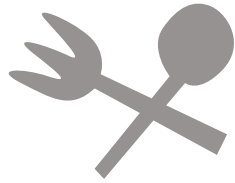


ROBB WOLF *revolutionary solutions
to modern life*



**FEEDING
KIDS
PALEO**

Thanks for downloading this guide on Feeding Kids Paleo. After I posted the blog on how we feed our kiddos in the Wolf household (you'll find the contents of that post below) we received a ton of interest as well as questions – so much so that we decided to put together this short guide to flesh out some additional topics.

As I mentioned in the original blog post, I am not suggesting what we do is the “best” way to do things, it’s just what we do. I’ll provide some reasoning behind what we are up to, use that information to your best advantage, not as doctrine written in stone. I also hope to convey that there’s no sense in haranguing yourself with guilt or feeling stressed if you don’t get things perfect. It’s a process. Experiment, tinker, and find what works best for you and your little ones.

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THE ORIGINAL POST: FEEDING KIDS PALEO

Hey folks!

I've had a lot of questions about how we feed our girls, Zoe (Age 4 in May) and Sagan (age 2 in July) so I'll take a crack at that finally. Just a few "rules of engagement" upfront:

1. I am not suggesting what we do is the "best" way to do things, it's just what we do. I'll provide some reasoning behind what we are up to, use that information to your best advantage, not as doctrine written in stone.
2. The kid topic seems...dodgy. Folks get really cranky about this stuff. I have suspicions why this is the case but I want this to be a practical piece on how we feed our kids, not a psychological treatise on bad internet behavior. Be nice. You may be wondering where my prickliness comes from on this, just check out some of the comments which popped up on posts related to type 1 diabetes...folks get really cranky and reactionary about the feeding and watering of kids.

Feeding the little ones starts not long after their arrival, so I think a little context there could

be helpful: Nicki had pretty easy pregnancies with both girls (easy for me to say sitting on the sideline!) and reasonably uneventful deliveries. We had some problems with latching Zoe (long story) and Nicki ended up pumping for 9 months in that case. Sagan latched pretty easily and is coming up on 2 years of breastfeeding. All things considered we were lucky and the girls



The Wolf family

got off to a pretty damn idyllic start when you think about epigenetics, gut biome etc. Nicki ate well throughout both pregnancies. Not “perfect paleo” but quite well and tried to keep her glycemic load consistent and not too high. We opted for an A1C in lieu of a the OGTT (oral glucose tolerance test). I did a great [podcast with Lily Nichols RD on this topic](#) and I have written about this several times on the blog. We used a lot of the information from Chris Kresser’s “[Healthy Baby Code](#)” to do our best to shore up any possible nutritional deficiencies Nicki might have faced, I highly recommend this program.



Sagan eating a chicken leg

OK, WHAT DID/DO THE GIRLS ACTUALLY EAT?

Both girls exclusively took breastmilk up to about 6-7 months of age and then we started rotating in the following:

Meats (including some liver, heart etc), bone broth, squash, sweet potatoes, avocado, fruit and soups. I make the bone broth weekly using a pressure cooker and we cook as much

as possible with this. This process is dead simple: Add bones to the pressure cooker + a tablespoon or two of apple cider vinegar. Bring up to heat, let it cook for a few hours, turn it off and let it cool off, typically overnight. Store the broth in mason jars in the fridge! The girls will also drink this straight with just a pinch of added sea salt. If we are out of bone broth we do use this [commercially available option](#) which is pretty damn good.

We cooked and blended most of the girls food initially, but both girls STRONGLY preferred... wait for it....pre-chewed food. I know, “dirty and unhygienic” right? I’ll be honest, it was a bit odd for me at first but they strongly preferred the pre-chewed food vs what came out of a blender. We rotated in things like liver and egg yolk pretty frequently as these tend to be both very nutrient dense, but can give some kids GI problems initially. Fortunately, we seemed to have no issues. I could make a pretty strong case for holding off on solid food longer than what we did as the GI lining of infants is not fully formed until around age two. Why might this be? Infants absorb large, intact proteins (antibodies/immunoglobulins) via the breast milk which are critical for the immune status of newborns. The realities of modern life being what they are however, we started introducing solid food a bit sooner than what MIGHT be biologically optimal. This is a key takeaway: You can be awash with information, but what can you reasonably pull off and not hang yourself from stress? For us, introducing some solid food meant a bit more freedom and it seemed like better sleep for all of us as the solid food seemed to “stick with” the girls quite well and helped them sleep through the night.

