

Nutritional Compromises For Dietary Success



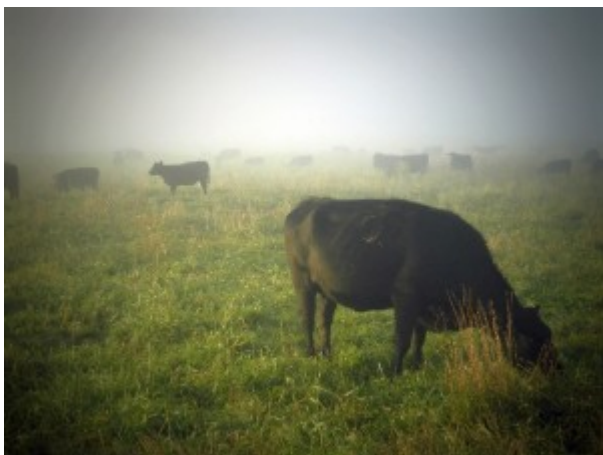
I listed **Nutritional Compromise** as one of the [seven principles](#) of The Practical Carbs Lifestyle. I realize the bombastic title makes it sound like some kind of grand manifesto, but it's just a collection of reminders (mental cues) that I put together so that I can keep things on track when it comes to navigating my daily routine. This particular principle is sort of my "get out of jail free" card. It serves to keep me from becoming obsessive about the food items I purchase and consume.

Though I strive to eat the healthiest and purest foods I can both find as well as afford, my primary focus is to keep my weight under control. Sometimes, I need to "cheat" a little and purchase food items that are not organic, nitrite-free, grass fed, free range, non-GMO, raw, pastured, etc., etc. It's not that I don't think most of the aforementioned items aren't healthier, but that I'm willing to make compromises when availability, cost, and taste outweigh those benefits; at least to my mind.

Cost and Value Propositions



I live in a smaller town where the options for organic food are not as diverse as in urban areas. Most grocery stores now stock organic produce and grass-fed meat and free range chicken. There is an organic store in town now, but I rarely visit since it's an extra trip and it's always sticker shock for me at checkout. To be honest, I don't notice much taste of freshness difference between organic produce and the regular stuff. The main concern when it comes to produce is pesticide use. I'm willing to take my chances with non-organic produce. I realize that washing doesn't remove every molecule of Roundup or whatever pesticides are on an apple, but I choose to not worry about it. Pesticides and other harmful compounds are all around us, from our drinking water to the air we breathe.



I've yet to sample grass-fed beef. The price always keeps me away. In theory, it makes complete sense that grass-fed beef is healthier for us than the feedlot, grain-fed beef that

overflows the shelves in the grocery store. What I have been buying recently is locally-produced ground beef. It's still grain-fed, but the cows are not shot full of antibiotics and hormones. And it tastes a lot better. It does cost a bit more, but still less than the grass-fed beef. I'm willing to spend a bit more for better taste, food safety, and also to benefit local farmers. The same goes for shopping at farm stands and farmers markets.

Ethical, Religious and Psychological Considerations

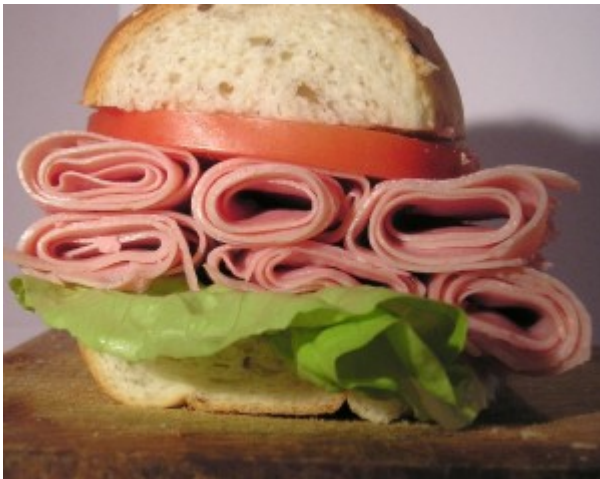


Many people choose veganism more out of ethical concerns regarding the [inhumane treatment of animals](#) used in food production than for the health benefits. The same can probably be said about those choosing to eschew GMO food products. There is no scientific evidence that GMO products are dangerous or less healthy than non-GMO products, but personal beliefs and lingering doubt make them a non-starter for many people. There's no point in consuming food that you believe will harm you. On the flip side of the GMO controversy, there is the very real concern over the undue influence [companies such as Monsanto](#) exert on the US agricultural industry with their patented seeds and Roundup pesticide product.

