz's take on nutrition in general—will be that for you. And if that's the case, I am *stoked* for you. You are going to get your world flipped upside down and sideways while you learn exactly what is true about the food you eat every day. And you'll probably be smacking yourself upside the head when you realize that you've been fighting your instincts on what's right and wrong about nutrition, but you will definitely be ready to stop the diet-food-and-calorie-cutting madness.

This book will set you free from the 100-calorie-pack-filled world of edible foodlike substances that cry “healthy” on the package but are slowly making you sicker and sicker as you eat them. Yes, it’s *that* dramatic. The impact that food has on your health is *that* serious. It’s a good thing Liz, a Nutritional Therapy Practitioner (NTP™) certified by the Nutritional Therapy Association, has a seriously hilarious way of explaining it all.

Allow me to back up for just a moment, because I haven’t known Liz my entire life, contrary to what our podcasting banter may imply. I was introduced to Liz Wolfe when listening to a podcast that was part of a (short-lived) series created by Hayley and Bill Staley (of *The Food Lovers Kitchen* and *Make It Paleo* fame) called “The Food Lovers Dish It.” Liz was the featured guest on one of the episodes they recorded—and right away, I loved her voice.

Now, when I say that I loved Liz’s voice, I mean both her audible voice *and* her way of thinking and presenting her opinions. I should tell you that I was feverishly on the hunt for a podcasting partner at this exact moment, so much so that I pulled my car over while driving on a busy highway to shoot Hayley a text and ask for Liz’s contact information. That was the beginning of the end, some might say—and I mean that in the absolute *best* way possible.

That was several years ago now, and I’ve since not only convinced Liz to record a weekly podcast with me (the “Balanced Bites” podcast, which ranks in the top Health shows in iTunes), but also (literally) dragged her on the road with me to meet folks across the country and teach them why “everything you know about good nutrition is wrong”—and, of course, exactly how to get it right.

Through the development of the podcast and our seminar curriculum, I have seen deeper into Liz’s passion and vigor for the Truth About Food (which could easily have been the title for this book, but that doesn’t pack the same vitamin D-rich punch as *Eat the Yolks*). She wants to know more than just the

biochemistry of nutrition; she wants to know the social and historical implications of the changes in our food supply—and what those changes have done to our long-term health.

Liz has a real knack for connecting with her readers (and our listeners and workshop attendees) in a way that is unlike anyone I've ever met. She isn't just hilarious; she is also darned *smart* about nutrition. Her passion for all things myth-and-truth-related when it comes to, oh, let's say the history of how the heck we started eating margarine, for example, has driven her to tirelessly research the foundations of it all. And she's able to turn around and tell you the story and actually make it interesting—injecting it with her signature wit and sense of humor—so that you leave the room never wanting to eat margarine again (and likely slapping it out of your spouse's or sibling's hand, too!).

In *Eat the Yolks*, Liz takes us step by step through nearly every dogmatic, scientifically unsound, and anti-“real food” notion that so many of us have been hung up on for years. She sheds light on the errors of those well-intentioned ways with compassion (she's been there too, folks) and wit. Liz explains why we need to eat fat (including saturated fat!), cholesterol, and even salt. (Bacon, yes! Steak, yes! Egg yolks, oh heck yes!)

Perhaps you've been bored to tears in the past by long, epic tomes that aim to educate you on the political and nutritional mess of what we've been told to eat for the last several decades. Or maybe you've read some real-food-centered books, but they were filled with overly science-y jargon or a rigid approach or way of eating that didn't leave you feeling empowered—or you quit reading partway through because you were flat-out bored. Well this, my friends, is the book for you.

Pour yourself a tall glass of home-brewed kombucha, whip up a nice frittata, and get ready to be edu-tained from cover to cover. And, for the sake of all that is decent in this world, you had better eat those yolks!

**Diane Sanfilippo, BS, NC**

Certified Nutrition Consultant and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Practical Paleo* and *The 21-Day Sugar Detox*



# introduction

*Happiness lies, first of all, in health.*

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS  
.....