WHAT ABOUT “NON-PALEO” FOODS?

We kept Zoe grain free until almost 2 years old at which time she'd get the occasional bit of white rice or corn tortillas if we made tacos. Zoe also started taking some goat milk around 12 months. Here is another takeaway: I actually DO try to get as much variety and latitude in the girls diets as possible, while weighing the immunogenic potential of the foods they eat. I've had the good fortune of interacting with thousands of people who went through this process before me and I noticed certain things that consistently caused problems. What's the first food we are supposed to give our infants? Most people (our pediatrician included) tend to gravitate towards some kind of rice cereal. Even the orthodox medical types know that rice is much less immunogenic than say wheat. We tended to rotate through potatoes, yams, bananas, plantains and squash for carbs. And purple sweet potatoes. Our girls absolutely love those! I can make an easy argument that all of these foods are far more nutritious than rice cereal and tend to be less immunogenic. Ok, back to that goat milk: Zoe started “weaning” around 9 months (remember Nicki was pumping all that breast milk) and Nicki felt like we needed some kind of supplement to fill the gaps given the decrease in breast milk for Zoe. We opted for [a formula designed by Mt. Capra](#) I know some of the WAPF leaning folks will lose their

shizz at not going for one of the liver formulas, but the goat milk formula was both convenient and seemed well tolerated by Zoe. Again, this is some of the process of trying to figure out “what is best” vs “what can I pull off.” During this time Nicki was a co-founder of a tech start-up and I do whatever the hell it is that I do...said another way, we are really busy. Had Zoe experienced problems with the goat milk formula you can

bet that we would have tried more time consuming options, but I weighed the risks/rewards and opted for something that was much more time efficient than the liver formula (and easy to do on the road) but much better than the soy/cow milk based formula.

Some folks will read this and think “Wow, that's a very balanced, reasonable approach...I thought Robb might be pretty zealous

about all this.” Others will be appalled by the degree of non-paleo latitude I practice. Funny how the interwebz work!

As I said, it seemed like Zoe was doing pretty well on the goat milk but then we noticed that Zoe had a really distended belly after drinking it. She also seemed to have some wacky-poo things going on. We deleted the goat milk and within a day or two all issues resolved. We motored along pretty well until summer hit last year and one of the truly amazing features of summer became a staple for us: watermelon. Zoe would eat,

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literally, a half a watermelon per day and again started having poo problems and a distended belly. I have some fructose malabsorption issues so guessed that she might also. We pulled out the watermelon and again, in 3 days, no problems. Zoe does fine on low fructose fruits like bananas, peaches etc and there is a reality of dose to be considered here. She does not eat the same volume of these other fruits as she does in watermelon. Take Away: People are unique and you need to tinker and figure out what works. Fruit is great, but as with all things, the poison is in the dose. Similar story with Sagan: The kid can sit and eat a whole flat of blueberries. At first there were no issues, but we noticed Sagan developing some kind of eczema on her arms. We added more liver for Vit's A and D. No change. We reduced her amount of fruit and within a week one arm was completely clear and the other arm was 90% better. Again, fruit is good, too much fruit may not be.

I know someone will bring up "raw dairy" so I might as well address it here: Other than some grassfed butter in the sweet potatoes for both girls and some goat cheeses on the occasional gluten free pizza (I'll get to that later) we no longer do much dairy for the girls. Raw milk is a pain to procure where we live and I've seen enough WAPF type folks migrate towards the paleo side of the street (due to dairy issues, even from raw milk) to decide that the cost/benefit story was not favorable. Y'all do what you want, but that's how we have tackled things.

PRE-PROBIOTICS

As I mentioned above the girls get a wide variety of fermentable carbohydrate in the form of

bananas, white potatoes, a little white rice etc. Both girls eat homemade sauerkraut like it's some kind of magic elixir. Sagan will eat SPICY kimchi until her tongue burns and she wipes it with a napkin, chugs water and then eats more! Zoe will not touch the stuff. When introducing new foods we are fairly insistent that the kids try it. If they don't like it, no biggie, we shelve it for a few months and try again. It's not a lot of drama and we notice that the girls have a decent variation in what they initially like and what they grow in and out of.



