



FOOD SECRETS THAT CHANGE LIVES

LESSON 2

What to Eat and Drink



PART 1

We've told 100,000 clients, "There are no bad foods." And we're not about to stop. Here's why.

Candy bars. French fries. Doughnuts. Can most people really include these foods in moderation? Or is that a recipe for a disaster?

By Brian St. Pierre, MS, RD, CSCS

At Precision Nutrition, we don't tell our clients exactly what to eat—or what not to eat.

In fact, we boldly say: “There are no bad foods.”

Our stance tends to spark lots and lots of questions, which is why we decided to take a deep dive into the “good foods vs. bad foods” debate.

In this section we'll:

- ✓ explore how good vs. bad thinking can actually set people up to eat MORE of the “bad” foods
- ✓ offer an alternative way to think about sweets, chips, and other low-nutrient foods
- ✓ provide techniques we use to help to liberate clients from the good vs. bad mindset.

We'll be honest. The “no bad foods” philosophy can be really scary, especially for people who've spent years organizing foods into good and bad categories.

But it can also be equally transformative.

We've found that once our clients welcome the foods they love back into their lives—without fear and without guilt—they struggle less, enjoy eating more, and, finally, are able to overcome obstacles that stand between them and their healthy eating goals.

Why the good vs. bad approach just doesn't work.

Many people divide food into just two categories.

Good foods: Vegetables, legumes, whole grains, fish, lean meat, and other minimally-processed, nutrient-dense foods.

Bad foods: Sweets, chips, crackers, white bread, fries, and other highly-processed foods that offer little to no nutritional value.

And before we explain why we don't sort food into "good" and "bad" buckets, we want to be very clear. The nutritional differences between these two categories are quite easy to spot.

Many of the so-called "bad" foods, in high amounts, can raise the risk for a variety of diseases.

They're also incredibly hard to resist. (The food industry really has created cheap, easily accessible products that our taste buds and brains love.)

But are they bad?

We don't use that terminology—for six major reasons.

Reason #1:

One single food doesn't define your entire diet.

Maybe you've heard of a teenager who ate just four foods for most of his life: fries, chips, white bread, and processed pork.¹

And then he went blind.

It's a cautionary tale, for sure, but it's important to keep one thing in perspective: That teen is an outlier. Most people don't eat just four foods.

They eat a variety.

What's more, the fries, chips, bread, and pork didn't cause the teen's blindness directly.

They caused it indirectly—by crowding out other foods needed for good eye health.

What truly matters for good health? Balance.

In other words, you don't want your toaster pastries, spray cheese-like product, and crescent rolls to crowd out veggies, fruit, beans, nuts, fresh meats, seafood, and other nutrient-dense whole foods.

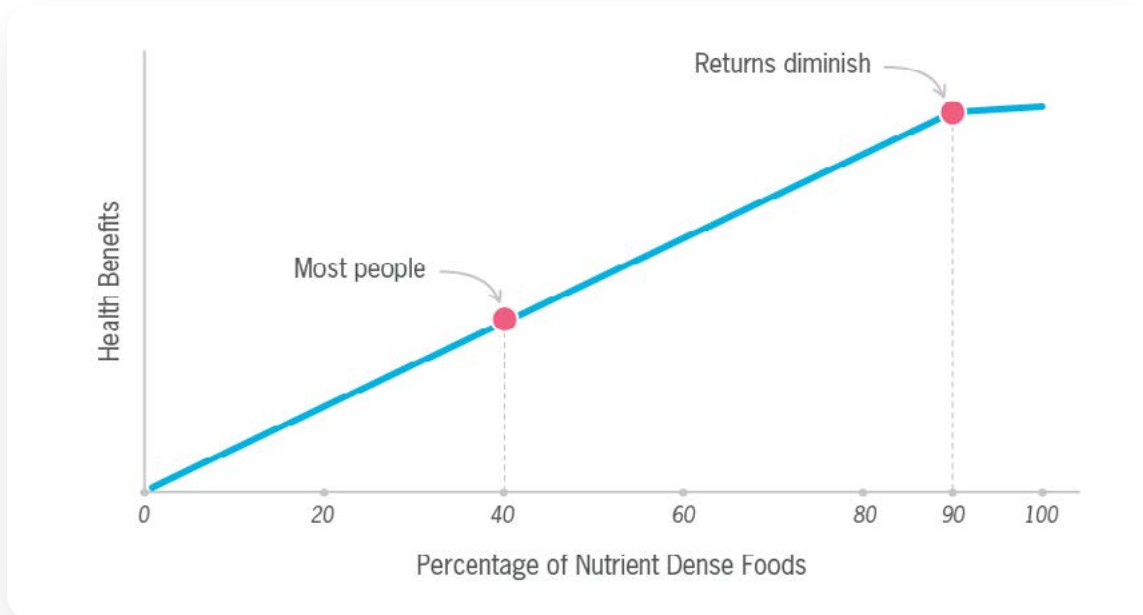
If they do, like the teen we mentioned, you run the risk of deficiency.

So the question is: Are you in balance?

We experience massive benefits (fat loss, improved health) when we go from poor nutrition to average or above average.

But eventually, we see diminishing returns.

As the chart on the next page shows, not only are gains much harder to see after 80 to 90 percent of your diet is composed of whole, minimally-processed foods, you also run the risk of eating disorders like orthorexia (an unhealthy obsession with healthy eating).



Is most (80 to 90 percent) of what you eat nutrient-dense and minimally processed? (Think veggies, fruit, meat, fish, nuts, seeds, beans, lentils, whole grains.) Then there’s likely room for less nutritious foods.

Is most of what you eat highly-processed and nutrient-poor? (Think sweets and chips.) Consider small actions to make your diet just a little bit better. Slowly add more nutrient-dense foods (veggies, fruit, fish, poultry, and so on) to each meal. Use our “What Should I Eat?” infographic, which you can find later in the lesson, for guidance.

Reason #2: No one food is bad for all people in all situations.

To illustrate this point, Precision Nutrition Master Coach Kate Solovieva often brings up cola.

Many people see it as a bad food. Because it's loaded with sugar and lacking in vitamins and minerals.

But is cola bad in all situations?

