

Low Carb Breading for Fish or Chicken



I'll state at the outset that I'm not a fish lover nor am I'm much of a seafood lover in general. Apart from shrimp and a can of tuna now and then, I get along quite well without the stuff. However, I know intuitively, and I'm constantly reminded from various sources, that fish is not only a healthy source of protein, but certain cold water types such as salmon, cod, and mackerel are great sources for the much vaunted omega-3 fatty acid.

Of those three varieties of cold water fish, I'm willing to make an exception for salmon, but only if it's thoroughly spiced and/or drenched in some kind of sauce. Can't have any of that fishy taste getting through! Below is a hilarious discussion by Jim Gaffigan with David Letterman on how much he hates fish and seafood in general. **Warning:** if you love clams and oysters, you probably should watch with caution!

In order to cover my fatty acid bases, I try to get a somewhat balanced ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids. I attempt to achieve this by simultaneously reducing my omega-6 consumption while increasing omega-3 consumption via supplements, from plant sources, as well as from occasionally eating salmon or canned tuna.

But the main reason I attempt to work fish into my diet is to add some variety beyond just eating chicken and ground beef for dinner every night. There are only so many bunless burgers and variations of baked chicken someone eating low-carb can manage – both gastronomically as well as emotionally.

Without too much of a stretch, I think it's safe to say that the most popular preparation method for fish, in terms of

taste and texture, is to bread and fry it.



Sushi, a dark place I don't go.

A close second would be sushi, but sushi restaurants aren't typically on my culinary itinerary. There are breaded and fried fish fillets of all kinds and in fact, there is an entire group of fish that are termed "pan fish" after this particular cooking method. Sunfish, bluegills, and perch are all pan fish. Catfish and any other white fish including, the ever-present tilapia (trash fish), can be breaded and fried up in a pan of hot grease. However, my preferred variety of fish to fry these days is flounder.

The suggested (healthy) cooking methods for all sorts of food, going back several decades, have been to eschew frying for: baking, poaching, grilling, and any other method, including raw consumption, to reduce the fat content of the dish. As we've come to find out over time, this across the board fear of fat has been unwarranted. Now that's not to say that heavily-battered, deep-fried, low-quality such as fish and chips is in any way close to a healthy meal. However, I won't deny that it is indeed a delicious indulgence and is wonderfully complemented by a pint or two.

The challenge I've been faced with is to prepare a fried flounder fillet using a low-carb or at the very least, lower-carb breading, and then fry it in healthy fats. The frying

part was quickly and easily solved. The breading part is one that continues to challenge/vex low-carb cooks the world over and though there is certainly no shortage of ingredients that can be substituted for refined white flour, cornstarch, and breadcrumbs, most come up short in the texture and taste department and usually both. Below are just a few off the top of my head:

- Almond flour
- Coconut flour
- Crushed pork rinds
- Parmesan cheese
- Ground cauliflower (I think)

I haven't managed to work my way through the relatively short list above, but have tried almond flour, pork rinds, and Parmesan cheese, singly and in combination. As far as pork rinds, I suppose I'm too much of a food snob to take them seriously and it was a long time before out of desperation for flour-based breading substitute that I relented and gave them a try. Yuck! No offense to pork rind lovers, and I know there a many out there, but they don't work for me.

I've found Parmesan cheese to be a very effective coating for chicken, but only when baked. I've combined it with almond flour with very disappointing results. I'm curious about coconut flour as it's something I've never tried, but at the point more interested in using it for baking. Cauliflower is something I've only recently acquired a taste for, but prefer it as nature intended it to be consumed: as a vegetable side dish, though the riced cauliflower as a substitute for white rice in stirfrys and even the pizza crust made from cauliflower look interesting, though much more work than smearing sauce on a low-carb tortilla.



Just say no to flakes!

To date, the most acceptable substitute for white flour that I've found is almond flour, but let's not kid ourselves, it's nothing more than ground up almond nuts without a trace of gluten to be found. Not containing gluten along with having much lower starch content would ordinarily be a good thing – at least from a nutritional standpoint if you're eating low-carb or are gluten-sensitive. However, it doesn't lend itself well to either baking or using it for breading.



Just say no to wasting a precious egg!

The stickiness of gluten makes for better behavior in both cases. I've found that mixing almond flour with some other non-flour ingredient such as cheese or other nut flour doesn't work too well as a meat or fish breading even when using an egg dip. An egg dip makes breading such as bread crumbs or cornflakes adhere better, but isn't necessary when using

flours. It makes for a sticky mess and is also a waste of a completely good egg!

I found that almond flour on its own or in combination does not adhere very well to what it's supposed to be coating. It would crisp up nicely in the frying pan only to flake off and burn up in the hot oil. The purpose of a breading is to seal in the natural juices of the meat or fish and provide a crispy outer shell. Think Southern fried chicken... or perhaps you shouldn't.



Not abstract art.

Again, I've been forced to settle for another "[Nutritional Compromise](#)" and use a scant amount of refined white flour to leverage the cooking benefits it provides while subjecting myself to some of its not so nice nutritional qualities. In the end, the relatively small amount of white flour used – less than 1 Tbsp – hasn't seemed to have had a negative impact on either my weight, digestive system, or level of carb cravings.

Of course, I'm well aware that this particular compromise is unworkable for those with a sensitivity to gluten as any amount usually causes issues and it may be problematic for those eating a strict ketogenic diet, though I'm willing to bet that even those folks could probably tolerate it and not

find themselves thrown out of ketosis. The very minimal amount of white flour shouldn't cause problems. If you can tolerate low-carb items containing wheat, such as tortillas, then this is in the same category.

Fried Flounder Recipe

By way of example, here's a recipe for fried flounder that uses the tweaked breading ingredients. I've come to enjoy this recipe so much that I now have it once a week for dinner to break up the monotony of chicken and hamburger. I use a preparation step to reduce the fish taste of the founder. How and if this technique actually works I have no idea. It's an old school trick and seems to work for me – at least psychologically. As a final “de-fishification” step, I squeeze fresh lemon juice over the fillet. I need all the help I can get in order to eat fish!