Zoe enjoying ribs

A QUICK LESSON ON HYPER-PALATABLE FOODS

Zoe was about a year and a half old when Nicki decided to make some "Christmas cookies" with Zoe's help. These were an almond meal snicker-doodle type of cookie and they are DAMN GOOD. Zoe had a lot of fun helping, and when she tried one of these cookies you

could see some kind of light in her eyes. For days and weeks afterwards, Zoe requested those cookies. Now, hang with me on this as I think it's important. We let Zoe try some good quality ice cream prior to this and she was totally uninterested. Similarly, when we'd do a coffee out we let her try a pretty watered down hot cocoa...she had a few sips and was done. Both of these things were way sweeter than what I'd normally eat and I too am pretty uninterested in either ice cream or hot chocolate. Those cookies though...they were "just right." They ticked the palatability box in ways that are hard to describe other than saying I'm not a big sweets guy but I could eat a metric ton of these. They are much tastier than what we normally do, but not over the top like most of the stuff you find commercially. It was like crack for Zoe. I related this story on Facebook in the hopes of getting folks to think about just how powerfully hyperpalatable foods can override our sense of taste and satiety. What I got was a bunch of people telling me Zoe had, at the age of 1.5 years, associated these cookies with "The Holiday Season" and it was in fact NOT a case of hyper palatability, but wistful nostalgia of "The Holidays." I say "bullocks" and I'll use one other example to make my case. As Zoe got older we let her try some 90% dark chocolate. She liked it, but no big deal. Then, Nicki switched the type of chocolate to an 85% variety. I'll be honest, the 85% tastes WAY better than the 90%. Result? Zoe was obsessed with that chocolate. We had

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we have food.*

to just stop the whole thing entirely for a month and then went back to the 90%. Result-2? Zoe was NOT obsessed with the 90% chocolate. She would ask for it occasionally, but not every 5 min like the 85%. This is largely speculation but I "think" that if anyone, kids included, is eating a largely whole food diet, foods that are WAY out of the ordinary (like commercial ice cream) are overwhelming. But, if we start ratcheting up

the palatability we can find a sweet spot where the foods are bypassing satiety signals and that can spiral on and on. This makes more sense to me than ascribing deep emotional connections in a 1.5 year old to "holiday foods." Can we get a double hit of hyper palatability and emotional ties to an event

like the holidays? Absolutely, but I think that comes later. As an aside we have found both girls love the [Paleo Power Balls](#). I'm pretty fond of them too and "might" hide a few packs in my sock and underwear drawer.

"TREATS" AND OTHER POTENTIAL PITFALLS

We don't have "treats" in the house, we have food. I have not tied emotionally charged behavior or rewards with food. It's not an easy road to navigate but as may have been made clear by my missive above regarding "holiday cookies" I think we can get into deep water by tying hyper palatable foods to rewards. We occasionally have gluten free pizza, chocolate and a gluten free cookie or muffin. It's

not a big deal when we have these things, it's also not a big deal when we do not have these things. Again, some will see this as balanced and reasonable, some will call it orthorexia.



Robb with Zoe and Sagan

WHAT ABOUT GLUTEN EXPOSURE?

There is some literature that indicates early exposure to certain foods, like gluten or dairy, can decrease the prevalence of things like type 1 diabetes and celiac disease. This exposure needs to happen at around 7 months of age... but the flip-side of this is we also know these foods are suspected triggers for a host of GI problems and aforementioned autoimmune diseases AND there are research papers saying the exact opposite, that we should limit exposure of these foods as long as possible to decrease the potential for problems. It's not a cut and dried topic. We also know that highly processed foods, particularly carbs, tend to shift the gut micro biome towards an unhealthy state. I have seen enough people report that their kids GI problems resolved after removing commonly offending foods that I opted to kick

the can down the road on this and keep the kids as gluten free as possible as long as possible. Perhaps it's a great idea, perhaps it's a mess. My mom lamented that she did not know that smoking during pregnancy (and while all of us kids were growing up) was a bad thing. In that day and age they simply did not know. We are earlobe deep in information and this is one area that I simply do not know what the right option is. It likely depends on the individual. As far as I know Zoe was "100%" gluten free up until the age of three when we had dinner with some friends at a BBQ joint and our friends ordered some sweet potato fries that were lightly breaded. Zoe really wanted to try them and I thought "good a time as any to test this out." She had a few fries and fortunately, had no reaction to them. Now, this does not incline me to start ordering toast for her meals as the likelihood of me getting a cross contamination is increased, and she loves "paleo" carbs. Also, I did not start out as reactive to gluten as I am now. I ate it almost daily as kid and I have no doubt there was some brain fog and other problems, but the terrible GI distress and neurological issues I now experience did not happen until after I caught giardia in my 20's. As far back as the 1950's we can find literature [connecting giardia infection with the development of celiac](#). This is why I encourage people to keep an open mind and to tinker. What might not have been a problem for you last year might be a huge issue this year. My hope is that feeding the girls as well as possible early on will set them up for better health than I have. Again, we have a lot of information to process and I just do the best I can to make good decisions.