“Let's say you're visiting a country with no safe drinking water,” says Solovieva. “In that case, cola—with its air-tight seal—is a much better option than water.”

Or, maybe you're sixty sweaty miles into a 100-mile bike race and your blood sugar is so low that you're hallucinating flying pink elephants. In that case, the sugar and caffeine in the cola might make the difference between finishing the race and a DNF.

Our individual physiology and psychology also affect what happens when we eat specific foods.

Added sugar, for example, affects someone with type 2 diabetes differently than it affects someone whose cells are insulin sensitive. And it can affect the same person differently depending on whether they're sleep deprived.

At PN, we talk a lot about deep health—which describes so much more than our weight, cholesterol level, and blood sugar.

Deep health includes where we live and how we feel and who we spend time with. It's about every aspect of who we are.

When you consider health in this light, the exact foods become less important, and the overall eating pattern and full context of someone's life becomes a lot more important.

WHAT'S THE CONTEXT?

Rather than zeroing in on a list of universally “bad” foods, consider the surrounding context.

WHO'S EATING?

The same food can affect one person differently than another, based on a range of physiological and psychological factors.



Level of Fitness



Health



Food Preferences



Allergies and Intolerances



Overall Dietary Pattern



Psychological State



Relationships

WHY ARE THEY EATING?

Different foods can affect the same person differently, depending on the situation.



Mindless Munching



Refueling During/After Intense Exercise



Emotional Stress



Fatigue



Intentional Indulging (Discretionary Calories)

WHAT'S THEIR GOAL?

Certain foods can make it easier or harder to reach certain goals.



Fat Loss



Muscle Gain



More Focus/ Energy



Improve Health



Boost Athletic Performance

Reason #3: Demonizing certain foods can make them even more appealing.

Lots of people tell us that 100 percent abstaining from “bad foods” is the only way they can maintain any smidgen of control around their eating.

If they say “okay” to one “bad” food, they worry they’ll open the floodgates to a diet swollen with cookies, brownies, chips, and fries—as well as devoid of veggies and other whole foods.

Here’s the thing:

There’s a subtle difference between demonizing a food and merely abstaining from it because you know you tend to overeat it.

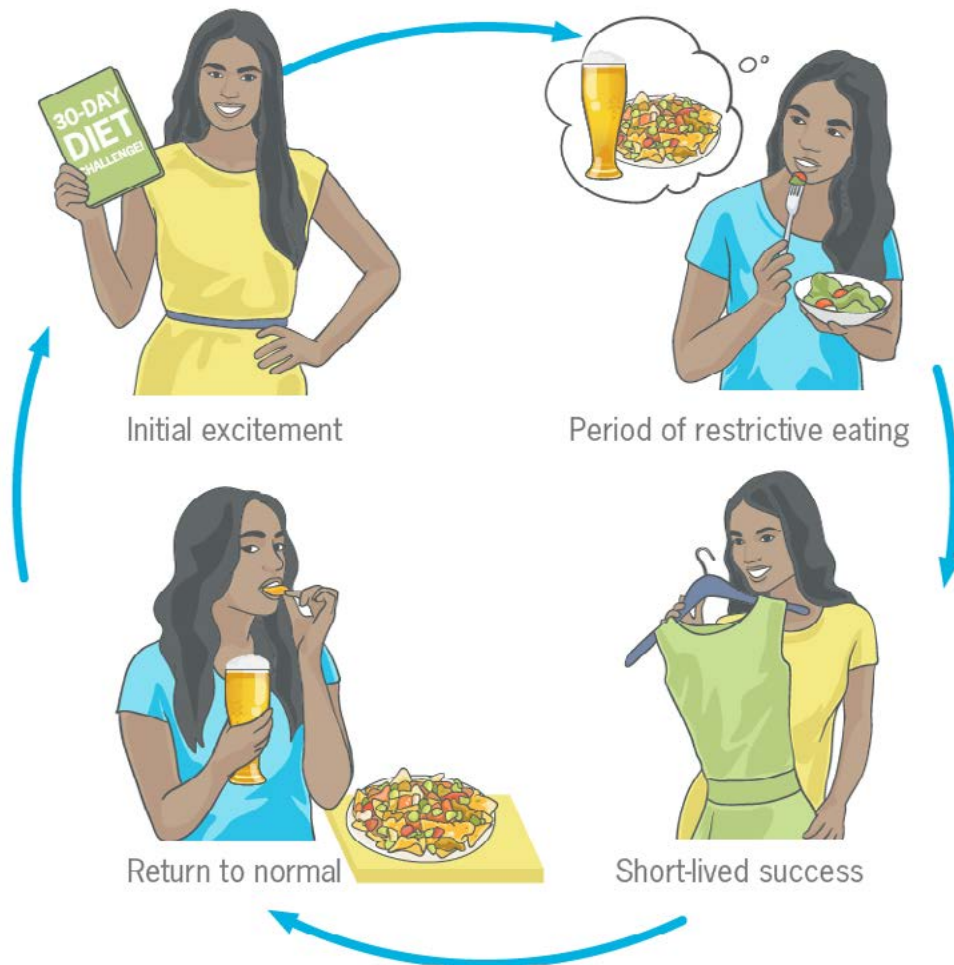
When we demonize foods, we “moralize these foods—thinking of ourselves as bad people for eating them,” says Solovieva.

This paradoxically can increase our desire for the very foods we’re trying not to eat. When researchers from Arizona State University showed dieters negative messages about unhealthy foods, the dieters experienced increased cravings for those foods—and ate more of them.²

It’s true that some people can restrict certain “bad” foods for a while.

But, for a lot of people, cravings eventually overwhelm their ability to restrict. And when they eat something “bad”—they feel guilty. So they eat even more—and may even stop trying to reach their goals. This can create a vicious circle, as the graphic on the next page shows.

THE CHALLENGE CYCLE



Now, let us be clear: For some people, certain foods may not be worth the struggle—at least for now. They may decide that, if they’re around certain foods, they’re going to overeat them. So they get them out of the house.

And that strategy can work. In fact, we encourage our clients to do kitchen makeovers and remove foods they tend to overeat.

But it’s not the same thing as labeling a food as “bad.”

