



CHAPTER 1

Real “Fast Food” for Real Weight Loss

Imagine how you'd feel if you were at your dream weight—healthier, more energetic, and happier than you've ever been. Imagine if you could get there hassle-free, without spending countless hours in the kitchen or thinking obsessively about what you're going to eat or how much of it you should eat. Doesn't this sound like an ideal way to lose weight and get healthy? Now ask yourself, “What's stopping me?”

When I coach my clients, I find that they want to lose weight but can't find the time to cook. They detest boring, bland diet food. They hate obsessing over calories, carbs, and fat. Nor do they want to go to weight-loss classes or meetings. They want to eat delicious food, spend minimal time preparing it, and watch those extra pounds fall off naturally.

Does any of this sound familiar? If so, then you're not alone. Not by a long shot. Getting in shape and staying healthy in today's world can defi-

nitely be challenging. Trust me when I say, been there, done that!

It took me a long time to become a health and wellness expert, and I experienced a lot of ups and downs in the process. As I described earlier, I was very unhealthy while I was modeling. Eventually I left the fashion industry and its pressures, but I still swung back and forth: I'd starve myself and overexercise, then I'd eat everything in sight, gain weight, and feel so bad about myself that I didn't want to exercise at all. Soon I couldn't sleep, so I relied on sleeping pills for the next five years. I fell into a dark place and didn't think there was any way out. It wasn't until I let go of the intense pressure I put on myself to be "perfect" that I began to get better.

Still, as I began my road back to health, I had no idea which path I should take. And it's no wonder: there are so many diets, fitness trends, and health products out there, and they all point in different—often opposite—directions. I was confused by all the information out there. Should I be paleo, vegan, or just raw before 4:00 PM? Should I go low-carb or high-carb? Or should I be focused on cleansing and fasting? Seriously, what was best? Should I treat breakfast as the most important meal of the day or skip it? Should I drink bulletproof-style coffee or swear off caffeine altogether?

I get questions like these all the time. Clients tell me they're scared of not eating enough animal protein, and yet they can't seem to understand why their digestion is terrible after eating meat at every meal. People are curious, and hungry for the right nutritional information—which is great. But with more information out there than ever before, there's also more room for confusion.

In this book, I make nutrition, dieting, and health easy to understand and effective for you. It all boils down to three simple secrets that will change your body and your life right now.

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Secret #1: Weekly Meal Prep

During the week, after a long day of health and nutrition coaching, the last thing I want to worry about is making food. If there isn't something

awaiting me in my fridge, ready to be heated and devoured, I know I'm in trouble. I might grab something less healthy or go out to eat or reach for something convenient that is just not good for my body.

I bet you've been in the same boat. In an online questionnaire administered by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada in 2011 and reported on www.cbc.ca, 41 percent of respondents said healthy meals are too much trouble to prepare. Too much trouble? *Cha-ching!* That's music to the ears of every fast-food joint on the planet. They've convinced us that we have better things to do with our time than cook, when in reality, planning healthy meals and cooking for ourselves is probably the single best thing we can do for our weight and health, not to mention our bank account.

So just think . . . you open your fridge and there's a full week of healthy, delicious food that's prepped, neatly portioned, and ready to eat. Wouldn't that make sticking to your diet and achieving fat loss a lot easier?

Behold: the power of meal prep. In essence, it involves cooking up several meals ahead of time and packaging them in individual, portion-sized containers so they're ready to eat and enjoy.

Making all your food for the week in advance keeps you on track with healthy, convenient eating, week to week. The key to success is planning out all of your meals on the weekend—for most people, Sunday works well—then doing the shopping and the prep on the same day. You can also split your prep into two days, with Wednesday as your second meal prep day, so the prep isn't quite as labor intensive. If you're worried about food not being as fresh, then splitting your week into two is a great option.

Whatever day you choose to do your meal prep, the preparation itself will take only two to three hours. Compare that to spending one to two hours each day cooking—seven to fourteen hours a week! Meal prepping is a huge timesaver—and more than that, it will help you control your portion sizes, stop you from obsessing over what to eat, save you money on groceries, and help you to achieve faster and easier weight loss. Meal prep is quite miraculous in everything it brings to the table—literally.



Secret #2: Plants!

So, what exactly are you going to be prepping? Mostly plant-based meals. I'm talking about vegetables, grains, fruits, and nuts. Yes, this is Secret #2 for keeping your weight down naturally and living a long and healthy life.