ARE THE GIRLS HEALTHY?

The short answer (fortunately) is “yes, very.” Both girls are 98% percentile on height, 15-20th percentile on weight. They are tall and skinny. Both girls have been early walkers and talkers. Our pediatrician and I had a few dick measuring contests on our first few visits as he was pretty put off by the whole paleo gig BUT he has been quite impressed with the health and development of both girls. He related a funny story to me about nine months ago that really shifted things: One of his colleagues discovered that our girls are patients of his. The guy said “that paleo diet is spot on and Robb really knows his stuff.” Clearly I have that guy snowed! The net result was that our ped looked at all this with a fresh set of eyes and you really can’t ask more than that.

WHY BOTHER WITH ALL THIS? THE GIRLS WILL EAT WHAT THEY WANT EVENTUALLY?

I’ve had a few people, almost gleefully, proclaim that at some point the girls will be out with friends and will eat whatever they want. This was relayed as almost a victory on their part that no matter what my efforts, my kids will one day eat “non-paleo food.” I don’t want to speculate as to the psychology of these folks, but I’ll tell you why I do this: It’s my job as a parent to do the “best job I can.” I don’t let my kids climb on the furniture, we have wrestling mats and foam blocks for that. They say “please” and “thank you.” All of this is, hopefully, setting them up for success. It is not my intention to raise automatons, but kids need some lane-lines to not be little animals. I do my best to supply that. Zoe, at the age of three can tell you what the outcome of poor decisions are: Consequences.

As she gets older, IF she understands where the lane lines exist, she can make informed decisions about what is involved with going outside the lane-lines, be this related to food, drugs or picking good friends.

I hope you have found this to be helpful, I’ve tried to be as thorough as possible. I do not put this stuff forward as the way YOU should do things, I’m just sharing what we have done and provided some of the reasoning behind it. I’m not recommending that you try to tackle this as some kind of perfectionist crusade, we can leave that for the raw-vegans. What I hope you take from this is an understanding of how one very busy family navigates the feeding and watering of their kids. I also hope that if you or your children’s early life story is not optimal there may be things you can do to stack the deck more in your (and your kids) favor.



First family photo with Sagan

FERMENTABLES: KRAUT AND KIMCHI

Will kids eat homemade sauerkraut, kimchi and pickles!? Yes, they will, if you put these items in their slop-bucket consistently. Both of our girls LOVE sauerkraut, which I make 4-5 quarts at a time in a [Gairtopf fermenting crock pot](#).

I like doing this at home for a few reasons:

1. I can completely control the ingredients.
2. The culture is FRESH. Although the store-bought brands are good options, they are manufactured and then shipped...you likely see some decrease in culture load relative to the homemade option. Personally, I've noticed that my gluten reactivity is less when I'm regularly doing my homemade kraut (this is pretty subjective...I just seem to get poisoned less when eating out).
3. Price. You can make homemade varieties for pennies on the dollar compared to buying the live culture varieties you see in Whole Foods and co-ops.

HERE IS A SIMPLE RECIPE:

For every kilogram (2.2 lbs for the metrically challenged) of fresh (ideally organic) cabbage you will add 12-15g of salt. The hardliners will say this salt need to come from the himalayas and must be blessed by a llama. I differ in this



opinion, use what you've got. You will need to weigh out your cabbage ahead of time to know how much salt you need, this would be the case if you are growing the cabbage yourself. OR, make sure to keep your receipt which will detail how much your cabbage weighs...and remember, 1 kilogram=2.2 lbs.

Shred your cabbage in a food processor (or break out a VERY sharp knife and cut the cabbage as thinly as possible). I usually do one cabbage, dump it in the fermenting pot and then add some of the salt and mix it together.

Repeat this process until your fermenting crock pot is at the fill line or you are out of cabbage.

Optionally you can add a tablespoon of caraway seeds to each kilo of cabbage.

KIMCHI

I tend to buy kimchi from the store as we do not go through it as fast as the kraut. That said, you can make kimchi and a host of other fermented food items by searching the interwebz or picking up a [book like this](#).