When we label foods “something I tend to overeat” rather than “bad,” we’re better able to relax, remain flexible, and, potentially, grow into someone who can enjoy the same food, in moderation.

Reason #4: Categorizing foods as “good” and “bad” can work—but usually only for a while.

Having coached more than 100,000 clients, we can say with confidence that “all or nothing” rarely gets us “all.”

Instead, it often gets us nothing.

For example, when someone decides to stop eating “bad” foods, usually they try really hard to stay true to their goal. They’re committed, and they even may stick to avoiding a long list of forbidden foods... for a bit.

But then something goes wrong.

Maybe they go to work and find that a coworker left homemade brownies on their desk.

Or every part of their day goes sideways and, in the evening, they find themselves head down in a gallon of chocolate chip cookie dough as they think “This is bad.”

Or they’re driving for hours to visit relatives, pull into a rest stop, and all they find to eat: the stuff on their forbidden foods list.

Rigidity—good or bad, all or nothing—is the enemy of consistency.

But on the flipside, flexibility helps you stay more consistent. That’s because it allows you to lean into all the solutions available to you.

Flexibility also frees people to use internal guidance—rather than someone else’s external rules—to decide what foods to eat, when to eat them, and why.

So, for example, rather than avoiding sugar just because a health site told them to stop eating it, someone might consider:

- ✓ Am I hungry?
- ✓ Am I stressed?
- ✓ Is this food worth it to me?
- ✓ What else have I eaten today?
- ✓ What would allow me to truly enjoy this food—without going overboard?

That internal guidance might allow that person with the brownie to say, “You know, I really like brownies, but I’m going to save this until after lunch, when I’m not as hungry, so I can eat it slowly and truly savor it.”

Or that person who is head down in the gallon of ice cream to say, “Okay, so this was probably more ice cream than my body really needed. True. No getting around that. How can I avoid feeling this triggered in the future? And are there other ways I can comfort myself that don’t involve raiding the freezer?”

And for that person at the rest stop, flexibility allows them to scan their choices and opt for the best meal for them at that moment.

Reason #5: It's really okay—and completely normal—to eat for pleasure.

Food serves many purposes far beyond just flooding someone's body with nutrients and calories.

Some foods aren't necessarily loaded with nutrients, but they:

- ✓ Taste amazing.
- ✓ Connect us with friends and families.
- ✓ Create a sense of belonging.
- ✓ Make celebrations worthwhile.

In other words, food isn't just fuel. It's also love and culture and pleasure—and a whole lot more.

When you think about food in this way, everything—even your grandma's special black forest cake—can have a purpose and a place.

Rather than a list of foods you can or can't eat, you instead have choices. You have foods you choose to eat for energy, for pleasure, for health, and many other important reasons.

Reason #6: When we obsess over “bad foods,” we rob ourselves of the ability to evolve.

Rigidly abstaining can teach us to get really good at... abstaining.

And if you're okay with abstaining from a long list of foods for the rest of your life, there's nothing wrong with that approach.

But if you're not okay with a life sentence of no cookies, no brownies, no cake, no bread, and no pasta, then you may be happy to learn that there's an alternative approach. It involves getting curious about why you struggle to moderate your consumption of certain foods.

Consider:

What leads to feeling out-of-control?

What triggers the “I need this” and the “I can’t stop eating this” thoughts?

When is it possible to eat this food in moderate amounts (if ever)?

When isn’t it?

The point: Rather than zeroing in on “bad foods,” look for the underlying reasons (called triggers) that lead you to struggle.

A trigger can be a:

- ✓ **Feeling.** We might eat more when we’re stressed, lonely, or bored. Food fills the void.
- ✓ **Time of day.** We always have a cookie at 11 am, or a soda at 3 pm. It’s just part of our routine.
- ✓ **Social setting.** Hey, everyone else is having beer and chicken wings, so might as well join the happy hour!
- ✓ **Place.** For some reason, a dark movie theater or our parents’ kitchen might make us want to munch.
- ✓ **Thought pattern.** Thinking “I deserve this” or “Life is too hard to chew kale” might steer us toward the drive-thru window.

To uncover triggers, we often ask our clients to keep a food journal—writing down everything they eat and drink for a week or two. When they find themselves craving or feeling out of control, we ask them to jot down the answers to questions like:

- ✓ What am I feeling?
- ✓ What time is it?

- ✓ Who am I with?
- ✓ Where am I?
- ✓ What thoughts am I having?

They approach it with a “feedback not failure” mentality.

The point isn't to catch them doing something wrong. It's to help them assess what's really going on.

Once we understand why our clients are reaching for these foods, we're better-equipped to suggest actions that truly help them move towards a healthier relationship with all foods.

“If there are no good or bad foods, how can anyone ever know what to eat—and what to limit?”

We hear this a lot.

That's because some people assume that “no bad foods” is synonymous with “all foods are good so eat whatever you want.”

But that's not what we're saying at all.

We are, however, saying this: Rather than sorting food into just two buckets—good and bad—it's usually more helpful for most people to see food as a continuum of eat more, eat some, and eat less.

This might merely sound like another way to sort food into categories.