Here's some powerful evidence: vegetarian and vegan diets (both are plant based) that *skipped counting calories* produced greater weight loss over two months and kept the weight off at six months compared to diets that included meat, according to a randomized, controlled study conducted at the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina in Columbia.

The study was the first to directly compare the effects of five diets: vegan, vegetarian, pesco-vegetarian, semi-vegetarian, and omnivorous. All five diets focused on low-fat, low-glycemic-index foods (again, no calorie counting!). What's more, all five stressed eating foods that were as unprocessed as possible.

After just two months, participants eating the plant-based diets had lost an average of 8 to 10 pounds, while those eating meat lost an average of 5 pounds. At six months, the vegans had shed about 7 percent of their weight, the semi-vegetarian group had dropped about 4 percent of their weight, the pesco-vegetarian group had lost about 3 percent, and the meat group was also down about 3 percent.

So all groups lost a significant amount of weight without having to count calories, but the weight loss was highest in the vegan group. There was also much less intake of saturated fat and cholesterol in the vegan group.

Once I started prepping and eating clean, organic, and largely plant foods, I felt better mentally and emotionally. I felt less stressed, anxious, and depressed. I even started sleeping better.

Okay, so it worked for me. But can it work for you? Yes, I believe so.

In 2015, a paper in the journal *Nutritional Neuroscience* observed that vegans experienced less stress, anxiety, and depression than people who ate a mostly meat-based diet. The researchers noted that the "reduction of animal food intake may have mood benefits." Like me, you're probably

wondering why that is. No explanation or evaluation was given, but I think it has to do with a number of known factors that affect our brains. One factor is that plant-based diets are extremely high in brain-friendly vitamins, like folate and B6, and beneficial fats. Plant-based diets also steer you away from bad fats that tend to harm mood and mental performance while increasing your intake of essential fatty acids from good fats, such as flaxseeds, walnuts, and olive oil.

Another reason you'll feel better on a plant-based diet is that you're not ingesting the hormones found in most meat products. We take on the energy of the things we eat, and when animals are not raised in a loving environment, their stress hormones accumulate in their bodies—and those hormones wind up in our favorite steak. This is why it's so important to purchase local and organic products as often as possible. Yes, organic can be more expensive (more later on combatting priciness by buying in bulk!), but it's worth it. Not only will the food taste better, but you will feel better.

The food we eat is vitally important: it affects everything from our emotional health to our skin health, from our energy levels to our brain function. Not only is eating lots of fruits and vegetables an ideal way to feel great and shed pounds, but mounting research shows that plants are packed with powerful compounds called phytochemicals that boost your immunity, protect against disease, and fight fat.

To get these benefits, we must eat a wide variety of colorful foods. The more colorful a fruit or veggie, the more health-building nutrients it contains. Red foods, such as tomatoes, raspberries, strawberries, red peppers, and red onions, for example, get their hues from lycopene, a powerful antioxidant that mops up cell-damaging free radicals and cuts the risk of certain cancers, including breast and cervical cancers. Orange foods like carrots, sweet potatoes, and mangos are filled with alpha- and beta-carotene, which the liver converts to vitamin A and retinol, key nutrients needed for eye health, immune defenses, and healthy cell division. Green foods—think kale, spinach, and broccoli—are loaded with nutrients that detoxify the body and help you lose weight. Blue and purple foods such as blueberries, blackberries, and beets contain health-protective antioxidants.

When you eat a plateful of colorful foods, the nutrients act synergistically to combat disease. The phytochemicals in the red strawberries you ate for breakfast, for instance, may fight off illness more effectively when combined with the mashed avocado on your morning toast. If you can prep your meals with at least three colors each, you're on your way to the healthiest, leanest, and most vibrant body ever.

I don't want you thinking that I am trying to convert you into a vegan, though! The proof is in the science that eating plant-based is healthier for the planet, your body, and your waistline. My goal throughout this book is to provide incredibly delicious, real food recipes.