Since we started these foods with the girls it's been relatively easy to get them to eat it...they never knew these were "weird" foods. If you



have older kids, just take your time. We've found "combo bites" to be very effective. A bit of kraut on a piece of hamburger is pretty damn tasty.

LIVER

HOW TO COOK AND HOW TO GET IT DOWN THE PIE HOLE

A lot of adults have problems with liver as they never developed a taste for it in their own youth. Well, suck it up buttercup! Time to get in some offal. We have found that chicken liver is MUCH milder tasting than say beef, lamb or pork, so it's not a bad idea to start there. I have had success with the following methods:

1. Fried in bacon fat
2. Paté
3. "Hidden" in hamburger or meatloaf

FRIED

Could not get easier. Take your ideally organic liver (although conventional is NOT a deal breaker if that's what you have access to) and rinse it, then blot dry with paper towels. Slice into reasonably thin pieces (which is no easy feat as the liver tends to wiggle and squirt everywhere). Season with salt and garlic powder, then fry in a generous amount of bacon fat, lard or similar tasty fat. Cut this into reasonably small pieces for the kiddos and then they can moderate their intake and not get overwhelmed by an overly large piece.

PATÉ

There are a ton of great recipes for this, [here is a fantastic option from Balanced Bites.](#)

We have played with a lot of options in this regard and the only thing I'd possibly delete from the above recipe is the rosemary. Both girls tend to throw the brakes on any food with rosemary in it, so just be aware of that. Butter, bacon fat and salt makes or breaks a good paté so pay particular attention to those ingredients. Both girls LOVE baby carrots, so we will put out a bit of paté and the girls will use it like a dip on baby carrots.

LET'S PLAY "HIDE THE LIVER"

So...let's say none of the above tactics work and your kids go on a hunger strike instead of eating liver in the above mentioned forms. You have another good option with "hide the liver." We will take 4 parts ground beef and add 1 part ground liver and use as you normally would for hamburgers, meat loaf, chili etc. You can grind liver to a pasty consistency in about 10 seconds in a food processor. We also do this with beef and lamb heart, takes about a minute of food processor time for those items.

COCONUT OIL

Coconut oil is a staple in our house. It's our number one fat when cooking (with bacon fat a close second) and we use it as a moisturizer for the kids after their bath. Sagan will eat it straight out of the jar (probably eats a tablespoon after each bath while we're giving her a coconut oil rub down), while Zoe isn't a big fan of it plain. You can use it to scramble eggs, roast sweet potatoes or other potatoes, and cook veggies, meat, pretty much anything! Try to find ways to sneak this incredible food into as many things that your kids will eat.



BONE BROTH

Bone broth (soup stock in my world) is delicious, nutritious and an important part of “snout to tail” consumption. I don’t care where you are on the “animal rights” spectrum, if we are going to eat these critters it makes sense to not waste a bit. I save ALL the bones we generate, be those pork ribs, chicken bones, whatever. I put them in 1 gallon freezer bags that have a resealable zipper and if I’m careful those bags will last several years. I store the bones in the freezer and once I get a gallon bag full I add the bones to a pressure cooker, with a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar. I let the bones cook for an hour or two at pressure, then turn the pressure cooker off and let the temperature come down naturally. I’ve historically made this in a standard pressure cooker, but recently purchased a nifty **Instant Pot**, which is a cadillac of pressure cookers (it can be used as a slow cooker too!) So if you’re a little leery of pressure cookers, you might want to give the Instant Pot a try.

I then decant the bone broth into mason jars and store in the fridge. Occasionally I’ll do this whole process a second time with the same set of bones. Some folks are really squirrely about keeping bones from various animals separate so as to have a consistent broth. Too much work

for me, I throw them all together, but again, this is an option if you want to have a few different bags in the freezer. You will often have a bit of a fat layer on the top of the jar after the broth has cooled, that will actually improve the shelf life, so just leave it there and if you do not want to use it, just peel that off the top of the broth before use. We add broth to EVERYTHING. Veggies, soups...whenever you need a little moisture in a dish, use the broth. We also heat this up and add a little salt to the mix and the girls will knock this back like Chico State Coeds drink beer. Check out the attached video for a snazzy “how-to.”