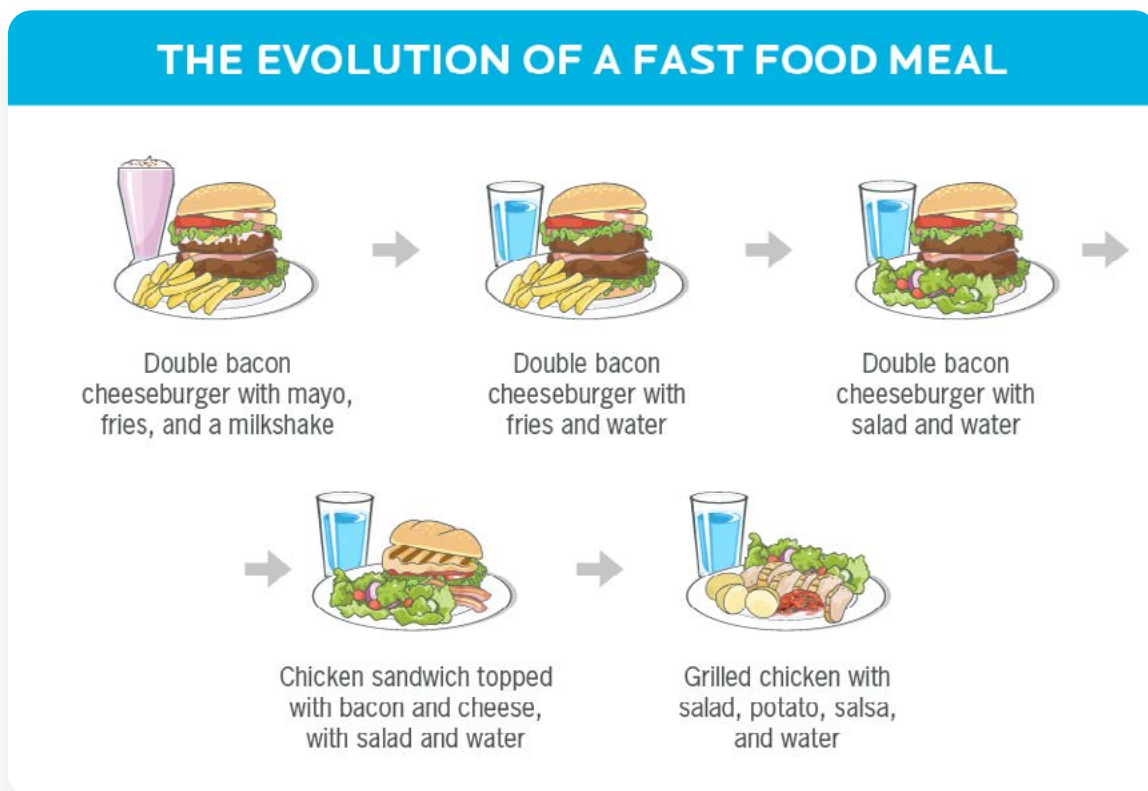
But it's not.

Unlike lists of bad foods, which tend to be universally rigid, a continuum “allows everything to be contextual and personalized,” Precision Nutrition Master Coach Dominic Matteo explains.

“If my goal is muscle gain, my continuum will look different than if my goal is fat loss,” says Matteo.

Once people define that continuum for themselves (more on how to help your clients do so later in this lesson), we then work with them to find ways to include more “eat more” foods and fewer “eat less” foods, aiming to make each meal just a little bit better.

For example, before Matteo became a Precision Nutrition Master Coach, he was a client who wanted to lose fat. This is how “just a little bit better” looked like for him for a specific fast food lunch.



He eventually ended up in a similar place that some forbidden foods lists may have sent him, but he did it in small steps, and in a way that was ultimately more sustainable.

What’s more, it didn’t mean he could never have a double bacon cheeseburger again. Sometimes he does, but he enjoys it—on his terms.

“My client believes in bad foods—as if they were a religion. Help!”

Saying, “there are no bad foods” usually results in a blank stare.

So, pretend you don’t know the answers, says Kate Solovieva.

Assume a poker face, and ask questions that seem obvious.

What follows is a conversation Solovieva had with a client about this very topic.

Client: *Bad foods are my problem. I need to cut them out. I just can’t eat them.*

Coach: So, can you tell me a little bit more. When you talk about cutting out the bad foods, what does that look like?

Client: *Taking sugar out of my diet.*

Coach: So when you say sugar, what are some of the things you are thinking of?

Client: *Cookies. Pastries. Chocolate—chocolate is my weakness.*

Coach: So... you really enjoy chocolate?

Client: *I do.*

Coach: Help me understand. What is it that you enjoy?

Client: *I don't know if it's the rush of eating the chocolate bar itself. Or maybe it's the fact that I don't have it all the time. I don't know. There's something about chocolate.*

Coach: So, in some ways, it makes you feel super good. And it obviously gives you pleasure. What makes you label it as bad?

Client: *It's the high-calorie count and the amount—the portion.*

Coach: So the number of calories makes it bad? Can you explain?

Client: *Well, for me, it leads to weight gain.*

Coach: So what I am hearing is that it's not the chocolate that's bad. It's the weight gain that's bad. Is that right?

Client: *Pretty much. Exactly.*

Coach: So I'm curious about something you said. You love chocolate. You enjoy it. You like the taste of it. When I asked why it's bad, you told me about the calories and the portions. Can you tell me more?

Client: *Well, I can't just have one or two squares. Ideally I should have no more than five squares—half a bar. But I don't have that control. The moment I taste it, I have to have more and more and more.*

Coach: So what happens when you don't have chocolate at all?

Client: *I've gone months without it. And it's great! But then I end up eating it—like on a special occasion. And then I binge. And then everything goes downhill. So I'm better off not having it at all.*

Coach: What do you think would happen if you had a little bit... everyday? Like on purpose.

Client: *I don't know... I don't think I have that control. Should I try that?*

Coach: I don't know. Should you?

Client: *(Sounding tentative) Sure, maybe I can try that?*

Coach: Well, what I am hearing is that you enjoy it. And it sounds like the bingeing behavior is happening because you don't have it every day. So maybe you can try this as an experiment. Maybe you see what happens if, every single day, you have this thing that you enjoy. And when you eat it, if you want more, you can just remind yourself that you can have more—tomorrow. Are you with me?

Client: Yes.

Coach: It's a scary experiment. But if you decide to give it a shot, let me know, okay?

Client: *Okay, I will. I'm kinda nervous about it, but I will try it.*

And then the conversation can go on to define the experiment: How much chocolate? What time of day? How will you eat it?

And no matter what the client ultimately does—whether the client tries the suggestion or not—“you’re in a position for them to come back to you without feeling judged,” Solovieva says.

“Isn’t it just easier to not eat certain foods?”

For some people in some situations at certain points in their journey: yes.

But this need to abstain doesn’t have to be a permanent situation. Once they develop a range of habits, many people can shift from abstaining from certain foods to moderating them.

That’s why we like to ask our clients to consider two questions about the foods they think of as bad:

What does this food do—for you?

What would you like it to do?

For example, maybe, right now, certain foods make you feel out of control because you struggle to stop eating them once you start. But you’d like them to merely become foods you enjoy in moderation.