My 28-Day Meal Prep Weight-Loss Plan

All of this brings me to my 28-day plan that you'll be following here. Here's how you'll do it:

- You'll eat three main meals—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—in moderate but filling serving sizes.
- You'll enjoy two optional snacks daily. These can be fresh fruit with some nuts, and you have the option of prepping some scrumptious snacks for the week.
- You have the option of eating one luscious but nutritious dessert each week; choose one day and make a plan to whip up the dessert you choose from the recipes provided.
- You'll have plenty of vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and seeds. But you don't have to stick with 100 percent plants. For those of who want to take a stepwise approach to the plan, you can add in animal protein foods such as eggs, poultry, fish, or meat. There are a few recipes throughout the book that do include some of these items, and you can either follow those, swap out the animal products with vegan ones, or skip the recipe altogether and pick a different one you like.
- You'll eat one mainly raw meal daily, such as one of my colorful salads with loads of extras on top that will leave you nourished and satisfied.

- You'll be introduced to "souping," a healthier alternative to juicing.
- You won't eat dairy and you will consume minimal salt, but you'll find that you won't miss either, because you'll be using *delicious* nut milks and you'll discover how to season your foods so that so they taste better spiced than salted.
- You'll get your share of healthy, beneficial fats from nuts, seeds, and good-for-you oils such as coconut oil and olive oil.
- You'll drink plenty of liquids—water (including my detox waters), smoothies, and herbal teas.

So that's an overview of the plan. It's divided into four weeks, and each week has a different theme, so you never get bored. Changing this up is also good for your body—by varying your meals and their flavor, you continue giving your body everything it needs for healthy weight loss.

Week One: Cleansing Soups and Healing Smoothies

Unlike juice cleanses, which are loaded with natural sugar from fruit and contain no fiber, soups contain little sugar, so you avoid blood sugar spikes that can leave you feeling moody, tired, and craving sugar. Vegetable "souping" lets you have a calorie-light day full of healthy ingredients *while still getting fiber*. A steaming bowl of soup not only warms you up but is a fast and efficient way to pack nutrients into your diet.

I've found soup to be a delicious weight-loss tool too. Soup is largely liquid and can satisfy your appetite. With water-rich foods like soup, you'll feel full and be less likely to get overly hungry, slip up, or binge. In a 2005 study conducted at Pennsylvania State University for *Obesity Research*, researchers reported that overweight or obese women who consumed two daily servings of soup lost 50 percent more weight than dieters who did not eat soup but had two snacks instead.

You'll also be adding smoothies into week one, using my favorite smoothie recipes. They taste amazing, and they're high in fiber and healthy fats. Like soups, smoothies are a wonderful weight-loss tool because they keep you feeling full despite the fact that you're consuming fewer calories.

Plus, a week of soups and smoothies gives your digestive system a break because the nutrients are absorbed and assimilated into your body much more easily than they would be from solid food. This means fewer hunger pains, more energy, and natural weight loss without ever looking at a label or counting calories.

That's week one: the souping and smoothie phase. After these first seven days, expect to be pleasantly surprised when you step on the scale. Based on what I've observed with my clients, you'll probably be lighter by about 5 pounds or more.

Week Two: Fiber Up

In week two, you'll up the fiber ante. I find fiber to be one of the best weight-loss weapons in the world because of its influence on insulin control, hunger, and body fat storage. Beans, chickpeas, peas, and lentils are among the foods highest in fiber—and they pack a punch for weight loss and weight control, as reported by Canadian researchers in 2016 in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. They analyzed data from twenty-one clinical trials on these fiber-packed foods and found that they can help dieters shed unwanted pounds and reduce body fat—all without counting calories or restricting other foods. The analysis also showed that people eating these foods did not gain weight back after losing it.

The Canadian team also reported that these foods have a low glycemic index—meaning that they break down gradually in the digestive tract and the fiber may reduce the absorption of fat too. They also appear to help lower blood levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol.

There's more good news: eating beans, chickpeas, peas, and lentils makes people feel fuller. Of course, this is key to weight loss. One reason I believe that so many diets fail is because people suffer from hunger and food cravings, which makes a diet unsustainable.

Conversely, trouble starts when we eat low-fiber foods: refined carbs, like those found in white bread, cake, cookies, and other baked goods. These foods are practically devoid of fiber and thus quickly digested, activating a rapid spike in blood glucose. In reaction, the pancreas churns out lots of insulin to wipe up the surplus glucose, though some of it will

likely get packed away as fat. Then blood glucose levels fall to the point where you feel so shaky, you're crazy to eat again.

The foods I emphasize on this plan are fiber-rich, non-processed, and lower-glycemic carbohydrates. They don't elicit the same kind of spike-and-crash response, and they make you feel full, so you don't overeat. In addition to beans, you'll also up your consumption of veggies like broccoli, leafy greens, cauliflower, cucumbers, and celery—along with nutritious grains, nuts, and seeds.