There are also religious laws that regulate what adherents may consume. If you're a faithful member of a religion with dietary laws, then these restrictions are non-negotiable. I remember growing up when as a Catholic, eating meat on Friday

was forbidden. Typically, many Catholic families ate fish. We weren't big seafood folks, so it was either pizza or pasta night which suited me just fine. It was also a fondness and a habit that took its toll on my weight and health over the years and was difficult to finally break.

When Taste Wins Out



The theme of this post is nutritional compromise, what it means, and when to employ it and as with diet, when and how to compromise with your food choices is deeply personal. Compromise must take a back seat when religious and ethical concerns are at stake. An Orthodox Jew could no more indulge in a shrimp cocktail than a strict vegan could in a 16oz Delmonico steak. The same holds for someone such as me that has worked hard to eliminate processed foods and added sugar from my diet. I will no longer drink a regular can of Coke or munch down on sour cream and onions potato chips – no matter how much I used to love them.

There also comes a point where attempting to be 100% healthy in all your food choices becomes overwhelming and in the end, impossible. The danger with this approach, is that the overwhelm leads to stress and frustration from attempting to be perfect, that it becomes very easy to succumb to the unnecessary pressure and give up. Frustration is a form of stress that often leads to bad things.

Instances of where I compromise nutritionally have already been mentioned. I usually don't purchase organic produce or pastured meats. I do, however, make sure that the fish I buy – both fresh and frozen – is wild caught. The unsanitary process of raising fish in a pen is the tipping point for me. Why I draw the line at fish and not beef is a good question. Perhaps, the cost difference between the two kinds of fish production isn't as great as it is for beef, poultry, and pork.



I'm also willing to ingest aspartame artificial sweetener on occasion. I'm fortunate that it doesn't give me a headache like it does for many others. However, now the Pepsi and Coke are taking measures to replace aspartame in their diet colas with sucralose (Splenda), I'll probably stop drinking diet soda altogether. Sucralose has been shown to interfere with gut bacteria [1]. This is a nutritional compromise I'm unwilling to make. However, I consume quite a bit of cured and processed meats such as salami, cooked ham, and deli meats such as turkey breast.

Perhaps, I'm foolhardy in choosing to ignore the nitrates and nitrites contained in these processed meats, but since I enjoy them so much, it would leave a pretty big void in my food options if I were to omit them. I rationalize their consumption by acknowledging the fact that humans have been eating cured meats for centuries without much evidence that

they have led to shortened life spans.

Some degree of compromise is essential to day to day living. We all lead busy lives and something has to give. Otherwise, we'd just collapse into a sobbing ball of limp flesh on the floor. The same holds for our eating habits. By defining and adopting an outline that guides a healthy eating plan for each of us that also allows some wiggle room; we place ourselves in a much stronger position to follow through with it. The end result is less frustration which in turn leads to less temptation to cheat and which ultimately leads to raging success in the long run.

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The Seven Principles of the Practical Carbs Lifestyle



Putting together the *Practical Carbs* eating plan and lifestyle has taken me almost twenty years. That would be twenty years of trial and error, experimentation, self-study, and a ton of frustration and setbacks. It's also involved considerable

financial investment. I've purchased loads of diet and nutrition books, nutritional supplements, and exotic food products.

Despite going on and off low-carb diets for years, I knew from the outset that it was the long term solution to my weight loss issues. It would take a few more years for me to realize that it was also the long term solution to many of the health issues that had plagued me up to that point.

I may not be a quick learner, but bang your head against a brick wall often enough, you tend to learn a few things. Either that, or you eventually knock yourself out. The result of this hard-won learning process are a set of strategies that I've been able to put to good use. I call these the *Seven Principles of the Practical Carbs Lifestyle*:

1. **Health First** – The old SNL Fernando Lamas skit used the catch phrase, *It's better to look good than to feel good*. It might have played to huge laughs back in the day, but it's an apt and sad commentary on how our society approaches the subject of body image. Simply removing sugar and starchy carbs from your diet can have an immediate impact on a host of medical conditions. Blood lipids improve, skin and hair become healthier, and of course fat is usually lost. Fat loss in turn lowers insulin resistance and which in turn lowers your risk for developing prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. The result is a cascading series of health benefits.
2. **Eat for your Type** – Where most diet plans, low-carb included, fall short is making the assumption that we're all alike. This is why the traditional low-fat, low-calorie diet has failed time and time again. Besides being a very difficult way of eating long term because most people can't tolerate being hungry all the time, which unfortunately is very common with this type of diet, not everyone can handle such high amounts of starchy carbs and sugar. On the other hand, some people