What are all of the possible ways of going from point A (out of control) to point B (something I enjoy in moderation)?

11 STRATEGIES FOR TRIGGER FOODS



Buy sweets, but only in individual servings.



Keep trigger foods out of the house (out of sight, out of mind).



Focus on addition—eating more veggies—rather than subtraction (eating fewer sweets).



Eat slowly, with no distractions, while paying attention to your sensations of hunger and fullness, your enjoyment, and your thoughts.



Indulge after you've comforted yourself in other ways—such as cuddling with your puppy, resting under a weighted blanket, or ranting in your journal.



Study your relationship with certain foods. Whenever you find yourself wanting them, notice your craving, name it, and investigate why you're feeling that way.



Eat it every single day—as an experiment—to see how it affects your cravings.



Abstain for a while—as an experiment—and see how it affects your cravings.



Change your routine to avoid situations (sights, smells, peer pressure) that tend to increase your cravings.



Solve lifestyle factors (lack of sleep, lack of exercise, lack of protein) that could be bolstering cravings.



Change your language from “that’s bad” to “that makes it harder for me to achieve my goals” or “I tend to overeat that.”

There are dozens of other possibilities that we didn't even list on the chart on the previous page. You might try one with a client. You might try several. You might try all of them.

The point: You may find that liberating yourself from the good vs. bad mindset frees you—and your clients—to see more possibilities than ever before.

And, along the way, you may also discover that this broader, more flexible mindset allows people to not only enjoy every meal a heck of a lot more—but also to reach their goals more quickly.

References

- 1 Harrison R, Warburton V, Lux A, Atan D. [Blindness Caused by a Junk Food Diet](http://dx.doi.org/10.7326/L19-0361). Ann Intern Med [Internet]. 2019 Sep 3; Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7326/L19-0361>
- 2 Pham N, Mandel N, Morales AC. [Messages from the Food Police: How Food-Related Warnings Backfire among Dieters](#). Journal of the Association for Consumer Research. 2016 Jan 1;1(1):175–90.



PART 2

‘What should I eat?!’ Our 3-step guide for choosing the best foods for your body.

This easy-to-use visual guide shows you how to make healthier nutrition choices—
with nothing off-limits.

By Brian St. Pierre, MS, RD, CSCS

“What foods should I eat?”

It’s a question we hear often. Sometimes in desperation.

Not because of the easy choices—spinach, duh!—but because of the not-so-obvious ones that cause confusion.

Foods that have been demonized then celebrated. Or celebrated then demonized. Or that come in so many forms it feels impossible to know the best choice.

Over and over, we’re asked:

- ✓ Are potatoes good or bad?
- ✓ What about eggs?
- ✓ Can I eat pasta?
- ✓ Is cheese okay?
- ✓ Do I have to live without bacon?

To add to the confusion, it’s not always obvious how to classify a food. Is it mostly protein? A carbohydrate? A fat? Many people know to eat a mix of these macronutrients, yet aren’t sure how that looks in “real food.” The result: more questions.

That’s why we created this handy, visual food guide. It’s designed to help your clients make healthier choices, no matter their knowledge of food and nutrition.

But as we just covered, don’t expect a list of “approved” and “off-limits” foods.

Instead, as you saw earlier in this lesson, we like to think of foods on a spectrum from “eat more” to “eat some” to “eat less.”

This approach promotes one of the most crucial philosophies that runs through our nutrition coaching method: Progress, not perfection.

Use our continuums to make choices that are “just a little bit better,” whether you’re eating at home, dining out with friends, or dealing with banquet buffets on a work trip.

Plus, learn how to:

- ✓ **Incorporate a mix of proteins, vegetables, carbohydrates, and fat.**
- ✓ **Strategically improve your food choices—based on where you are right now—to feel, move, and look better.**
- ✓ **Customize your intake for your individual lifestyle and (of course) taste buds.**

As a bonus, we’ve even provided you space to create your own personal continuum. That way, you can build a delicious menu of healthy foods that are right for you—no questions asked.

WHAT SHOULD I EAT?!

OUR 3-STEP GUIDE FOR CHOOSING THE BEST FOODS FOR YOUR BODY





















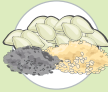















This easy-to-use chart shows you how to make healthier nutrition choices for achieving your goals, while still enjoying the foods you love.

1

KNOW YOUR FOODS

Nutritional value varies, but don't think of food as "good" or "bad". Seeing it on a spectrum from "eat more" to "eat less" helps you make better choices without branding anything off-limits.

EAT MORE

PROTEIN	CARBS	FATS
 Eggs and egg whites	 Beans and lentils	 Extra virgin olive oil
 Fish	 Steel-cut, rolled, and old-fashioned oats	 Walnut oil
 Shellfish	 Buckwheat	 Marinades and dressings with oils in this category
 Chicken	 Quinoa	 Avocado and avocado oil
 Duck breast and thighs	 Whole-grain, black, and wild rice	 Cheese, aged > 6 months
 Turkey	 Sorghum	 Egg yolks
 Lean beef	 Farro	 Seeds: chia, flax, hemp, pumpkin and sesame
 Bison	 Millet	 Cashews
 Lamb	 Potatoes	 Pistachios
 Pork	 Amaranth	 Almonds
 Wild game	 Plain non-Greek yogurt	 Brazil nuts
 Other meats goat, camel, kangaroo, crocodile, horse	 Plain kefir	 Pecans

