

THE TAO OF PALEO

FINDING YOUR PATH TO HEALTH AND HARMONY

BY JOE SALAMA AND JASON GOLDBERG

ORIGINAL CONCEPT BY JASON GOLDBERG

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CHAPTER TEN: PROTEIN

*"I would gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today." ~
J. Wellington Wimpy*

JG: This is the hamburger chapter? Yummy.

JS: Ohhh yeah. Especially if it's a big grass-fed burger, with guacamole on top, served between some nice crispy kale leaves.

JG: THAT SOUNDS LIKE A TASTY BURGER. Me, I can't usually eat 'em 'cause my girlfriend's a vegetarian. Which more or less makes me a vegetarian, but I sure love the taste of a good burger.

JS: Nice, Jules. Did you know there's no such verse as Ezekiel 25:17?

JG: Check out the big brain on Joe. Would you like a foot massage?

JS: No.

JG: Back to protein then.

JS: Let's get the wiki stuff out of the way for you sciencey nerd types. Protein is a macronutrient - just like fat and carbohydrates - which means that it's one of the three substances that make up the bulk of the human diet.

JG: Proteins are actually chains of amino acids, strung together with peptide bonds.

JS: Are those the things you buy your kid so they can go to college?

JG: No, those are savings bonds.

JS: The reason Dog the Bounty Hunter chases people?

JG: Bail bonds.

JS: Powder you put on your feet when you're itchy?

JG: Gold Bond.

JS: The British guy who drinks martinis and kills people?

JG: James Bond.

JS: Hmm. The guy with the big alien head who put all that stuff into his body with needles and hit a lot of homers??

JG: Barry Bonds. Listen, it doesn't really matter what peptide bonds are, unless you're planning on passing organic chemistry this semester, ok? I'm just telling you protein is amino acids connected by them. Sheesh.

JS: Ok, Ok. I got it.

JG: You know what comes next.

JS: Yah. The guy waiting outside.

JG: Yep. It's interesting that the Pulp Fiction references came up, though. Let me introduce you to Vincent Vegan.

VV: Did I hear someone mention foot massages?

JS: Yes, but forget it.

VV: Have you seen a used-up palookah named Butch? My boss Marcellus Lettuce wants a word with him.

JG: We haven't seen him. Joe, Vince here is a vegan.

JS: I see.

VV: Yeah, ethically, I can't kill animals, so I don't use them as a food source.

JS: Yet, you do kill people. I mean, you're a hit man, right?

VV: What's your point?

JG: Again, back to protein. It's a vital component of our food, first and foremost because it's what most of our bodies are made of. Our cells are held together by protein, and it is what forms our hair, skin, nails, and organs.

JS: We get protein through the food we eat. In our digestive system, protein gets broken down into its component amino acids and used for a number of tasks. Aminos are ingredients in hormones, they perform cellular signaling functions, they are key components of red blood cells, and they are used for muscle repair and building. Many of the amino acids we need to survive are essential, which means that we can't synthesize them in the body but need to get them via nutrition instead.

VV: I get all the protein I need from beans, nuts, grains, and soy.

JG: The paleo lifestyle is definitely biased toward eating animal protein in order to get the necessary amino acids. It is possible to get sufficient protein through vegetarian sources. However, it's far more difficult, because vegetables, nuts and legumes don't contain the density of protein in animal flesh. Also, with the exception of the pseudo-grain quinoa, single vegetarian sources don't include all the amino acids necessary for the body to survive.

JS: If you try to eat vegetarian sources to meet your protein needs, you're forced to deal with things like gluten, saponins, lectins, and phytates that humans have difficulty digesting. Also, you are forced to eat a very high-carbohydrate diet, since vegetarian foods containing significant protein are almost always high carb. We don't believe that a traditional high-carb diet is optimal or healthy - it often leads to insulin de-sensitivity and excessive weight gain.

JG: As for soy, I wouldn't come within fifty feet of it. Soy is filled with phytoestrogens which can cause severe hormonal problems in men by effecting testosterone and increase the likelihood of cervical cancer in women.

JS: If you're a guy, you don't want man-boobs or performance issues. No need to support Pfizer if you don't have to.

VV: I'm still an A-cup.