I wrote this book with the hope that we will soon see the last of the egg white omelet.

Truth time: We don't throw away egg yolks because we appreciate the culinary delight that is a rubbery, floppy, watery egg white breakfast. We do it because tossing that buttery, yellow-orange orb represents most of the ground rules of modern-day, so-called healthy eating: The cholesterol in egg yolks is bad for the heart. The calories in egg yolks can cause weight gain. The fat in egg yolks—well, a moment on the lips means a lifetime on the hips. Right?

The doctrine of modern nutrition proclaims that anything rich in cholesterol, calories, or saturated fat must be dangerous. Many even say that *all* animal products are unhealthy while all plant products are wholesome. Low-fat, low-carb, and low-calorie diets are all the rage, sometimes individually and sometimes all at once (oh, the hunger). If we believe the hype, the path to a better life is paved with the foods of conventional wisdom, our government's dietary recommendations, strict diet regimens, and sometimes in highly processed, packaged garbage marketed as "health food." And it's absolutely not paved with saturated fat, cholesterol, animal protein, carbs, or even salt. Because those things are bad, right?

Wrong.

Each and every one of those twisted takes on the truth has made victims of our bodies, our sanity, and our taste buds. The consequences of this nutrition dogma are visible everywhere: Rampant heart disease and obesity are major public health threats. Diet books are bestsellers year-round. Many people can't lose weight, and many others can't figure out why they feel just plain crappy when they're "doing everything right." Worse yet, many people haven't had a good steak in years out of fear for their health. That's a damn tragedy.

It's because everything we've been taught about good nutrition is wrong.

What if the foods we've been told not to eat—the foods we've been told might, in fact, kill us, make us fat, or make us unhealthy—are actually the foods we should be eating? What if the foods we've been told *are* healthy are actually causing us harm?

The only thing more infuriating than finding out that we've been lied to is finding out that we've been eating those lies for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, day in and day out, for decades. How could this have happened?

Here's the thing: From the time we're young, we place far more faith in so-called authorities than we do in our own common sense. This would make sense if we were talking brain surgery, but when it comes to eating—a basic, primal act that we are programmed to do, instinctively, from birth—it's simply outsourcing something that, deep down, we already know how to do. Unfortunately, we tend to accept what we're told, whether by a commercial, a label claim, or a so-called professional, rather than trusting what our instincts tell us. We grow up believing the lies, and they become the truths we live every day.

We don't always realize that the so-called authorities who spoon-feed us conventional wisdom about nutrition have been educated by corporate interests—or barely educated at all. Doctors, for example, don't get more than a few credit hours (if that) of nutritional education, and many

nutrition professionals receive an education that is simply a regurgitation of the same old lies that this book is here to combat. Even dietitians are forced to endure a corporate-sponsored education: The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association), which is the credentialing body for all registered dietitians and associated educational programs in the United States, lists Coca-Cola, General Mills, Kellogg Company, SOYJOY, and other large processed-food conglomerates as major donors. (Of course, there are nutrition professionals who break the corporate mold, and every single one has my deepest gratitude.) But all too often, we listen not even to doctors and dietitians but to a plethora of pop experts proffering whatever fake-food-based diet catches on, whichever plan a celebrity swears by, or whatever obsessive, calorie-restrictive diet turned the Biggest Loser into the Smallest Winner—at least, until that Biggest Loser became the Biggest Regainer. We have to wonder: What the heck are we thinking?

## The propaganda police (or how I learned to stop worrying and love real food)

.....

I didn't think I was buying into the conventional nutritional wisdom until I asked myself a few questions. Take a moment, if you will, to answer them as well. Have you ever:

- ① Counted calories, points, or carbs?
- ② Stopped eating meat because you believed animal products were bad for you?

- ⦿ Eaten soy-based meat or milk substitutes?
- ⦿ Bought food that came in a box, bag, or package?
- ⦿ Eaten something because it was labeled “fat-free”?
- ⦿ Thrown away an egg yolk?
- ⦿ Eaten margarine instead of butter?