SUSTAINABILITY PRO-TIP

Since we are talking about kids, food and how those things relate, it's worth mentioning that we made a move out to a small farm/ranch about a year ago. There were several reasons for this including quality of life but I'm also passionate about the sustainability topic and decided to not just jabber about this but to actually become an example of how this regenerative process can work. Reno (where we live) is high desert and the soil is not great. We've instituted a number of strategies to add carbon and nutrients to the soil and this includes taking all of our bones left over from stock making and burying these in the garden and pasture areas. I've heard of some folks burning bones in camp fires and then using the ashes from that process to enrich the nutrient content of the

soil...I'm still a neophyte to all this so I do not have solid recommendations on which process is better, but I will say that the soil in Reno is

VERY alkaline. We need organic material to acidify the soil and bring that pH down. So, I go through the trouble of digging a hole (doing my best to keep the grass and plant material on the top intact) and burying these bones. Not to get too long winded but it's stunning how much "waste" we throw away is perfectly amenable to composting or similar uses. Instead, we mine the soil to grow our veggies, throw lots of that

away and store the refuse in plastic bags that will only degrade once the sun explodes. Ok, sorry for the buzz-kill, but noodle on this stuff. While we are feeding our kids I'm also thinking about what type of legacy and world I'm leaving for them.

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Veggies, soups...
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NAVIGATING HYPER PALATABLE FOODS

Ah, junk food and kids...they go together like, oh, peanut butter and chocolate, right? This can be a thorny topic and it is not a process that I'd recommend shooting for perfection. BUT I think it's reasonable to have some standards to up-keep. Let me touch on a few peripheral points before we get into the details of "hyper palatable foods."

These are your kids. You are the parent. You set the rules.

When we eat out people comment on how well behaved our kids are. This is a combination of luck, good food, and consistent parenting. We are lucky that the girls are, although willful (as they should be) also pretty reasonable kids. I have always talked to them like they are adults and I have high expectations for them. The fact we generally feed them well means they are NOT on a blood sugar roller-coaster. This helps behavior a ton. Finally, I am consistent in my parenting. The girls have lane-lines I keep them within. There seems to be a culture of parents these days never telling

their kids "no" and I notice many folks let their kids run around acting like little animals. Not in our house. Parent how you want, but as I see it you can either have the constant low-grade irritation of consistent parenting or deal with catastrophic breaks at various points like being on an airplane, eating at a restaurant etc. I try to strike a balance with this as I have also noticed

that folks who have raised their kids in a hyper rigid home are surprised when, at age 18 their daughter is seen leaving the house on the back of a motorcycle, flipping the parents "the bird."

What on earth does this have to do with food? You need some standards but being a drill sergeant will have blowback. This middle ground is likely the most work for you as a parent as you are not tackling this with religious dogma on the one hand or absentee parenting on the other. You need to think things through, modify and grow. It will not be a "perfect" process and that's just fine. Perfection is indeed the enemy of "good enough."

*These are your kids.
You are the parent.
You set the rules.*

In practical terms we have generally focussed on items that are not over the top sweet, opting for things like 90% dark chocolate instead of milk-chocolate. What we've found is there are definite margins at which a food shifts from being "good" to "crack." 85% dark chocolate or below? Crack. Some of our favorite recipes like our no-grain snickerdoodles (detailed below) are... well, crack. We do not generally emotionalize these foods, nor use them as rewards. I broke this rule in the depths of potty training despair (Me: "Zoe, if you go poo-poo on the big girl potty, I'll give you some chocolate." Zoe: "Ok dada!" And she proceeds to pinch out poo's so she can collect more chocolate! This is why I'm a fan of economics as people always respond to incentives....but often not in the way you think they will), so again, do not write this stuff in stone, use it as a guide.

HERE IS A WAY YOU MIGHT BREAK ALL THIS DOWN:

1. For day to day consumption try to figure out some foods that the kids like, are a bit special, but you'd not consider them to be "dinner." Dark chocolate, unsweetened banana chips and dried cranberries fit that bill in our house.
2. Truly crack-tastic items like the snickerdoodles are for special occasions only. This is true for the kids and for us as

Nicki and I will eat as many of these things as are made. We are biologically wired to eat everything that is not nailed down. We are drawn to unique flavor combinations, particularly if they convey to our taste buds that they represent large amounts of calories (fat/sugar combos are a perfect example).