 <p>Plain Greek yogurt Cultured cottage cheese Tempeh</p> <p>Lentils and beans These are protein for plant-based eaters and meatless meals, otherwise, they're considered sources of carbohydrates.</p> <p>Insects</p>	 <p>Fresh and frozen fruit Corn Barley</p> <p>Sweet potatoes Taro Yuca</p> <p>Whole or sprouted grain bagels, breads, English muffins, pastas, and wraps</p>	 <p>Peanuts & natural peanut butter Olives Pesto made with extra virgin olive oil</p> <p>Nut butters from other nuts in this category Fresh unprocessed coconut</p>
<p>Prioritize fresh, lean, minimally processed sources of protein, and consider limiting red meat to ~18oz (or 4 palms) per week or less.</p>	<p>Focus on whole, minimally processed sources of carbohydrates that pack lots of nutrition and fiber, and include a mix of starches and colorful fruits.</p>	<p>Aim for a mix of whole-food fats (like nuts and seeds), blended whole foods (like nut butters), and pressed oils (like olive and avocado).</p>
<h1>EAT SOME</h1>		
<h2>PROTEIN</h2>	<h2>CARBS</h2>	<h2>FATS</h2>
 <p>Uncultured cottage cheese Medium-lean meats</p> <p>Tofu Edamame</p> <p>Canadian bacon Meat jerky</p> <p>Poultry sausage Minimally processed lean deli meat</p> <p>Protein powders</p>	 <p>Couscous White rice Granola</p> <p>Instant or flavored oats Milk Vegetable juices</p> <p>Flavored yogurt Flavored kefir Pancakes and waffles</p> <p>Whole-grain crackers Oat-based granola bars Canned, dried, and pureed unsweetened fruit</p> <p>White bagels, breads, English muffins, pastas, and wraps</p>	 <p>Virgin and light olive oil Expeller pressed canola oil Sesame oil Flaxseed oil</p> <p>Coconut oil / milk Peanut oil and regular peanut butter Dark chocolate Marinades and dressings with oils in this category</p> <p>Fish and algae oil Cream Cheese aged <6 months Flavored nuts and nut butters</p> <p>Trail mix</p> <p>Often rich in carbohydrates as well, with sources of varying quality.</p> <p>High oleic safflower oil High oleic sunflower oil</p> <p>These naturally-bred oils are high in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats and contain little saturated fats and no trans fats.</p>

EAT LESS

PROTEIN



Fried meats



Chicken fingers, nuggets, and wings



High fat ground meat



High-fat sausages



Processed soy



Processed deli meats



Protein bars



Pepperoni sticks



High-mercury fish

CARBS



Cereal bars



Fruit juices



Flavored milk



Honey, molasses, syrups, & jellies



Canned, dried, and pureed fruit with added sugar



Sugar



Soda



Crackers



Pretzels



Foods with 10+g added sugar



Chips



Fries



Candy bars



Donuts



Cookies



Pastries



Muffins



Cakes

These foods are also rich sources of fats, so be mindful of both their carbohydrate and fat content.

FATS



Bacon



Sausage

Also sources of protein, though usually higher in less desirable fats.



Butter



Margarine



Processed cheese



Corn oil



Cottonseed oil



Sunflower oil



Canola oil



Soybean oil



Safflower oil



Marinades and dressings with oils in this category



Vegetable oil



Fat-rich foods with 10+ g added sugar



Hydrogenated oils and trans fats



Shortening



Alcohol

Alcohol is a distinct macronutrient with unique risks and benefits. But if you're being mindful of energy balance, we recommend including it in the "eat less" carb category, and tracking your intake (e.g. '6 carb portions today; 4 from food, 2 from beer'). This helps you align alcohol consumption with your health and fitness goals.

Wondering about portions? Check out www.precisionnutrition.com/calorie-control-guide-infographic

VEGETABLES

Veggies of varying colors provide different nutrients and health benefits.
So make it a point to "eat the rainbow"!



Eating a variety of colorful fruit and starchy vegetables (like potatoes) also helps you “eat the rainbow”, though these foods live in the carbohydrate category.

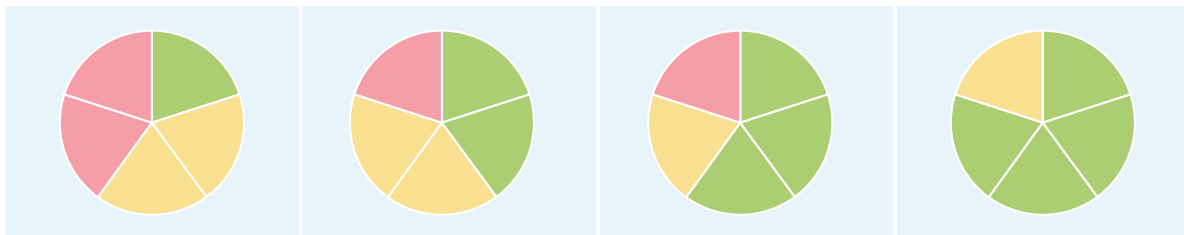
Not a veggie lover? Add herbs, spices, and aromatics, which enhance flavor and provide additional health benefits. To learn how, check out www.precisionnutrition.com/create-the-perfect-meal-infographic and www.precisionnutrition.com/dont-like-vegetables-infographic

2

BASE FOOD CHOICES ON YOUR GOALS

The proportions of your food intake that come from the "eat more", "eat some", and "eat less" categories will depend on how you eat now, and what your goals are.

● "eat more" ● "eat some" ● "eat less"



THESE PROPORTIONS MAY WORK FOR YOU IF...

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you want to generally improve your health. • you're new to exercise or exercise moderately. • you want to look, feel, and perform better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you want to significantly improve your health. • you exercise moderately, or are training for an event like a half-marathon or obstacle course. • you want to look, feel, and perform a little better than average. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you want to significantly improve your health, or maintain a high degree of health. • you are training for a major athletic event like a marathon or ultramarathon. • you want above-average body composition, athletic performance, and/or recovery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you love eating this way. (This routine won't make you much healthier.) • you're preparing for a bodybuilding, physique, or elite athletic competition. • you are paid for your body's looks or performance.
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3

ADJUST FOR YOUR PREFERENCES AND LIFESTYLE

Your "eat more", "eat some", and "eat less" list is unique to you and may evolve as your goals, likes, and dislikes shift over time. Use the table below to note your preferred foods.

CREATE YOUR OWN SPECTRUM

PROTEIN	CARBS	FATS	VEGGIES
Green foods I like or want to try:	Green foods I like or want to try:	Green foods I like or want to try:	Red, orange and yellow veggies:
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
Yellow foods I want to incorporate:	Yellow foods I want to incorporate:	Yellow foods I want to incorporate:	Green, blue and purple veggies:
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
Red foods I want to indulge in:	Red foods I want to indulge in:	Red foods I want to indulge in:	White veggies:
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2

HOW TO ADD FOODS TO THE SPECTRUM

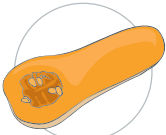
At some point, you're going to want to eat foods that aren't on our spectrums. Here's how to categorize them.