Nutritional Information:

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2 Tbsp (1g)	
Servings Per Container 1	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 68	Calories from Fat 31.5
% Daily Values*	
Total Fat 3.5g	5%
Saturated Fat 0.25g	1%
Trans Fat 0g	
Sodium 0.2mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 7.5g	3%
Dietary Fiber 0.8g	3%
Sugars 0.25g	
Protein 2.3g	5%
<small>*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.</small>	

Breading Nutrition Label

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 4 oz	
Servings Per Container 1	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 156	Calories from Fat 50.4
% Daily Values*	
Total Fat 5.6g	9%
Saturated Fat 0.3g	2%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 52mg	17%
Sodium 95.2mg	4%
Total Carbohydrate 9.9g	3%
Dietary Fiber 0.8g	3%
Sugars 1.05g	
Protein 17.4g	35%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Fried Flounder Nutrition Label

Ingredients:

- 1 medium flounder fillet
- 1 Tbsp butter
- 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 small lemon
- dried parsley flakes

For the Breading:

- 1/4c milk
- 1 Tbsp white flour
- 1 Tbsp almond flour
- dash ground black pepper
- dash garlic powder
- dash paprika

Directions:

1. Soak fish in a small bowl of milk for at least 15 minutes.



2. Thoroughly mix breading ingredients on a plate.
3. Heat non-stick skillet and add butter and EV00.



4. Carefully remove fish from milk and gently squeeze out excess milk. Don't want fish too moist.
5. Dredge both sides of fillet through breading mixture. Use a metal soup spoon to distribute mixture on fillet.
6. Fry fillet in oil until crispy brown on both sides – about 4 minutes per side.
7. Sprinkle ground black pepper and dried parsley flakes on fillet and let cook a few more seconds.



8. Remove fillet from pan onto serving dish. Squeeze juice from lemon over fillet.

Photo Credits (morguefile.com):

- *Sushi: priyanphoenix*
- *Flakes: dhester*
- *Eggs: Scarletina*

Pros and Cons of Low Carb Diets – Part 1



The topic of the risks and benefits of low-carb diets will probably turn into a series of posts. It's a big topic requiring some degree of analysis and contemplation. To kick off the series, I'll begin with a single post on the pros of low-carb eating. I think the cons will need to be broken out into at least two. Hey, might as well start out by saying a few nice things about one

of my favorite ways of eating before digging into it's risks when over-zealously embraced and promoted.

Before we begin, it's important to define some parameters as to degree and demarcation of what constitutes low-carb. It's easy to assume that low-carb eating means being in a state of constant ketosis via a ketogenic diet. It's the condition of "Perpetual Atkins Induction," which is defined as 20g of carbs or less per day. If that number isn't already permanently etched into your brain, then be sure to remember it. We'll be coming back to it shortly.

From what I can tell, nutritionists (the mainstream variety) consider anything under 200g of carbs per day to be low-carb. Some may set the cutoff a tad lower and call it at 150g per day. Folks in the low-carb and associated communities tend to consider 150g per day as a full-on carbo binge and a recipe for developing t2 diabetes. For the sake of this discussion, let's classify low-carb eating to be in the range from zero carbs to 200g of carbs per day. There are some categories within low-carb with the ketogenic diet being at the lowest end of the range:

- Ketogenic Diet or Very Low Carb Diet (VLC): 0-50g
- Low Carb Diet: 50-130g
- Reduced Carb Diet: 130-200g
- Balanced Diet: 200-300g

- High Carb Diet (high-activity): >300g

When I first embarked on low-carb eating almost twenty years ago, I bought into all the purported benefits and advantages of reducing carbohydrate intake to an ever vanishing amount. My favorite principle was the metabolic shift that occurred when going into a state of ketosis and transforming myself from a “sugar-burner” to metabolically advantaged “fat burner.” This concept was first put forth by Dr. Robert Atkins in his *New Diet Revolution* book and then wrapped in terms readily embraced by the body building community by [Dr. Mauro G. Di Pasquale](#) in his own work entitled *The Anabolic Diet*. As I would discover years later, this concept was highly flawed and actually downright incorrect.

The nutritional alchemy behind low-carb diets made no difference to me at the time. and in fact, this naive believe aligned perfectly with a semi-youthful quest to pack on lean muscle mass. My faith in this belief was reinforced that such a way of eating had made me noticeably leaner. It took several more years to realize that though I was noticeably leaner, the perceived muscularity was an illusion brought about by... well, simply being leaner and more vascular. I was also discovering that no amount of effort in the gym could compensate for the lower energy levels and the corresponding decrease in strength I was experiencing.

Perhaps one advantage I have when it comes to discussing and evaluating low-carb eating is that I've been doing it for so long.

The aforementioned twenty year span covers the periods of my life from my late 30s while I still had some of the raging testosterone from the previous decade that drove my devotion to exercising with weights, through my 40s when those hormonal levels began taking a noticeable dive, until today where I'm on the threshold of entering the sixth decade of my life where everything seems to be an enormous effort – both physically

and mentally. Through it all, I've paid close attention to carbohydrates. During the early days and for many years thereafter, I counted every last carb and wore my "20 net carbs per day or lower" goal as a badge of honor, though I was realistic enough to know that I could never take things to zero. In theory, our metabolisms may not need carbohydrates, but in practice, it's a completely different story.

OK, let me list off a few the advantages/benefits of a low-carb diet. Most of these are observational and anecdotal in nature, having come from my own experience with this way of eating and also from observing the reported experiences of others from various places such as online forums, Facebook groups, blogs, and from firsthand accounts of friends and acquaintances.

An important side note: I won't be listing any of the claimed benefits for LC with respect to those – primarily epileptic children – suffering from neurodegenerative diseases. These benefits are associated with a very low-carb, ketogenic diet and though important, have little to do with the motivations of the vast majority of people seeking out low-carb diets.

It's Easier to Count Carbs than Calories



If nothing else, Dr. Atkins' brand of the low-carb diet got people to focus on the number "20" – the total amount of carbohydrates in grams required to be consumed per day during

the Induction phase of the diet. What could be easier than keeping a running total of a single macronutrient? OK, a magic weight loss pill comes to mind, but short of that, it's vastly easier to count carbs than tally up the total calories for everything you eat, which for even the simplest meal, might consist of several food items. With carbs you can ignore things that don't contain appreciable carbs such as meat, fish, etc. and once you get into the groove, you can simply perform a mental estimate that is often pretty close to actual totals.