If you answered “yes” to *any* of those questions, you’re reading the right book.

If you answered “no” to those questions, you’re probably *still* reading the right book. Because—even though I love you—I kinda think you’re fibbing.

My passion for uncovering all the lies, where they came from, and why we believed them—and for writing this book—is rooted in my own transformation. Years ago, at the tail end of ten years of dieting disasters and robotlike adherence to deeply ingrained nutrition dogma, I was, yet again, feeling like a failure. I had tried everything, and not all of it with health in mind: I’d tried the ol’ Red Bull-and-cigarettes diet and a few other desperate regimens in an attempt to eat less and drop the weight I’d gained on my college diet of beer and pizza. I dabbled in veganism, and, just to be contrarian, I followed that up with the Atkins diet. I did the lentil-soup-and-imitation-soy-cheese diet in an attempt to change my body (I spent most of that month sleeping). I tried eating “everything in moderation,” counting calories based on my basal metabolic rate, counting points, and cutting carbs. I tried following the U.S. government’s recommendations. And after ten years of this, I was confronted by the fact that I still wasn’t healthy or happy, and that my relationship with food was totally deranged.

I was ready for a change, but I had no clue where to start. In fact, it hit me like a ton of bricks: I had no idea how to make my own life better. I’d failed miserably so many times, and I was afraid that history would repeat itself yet again.

Desperate, I enlisted the help of legendary strength and conditioning coach Michael Rutherford. I hoped “Coach Rut” would help me exercise my frustration away. Maybe he’d

recommend a good protein shake or help me find a way to cut more calories without passing out on the way to the break room for my fifth cup of coffee.

What happened next was a turning point.

Coach Rut wasn't only dedicated to strength and conditioning. He was also dedicated to real food. He wasn't peddling low-fat dogma, protein bars, or calorie restriction. His philosophy was simple: If you want to feel better, you've got to eat better. That was when the magic would happen. I came for a workout (and a workout I got) and left with a much-needed reality check. It was time to change what I chose to eat and how I thought about food.

I knew Coach Rut was a fan of something called "Paleo." On this crazy (I thought) plan, you ate like a modern hunter-gatherer. This meant you ditched everything out of a box or a bag—even bread and pasta—and anything with a long list of unpronounceable ingredients. You ate only foods you could wrangle, if you had to, with your own hands: properly raised animals, vegetables, nuts, and fruits. You ate the *whole egg*. And steak. And avocado, in all its fatty glory. And a whole range of foods I'd long relegated to the nutrition boneyard like toys with broken squeakers.

Up until then, I'd always thought of food as an enemy. I only knew rules, "yes/no" lists, and the holy terror of calorie-counting paired with backslides of binge eating. I knew how to cry over a gallon of low-fat ice cream while watching *The Biggest Loser* and then eat high-fiber cereal with almond milk the next day to atone for my failings. I knew how to follow a vegan diet, a low-carb diet, or a low-fat diet as a clever disguise for cutting extreme amounts of calories. I knew how to be "on the wagon" and I knew how to be "off the wagon," but I didn't know how to live happily and healthfully without all that diet drama. I thought I was supposed to have willpower, but it seemed to fail me every time.

I asked myself: *Am I healthier for all the dietary insanity? Did all the wasted egg yolks, the diet food, and the conventional wisdom translate to a healthier, happier life?* My answer was, of course, no.

So I went Paleo, full-tilt. And something incredible happened.

I got healthier and happier simply by following a Paleo plan. My skin became clearer. My energy level was consistently high, and I slept well, waking up refreshed for the first time in years. I loved my life and my body. Turns out, it wasn't about willpower. It was about eating some emotion-balancing, hunger-regulating, body-nourishing real food and, above all, learning what junk was—and eliminating it.

