

Printable Cheat Sheet For Shopping



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By Matthew Albracht

A handy guide of healthy options for grocery shopping, as well as items to avoid. Also some fun replacement cheats to swap out for some favorite unhealthy foods. Just print it out and take with you, or save the .pdf to your phone so you always have it with you. This guide is information taken from my book, "Nourish Your Self Whole: A Guide to Core Nutritional Pillars, with Achievable Steps for Vibrant Health." It can be used independently, but for more in-depth context, see book.

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Sugars to Avoid

Foods contain naturally occurring and added sugars. You want to watch and limit both, but added sugars are the most troubling as more and more processed and packaged foods contain them. Look at your labels for any packaged foods to make sure there aren't too many grams of sugar listed (anything over just a few is a lot).

Whether it's something you stock at home, or that is put into a packaged food, some of the big baddies to avoid are:

- Sugar (cane, powdered, brown, etc.)
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Dextrose
- Maltose
- Glucose
- Fructose
- Corn sweetener
- Honey (raw ok in small amounts)
- Corn syrup
- Sucrose
- Sorghum syrup
- Sorbitol
- Lactose
- Molasses
- Syrup
- Fruit juice concentrate
- Artificial sweeteners: NutraSweet, saccharine, aspartame, etc.

Good Sugar Alternatives

When you have the occasional treat, there are some tasty but still somewhat healthier options to sweeten your food. Three of the best alternatives are:

- Stevia
- Monk fruit (Lakanto brand is most common)
- Allulose

These options contain no calories and won't spike your blood sugar. Monk fruit and allulose looks like and converts into recipes just like sugar, and have a pleasant, sweet flavor not too dissimilar to refined sugar. Stevia comes now in many brands, and some have much more of an aftertaste than others. Look for a whole-foods source that isn't overly processed for the best flavor and quality.

The jury isn't completely in on how these effect your body, but they are likely better than real sugars when used in moderation.

Just Ok Sugar Substitutes

(Use sparingly)

- Coconut Sugar
- Maple Syrup
- Maple Sugar
- Raw Honey

Good Alternatives to Refined Flours

All three of these are decent substitutes for refined wheat flour. They don't break down into glucose as much as standard choices and can be used for the occasional baking needs.

- Cassava flour
- Almond flour
- Coconut flour

Pasta Alternatives

- Spiralized vegetable noodles (I like carrot and zucchini. Sweet potato, butternut squash, and beet noodles are good, too.)
- Spaghetti squash (makes a fantastic alternative for spaghetti noodles).
- Shirataki noodles (made from a Japanese yam that are tasty and closer to traditional pasta. The brand I'm most familiar with is called Miracle Noodles.)
- Almond flour pastas are also available in some markets, typically in freezer section, and are quite tasty for the occasional treat (Cappellos is the brand I like).
- Quinoa or lentil pastas (with these grain-based alternatives, keep it to a minimum).

Good Complex Carbs

Starchy vegetables are a good substitute that can help fill the refined carb void. Some of the best starchy vegetables are:

- Sweet potatoes & yams,
- Jicama,
- Squash (e.g., butternut, acorn, kabocha, delicata, pumpkin, spaghetti, etc.)
- Turnips,
- Beets,
- Red-skinned potatoes,
- Parsnips,
- Celery root,
- Plantains,
- Traditional russet potatoes are ok too, but try to mix other varieties of potato into your diet as russets can be harder on the digestive system than others.

Best Types of Fats And Oils to Use

(Diversity is important, so mix it up and get a variety each day.)

- Olive Oil (always extra virgin, cold-pressed)
- Avocado Oil
- Coconut Oil (virgin)
- Tallow and Lard (from good sources, like grass-fed animals)
- Butter and Ghee (Clarified Butter) (grass-fed is best)
- Palm Oil (sustainably sourced)
- Smaller amounts of cold- or expeller-pressed, unrefined nut and seed oils, such as macadamia, walnut, and sesame. Flax, chia, and hemp are also considered to be decent sources.
- Full-Fat Dairy. For those that can tolerate dairy, this can be a good source. (Organic, grass-fed sources are best.)
- Quality, Grass-Fed Animal Fats.

Fats and Oils to Avoid

(Almost all processed foods contain one form or another of these toxic fats, so watch out!)

- Canola
- Soy
- Corn
- Sunflower
- Safflower
- Cottonseed
- Grapeseed
- Sesame (unless used cold-pressed in things like salad dressing, but never in processed foods or to cook with)
- Margarine
- Most non-stick cooking sprays (some new companies are using avocado or coconut oils, which may be better)
- Anything labeled “Vegetable Oil,” “Shortening,” or with words “Hydrogenated” or “Trans Fat” on label.

Fat Smoke Points

(When cooking with oils, you want to keep them below their smoke point. When they get past their smoke point, they start to form dangerous free radicals.)