The problem with obsessing on a single macronutrient and setting a maximum threshold that going over is cause for a great deal of shame is that it becomes the reverse of too much of a good thing. In the case of carbs, people often figure that if I'm losing weight at 20g of carbs per day, then let me take it down to 15, 10, and eventually 0. It eventually becomes the equivalent of a [*China Syndrome*](#) meltdown if allowed to run uncontrolled.

Reduces Cravings and Appetite



The focus on carbs is a result of the delusion that calories don't matter – only the quality of those calories truly matter. What low-carb dieters – at least most of the diehards – don't understand is that by removing a great deal of the sugar in their diet in the form of sweets, bread, pasta, and to some extent potatoes and rice, they are suppressing their

cravings for sugar which in turn suppresses their overall appetite thus resulting in lowering their daily caloric intake. In the end, they drop real (fat) pounds after the dramatic initial glycogen and water weight drop. Unfortunately, many proponents of this diet cheerlead from the sidelines and cajole practitioners to gobble up ever increasing quantities of butter, bulletproof coffee, steak, and bacon. The sad reality is the thermodynamic piper will have to be paid at some point in the form of stalled weight loss or in many cases – reversal of all and any weight loss.

It Tricks You into Eating More Veggies



We may have pitched a fit at the dinner table when mom laid down the law and said we had to finish our Brussels sprouts or there would be no dessert, but once on a low-carb diet we find creative ways to get in every last ounce of vegetables from roasted Brussels sprouts to faux pizza made from pureed cauliflower “dough.” Nothing wrong with this, it’s just unfortunate that the other plant group in the way of fruit becomes villainized with the same brush to tar ice cream, cheesecake, and Reese’s Cups. Granted, some people are extremely glucose sensitive that too much fructose from fruit can cause a wild ride for their blood sugar levels. This is why a period of carb reduction to break sugar cravings and allow for the gradual reintroduction of healthy carbs in all their forms including fruit, grains, and starch up to the

individual's threshold for carbohydrate tolerance.

It may help with certain health issues



This is a controversial topic and I can only present my experience with an autoimmune condition of my own as well as relate a few anecdotal success stories. I suffered with plaque psoriasis for a good portion of my adult life. It wasn't a serious case – certainly nothing approaching full body coverage – it was mainly just on my elbows and back of my forearms. Mostly just on my right side. Creams of various strengths moving up to strong corticosteroid creams and even injections of these compounds failed to provide long term improvement. In fact, the injections made things worse by causing the skin on my elbows to thin to the point where simply bumping an elbow would cause profuse bleeding.

I did manage to get noticeable improvement about 15 years ago with a new steroid cream, but it never quite cleared up the plaques and ceasing use would cause the plaques to rethicken. Around the same time I had been experimenting with low-carb dieting off and on for a few years. I had begun to notice that each time I went on the diet that my plaque psoriasis would greatly improve regardless if I used the corticosteroid creams or not. I've been off all dermatological medications for over five years and no longer have a trace of psoriatic plaques.

I can't conclusively chalk it up to eating low-carb and it's

quite possible that I simply outgrew the disease. It does happen and psoriasis has been associated with [emotional stress](#). Several variables to consider in this case and I certainly didn't conduct a proper medical study – even on myself – draw any valid conclusions, regardless, I think it warrants a proper study or two. Conversely, during the course of writing this post I came across a blog comment where a woman claimed that low-carb eating triggered an outbreak of psoriasis, so perhaps, LC creates a form of stress that can trigger the condition.

I have also read and heard from others on low-carb diets that they've seen noticeable improvements in rheumatoid arthritis and gastrointestinal conditions with an autoimmune basis such as IBS and Crohn's Disease.

Dietary cholesterol, saturated fat, and sugar and their impact on blood lipid levels and in turn what the ensuing numbers mean with regard to cardiovascular disease and atherosclerotic plaques is another volatile topic and one which deserves a separate discussion. There is ample evidence that LC can affect blood lipids both positively and adversely.

The link between diabetes and heart disease is well-known and under the proper circumstances, a low-carb diet can improve diabetes, which should in turn improve the subject's outlook with respect to CVD. In my own case, my blood lipids – total cholesterol, HDL, triglycerides, and LDL – have all improved while eating low-carb, however, I had also been self-administering Niacin (B3) and red yeast rice during the periods when blood tests were performed. I'm unwilling to forgo either regimen for the sake of scientific testing and for the record, I've never been a big consumer of saturated fat, though I do eat it without guilt or concern when a meal would be better enjoyed with it.

Update (5/14/2015):

In my haste to enumerate all the terrific benefits of a low-carb diet, I overlooked two additional bennies:

Reduction of dental caries and improved oral health – diets containing high amounts of sugar promote tooth decay. I have a mouth full of ugly gray amalgam filled molars as proof. I'm not sure when the Philly region where I grew up began fluoridating its water supply – most of America had instituted it by 1961 when I was 4 – but with or without it, my diet and oral hygiene habits didn't help matters. My childhood diet of white bread, pasta, pizza, and sweets left a sticky plaque that coated my teeth and it provided a steady source of business for my dentist. To this day, I can visibly notice the difference in the degree of plaque that accumulates on my teeth depending on my consumption of wheat and sugar-containing foods [1].

Of course, adequate and proper dental hygiene is most likely the most important factor in preventing dental problems, and without getting into the controversial issue of feeding a low-carb diet to children, it probably wouldn't be considered abusive or negligent to restrict the amount of added sugar in the form of soft drinks and candy in a child's diet. It then comes down to a question of which is harder: restricting sweets or getting a kid to brush his teeth on a daily basis?

Reduction in acid reflux episodes – I used to experience heartburn on an almost daily basis. Heartburn so extreme that I used to gobble Tums antacids two at a time. It would often disrupt my sleep. Pizza was a major offender. I used to think it was the garlic or even the tomato sauce that caused these flareups. My bouts of heartburn all but vanished the first time I began a low-carb diet. It took me a while to notice a connection and of course, pizza had been relegated to the sideline while eating low-carb.

As close as I can tell, the root cause was the presence of wheat products (unrefined wheat flour in pizza dough) along

with gastrically irritating foods such as garlic, onions, hot peppers, and certain spices. Perhaps gluten – that perennially bad guy – is the actual culprit. Fortunately, I've been able to have my pizza (and bread) and eat it too. Simply by greatly reducing the total quantity of gluten contained in a food, I can enjoy these beloved food items once again without digestive stress.