JG: Lovely. While we understand and acknowledge the fact that some lovely and intelligent humans reject the consumption of meat on ethical grounds, we paleo types believe that it's entirely appropriate to consume well-raised and healthy animals. As an aside, we'd like to point out that the non-meat eaters who are trying to do a wonderful thing for the planet should bear in mind that 40 times the number of species die out as a result of our practice of farming monoculture grains versus if we devoted our agricultural

efforts to raising grass-fed meat and stopped farming grains. Back to our point that humans do much better consuming animal protein.

JS: We're genetically programmed to eat that way, and the science says so. A 2010 study at Arizona State University found that vegetarians that don't get at least 50% of their protein from eggs and dairy sources need to eat 20% more protein from vegetable sources than their meat eating peers to get the same nutritional benefit. This is because vegetable protein just isn't as bioavailable - accessible to the body - as animal protein.

JG: In order to make you healthier, we've made it clear that one of your highest priorities is to rid yourself of some body fat and add some lean muscle. In *Move*, we talked about the methodologies for doing so, and here in *Protein* we want to let you know how important protein is to that process.

JS: Exactly. When you exercise, you are actually stressing your muscles - intentionally breaking them down in hopes that they will rebuild themselves.

JG: We can rebuild them. We have the technology. We can make them bigger. Faster. Stronger...

JS: Oscar Goldman just called. You're needed back in the early seventies.

JG: I'll get my polyester leisure suit from the dry cleaner. Anyway, you've just finished a nasty session of lifting heavy things, and your muscles are insulin-sensitive and looking for supper. Certainly, eating a meal rich in carbs, as we discussed in *Carbs*, isn't a bad idea. It will cause an insulin release which will allow the glucose from the digested carbs to be up-taken into the muscle cells and glycogen stores in the liver and muscles to be restored.

JS: That won't help your muscles repair themselves or get stronger, though.

JG: No sir, it won't. Your muscles are looking for amino acids from protein, which they would like to up-take at the same time they up-take glucose. That's why we recommend a meal with both carbs and lots of protein post-workout, so your muscles can respond to the adaptive stress of working out by getting bigger and stronger. I hate to stereotype, but there aren't many vegan bodybuilders out there.

WV: And I want to be bigger and stronger why?

JS: So you can kill people more effectively for Marcellus Lettuce?

JG: Certainly, to most of us, lean muscle is more aesthetically pleasing than fat, but it's also healthier. Excess adipose tissue is tied to greater likelihood of a whole list of illnesses and diseases.

WV: I've heard that muscle burns more calories than fat.

JS: That's true, but it's a relatively minor issue. According to research from the Pennington Biomedical Center, a pound of fat at rest burns two calories per hour, while a pound of muscle burns six.

JG: Neither of those are big numbers.

WV: So then why do we want to eat protein and work out in order to build bigger and stronger muscles?

JS: Because muscle mass has a huge effect on insulin sensitivity. People who carry lean skeletal muscle are much more insulin-sensitive than those who carry more fat. Remember that the more insulin sensitive you are, the more likely your cells are to uptake glucose, rather than have it transported to the liver and

stored in the fat cells as triglycerides. As we've mentioned before...

JG: And we will mention again...

JS: ...excess body fat is linked to a host of physical ailments including heart disease and stroke.

JG: We've told you that we'd like your paleo plate to be full of fat, protein and leafy greens, with smaller sides of starchy vegetables and fruit. There are reasons for that over and above the muscle-building issue.

JS: Of the three macronutrients - remember, those are the three main compounds humans eat - protein and fat are the most satiating.

JG: That's right. Protein is going to satisfy your hunger, which means that you're going to be satisfied with less food.

VV: Huh? That doesn't make much sense. You guys have been telling people not to count calories or measure portions, and that calorie restriction is bad, and now you're talking about calorie restriction with less food?

JG: You'll be eating large plates of food for sure, but the satiating effects of protein-dense meals will likely remove the temptation to snack all day on unhealthy foods. As a result, your food intake becomes a self-regulating mechanism. Because you're eating satiating foods, you won't eat too much.

VV: How do you know you're not eating too little then?

JS: Your body will tell you. When you begin to follow the paleo path you will be more in touch with your body and will learn to trust your hunger levels. If you're eating clean paleo, with your plate composed as we suggest, and you still lack energy or you're retaining fat, you need to eat more food, because what you're

seeing is a hormonal response to calorie restriction. If you're feeling full of energy, if you're leaning out properly, then you're eating the right amount.