FIRST, FIGURE OUT THE MACRO CATEGORY:



- **Which macronutrient delivers the majority of the calories?**

Classifying a food as the macronutrient that delivers the most calories is generally a safe bet.



- **Which eating style do you follow?**

For example, with most approaches, butternut squash would count as a veggie. For someone eating low-carb or keto, it might be a source of carbohydrates.



- **How is this food commonly eaten?**

Perhaps as a protein, starchy side, or fat-rich topping?

NOW, DETERMINE ITS PLACE ON THE SPECTRUM:

How close is it to a whole food?

Generally, the more processed a food, the further it moves toward "eat less".



REMEMBER, YOU'RE THE BOSS

We've given you some ideas to get started. But YOU know best what works for you. Sustainable nutrition always prioritizes:

- ✓ the foods and flavors you truly enjoy,
- ✓ the things you know how to cook or prep,
- ✓ and the portions that make sense for YOU.



For the full article explaining this infographic, visit:
www.precisionnutrition.com/what-should-i-eat-infographic





PART 3

‘What should I drink?!’ Your complete guide to liquid nutrition.

The uncomplicated answer to every question you’ve ever had about what to drink.

By Brian St. Pierre, MS, RD, CSCS

“I’m not allowed to drink anything!”

Ever feel that way?

When it comes to improving our nutrition, many of us have been told, quite matter-of-factly: Cut out liquid calories.

No soda. No juice. No alcohol. (Oh, and no fun!)

This well-meaning advice is at least partially justified.

Most drinks don’t make us feel full, yet they compose about 20 percent of the average person’s daily calorie intake.

Yanking them out of your diet makes for a simple solution. The problem: It’s often not a welcome one.

That’s because it instantly limits your choices to water, unsweetened tea and coffee, and zero-calorie diet drinks. For some, this can lead to serious feelings of dietary deprivation and make it harder to practice healthy nutrition habits.

Thankfully, there’s another option.

Instead of making certain drinks entirely off-limits, think of all beverages on a continuum, from “drink more” to “drink some” to “drink less.” (You’ll recognize this approach from our food infographic above.)

Here’s what to do:

Look at our continuum, and ask yourself: ‘How might I do just a little better?’

For example, if you’re drinking four regular sodas a day (“drink less”), maybe you swap one of those for a diet soda (“drink some”). Then gradually, you continue to make adjustments, exchanging some of your regular and diet sodas for carbonated water (“drink more”).

This is how you make lasting change.

But it's just the start of what this infographic has to offer. You (and your clients) can use it to:

- ✓ Strategically improve your drink choices (without a rapid overhaul).
- ✓ Customize your beverage intake for your lifestyle and preferences.
- ✓ Create your own personal continuum and expand your drink list.

All so you can work towards better nutrition, while still enjoying the drinks you really love. (Including milkshakes and jalapeño margaritas.)

WHAT SHOULD I DRINK?!

YOUR GUIDE TO LIQUID NUTRITION

Use this handy chart to make better beverage choices and develop healthy drinking habits—no matter what your starting point.

1

KNOW YOUR BEVERAGES

No need to label any drinks “off limits,” but nutritional value does vary. Here’s how different beverages stack up, and why you may want to drink some more often than others.

DRINK MORE

DRINK SOME

DRINK LESS

PLAIN WATER

DRINK MORE



Spring water



Tap water



Alkaline water



Distilled water



Filtered water



Reverse osmosis water

“Eight glasses of water a day” isn’t supported by scientific evidence, but it’s still a reasonably good rule of thumb. Get a healthy amount of water by:

- Drinking when you’re thirsty
- Sipping, not guzzling
- Having a glass or two of water with meals
- Remembering that all types of water (plain, sweetened, carbonated) count towards your water intake

All plain water is good for you, but filtering water removes substances that could negatively impact health, such as heavy metals, radon, pesticides, and microplastics.

SWEETENED BEVERAGES

DRINK MORE ← DRINK SOME ← DRINK LESS



Infused water



Naturally flavored water



Vegetable juice



Artificially sweetened water



Fruit juice



Juice drinks

Try adding berries, citrus fruits, herbs, and/or ginger to your water to infuse it with natural flavor.

Vegetable juice is fine in small amounts, but eating whole vegetables is preferable because they contain more nutrients and fiber, and are more filling.

It's okay to drink some fruit juice, but it's likely best to limit to less than 1 glass per day, since it contains more sugar, less fiber, and less nutrients than whole fruit.

CARBONATED BEVERAGES

DRINK MORE ← DRINK SOME ← DRINK LESS



Carbonated water, unsweetened



Carbonated water, naturally flavored



Diet soda



Carbonated water, artificially sweetened



Energy drinks, artificially sweetened



Soda (pop)



Tonic water



Energy drinks, sweetened

Carbonated and infused waters are generally quite healthy, but their lower pH levels may be harmful to tooth enamel when consistently consumed in large amounts. Up to 16 ounces (500 ml)/day of carbonated beverages is a reasonable benchmark.

Beverages with artificial and low-calorie sweeteners are fine to consume in moderate amounts (around 8-16 ounces/day).

Research shows that consuming 3-5 mg/kg body weight of caffeine 30-60 minutes before exercise can improve athletic performance. But use wisely: This amount can also cause jitteriness.

Soda and sweetened energy drinks contribute more sugar to the average diet than any other food or drinks. If you're drinking a lot from this category, make progressing towards "drink some" a priority.

Did you know that tonic water has roughly as much sugar as soda?!

TEA & COFFEE



Tea contains a host of health-promoting substances.