Yet while I was thrilled with these changes, I still had lingering fears. I was worried that one day, I'd suddenly blow up like Violet Beauregarde in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* thanks to all the delicious, filling fat I was eating. I worried that the cholesterol in my egg yolks would give me heart disease. I worried that forgoing bread would somehow make me fiber-deficient and my—ahem—*regularity* was doomed to suffer. When I told people I was “eating Paleo,” I didn't have a good answer when the inevitable questions came flooding in: *Won't all that animal protein give you cancer? Aren't you worried about your cholesterol? Is it really smart to eliminate all grains?* (Ironically, nobody seemed to care when my breakfast, lunch, and dinner consisted of nicotine and caffeine-laden soft drinks.)

For the first time, I wasn't content with simply following rules. I wanted to know why this was working and whether all the worries were justified. I wanted to know everything. With no dog in the fight, I set out to discover the truth about food, nutrition, and how I could best nourish my body. I wanted to know how we got here, why we believe what we believe, and what all of it meant to my health.

I read. I researched. I accumulated credentials in the worlds of both fitness and food: I received my CrossFit Level 1 trainer certificate and, soon after, I became a Nutritional Therapy Practitioner (NTP™) certified by the Nutritional Therapy Association. I began working toward my master's degree in public health so that I could better grasp the scope and the legitimacy of the research behind different ways of eating and better understand the shocking disease statistics that we've seen since certain foods fell out of favor. I started

working with clients both individual and corporate, co-hosting a podcast, and traveling across the country to teach the principles of healthy eating to thousands of others. Over time, my interests shifted toward sustainable agriculture and self-sufficiency, so along with my incredible husband, I moved to a fifteen-acre homestead in the Midwest to start raising and growing our own food—the same foods I’ve been eating this whole time, only now they’re homegrown. All the while, I’ve been documenting my personal journey on—you guessed it—a blog. (Because you’re nobody until you’re putting your every thought on the Internet.)

In my years of hacking away at nutrition lies and dusting the cobwebs off the truth, here is what I’ve discovered:

- ① We’re told to choose foods based on myths that have absolutely no place in our dietary decision-making. Many of these myths are simply silly superstitions. Others are downright dangerous.
- ② The history behind the demonization of cholesterol, saturated fat, and animal products is quite shocking and has no nutritional validity. For the last sixty years, we have been the subjects of a nutrition experiment, and it has not gone well: We’re more confused and less healthy than ever.
- ③ Low-carb, low-fat, and low-calorie diets aren’t all they’re cracked up to be. It’s the nutrient value and the quality of our food that matter most.
- ④ Much of what we’re told to eat is neither nutritious nor natural. It’s processed junk disguised as health food, and it has the muscle of powerful industries behind it.
- ⑤ When we strip away all the processing, the profitable industry, the diet dogma, and the bad science, we’re left only with real food.

That last one is the most important point of all. When we’re left with real food, we’re left with the food that has a long history in the human diet. This is the food that humans—our



ancestors—ate for thousands of years in good health, without fear.

Thanks to some of the better endeavors of nutritional science, we can look more closely at these real foods for insight into which nutrients we need most. This goes beyond just a Paleo diet to truly explore nutrients, where they come from, and why we need them.

Eating real, natural foods with a long history in the human diet isn't hard. Unlearning all the crap we've been taught? *That's* hard.

Before we get to all that, however, it's time to define some terms: what *Paleo*, *real food*, and *properly raised* really mean.

## What we talk about when we talk about Paleo .....

Paleo is not a diet. It's not a fad. It's not a rigid set of rules to follow. It's not a sound bite. It's an exploration of history, nutrition, the human diet, and, most important, our health.

*Paleo* is the word we use to encompass a robust collection of information that continues to grow. This is not something that's been seen before in the "diet world," where lists of rules trump all and conventional wisdom, along with obsessive behavior, continues to reign.

*Paleo* is a term that helps define real food, the food with a long history in the human diet. It's the food our ancestors instinctively knew provided the greatest nutrition, and the food our modern knowledge of nutrition can verify as the most nutrient-dense. It's the only food that has *always* been food in some form: meat, eggs, and fat from healthy, properly raised animals and seafood; vegetables and fruits of all



kinds; and a few lesser-known foods that we'll discuss in chapter 4.