3. If you notice the kids are selling your Spongebob collectables on Ebay to fund their snickerdoodle habit, you need to put your foot down and take that item out of the rotation for a month or two, and again, only reintroduce in limited amounts. Our kids are fine with a piece of 90% chocolate here and there. 85% makes them beg for it constantly. So, we mainly keep 90% in the house. If that becomes a problem, we dial that back.
4. Be patient with yourself and your kids. We live in a world for which our genetics and psychology are ill adapted. The impulse to have these hyper-palatable foods is a good one from a biological perspective. The results can be bad. We need to strike a balance.
5. How much dark chocolate, gluten free cookies, etc are ok? I have no idea. Are the kids eating decent amounts of good protein, fruit, veggies, tubers etc? If not, then they likely should not displace those foods with junk.

SPECIAL OCCASIONS: BIRTHDAYS, HOLIDAYS, HALLOWEEN, EASTER

BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAYS

Birthdays and holidays can be tough to navigate for folks. We are pretty lucky in that our extended family is largely on board with this way of eating. We've made all this pretty easy though: We ask what is on the menu, if it's going to be gluten-bombs, we make as close to the same thing as possible with a gluten free option and bring it with us to the event. It's not that big of a deal and we tend not to make it a big deal. Both girls have had a few random gluten exposures and neither of them seem to be terribly (if at all) reactive. So, if we get caught flat footed and did not plan ahead, we just roll with it and let the girls have some of what is available. If either of the girls showed any type of significant reactivity, I'd be more pinched about this. They don't, so I'm not.

I'd say 90% of the time we have a gluten free option. We are not yet at a stage where there is

a birthday party every weekend, so I have not been fully thrown into this mess, but again, we do the best we can and when things are out of our control, we do not sweat it.

HALLOWEEN

Halloween may seem like a trainwreck for the kids, and it certainly can be, but here is how we navigate it: We buy several options ahead of time like the Justin's chocolate peanut butter cups, some dark chocolate squares and a few other items. We do our trick-or-treating and afterwards we sort the loot and tell Zoe which items have gluten and we trade that out for one of the (hopefully) better options. We take the stuff we are not going to eat to a food bank and only let the girls have a piece (possibly two) per day. Will they one day hoard this stuff under their bed? Maybe, but this is how we handle it now.

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EASTER

Nicki grew up with a large extended family, she had over 25 cousins on her dad's side alone! The Easter bunny hid a ton of goodies, but almost entirely of the Hershey's, Mars, Peeps, and Cadbury variety. For Zoe's first Easter we went to Nicki's aunt and uncle's house to participate in the egg hunt (or candy hunt). Nicki wanted Zoe to be able to hunt, but clearly we weren't super keen on her eating a bunch of junk. Nicki's solution? The day before she made about four dozen mini gluten free chocolate cupcakes and wrapped them in saran wrap, tied with a ribbon. We brought these and hid them outside alongside the Easter bunny. Zoe had a great hunt and was thrilled with having a few of these mini cupcakes – and the other egg hunters were pretty enamored with them as well!

We didn't make the trek to visit extended family this past Easter and instead spent the day at Nicki's dad's house here in Reno. The girls



Sagan enjoying chicken wings and blueberries

helped color hard boiled eggs (we used a plant based coloring) which they left for the Easter bunny to hide. We also hid plastic eggs filled with sparkly hair clips, quarters for the piggy bank, and some mini Justin's chocolate peanut butter cups. Again, the fun is in the hunt, and they had a blast.

A COUPLE OF WOLF CUB APPROVED RECIPES

OUR TWO FAVORITE PALEO COOKIE RECIPES:

PALEO SNICKERDOODLES

This is the recipe I mentioned in the blog post that Zoe went crazy about during the holiday's a couple years back. It's one of our favorite go-to cookie recipes. It's also a great recipe for little ones to help. Zoe helps stir, she rolls the cookies into balls, rolls the balls in the cinnamon, and she even loves to flatten them with the bottom of a glass. We make them using coconut oil and honey.

<http://theurbanposer.com/snickerdoodle-cookies/>

CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

These cookies from Elena's Pantry are another great option if you and your family tolerate butter. I find these are best if you let them completely cool and even chill them a bit after baking. Again, we use honey as the sweetener (no agave nectar in our house!).

<https://elanaspantry.com/chocolate-chip-cookies/>

SOUP, SOUP, SOUP!

I don't know if all kids love soup as much as ours do? It's pretty handy because soup is one of the easiest meals to make. Gather ingredients, chop, dice, throw in the pot, add bone broth or stock, cook. Done. Seriously, it's easy. You can even do it in a slow cooker!