- Avocado Oil 520°F
- Ghee 485°F
- Palm Oil 450°F
- Coconut Oil (expeller pressed, refined) 450°F
- Coconut Oil (extra virgin) 350°F
- Macadamia Nut Oil 390° F
- Beef Tallow 400°F
- Duck Fat 375°F
- Lard 370°F
- Olive Oil (extra virgin) 320° F
- Butter 350°F

Much of this data is from: John Barron, "Healthiest Cooking Oil Comparison Chart with Smoke Points and Omega-3 Fatty Acid Ratios." [Baseline of Health Foundation](#).

Vegetables & Fruit

You really can't go wrong in this department. Most fruits and vegetables can be liberally eaten (with some moderation on fruit because of the higher sugar content). Get a wide variety of colors for a broad spectrum of vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients and antioxidants.

Fiber: Vegetables and Fruits Contain Some of the Best Kinds

Another great benefit of vegetables and fruits is the important fiber content. Fiber can help bulk up the stool, including detoxified “bad stuff” our body needs to flush out, and move everything through the intestines more efficiently. It also helps minimize blood sugar spikes by slowing sugar breakdown and absorption, it helps feed good gut bacteria that provide numerous benefits for our healthy functioning, and more. Great sources of soluble and insoluble fiber include:

- leafy, green vegetables;
- yams and sweet potatoes;
- carrots and other root vegetables;
- squash;
- fruits with an edible peel, like apples and pears;
- berries;
- seeds;
- nuts.

Going Organic

As much as you possibly can, buy organic. The pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers that are used to help produce conventionally grown crops are shown to be particularly toxic to humans.

I realize it's not always possible to buy organic, especially depending on where you live. The Environmental Working Group (EWG) has done a great job of identifying the biggest "problem" fruits and vegetables on their annual "Dirty Dozen" list. They do rigorous testing and research to identify the most pesticide-ridden fruits and vegetables, the ones we should buy organic, every year.

Here are this year's Dirty Dozen, with the worst culprit first:

- Strawberries
- Spinach
- Nectarines
- Apples
- Grapes
- Peaches
- Cherries
- Pears
- Tomatoes
- Celery
- Potatoes
- Sweet Bell Peppers
- [Dis]honorable Mention: Hot Peppers.

Please note, this list can change a bit from year to year (though it tends to stay pretty consistent). Check www.ewg.org for the most recent list.

If you can't find fresh organic versions of these foods and you really need one of these items, consider looking for organic frozen.

Speaking of cleaner conventionally grown options, EWG also has a list called the “Clean Fifteen,” listing the least contaminated. This year’s includes:

- Avocados
- Sweet Corn
- Pineapples
- Cabbage
- Onions
- Sweet Peas (frozen)
- Papayas
- Asparagus
- Mangos
- Eggplant
- Honeydew Melon
- Kiwi
- Cantaloupe
- Cauliflower
- Broccoli

On a related note, EWG makes a great set of phone apps for identifying more and less toxic foods in general. You can also check out their food score website at www.ewg.org/foodscores. Here, they rank the health of food items you might find at the grocery store.

My Favorite brands Of Staples and Treats

There is a variety of items here that I enjoy. You can find updates and clickable links on my website at: www.nourishyourselfwhole.com/shopping-list

Refined Carb Alternatives:

These lower glycemic load “carb” alternatives are all gluten free and won’t wreak as much havoc on your body as many refined flours. You can bake with these or use them for a number of cooking needs. They taste great and are paleo friendly and gluten free. You should still be mindful about how much you indulge.

Paleo Pancake and Waffle Mix by Birch Benders: This mix is sooo good. Totally hits my need for occasional pancakes, without the giant carb hit.

Cassava Flour by Otto’s Naturals: This flour is made from Yucca root. Another great alternative baking flour that is a staple in low glycemic non-wheat flour baking.

Coconut Flour by Nutiva: This is a great alternate for baking.

Cassava and Coconut Flour Tortilla’s by Siete: These taste good and are a great alternative for those that really want some kind of carb alternative for wraps or other uses.

Shirataki Noodles by Miracle Noodles: Made from a Japanese yam. These are zero carb and gluten free. Taste good. They have an assortment of styles, fettuccini, angel hair, etc.

Almond Flour by Bob’s Red Mill: There are several types, all good. Super fine from blanched or non-blanched whole almonds. Other brands good as well.

Snacks & Appetizers:

Mary's Crackers: These are gluten free and relatively clean ingredients if you want a crackery snack. They have many flavors. Crunchy and nice.

Siete Grain Free Tortilla Chips: These are AMAZING! So light and crispy. Tastes surprisingly like corn chips. They are made from Cassava and fried in Avocado oil. Both are better for you than other chips made with cheap industrial seed vegetable oils which are rancid and toxic.

Sweet Potato Chips or Blue Corn Chips: Jackson's Honest chips are fried in coconut oil, which is a far better option than cheap vegetable oils.