An important note: You won't be choosing boxed foods with labels that say "high fiber." Those products are usually made with wood pulp (typically labeled as "cellulose") after the real fiber has been naturally removed. You're going to eat foods naturally high in fiber—not splinters or anything termites eat!

So that's week two, the fiber-up phase.

After both weeks, expect to be around 5 to 10 pounds lighter than you are right now. Seriously! This weight will drop from every part of your body . . . so start anticipating a flatter tummy and thinner thighs. But these aren't the only changes you'll experience. Your body will love the surge of nutrients it's receiving—so you'll find that you're more energetic, in a better mood, sleeping well throughout the night, and experiencing an overall feeling of well-being. And believe me, the time you spend prepping your meals on Sunday will free up the rest of the week to unleash your newfound energy on activities you enjoy or felt too tired to cross off your to-do list!

Week Three: The Protein Period

Protein is to your body what a wood frame is to your house or steel is to a bridge. Nutritionally, it's the most important structural material in your body, vital to exceptional health because of its role in building, repairing, and maintaining the body.

If you don't get enough protein, your body will start breaking down muscle tissue to yield energy and you'll lose body-firming muscle, which will sabotage your weight-loss efforts.

I'm well aware that low-carb, high-protein diets are all the rage, and they can be an effective way to lose weight. But on my plan, you will in-

crease your protein intake mostly from plants such as beans and legumes, which also happen to be higher in carbohydrates than animal proteins. Will you still lose weight? Yes! In 2014, researchers from the School of Public Health at Loma Linda University in California compared weight loss in dieters who followed either a low-carb diet or a high-fiber legume diet. They found that the bean-rich diet worked as well as a low-carbohydrate diet for losing weight, with the added benefit of tamping down artery-clogging cholesterol, which often plagues low-carb, high-protein dieters. I like hearing that because I'm all about having a healthy body first and foremost. Health is wealth, after all.

In terms of hunger, protein is more satisfying than the other macronutrients and requires more energy to break down and assimilate. And whereas carbs can spike your blood sugar and insulin, protein does not. Having plant-based proteins such as beans give you a high protein-to-fiber-to-carbohydrate ratio, making it one of the healthiest foods on the planet. So don't worry about carbohydrates and a lack of protein on this plan. It is designed to keep you full, help you drop the weight, and improve your digestion.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommend 50 grams of protein daily, which you'll easily get as long as you eat the beans, nuts and seeds, grains, and vegetables that I recommend. As I've pointed out, plant protein is as effective as animal protein for losing and managing weight, building and preserving muscle, and making the stuff our bodies need for good health. Just look at a horse (a plant-eater) and you'll be reassured that plant proteins build sleek, lean muscle, and plenty of it. Still not convinced? I challenge you to try out the protein power week with the recipes written as they are and see how you feel. I'm certain you will have more energy, will have better digestion, and will find yourself thinking more clearly. Remember, you still have the option to add animal products, so follow the plan as best you can and modify as needed.

So that's week three, the protein phase. More good news: the number on the scale is dropping. Don't be surprised if you're down by 8 to 15 pounds by the end of the third week. And I'm sure your clothes are fitting better too, not to mention your tummy is going to be flatter.

Week Four: Detox

Finally, in week four, you'll eat foods and enjoy recipes that emphasize known "detox foods." These foods naturally detox your body to help you lose additional weight, break through a plateau, and, for many of you, shed those last 5 stubborn pounds.

Detoxification is the process of cleansing toxins from the body. When I mention "toxins," I'm talking about the pesticides, artificial hormones, additives, and preservatives with which our food is treated, as well as the excess sugar, alcohol, caffeine, tobacco, pharmaceutical drugs, air pollution, bacteria, and viruses to which our bodies are routinely exposed—either by our lifestyle choices or through the environment.

According to the American Academy of Environmental Medicine, there are some ninety thousand chemicals commonly circulating in the modern world, many of which may produce chemical sensitivities, ranging from allergies to chronically poor health. When chemicals don't break down fast enough or the body's processes can't keep up with intake, you can develop a variety of symptoms; everything from weight gain, aches and pains, headaches, dull skin, acne, lack of energy, insomnia, constipation, and bloating to cellulite, joint pain, depression, and severe fatigue. As if these aren't enough reasons to detox, a buildup of toxins is also associated with diseases such as fibromyalgia, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and cancer, just to name a few.