Paleo is about learning from our ancestors and adopting modern versions of the behaviors that kept them healthy. And when I talk about our ancestors, I'm not just talking about cavemen and -women. I'm also talking about more recent hunter-gatherer cultures and isolated communities (often called "traditional cultures") that had no access to modern, processed foods and that lived off the natural resources available to them in great health, suffering none of the chronic diseases of our modern world. To guide our modern dietary decisions, we can search for common threads among what these cultures ate, the nutrition they valued, and how they thrived. Some of the foods they ate might seem surprising, like those discussed in chapter 4. Other foods are to be expected: meat and fat from properly raised animals, seafood, eggs, vegetables, fruits, and nuts. These are all *real foods*, and this book will explain that concept further. In talking about the shady, shocking history behind the demonization of these foods in our modern world, we will also be able to answer the question: *How the heck did we get to where we are today?*

Most important, eating well and healthfully means knowing where your food comes from. Throughout this book, we'll discuss "properly raised" animals and the importance of eating foods produced in a natural, harmonious environment. Factory farming, like much of industrial agriculture, is unnatural and inexcusable. Animals should be raised on their natural diets, in their natural environments, with the freedom to engage in their natural behaviors. That's what *properly raised* means—cattle graze on grass in open pasture instead of being fed corn on a feedlot; chickens range freely over pasture and eat insects, grass, and worms. A healthy animal makes healthy food, and this concept is vital to eating and living well. We are what our animals ate, after all. Fortunately, the Paleo movement has been—and continues to

be—instrumental in making real, nutritious, properly raised animal products more accessible and more affordable.

Sound good? It should!

Before we move on, let's talk for a moment about the most pervasive propaganda that, at times, paralyzes us and makes us question our choices. Even the most commonsense concepts are often saddled with controversy, and Paleo is no exception. I want you to be prepared for the various things people may say to bomb your bacon.

### But that's not *Paleo*

Remember, we're making choices based on a framework we call *Paleo*, and that's an entirely different animal from a list of rules defining so-called Paleo and non-Paleo foods. While it's tempting to make a rigid list, here's the problem: *Nothing* is Paleo if we go by black-and-white logic.

After all, almost all modern foods, including meat, vegetables, fruits, and nuts, were unavailable to our hunter-gatherer ancestors. The modern grass-fed Jersey cow has been around for just a few hundred years, and the modern beefsteak tomato was certainly not growing in lovely cave gardens. Fruit has been selectively bred over hundreds of years for maximum sweetness and size, while the fruit available thousands of years ago was small, tart, and a rare find.

Whatever cavemen could find, they'd probably eat—they had to survive, after all. We modern humans, however, have the luxury of abundant food. We just need guidelines to help us make wise choices.

The word *Paleo* simply represents the foods eaten before feedlots, global commerce, the refinement of sugar and grains, and the hydrogenation of fats changed our food landscape from one of nutritious, natural food to one of easy, cheap, and shelf-stable products. It represents a time when real fat was cherished as the nutrient-rich, nourishing food

**(pages 21-261 not included in preview)**

# nutrition in 100 words

.....  
Seek real, nutrient-filled food, as close to its natural state as possible: whole, unprocessed, unmodified, and unrefined.  
.....

.....  
Pretend the modern supermarket doesn't exist. Choose foods that could be hunted or gathered—food that has *always* been food.  
.....

.....  
Support local, responsible producers.  
.....

.....  
Eat vegetables and fruits. Eat meat and fat from properly raised animals, eggs, and seafood. Enjoy cold-pressed oils and plants rich in healthy fats, like coconut, avocado, and olives.  
.....

.....  
Drink water.  
.....

.....  
Incorporate superfoods: fermented vegetables and beverages, homemade bone broth, and organ meats (if you dare).  
.....

.....  
Above all, ditch obsessive behavior and “diets.”  
.....

.....  
Question conventional wisdom.  
.....

.....  
Eat real food.  
.....

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