



How I Got Processed Foods Out of My Diet

It has been quite the journey before I have been able to officially get off of processed foods from my main diet. What I mean by that is that my diet consists of foods that are of one ingredient unless I'm combining foods into one such as a smoothie or salad. So why do this? The main reason for me is to keep up with the rigors that everyday life throws at me and allows me to put in a good effort with my teaching, tennis instruction, workouts and recreational activities. Plus I want to be climbing mountains and hitting tennis balls until I die 😊 Trying to live life to its fullest starts with good sleep and a good diet! Don't get me wrong, I enjoy my share of beer and takeout food but that is the exception, not the rule. This has taken me YEARS to do (even though I wasn't planning on it) so I thought some advice might help if you're interested in trying this out.

Track Your Energy: The reason I was motivated to get off of processed foods was the lack of energy I felt in the middle of the day. I was not only really hungry but also very tired. Not a good combination to make the right food choices! This impacted my performance during workouts or competitive tennis matches. The first indicator that I was not on the right track with my diet is a friend of mine ([who is a beast of an athlete](#)) told me that my diet "sucked." I immediately started to make improvements. I would suggest starting this out by writing down the times and foods you eat when you feel the most energy and the times and foods you eat when you do not. Do this for a week and then analyze. Can you pinpoint foods that are causing a sudden drop in your energy? For me it was the consumption of cereal, which gave me a quick jolt of energy but not over the long run. The main focus on your analysis should be related to blood sugar. Keeping it steady throughout the day is critical. Foods that are low on the glycemic index are best. [Click here](#) to check on foods you normally eat to see how they rank.

Any Other Goals? Weight loss (or gain...see future blogs for this 😊) can be a motivating factor as well. Having weight to lose is hard if you're eating processed foods. It may have lower calories but your energy level is low which might keep you from being active and burning those extra calories that can help you lose weight.

Start Small and Experiment: Regardless of what your changes will be in your diet, try one at a time. As a science teacher, I stress to my students that testing one variable at a time allows us to see if that change made any difference. Same with changing the diets. Substitute (same for adding or subtracting) a food item for a few days and see what it does to your energy level. Eventually you will get to a diet that you can maintain throughout the week.

Let the Substitutions Come Naturally: Make sure you can sustain this diet so keep foods that will quench your cravings. From my experience, they tend to go away as you keep eating healthy foods. For example, I love ice cream so I kept that as my evening treat but it naturally worked itself out. I didn't feel like eating it anymore. The body wants nutrition so expect your cravings to change as you change your diet. Be patient and it will happen!

What Worked for Someone Might Not Work for You: Everyone is unique so by giving a “one size fits all” diet will most likely result in frustration and abandonment of this effort. Consider your diet unique to you. However, you can always try to get tips from others and combine what people do into your own master plan. Here is mine in case you were wondering:

Breakfast → spinach, eggs and lentils cooked together with garlic powder. Smoothie consisting of: water, blueberries, a third of a banana, plain Greek yogurt, chi seeds, flaxseed, spinach and plant protein powder.

**I usually add a cup of coffee sometime during the morning. I go back and forth with that and peppermint tea.

Snack → Microwaved sweet potato, celery with peanut butter

Lunch → Apple and a salad consisting of: spinach, tuna or chicken, carrots, pumpkin seeds, sunflower kernels and olive oil.

Snack → Apple and a kind bar

Dinner → Steamed veggies mixed with a half of an avocado. Sometimes I'll add veggies to an organic soup base.