Coconut Almond Butter by Maranatha: This is so tasty! Creamy and delicious. A blend of almond butter with coconut cream. One of my favorite treats is a tablespoon of it.

Sardines by Wild Planet: These are a great snack. Loads of good omega 3 fats and decadent. I like to get the ones packed in extra virgin olive oil as they help protect the fat from the fish.

Roasted Seaweed by SeaSnax: This is one of the only seaweed snacks that uses olive oil to roast in, not a cheap, crappy oil like canola.

Meat Bars, Grassfed, by Epic: These are paleo friendly. I bring them with me when traveling and flying. Make a good jolt of nourishment.

Hummus, Organic by Hope: Make sure to get a brand that has good oils. Most use canola or other cheap, bad oils. Hope brand uses extra virgin olive oil.

Sweeteners:

You don't have to fully give up your sweet tooth! These sweeteners are less negatively impactful as cane sugar or high fructose corn syrup.

Monkfruit Sweetener by Lakanto: Tastes good and makes a nice replacement for cane sugar. You can use it the same, cup for cup. This has almost no glycemic load (blood sugar raiser).

Stevia: Liquid or powdered packets: Avoid cheap crappy stevia's, they don't taste good. Only get 100% Stevia, not mixed with other types of junk sweetener. Just say NO to Truvia.

Raw Honey by YS: Be sure to buy raw honey, unfiltered if you can. Heat processing kills many of the good nutrients in honey.

Coconut Sugar, Organic, by Big Tree Farms: Nice flavor, works well for cooking. Occasional treat.

Maple Syrup, Organic by Coombs Family Farm: This should be used only occasionally, it still has a lot of sugar in it.

Oils and Fats:

Olive Oil, Napa Valley Naturals Organic: Great flavor and good quality. Always buy cold pressed extra virgin.

Amphora Olive Oils: This is a great company that carefully sources its oils (and amazing flavored, barrel aged Balsamic Vinegars). Found online only.

Ghee, 4th and Heart Plain and Heart Pink Himalayan Sea Salt: Love these. Ghee is a great alternative for butter. Both of these are grassfed. Ghee has a high smoke point, so you can sauté with it at higher temperatures. I use the plain for cooking and the sea salt version for snacking.

Coconut Oil by Artisana: Nutiva brand is fine as well, it's more affordable, but I like Artisana's taste.

Avocado Oil: I use La Tourangelle for more delicate flavorful needs, like salad dressing. I use Primal Kitchen or Chosen Foods for cooking. Avocado oil has a high smoke point, and doesn't oxidize as easily. So you can sauté with it at higher temperatures. Or even for frying. Chosen foods makes a pan spray as well.

Avocado Oil Mayo: Primal Kitchen or Chosen Foods. Tasty and much better than almost all other mayo's, as they all use cheap, unhealthy vegetable oils.

Macadamia Nut Oil: by Roland. Mac oils are great for salad dressings. Healthy oil, don't need a lot though, just a splash mixed in with olive and avocado. Another option is Piping Rock.

Dairy Alternatives:

Coconut Milk, Simple, Native Forest: This is one of the only brands that makes it without Guar Gum, which can cause digestive problems for some people. This is a heavy coconut milk used primarily for cooking, not for a "milk" substitute for things like cereal.

Coconut Cashewmilk by Forager: This is in refrigerated sections only, but has very simple ingredients and also no gums. Tastes great if you can find it!

CoYo Coconut Yogurt: This coconut-based yogurt is very delightful and surprisingly creamy. It also makes a great substitute for sour cream, a similar consistency. Since it's refrigerated, it's at stores only.

Herbs, Spices & Flavorings:

Celtic Sea Salt

Himalayan Sea Salt

Real Salt, by Redmond: This “sea salt” comes from an ancient seabed in Utah that was not exposed to modern toxins like sea salts are often today. Another bonus is this is one of the only sea salts that has a decent amount of iodine.

Balsamic Vinegar: Amphora (online only) makes these barrel aged vinegars that really are pretty amazing. My favorites are the red “cinnamon & pear” and the white “apricot”. These are slightly thicker and a touch of sweet. But it doesn’t take much to flavor a great salad dressing or for a drizzle.

Swiss Chard Powder by Dr. Cowan’s Garden: This delightful flavoring powder is nutrient dense. If you have a hard time squeezing in enough vegetables in a day, try this out. They also have Kale and number of other great options. I put a spoonful in salad dressings, sprinkle into soups, etc. Great way to spice up and packed with nutrients!

Miscellaneous:

Bone Broth, Grassfed by Kettle and Fire or Epic: Great source of nutrients for your gut and skin health, plus so much more. Should be a dietary staple.

Wild Salmon by Wild Planet: These are a great alternative to tuna (which is high in mercury). Loads of good omega 3 fats.

Check my website as I update this list periodically as I find new stuff.

www.nourishyourselfwhole.com/shopping-list