See my tweaked versions of Ultra Thin Crust Pizza (video below) and [Low Carb Bread That Doesn't Suck](#).

Babies and Ketotic Bathwater



A pervasive cry from the low-carb community – at least among those who acknowledge that dogma exists – is let's not get all crazy and stuff and toss out the baby (LC benefits) with the bathwater (dogma, carbophobia, and blind adherence to ketosis). I count myself among this group. This sentiment will be revisited after we have a look at the risks of low-carb dieting. Most of the risks are concentrated around the VLC and ketogenic approaches to the diet, but also extend into daily carbohydrate ranges above these extremes. I have my work cut out for me in performing the background research and data gathering for these upcoming posts, so I better carb up and get my butt in gear!

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- *Steak and Salad: LifeisGood*
- *Calculator: DuBoix*
- *Christmas: Cookies: Ladyheart*
- *Squash: MaxStraeten*
- *Stethoscope and Heart: imelenchon*
- *kamuelaboy: Baby's Foot*

Prepare Your Own Meals For Healthier Eating



I've liked to cook from an early age. I suppose it started with visiting my grandparents and soaking in the smells when my grandmother was preparing the sauce and meatballs for Sunday dinner. It was my personal nirvana! I also loved to "help" my mother bake pies and cookies. The lumps of baked dough I called "cookies" weren't much to look at and were tough to choke down, but to me they were every bit as good as the fancy cookies from the corner bakery. It was because I made them all by myself!

The first real thing I learned to cook—after toast—was fried eggs. If you can fry an egg without burning the house down, then you basically know everything there is to cooking for yourself. If you can also open a can, then you're well on your

way to being the next *Top Chef*.

OK, maybe I'm getting a bit carried away and over confident, but preparing your own meals is not too difficult. The most challenging part is keeping and grocery list and doing the actual shopping. You can still be lazy, but just not too lazy.

Benefits of home cooking:



- **Fresh and unprocessed ingredients** – it should be assumed that preparing your own meals doesn't mean tossing a box of Hamburger Helper into a hot skillet with a chunk of ground beef. It does mean using as many fresh ingredients as you can such as vegetables, meat, fish, and poultry. If you choose to use organic and grass-fed versions then go for it. Personally, it's a bit out of my budget and I'm OK with purchasing the cheaper varieties of fresh food.
- **You pretty much know what goes into your food** – menu items at restaurants and fast food places are made out of your view – unless you're eating at a sushi place. My point is, that despite what ingredients are listed on the menu, you can't be 100% sure of what goes into making it. Perhaps, more importantly, you have even less of an idea of

how it's prepared. Once you start preparing your own meals, you become more sensitive to ingredients and their nutritional content. This in turn, will give you a better perspective on what constitute healthy ingredients. And don't rely on the server or staff at a fast food restaurant to provide you with reliable information on ingredients and methods of preparation.

- **You'll eat less** – the trend for a while at most American dining establishments is to supersize everything. There are 32oz sodas, 1 pound cheeseburgers, and jumbo plates of pasta and seafood to just mention a few items that have been elaphantized. Sure, you can always ask to take home leftovers, but that's both inconvenient especially is you're going out somewhere afterwards such as to a bar or movie or just want to take a leisurely stroll after dinner. Not to mention, that the leftovers often turn moldy in the fridge because they don't looks all that appealing the next day.
- **Save money** – this point should be obvious, but based on how many coworkers I've known over the years that habitually grab lunch away from the office, I'm not so sure. Many of these same people would also stop off at a fast food or pizza joint on the way home in the evening to pick up dinner. It didn't surprise me that many of them were overweight. As any high school math teacher would preach: "Do the math!" It does add up over time.
- **Hygiene** – if you've ever worked in the food industry then you probably have a good idea of what goes on behind the scenes. There's a reason for the Board of Health. My first job while still in high school was washing dishes at a country club. You would think an elite establishment such as a country club would have impeccable food

storage and preparation standards in their kitchen. It was anything but! It's also advisable to not upset your server. For reference, view the movie *Waiting* – the video clip below should be sufficient to get the point across. There are many cases of food poisoning each year in the US – many of them unreported. How often has that happened when you've prepared food at home?

- **Food will taste better** – it may just be me and where I live, but I'm usually always disappointed when I dine out. Frankly, the food leaves a lot to be desired along with the competency and courteousness of the servers. Factor in that it's an effort to find menu choices that satisfy my particular dietary needs along with the high cost of dining out, then it's a disappointing experience all around. If nothing else, it makes me appreciate preparing and eating meals at home.

I can hear you saying, "That's great and all, but who has the time for meal planning and then doing all that cooking?" Glad you asked since I have some helpful tips to deal with those concerns in the form of some simple strategies:

Strategies for preparing your own meals:



- **Meal planning** – every project begins with a list. Make

one on a weekly basis. You don't need to plan out each and every meal for an entire week. Just having a general idea of what you'd like to eat for a few lunches and particular dinners should suffice. You can fill in the blanks once the day rolls around. By that, I mean having on hand the basic ingredients from which you can throw together a simple and quick meal. Having a large bag of frozen chicken breasts or other parts can server for at least two dinners and possible a lunch or two. Fish filets and steaks can also be stored frozen. Fruit and veggies should be purchased fresh at least weekly along with dairy items such as milk, cream, butter, and of course a variety of cheese. From there it's a matter of making sure you have the bulk items stocked in your pantry such as cooking oils, snack foods such as nuts and other healthy snack items.

- **Learn the basics of cooking** – as I mentioned previously, if you can fry an egg you're well on your way to cooking simple meals for yourself and your family. Of course, you'll probably get tired of eating eggs at every meal, so you'll want to learn a few more advance recipes. There are many great meals that you can cook in a glass baking dish such as baked chicken, fish, and vegetable casseroles and bakes. Stir fries are extremely simple and only require a single skillet – pretty much the same as frying an egg. One of the great things about the low-carb and Paleo communities is that they have some of the best cooking and recipes sites on the Web. Below are some of my faves. There are also tons and tons of general recipe and cooking sites to explore for healthy recipes and cooking tips. And don't forget YouTube!
 - <http://peaceloveandlowcarb.com/>
 - <http://low-carb-news.blogspot.com/>
 - <https://buttoni.wordpress.com/>
- **Stock up on containers** – leftovers are your friends and saviors! With actively practicing portion control, you'll often find yourself satisfied with half the

contents on your plate. Scooping half of the large chicken breast and vegetables into a plastic storage container becomes a quick and easy lunch to take to the office or school the next day. Storage containers also come in very handy to keep chopped veggies at the ready for salads, stir fries, and other main and side dishes.