Black tea: Rich in theaflavins and thearubigins; strongly associated with decreased stroke risk

Green tea: Rich in catechins (especially EGCG) and may lower your risk of several cancers

White tea: The least processed type of tea, so it retains the most antioxidants

Herbal teas: Caffeine-free, packed with antioxidants, and available in a variety of natural flavors

<p>Benefits of coffee: ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caffeine may boost alertness, physical performance, and reaction time • Regular drinkers may have lower risk of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's • Contains antioxidants and is associated with overall decreased risk of cancer 	<p>Downsides of coffee: —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Slow metabolizers" of caffeine may experience increased blood pressure, disrupted sleep, or worse PMS symptoms • Too much caffeine can stimulate anxiety and disrupt sleep
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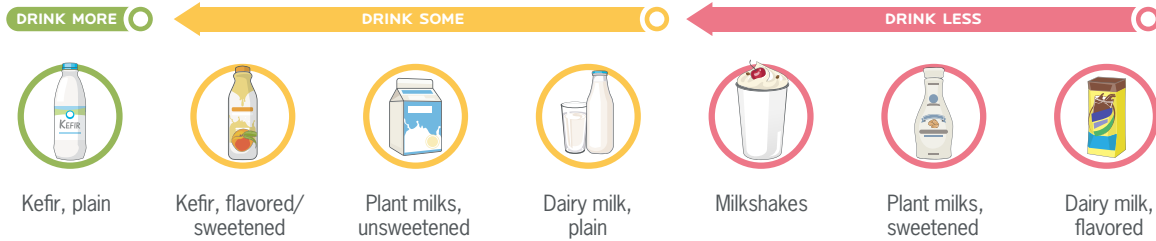
When you drink caffeinated coffee or tea:

- Limit total consumption of the two to 5 cups/40 ounces (1200 ml) per day.
- Ask yourself how you feel physically, mentally, and emotionally a few hours afterwards... as well as if you miss your daily dose.

Go plain if possible. Cream, sugar, and other additives reduce potential health benefits by adding calories and artificial sweeteners and flavors. **"Plain" doesn't have to be boring, though. There are still plenty of "drink more" options.**

The grid contains 20 icons arranged in two rows of ten. The first row includes: Drip coffee, Pour over, French press, Americano, Espresso, Cold brew, Iced coffee, Instant coffee, Yerba Mate, and Matcha tea. The second row includes: Iced tea, Black tea, Oolong tea, Green tea, White tea, Kombucha, Tulsi tea, Rooibos tea, Chamomile tea, and Peppermint tea.

DAIRY & PLANT MILKS



Fermented drinks (like kefir and kombucha) contain probiotics and other bioactive compounds, which may improve your digestion and nutrient absorption.

If environmental sustainability is your top priority, categorize dairy milk and resource-intensive plant milks as “drink less.”

If you're struggling to gain lean mass or are very active, it may be beneficial to place sweetened milks in the “drink some” category.

When it comes to plant milks, choose unsweetened when possible. **For variety, consider trying:**

RECOVERY & PERFORMANCE DRINKS



Limit Super Shakes to one or two daily. Otherwise, they start to displace solid meals. Never heard of a Super Shake? Check out <https://www.precisionnutrition.com/super-shake-creation-infographic>

Coconut water can be a fine recovery drink after lots of perspiration, but it does contain calories and sugar. Look for versions without added sugar.

Consider sports drinks in the “drink some” category during training or even the “drink more” category during competition.

ALCOHOL

DRINK LESS



Beer
5% alcohol
1 serving = 12 ounces



Wine
12% alcohol
1 serving = 5 ounces



Fortified wine (sherry, port)
18% alcohol
1 serving = 3 ounces



Hard liquor
40% alcohol
1 serving = 1.5 ounces

The truth: No one knows whether drinking any amount of alcohol is actually good for us. And too much alcohol is absolutely harmful.

Here's how to play it safe:

- Drink alcohol moderately.
- If you don't already drink alcohol, don't start.
- Try going without alcohol for two weeks. If you can't, you may not be drinking in moderation.

What does "drinking moderately" mean?

	Women	Men
Drinks per week	Up to 7	Up to 14
Maximum drinks/day	3	4

To learn more about alcohol, check out <https://www.precisionnutrition.com/quit-drinking>

2

CHOOSE DRINKS BASED ON YOUR GOALS

The amount you drink from each section will depend on what you drink now, and what your goals are. Aim to get a little bit better; you don't have to do a complete overhaul.

● "drink more" ● "drink some" ● "drink less"



THESE PROPORTIONS MAY WORK FOR YOU IF...

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of your drinks currently fall into the red category • You're new to exercise or exercise moderately • You want to look, feel, and perform better than you do now | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of your drinks currently fall into the red and yellow categories • You exercise moderately or are training for an event like a half-marathon • You want to look, feel, and perform a little better than average | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of your drinks currently fall into the yellow and green categories • You're training for a major athletic event, like an ultramarathon • You want above-average health, body composition, or athletic performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of your drinks currently fall into the green and yellow categories • You're preparing for a bodybuilding or elite athletic competition • You're paid for your body's looks or performance |
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|---|--|--|---|

HOW TO ADD BEVERAGES TO THE SPECTRUM

At some point, you're going to want to drink something that isn't on our lists. Or move drinks around to better suit your needs. (For example, you're an athlete who needs to consume sports drinks more often.) Here's how to decide where they fit.

FIRST, CONSIDER HOW IT HELPS YOU REACH YOUR GOALS. WILL THIS DRINK:



Make your body, performance, and/or recovery better?

OR



Make your body, performance, and/or recovery worse?

THEN, ASK:



How processed is this drink?



Does it have added sugar or fat?
Or artificial sweeteners?



How do I feel mentally and physically when I drink this beverage?

WITH THIS INFORMATION, DETERMINE ITS PLACE ON THE SPECTRUM.

IT'S ALL RELATIVE

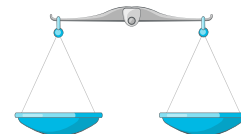
Remember, just because a drink falls in the red or yellow sections doesn't mean it's forbidden.



Make drink choices based on your goals and current habits.



Don't worry about completely revamping drinking habits overnight.



Find a balance that works for you.

For the full article explaining this infographic, visit:
www.precisionnutrition.com/what-should-i-drink-infographic



Discover how to help anyone make better food choices—starting now.

If your career path includes coaching people to make lasting change, check out the #1 rated Precision Nutrition Level 1 Certification. It's the most respected nutrition and lifestyle coaching education program in the world—and the next group kicks off soon.

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