

Foods That Burn Fat: The Top 10 Lists

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Anytime the topic of discussion in my blogs, articles or newsletters has turned to my own personal grocery shopping list, there has always been a spike in interest. It seems that many people are not only curious about what foods a natural bodybuilder eats to maintain single digit body fat, but they also want to be taken by the hand and told exactly what foods to eat themselves while on fat-burning or muscle building programs. That's why I decided to put together four separate top 10 lists of healthy foods that burn fat and build muscle.

Exact quantities and menus are not listed, just the individual foods, and of course my food intake does vary. I aim to get as many different varieties of fruits and vegetables as possible over the course of every week and there are a lot of substitutions made, so you are not seeing the full list of everything I eat, only what foods I eat most of the time.

I also want to point out that while I don't believe that extreme low carbs are necessary or most effective when you look at the long term, research has shown that there are some definite advantages to a low to moderate carb and higher protein diet for fat loss purposes. These include reduced appetite, higher thermic effect of food and automatic calorie control.

Personally, I reduce my carb intake moderately and temporarily prior to bodybuilding competitions. Specifically, it's the foods that are on the starchy carbs and grains list that go down during the brief pre-competition period when I'm working on that really ripped look. I keep the green and fibrous veggie intake very high however, along with large amounts of lean protein, small amounts of fruit, and adequate amounts of essential fats.

This list reflects my personal preferences, so this is not a prescription to all readers to eat as I do. It's very important for compliance to choose foods you enjoy and to have the option for a wide variety of choices. In the past several years, nutrition and obesity research - in studying ALL types of diets - has continued to conclude that almost any hypocaloric diet that is not completely monotonous can work, at least in the short term.

It's not so much about the high carb - low carb argument or any other debate as much as it is about calorie control and compliance. The trouble is, restricted diets and staying in a calorie deficit is difficult, so most people can't stick with any program and they fall off the wagon, whichever wagon that may be.

I believe that a lot of our attention needs to shift away from pointless debates (for example, low carb vs. high carb is getting really old ..so like ..get over it everyone, it's a calorie deficit that makes you lose weight, not the amount of carbs).

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Instead, our focus should shift towards these questions:

- * How can we build an eating program that we can enjoy while still getting us leaner and healthier?
- * How can we build an eating program that helps us control calories?
- * How can we build an eating program that improves compliance?

Here's one good answer: Eat a wide variety of high nutrient density, low calorie density foods that you enjoy which still fit within healthy, fat-burning, muscle-building guidelines!

Here are the lists of foods I choose to achieve these three outcomes. This eating plan is not difficult to stick with at all, by the way. I enjoy eating like this and it feels almost weird not to eat like this after doing it for so long.

Remember, habits work in both directions, and as motivational speaker Jim Rohn has said, "Bad habits are easy to form and hard to live with and good habits are hard to form but easy to live with."

These are listed in the order I frequently consume them. So for example, if oatmeal is on the top of the list, it means that is the food I am most likely to eat every single day.

My 10 top natural starchy carb and whole grains

1. Oatmeal (old fashioned)
2. Yams
3. Brown rice (a favorite is basmati, a long grain aromatic rice)
4. Sweet potatoes (almost same as yams)
5. Multi grain hot cereal (mix or barley, oats, rye, triticale and a few others)
6. White potatoes
7. 100% whole wheat bread
8. 100% whole wheat pasta
9. Beans (great for healthy chili recipes)
10. Cream of rice hot cereal

My Top 10 top vegetables

1. Broccoli
2. Asparagus
3. Spinach
4. Salad greens
5. Tomatoes
6. Peppers (green, red or yellow)
7. Onions
8. Mushrooms

9. Cucumbers
10. Zucchini

My top 10 lean proteins

1. Egg whites (whole eggs in limited quantities)
2. Whey or Casein protein (protein powder supplements)
3. Chicken Breast
4. Salmon (wild Alaskan)
5. Turkey Breast
6. Top round steak (grass fed beef)
7. Flank Steak (grass fed beef)
8. Lean Ground Turkey
9. Bison/Buffalo
10. Trout

My top 10 fruits

1. Grapefruit
2. Apples
3. Blueberries
4. Canteloupe
5. Oranges
6. Bananas
7. Peaches
8. Grapes
9. Strawberries
10. Pineapple

Note: I DO include healthy fats as well, such as walnuts, almonds, extra virgin olive oil, flaxseeds, flaxseed oil (supplement - not to cook with), avocado and a few others.

Also, I do eat dairy products and have nothing against them, nor am I lactose intolerant. I simply don't eat as much dairy as the rest of the stuff on my lists. When I eat dairy, it's usually skim milk, low or non fat cottage cheese, low or non fat yogurt and low or non fat cheese (great for omelettes).

Last but not least, I usually follow a compliance rate of about 95%, which means I take two or three meals per week of whatever I want (stuff that is NOT on these lists - like pizza, sushi, big fatty restaurant steaks, etc)

I hope you found this helpful and interesting. Keep in mind, this is MY food list, and although you probably couldn't go wrong to emulate it, you need to choose natural foods you enjoy in order to develop habits you can stick with long term. In the fruits and vegetables categories alone, there are hundreds of other choices out there, so enjoy them all!

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