Getting in the habit of preparing your own meals at home puts you more in tune with what goes into a healthy and great tasting meal. You'll have a deeper appreciation for selecting quality ingredient while grocery shopping and this will translate in making better choices when dining away from home. Eating out is a great way to treat yourself and for making a fun social occasion with family and friends. It's also a necessity when traveling. I've just found over the years that making dining out the exception rather than the rule has allowed me to stay on track with my way of eating and has also added a fun dimension to everyday living.

Photo Credits (morguefile.com):

- *Chopped Veggies: Seeman*
- *Produce Basket: macroncasin*
- *Cooking Utensils: Melodi2*

Low Carb Snack Ideas



It frustrates me that the notion of snacking is still being attacked in some quarters of the health and fitness industry. When I was growing up during the 1960s, snacking was blamed for unwanted weight gain. It even acquired the moniker of “in-between-meal snacking” to give it added vilification in case

the point hadn't been made strongly enough. On the flip side, parents were forever blaming snacking for spoiling their kids' appetite for dinner. It seems snacking couldn't win for losing back in the day!

Fast forward fifty years and it seems little has changed with regards to the poor, defenseless afternoon snack. Perhaps it's because the most common remedy for between meal hunger is to head for the vending machine or pantry and opting for the most convenient form of “nourishment.” This typically turns out to be a candy bar or bag of chips. And thinking that the low-fat and so-called “healthy” snacks have you covered, well, think again.

By now you've probably heard it over and over how eating a snack high in sugar will momentarily satisfy your hunger, but will leave you hanging an hour later no better for having consumed the empty calories. This is aggravated if your lunch consisted of hitting the drive-thru. It's kind of hard to sustain yourself eating less than nutritious main meals. Let's start with the assumption that you're eating a balanced diet consisting of real foods even if it's not strictly low-carb.

The main challenge of eating healthy between-meal snacks is being prepared. Preparation is key. You will need to include the basic ingredients for your snacks as part of your weekly grocery shopping list. What you want is a nutritious snack that will satisfy your immediate hunger and also tide you over

to your next meal, or if necessary, your next snack.

I'm including certain food groups as well as individual foods that aren't typically allowed or at best, frowned upon in some low-carb eating plans. Ultimately, it's up to you to decide what you're going to eat and not allow your choices to be swayed by dietary dogma. At the end of the day, having the occasional banana beats the heck out of the momentary satisfaction delivered by a Snickers bar.

- **Fruit** – the low-carb directive on fruit is to go with low glycemic index fruits such as berries, but unless you're on a ketogenic diet, any kind of fruit is fine for snacking, even a dreaded banana now and then.
- **Meat** – if you're OK with processed meats, then cold cuts and pepperoni are quite convenient. Uncured, nitrate-free meats are a better choice.
- **Cheese** – all kinds of cheese make for terrific snacks. Their fat content also helps satiate hunger more effectively than a candy bar or bag of chips.
- **Yogurt** – something else that's usually forbidden on very low-carb diets, but if you can tolerate milk, then full-fat plain yogurt (avoid the fruit varieties due to the added sugar). It's almost like having a dish of ice cream!
- **Sugar-free dessert and candy items** – coconut oil fudge and other sugar-free treats can satisfy a mid-afternoon sweet tooth flareup. See some of my [videos](#) for suggestions.
- **Nuts** – all kinds, especially pistachios, pecans, cashews, almonds, and walnuts. Just be sure to watch quantities as it's easy to get carried away.

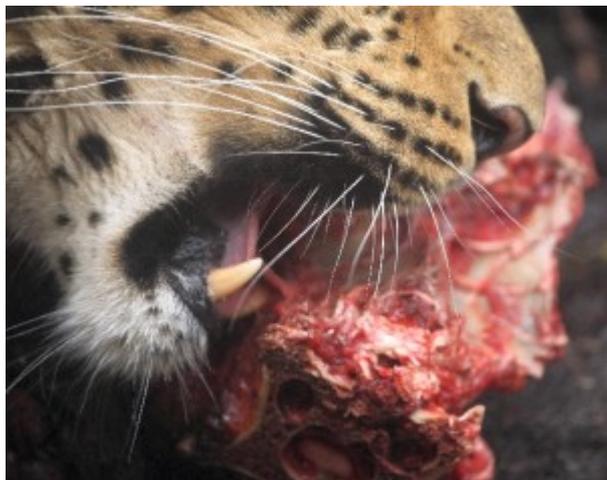
In the video below, I review some of my favorite snack items:

Hopefully, you're bringing your lunch to work or school on most days of the week. If you're not, then I trust you're doing your best to navigate the menus of the places where

you're grabbing your lunch. You may want to consider bringing your lunch at least one or two days a week. It will not only assure that you're eating a healthy meal while away from home, but the cost savings can add up pretty quickly. Just be sure to leave some room in your lunch bag for at least two snacks: a mid-morning snack and a mid-afternoon snack. If you work later, then even a snack for the road is a good idea. That way you won't burst through the front door when you arrive home and trample the cat on the way to the fridge.

The timing of snacks should depend on when you're feeling hungry. One of the maxims of low-carb eating is to eat when you're hungry. I love this! This is the exact opposite of a severely calorie-restricted diet that depends on self-denial and willpower. Now, this doesn't mean going hog-wild with your food consumption. At its core, a low-carb diet works because of lowering daily calorie consumption below what your body requires for maintenance. In general, you shouldn't be eating massive meals. And if you can't wait until the next one, then think of snacks as the stepping stones to get you there unscathed.

Is Low Carb Necessary To Lose Weight?