I'm sure you've heard the back-and-forth on whether detoxing is actually good for you. One side says it's all nonsense: your body does a beautiful job of cleansing and detoxifying itself. But detox advocates say our bodies need to be flushed with the help of juice cleanses and water fasts, which reset our metabolism, our gut health, and nearly every other system in our body.

So, what's the truth here? Well, for more details on this I highly recommend you check out my first book, *The 5-Day Real Food Detox*, in which I talk all about detoxing. The short of it, though, is that yes, our bodies naturally detox, and our liver is an incredible organ of detoxification. However, we are exposed to so many chemicals in our food supply and in the environment that the body becomes overwhelmed and needs the nudge of an occasional detox. Simply put, a detox is good for your body and

health, because you're essentially cutting out unhealthy foods and drinks and replacing them with nutrient-rich ones. This is what detoxing really means to me. It's not about anything other than removing something not as good for you, say alcohol, and replacing it with something better for you—a green smoothie, for instance. There is not a single person who can argue that having a bit less booze and a bit more fruits and veggies isn't healthy. So think of the detoxing week as just adding in more beneficial things to your body.

What are those foods? Think beets, cruciferous veggies, avocados, fennel, raw spinach, walnuts, onions, beans, garlic, and red peppers. While not technically a detox or a cleanse, this week will teach you about cleansing foods, and it's a great way to finish out the four weeks, breaking any plateau you might have and leaving you feeling lighter than you ever imagined.

That's week four, the detox phase.

After 28 days, a lot of changes have taken place. You've lost weight, steadily and naturally—perhaps up to 15 to 20 pounds total. Your body is responding positively to the alterations in your diet. You're experiencing less bloating and fewer cravings. Your skin is clear, and your energy levels are so high that you don't even miss your unhealthy indulgences.

So, you can have the body—and brain—you want by solidifying your meal prep habits and increasing plant foods in your diet. But you just have to . . .

Secret #3: Be Consistent

What we do on a daily basis is more important than what we do once in a blue moon. Consistency is the key, my friends. Without it, your progress will stall.

How can you stay consistent? First, focus on making small healthy choices each day. It's these changes that add up to the big ones you ulti-

mately desire. Second, don't beat yourself up if you slip. Just get back on the plan and keep moving forward. Third, put in the work. If you eat healthy only occasionally, you won't develop a rockin' bod.

I'd like you to remember one thing going forward, though. This book is all about consistency. The more you do the meal prep, the easier it will become. The first time you do it, you might find it frustrating or time consuming. But I promise that it will become easier, just like riding a bike or driving a car. The more we do something, the easier it becomes. So stick with it even if it's hard, and the rewards will become apparent.

The other thing I'd like you to take away from this is that everything is customizable to you! If you hate tomatoes, please do not feel compelled to eat them. I receive countless questions from people thinking that they cannot make a certain recipe of mine because it has one ingredient they don't like. What I'd like you to take away from this book is that cooking is fun, meal prepping is easy and effective, and that you will find things that work for your lifestyle. If you are fully vegan, then either skip the recipes that mention an animal product or swap it out for plant-based protein that you love. A recipe has almonds and you can't have them? Use a different nut. The other thing to note is that if you absolutely think that the meal prep is going to be too much for the week or you don't want to make all the variation of meals, then simplify it. I always say, even if you cannot do a plan 100 percent, trying to do it is still better than not doing it at all!

There are definitely weeks that I know are going to be busier than others, whether it's a lot of meetings each day, or certain dinners I cannot avoid. When I hit these points, I absolutely simplify my meal prep to make sure that I am still going to eat the food I have in my fridge and not fall off-track. The key to simplifying the meal prep each week is making note of any recipes you would like to eat multiple days and buying extra ingredients for those, instead of what is written. For example, if you want to make this plan really simple, choose two breakfast options and alternate between them throughout the week, depending what week you're on. Do the same for lunch and dinner. The plan is written to give you an abundance of delicious recipes so you don't get bored; however, I don't want you getting overwhelmed and quitting altogether. It's better to eat a few

recipes I've provided each week than none at all!

Now, before we dive into the mechanics of meal prepping, let's talk about the amazing ways it can help curb emotional overeating. That's where we're headed next.