JG: It's self-correcting. After you've spent some time following the template, and you set out to find your own Tao, doubtless you'll experiment with protein intake depending on your individual biology and goals. Some sources, such as paleo guru Robb Wolf...

JS: Bow to your Sensei!! Bow to your Sensei!!

JG: Bowing. Robb Wolf, by the way, is one of the pre-eminent reasons for the progress of the paleo movement, and Joe and I think he's like the paleo Michael Jordan. Anyway, Robb suggests 1 gram of protein per day per pound of bodyweight, others suggest a bit less. That's if you're one of those people who absolutely NEEDS a number, no matter what.

JS: You may be interested in things like bodybuilding or competitive weightlifting, in which case your goal is to build bigger or stronger muscles, respectively. In that case, you're probably going to add protein to your diet and monitor when you eat it carefully to support maximum gains.

JG: If you're looking to be a normal, healthy, active, fit human, however, the template works just fine. Fill your plate with grass-fed ruminant meat like beef or lamb, pastured pork, free-range and non vegetarian-fed organic eggs, wild seafood, and other healthy proteins. Make them the focus of your meals along with leafy green vegetables.

VV: Marcellus Lettuce is a vegan too, you know.

JS: I'm not surprised.

VV: Marcellus says that too much protein is bad for you, that it harms the kidneys and that it can even cause kidney failure. He told me that there are scientific studies that prove it.

JG: Marcellus is wrong.

VV: Last dude who told Marcellus he was wrong got thrown out of a fourth-story window...developed a speech impediment.

JS: Nevertheless. All the studies cited by people like Marcellus with a grudge against diets higher in protein forget to mention one critical fact.

VV: What's that?

JG: The only studies that correlate kidney problems to higher protein diet involve subjects that already suffer from kidney diseases.

JS: That sound you hear is another myth being blown to smithereens by a big 'ol pile of factual dynamite.

JG: Here's a quote from the conclusion of a recent University of Connecticut study by Nancy Rodriguez, Lawrence Armstrong, and William Martin:

"Although excessive protein intake remains a health concern in individuals with pre-existing renal disease, the literature lacks significant research demonstrating a link between protein intake and the initiation or progression of renal disease in healthy individuals."

JS: KA-BOOM!

JG: Yep. But don't take our word for it Vincent. Try it for yourself for 30 days and discover your own paleo Tao.

VV: You guys might be right. Marcellus and I could be completely wrong about protein. You've given me a lot to think about.

JS: Thanks Vincent! That's awfully big of you.

VV: But I don't like having to think about stuff. So I'm going to shoot both of you guys in the face.

JG: Oh no! Just like Marvin!!

VV: There's a little something I like to say right before I shoot someone in the face. Here goes. The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the inequities of the animal flesh and the baconry of evil men...

JS: We better do something quick Jason!

VV: Blessed is he who, in the name of soybeans and good kale, shepherds the leeks through the Valley of Darkness...

JG: I'm on it Joe! I'm on it!

VV: And you will know that you should have eaten corn, when I lay my vengeance upon thee...agggggh! What the hell is that!!

JG: The power of rice compels thee! The power of rice compels thee!

JS: Leave it to you to have a cross made entirely of steak stashed away in case of emergency.

JG: Just wait until I start reading from the Book of Revelbacon.

VV: I'm outta here!

JG: Another disaster narrowly averted.

JS: I've never seen a real live vegan exorcism before. Death successfully dodged.

JG: Let's wrap it all up in a bow for you. Protein is a very important part of the paleo lifestyle, and it's necessary to produce and maintain a healthy human. If you want to be a vegan, we respect that choice (although I would say about 25%-35% of the paleo community are former vegetarians or vegans). In any case, you're not likely to die from lack of protein as a result. But you're probably in the wrong book.

JS: Or maybe you should say the wrong movie.

JG: That too.

JS: Still got that cross?

JG: Right here.

JS: (CHOMP!!!)

JG: HEY!!

JS: Sorry Jason. Needed some protein.

JG: Sacrilege. You're going to hell you know.

JS: At least I won't be hungry.