Eating a diet that is lower in total daily carbohydrates has been shown to cause weight loss. I won't link to any of the studies, as they're the same ones linked to by a lot of other nutrition bloggers and most readers don't bother to follow the links anyway. What has yet to be sufficiently studied,

however, are what happens to people that eat a low-carb diet for more than a year. This is an issue we'll look at a bit further down, but for now let's agree that eating low-carb results in weight loss, at least in the short term. It should be noted that other diets also result in comparable weight loss – over the short term anyway. Again, something we'll look at further down. For now, let's address some essential questions surrounding eating low-carb:

1. What truly constitutes a “low-carb” diet?
2. And is it really necessary to eat low-carb in order to lose weight?

The cutoff point for total daily carbohydrates in order for a diet or eating plan to be considered “low-carb” is subject to some debate. Perhaps it's best to begin answering this question by looking at the number of daily total carbs in the Standard American Diet (SAD). Yes, it is SAD when you examine what we Americans eat in a typical day, but the rest of you non-Americans shouldn't be so smug. It seems our dietary customs have caught on in your part of the world and is responsible for adding pounds and inches (or kilograms and centimeters) to your bodies as well.

It's a SAD, SAD World



The SAD or "[Western Pattern](#)" diet is 50% carbs, which is below the 55% recommended amount. It surprised me that even this relatively high number of carbs isn't considered high enough by the nutritional authorities. Taking a nominal calorie count of 2700 kcal for this diet, the daily total for carbs comes out to just above 300g. Even at half that amount, 150g, it is still within a range above what is generally considered to be low-carb.

The upper threshold for low-carb is somewhat arbitrary, but we need to set it somewhere, so let's call it at 100g. I eat within a range from 50g-100g of carbs per day. This range most likely doesn't permit me to enter ketosis (producing ketone bodies to be used for fuel instead of glucose). For my particular metabolic type, which I've determined to be one characterized by insulin resistance, I do quite well eating within this total daily carb range. My weight is down and more importantly, I feel good in terms of energy, stamina, and mood.

This raises a controversial topic, of which there are many where it comes to weight loss and nutrition, relating to which is more important when it comes to losing weight: calories or the amounts and balances of macronutrients (carbs, protein, and fat). As to be expected, there is a lot of misinformation, misunderstanding, and even (shudder) acrimony surrounding this debate. Again, without bogging things down with that messy thing called "science," the brief answer is: "both matter."

But this pithy answer comes with a caveat: the weight of their individual importance varies with your metabolic type.

While some people seem to be able to eat just about anything they please – ice cream, donuts, beer, and get all three meals from a fast food drive-thru – and not get an ounce. These people are more the exception than the rule and I'm willing to bet that their underlying health isn't all that great. Their blood lipids, degree of inflammation, risk for heart disease and they may even be dangerously close to full-blown type 2 diabetes. And yes, it's possible to be at risk for diabetes or have full-blown type 2 diabetes without being overweight.

Health Isn't Always About Body Shape



You can't always gauge a person's overall by simply looking at their body size. Conversely, people that are overweight (not obese) can be quite healthy. There are people that don't eat what is considered a low-carb diet (carbs well over 150g per day) and are both quite healthy and are able to maintain a normal body weight. People such as these are blessed with a very healthy metabolism, and though they may indulge occasionally in unhealthy foods, they have, in general, a healthy relationship with food. Often times, people such as these eat a balanced diet consisting of mostly unprocessed, fresh foods consumed in amounts that don't exceed the number

of calories required to maintain their current, healthy body weight.

The rest of us are going to fall somewhere below these “metabolically blessed” types and must adjust our eating accordingly if we want to be both healthy as well as maintain a healthy body weight, which may not be quite a slim as we’d like.

Cut The Junk!



You can go a long way towards achieving this result by eliminating a lot of the sugar in your diet along with a lot of processed foods such as frozen dinners, packaged snacks, sports and energy drinks, candy, and ice cream. These products draw you in with their carefully crafted tastes with an emphasis on salty, sweet, and fatty flavors. The end result is your hunger isn’t fully satisfied and you wind up craving even more. It’s true that “you can’t eat just one.” I cringe when I hear someone say they ate an entire can of Pringles in one sitting or devoured a bag of Double-Stuffed Oreos while watching TV, but it’s certainly easy to see how this can happen. I’ll stop shop of calling this a true addiction as exists for drugs and alcohol, but since one’s sensitivity for these tastes become lessened; it requires ever increasing “doses” in order to satisfy the cravings. Once you begin to wean yourself off food with empty calories, you will find that your cravings lessen and foods that you once found unpalatable

such as fruits and vegetables all of a sudden have a pleasing sweet taste which actually leaves you satisfied after eating it.

Not everyone needs to cut carbs down to the bare bone or gasp, eat a “zero carb” diet. In fact, I’ll go out on a limb and state that most people don’t need to go to these extremes. Yes, there are those with diabetes and who are extremely insulin resistant that probably need to eat a ketogenic diet, but ask yourself if you fall into that classification. Despite being insulin resistant, I know that I thrive by not being in ketosis. Instead, I eat the aforementioned “lowish” carb diet.

One Size Does Not Fit All!



The best way to find out the optimally balanced diet in terms of carbs, protein, and fat is to first cut out the processed junk items mentioned above. Do this for at least two weeks and see if you’ve lost weight, and more importantly, take an assessment of how you look and feel. From there, you can then start becoming more “carb aware.” This means reading nutrition labels as well as asking yourself if what you plan to eat is “high carb” or “low carb.” You don’t need to count calories or even carbs for that matter. Just eat regular meals and eat until you’re no longer hungry. Replace the starchy carbs and sugar-laden items that you used to eat with more vegetables, meat, poultry, fish, and healthy snacks such as nuts and

fruit. And if you're losing weight simply by cutting out the junk, then stick with it! No need to further restrict things like carbs or even fat.

Portion control is also important, so don't eat beyond the point of being satisfied. You want to avoid the feeling of being stuffed at all costs even if it means saving some of your food for another meal. One of the side benefits of lowering total carbs in your diet is a gradual reduction in appetite and cravings. This will make it much easier to cut back the overall calories you consume in a day. By following a plan of "gradual immersion" it's much easier to get to a point of healthy eating and more importantly, you set the foundation for sticking with it for the long haul and that's where so many fail, regardless of the style of eating.

Healthy Eating Strategies for Dining Out



Going out to eat is one of life's little pleasures common to so many people. Trying out a new hot spot or visiting a favorite restaurant where you're treated like family is a big part of the fun of dining out. It's often a welcome relief from cooking and cleaning up afterwards and also a great way to socialize with friends or have a fun night out with the entire family. Dining out has so many great benefits associated with it that we often overlook some of the pitfalls it can present towards staying on track with a healthy eating regimen. These pitfalls are greatly magnified when attempting to stick to a low carb

eating plan.