may actually require more (healthy) carbs in the form of whole grains, fruit, and vegetables to fuel their activity level while also keeping their weight down. People who do physical labor and those involved in athletic pursuits often have a difficult time sustaining a strict ketogenic way of eating. In the end it comes down to how your metabolism responds to insulin. The good news is this can be evaluated either subjectively by gauging your body weight with what you're eating or objectively, via various blood tests such as a lipid panel, C-Reactive Protein, and the panel of blood tests for glucose and diabetes.

3. **Gradual Immersion** – Forcing people wishing to embark on a low-carb eating plan into a state of ketosis such as the Atkins Induction Phase is much too abrupt a transition for my liking. In many cases, cutting back on sugar and refined flour products is enough to achieve significant weight loss as well as reap the accompanying health benefits. Daily net carb levels in this case can be several times those of Atkins Induction, often between 100-150 grams of daily net carbs. If after a few weeks at the higher levels, adequate weight loss is not experienced, then it's much easier to drop down to a lower level since you've already prepared both your mind and body for reducing carb consumption. In my experience, it's far easier to tighten things up while descending gradually than it is to relax your discipline while reintroducing carbs back into your diet. More often than not, the tendency is to relax things too much and then winding up blowing all your efforts.
4. **Nutritional Compromise** – In an ideal world, eating 100% "clean" and healthy would be incredibly easy and inexpensive. In my world, and probably yours as well, there are limits. Anything labeled "Organic" is most likely more expensive than the non-organic version. In many cases, a LOT more expensive. This also goes for "grass-fed" and "free-range" anything. Is it healthier?

Yes, I won't argue that, but I choose to purchase the non-organic varieties because it better suits my budget. I'm also not up for an extra trip to a special store that carries such products. Am I worried about ruining my health from eating non-organic? No. I personally feel the risk is small and is greatly outweighed by the risk of being forced off my eating regimen and back to being overweight and unhealthy simply because I can't afford to buy organic products. But this is my personal choice. If you're unwilling to make such a compromise, then I respect that. This is in line with *Principle 7: You're Always in Control*.

- 5. Prepare Your Own Food** – I could never have started on eating low-carb unless I was willing to cook most of my own meals. This includes weekly grocery shopping excursions. Before you throw up your hands and say *that's way too much time and effort* or *I'm a terrible cook*, please hear me out. It's not all that hard. I realize that meal planning is a deal breaker for a lot of busy people. After all, who has the time or patience to sit down and plan out every meal for the coming week? I don't. What I do is make certain that I have all the ingredients for the core recipes that I like to cook. Many items can be purchased in bulk sizes and kept frozen such as chicken breasts, seafood, and even beef if you eat it. Vegetables like peas and green beans can also be kept frozen. Fresh items such as salad greens, fruit, vegetables, eggs and dairy products can be purchased during your weekly grocery shopping. Snack items such as nuts, cheese, and salami can also be purchased weekly. And when it comes to cooking, no worries! If you can fry an egg, then you can cook a wealth of mouth-watering low-carb meals! No one would mistake me for a gourmet cook, but I eat quite well with a very limited set of culinary skills. I also prepare very simple meals that that often only require one pot or pan, use a limited set of ingredient, and can be on

the table in 30 minutes or less. Try and top that Domino's Pizza!

6. **Evaluate, Tweak and Move Forward** – Measuring your progress and taking assessment of where you've been and where you're currently at are important steps in keeping up your progress. Things don't stay constant. Your life or work situation may change, requiring you to adapt your eating schedule and routine. You may experience a setback where you've put on extra weight despite being strict with your eating. Our bodies and metabolism change as we age. This is a fact. What once worked splendidly now appears to have little to no effect. When this occurs, it's time to take assess and adjust. It also requires a frank and honest evaluation of how well you've been sticking to both your eating and exercise plans. Have you gone off track? Are you giving full effort? It's never too late to get back on track and push even harder.
7. **You're Always in Control** – How you ultimately decide to live your life is your choice. What you eat and drink and your activity level are also your choices—very important ones. A lot of diet books and experts will tell you that it's not your fault that you're overweight. I understand what motivates this as we all want to be reassured and comforted, but in the end, it is your responsibility how you choose to deal with your condition. My goal is to help you choose a way of eating and exercising that best suits your metabolic and personality types.