I'm going to cut right to the chase and get the unpleasant stuff out of the way before we go any further and that's my belief that you should severely limit the number of meals you eat away from home. OK, let that sink in a bit and also give me a chance to duck while you hurl the nearest piece of furniture in my general direction once you've fully absorbed the outrageousness of my position.

I have nothing against the dining industry and some of the nicest clients in my marketing consulting business happen to be restaurant owners. The last thing I wish to see is their businesses hurt because diners have decided to eat all their meals at home, however, that's never going to happen no matter how much I preach about the importance of preparing your own food. Restaurant proprietors the world over can now breathe a big sigh of relief!

My fundamental point is that you should make a serious effort to eat more of your meals at home especially if you're eating more than three meals a week out. This may be you if you're single and don't feel like staying home and cooking or if you're older and your kids have left home and you don't see the point in cooking for just two every night.

There are strategies for dealing with these situations that I'll cover in future articles, but for now, let's have a look at several strategies for restaurant and menu selection when you do find yourself eating meals away from home.

We will need to have a look at several factors:

- Which meal(s) are you eating out: breakfast, lunch, or dinner
- Restaurant type and cuisine
- Menu selections

First off, when it comes to which meals you're eating away

from home, you should never eat breakfast out. Traveling is a special case and there's not much you can do about it since you will be eating most all of your meals either in hotels or restaurants unless you're lucky enough to be visiting with friends or relatives.

I used to be guilty of stopping off at McDonald's or Roy Rogers (fast food place in MD known for their breakfast biscuits) almost every weekday before heading into the office. It wasn't so much that I didn't have time to fix breakfast at home as I was addicted to sausage, egg, and cheese biscuits with a side of hash browns and an over-sweetened cup of coffee.

It was a special treat that got my day off to a happy start and it was a very difficult routine to break, but one that was expanding my waistline and raising my cholesterol levels. If you're going to eat breakfast out, then really make an effort to limit it to just one day per week and try to resist the temptation of going full-on "Grand Slam" with lots of pancakes, waffles, and syrup! It's far better to just have a light breakfast at home along with your first cup of coffee or tea. I'll have a whole lot more to say about breakfast in future articles.

Eating lunch out is probably the biggest pitfall for anyone who works outside their home – both in terms of excess calories consumed and extra dollars spent. Eating lunch out more than once a week can get expensive in a hurry. At least when compared to preparing your own meals. And when it comes to the establishments that most workers tend to frequent, they are usually of the "fast food" variety. It may come as a shock, but eating foot long subs every day for lunch won't decrease your pants size no matter what that guy on TV says.

So what kinds of restaurants are going to be the friendliest to your health and waistline?

Since that's a tough question, let me start with the kinds of places that are the worst. I'd have to say, that after the burger and fried chicken joints, that Chinese restaurants are a very close second – especially the ones with the “Big Buffet.” Even though Chinese dishes tend to have a lot of vegetables in them, the breading and super sweet sauces they come drenched in won't do you any favors. The best approach is to skip all the appetizers (yes, I know, they're the best part) and order a small lunch sized entrée. Just be sure to ask if they can bring a “brown sauce” on the side so you can portion it out yourself (they'll know what you mean) and don't consume the entire bowl of rice that comes with it. You also don't have to eat the entire plate as Chinese food makes for some great leftovers.

BBQ and chicken places, as tasty as their offerings are, should be avoided. The thick and sweet sauces on BBQ and the breading on chicken along with the starchy sides such as fries, mashed potatoes, mac and cheese, and buttermilk biscuits are waistline killers. Unfortunately, that last sentence just made my mouth water – ugh!

Italian restaurants are a mixed bag and can actually provide some healthy, low carb options if you're careful. It's staying away from the bread basket, the wide variety of tempting pastas, and the pizza that makes going Italian a real challenge. However, if you don't succumb to the aforementioned temptations, there are plenty of seafood dishes, especially fish, as well as veal and chicken dishes that are both tasty and low carb. Just avoid the parmigiana versions which have a lot of breading and instead of the typical side of pasta, ask for whatever the fresh vegetable of the day is. A small side salad with oil and vinegar or vinaigrette dressing is a great starter – just try your best to stay away from the warm Italian bread and butter!

Perhaps the best types of places to have a meal out are the chain “family style” restaurants such as Places like Ruby

Tuesday, Chili's, TGI Friday, etc. Steak houses are also good choices, but they are typically quite a bit more expensive. Of course, you can certainly go off the rails easily at these places as well, but with all the menu selections they offer, it's not too difficult to find something on the low carb side.

Steaks, chicken, fish, and vegetarian offerings are all good places to start. As with Italian cuisine, just be sure to watch the appetizers and sides. Veggies are always the preferred side dish and don't be afraid to ask your server to hold the fries, pasta, rice, or potatoes and substitute a vegetable side such as steamed broccoli or roasted carrots. If the restaurant has a salad bar, so much the better, just don't load your plate up with macaroni salad and potato salad and avoid the overly sweet dressings such as honey mustard and French dressings. Ordering a small house salad and using the same discretion regarding dressings is a good choice in other establishments sans salad bar.

This now brings us to dessert.

What, you didn't think I was going to advise you to avoid dessert entirely while your dining companions indulge themselves did you?

No way!

When I choose to dine out, I want it to be a special treat and that definitely includes treating myself to dessert. Dessert in the traditional sense of cake, ice cream, or other decadent delights is something I rarely have when I eat at home. Therefore, when I'm dining out I make sure that the rest of the meal, from the appetizer through the entrée, is as healthy and low carb as I can make it. I'm then free to have some double chocolate cake or Key Lime pie along with my coffee!

The main thing to consider is that for the sake of your health and your waistline, it's far easier to control what you eat if you plan and prepare your own meals. Eating out should be

approached as a special treat – not as part of your everyday routine. Taking this measured approach, and ordering your meal with a game plan at the ready, is the best recipe for a healthy and enjoyable dining out experience!

Eat Fruits and Vegetables in Season



As I write this in the middle of August so many delicious fruits and vegetables are now on the shelves at the grocery store, at road side stands, and at farmers' markets. I just finished devouring a plate of locally grown cantaloupe chunks to cap off my breakfast. Each bite was an explosion of juicy sweetness that made me both happy and proud to be a resident of Maryland where such healthy goodness comes out of the soil every summer!

Just like so many other things in life that have their season, so do fruits and vegetables. This is a maxim that I've come to adhere to with my year round eating plan. It's one that will keep you both satisfied and well-nourished regardless of the season.

Just to make clear, my perspective is from someone living in the Northern Hemisphere, but this approach to seasonal fruit and vegetable consumption can be followed no matter where in the world you live. Each region has its own growing season and with global commerce, produce can be shipped fresh all over the world. With that in mind, below is a very broad chart of

seasonal produce:

Spring – all greens such as lettuce and spinach, green beans, tail end of citrus season for oranges and grapefruits, beginning of berry season for strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries.

Summer – the “bountiful” season for fruits and veggies! Strawberries, melons – cantaloupes, honey dew, and watermelons. Peaches, plums, cherries, and nectarines. Corn and squash such as zucchini, spaghetti squash, and eggplant.

Fall – apples, apples, and more apples! And don’t forget about pumpkins. Squash and melons are still tasty this time of year.

Winter – citrus season! Load up on oranges, tangerines, and delicious grapefruits from Florida!

It’s important to let some of your favorite fruits and vegetables go when it’s not their season. Though some fruits such as bananas and apples are acceptable year round, there are some fruits that should only be consumed fresh when they are in season. As much as I love cantaloupe, there’s nothing worse than trying to choke down a hard and juiceless cantaloupe in the middle of winter! The same goes for grapefruits and navel oranges during the heat of summer. It’s all about going with the flow and adjusting to the natural rhythms of nature!

Why You Should Prepare Your Own Food



I learned how to cook at a fairly young age. I'm not sure what I first learned how to prepare, it might have been a fried egg. I've cooked a lot of fried eggs since then and continue to prepare them as my main breakfast staple. There have been some pretty good cooks in my family starting with my grandmother and continuing down through my mom and my aunt. They taught me the basics and I've gone on to learn a few other things on my own. My culinary repertoire is definitely limited and I won't be a contestant on "The Next Top Chef" challenge any time soon, but that doesn't stop me from preparing almost all the meals I consume these days.

Besides enjoying the process of meal planning and preparation, the primary reason I cook is so that I'm eating only meals that nourish my body while also keeping my blood sugar and insulin levels in check. Translation: I make sure that I don't get flabby ever again. My only requirement, besides being generally low in starchy carbs, is that every meal must take only thirty minutes or less to prepare from start to table – sounds a bit like a Rachael Ray program on the *Food Network*.

There are quite a few sub-topics related to this issue, some of which I'm thinking are also a bit controversial – at least in the sense that not everyone may agree with me. That's fine, healthy debate and discussion are always good and I'm willing to have my mind changed when presented with convincing arguments accompanied by solid proof. For now, I'll simply outline the related issues and make note to expand on them in future posts.

Eating In or Eating Out?

Perhaps the strongest argument for preparing your own food is that you have much more control over what ultimately winds up on your plate. Don't get me wrong, eating out can be a very enjoyable experience and can also provide a welcome break from

cooking and washing dishes back at the ranch, but it's when you find yourself eating most of your meals out that problems set in. Being presented with a lot of choices on a restaurant menu can often lead to both overeating and making poor nutritional choices. Save evenings out at a restaurant for special occasions or for when you and the family could use a well-deserved break.

Meal Planning

No meal actually gets prepared without first taking a trip to the grocery store. That's unless you live on a farm where you can go out your backdoor and gather eggs, milk a cow, pick fresh veggies, and also slaughter a cow and a few chickens while out in the barnyard. The rest of us have to make at least one or two trips during the week to gather groceries for the meals we'll consume during the week.

There are two basic approaches to grocery shopping:

1. Stock up on the staples such as meat, vegetables, dairy products, etc. and fill the larder. You can then decide what you'll eat right before meal time or a bit earlier in the day. This method works for getting something on the table, but doesn't always result in the healthiest decisions. Many times, the deadly combination of hunger and fatigue drive this decision.

What often happens is that the path of least resistance from pantry to dinner table is taken.

How many times have you arrived home from work thoroughly exhausted, stressed out, and famished? You're so blinded by hunger that you immediately head for the pantry and grab the first thing within reach like a bag of sour cream and onion chips or a bag of double stuffed Oreos. You then wind up hating yourself by the time you roll into bed.

2. The other approach, and the one I advocate, is weekly meal planning. This approach simply involves planning all your meals for the coming week prior to setting out to the grocery store. I only consider lunch and dinner when doing my own meal planning as breakfast for me is always some variation (or lack thereof) of an egg and some kind of breakfast meat. I don't even get too precise about what I'll eat on each particular day of the week – I just mentally pencil in suggestions and then make sure that I have all the necessary ingredients to prepare that meal when I decide to have it. This may sound similar to the first method above, but all my meals for the week are set in advance – I'm just flexible on which days of the week I choose to eat them.

I'll have a lot more to say on the topic of meal planning in a future post, but for now it's enough to note how important it is to meal preparation.

How Much Variety?

This is another topic that's important enough to warrant a post all its own, but again, for now, I'll just mention it here because of its importance to meal planning and meal preparation. This is also a topic that I have a rather strong opinion on and one that should prove to be controversial.

A long held belief is that as humans, we need to have a lot of variety in what we eat. After all, our brains are so much more advanced than other creatures in the food chain, that unless we get sufficient variety in the food we eat, we'll keel over face first into our dinner plates from insufferable boredom. If this were the case, then I should have passed on to the Great Beyond ages ago. The menu I feast on today is limited to just a handful of food items, which I rotate through almost like clockwork on a weekly basis.

I'll leave further discussion of this topic to a future post,

but it should be pretty clear how eating a limited menu greatly facilitates meal planning and grocery shopping. It also has proven for me to be highly effective in shedding fat and keeping it off.

The main point I'm attempting to get across here, is that when you take over control of planning and preparing what you eat on a weekly basis, then you ward off the temptation of making unhealthy eating choices and also control the portions that you consume – all of which play a big part in controlling your weight.

One final topic that I have yet to mention is the importance of knowing the basics of cooking. The good news is that learning to cook well enough to prepare nutritious dishes that will help keep your waistline in check is extremely easy. Have a look at some of the recipes I've posted here on PracticalCarbs.com and see for yourself just how simple and easy they are to prepare – believe me, if I can prepare them, then so can you!