Here's one of Nicki's favorite soups to make – the girls love it and I'm pretty fond of it too. Often we'll make this soup to go with a baked chicken or grilled pork chops.

TOMATILLO AND BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

- 2 pounds fresh tomatillos
- 2 medium white onions, chopped
- 1 TBSP coconut oil
- 5 garlic cloves
- 6 cups butternut squash peeled and cubed
- 6 cups bone broth (or use chicken stock)
- 3 cups chopped plum tomatoes, undrained (28 oz can)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Toppings (optional)

- Chopped fresh cilantro
- Cubed avocado

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.
2. Remove the husks of the tomatillos and discard. Rinse them, cut them in half, and place them cut side up on a baking sheet. Roast for 30-35 minutes, or until slightly brown and soft.
3. In a soup pot, add the coconut oil and cook the onions on medium heat, stirring frequently for about 10 minutes, or until the onions are translucent. Add the garlic and cook for about 2 minutes more. Stir in the squash, bone broth, and tomatoes with their juice. Cover and bring to a boil. Turn down the heat and simmer for 15-25 minutes, until the squash is tender. Add the roasted tomatillos.
4. Puree the soup in the pot using a hand blender. (Alternatively, puree in batches in a regular blender, then return to the soup pot).
5. Serve hot with toppings if desired.

BAKED SWEET POTATO SLICES

- 2 - 3 large sweet potatoes or yams peeled and thinly sliced (any variety will do)
 - 4-5 TBSP of bacon fat or coconut oil
 - Sea salt
1. Peel and slice your sweet potatoes.
 2. Melt the bacon fat in a large skillet
 3. Line a baking sheet (or two) with foil.
 4. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
 5. Using tongs, take the sweet potato slices and place in the skillet with the bacon fat, then flip, coating both sides. Place coated slices on the foil lined baking sheet. Repeat until all slices have been coated and placed on the baking sheet.

6. Place in the oven and set a timer for 20 minutes. When the timer rings, remove the baking sheet and turn over each slice with the tongs. Return to the oven for another 15 - 20 minutes until golden brown. Removed from the baking sheet, place in a large bowl and lightly salt.

ROASTED PARSNIPS

Parsnips are probably one of the most overlooked tubers in our country. When roasted in coconut oil or bacon fat and topped with a wee bit of nutmeg they are both divine and kiddo approved – our girls love them. Hopefully, you'll give this recipe a shot.

- 4-5 parsnips, peeled and cubed.
- 4-5 TBSP coconut oil or bacon fat
- Sea salt
- Pinch of nutmeg or cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Peel and cube the parsnips and add to a large bowl. Melt coconut oil or bacon fat in a skillet and pour over the cubed parsnips. Use two spoons to toss the parsnips in the fat making sure to coat evenly.
3. Place parsnips on a baking sheet and sprinkle with nutmeg or cinnamon and place in the preheated oven. Set a timer for 20 minutes. When timer rings toss and rotate the parsnip cubes using tongs. Return to the oven for an additional 20 minutes or until parsnips are golden brown.

ACTIVITIES WITH SNACKS

We are currently not doing a ton of activities with the girls and will likely keep it to a minimum. Swimming and gymnastics both seem like critical life skills, great developmental opportunities and heck, they are fun! Zoe started at a new gymnastics gym a few months ago and this place is fantastic but they threw me a curveball on the first day. At the end of practice all the kids get animal crackers as a “reward.” The place we went to previously did stamps and stickers at the end of class, so I was not expecting the Costco sized bin of animal crackers to come out at the end of training. I was not stoked about this but I let Zoe finish her animal crackers (asking her to wash her hands so she did not poison me!) and then at the next class I brought a box of gluten free animal crackers to keep at the gym. I pulled the young coaches aside and

asked them to give those out to Zoe. When they learned we were largely gluten free they were super apologetic and have been FANTASTIC in helping Zoe get her gluten free cookies while also taking care of all the other kids. What I did not do was make a big deal about this, either to the staff or Zoe. I did not make her the odd one out on that first day, and I did not lambast the staff. Yes, it was a surprise, but instead of some kind of self righteous tirade I quietly asked for their help and they about fell over themselves to accommodate. Again, if Zoe had a serious reaction to these foods (like a peanut allergy for example) I’d need to be more proactive but I can still handle this in better or worse ways. I think how I handled this was great as Zoe feels good about the whole process and the staff does not think I’m a dick (I think.)

SCHOOL LUNCH

We send lunch with Zoe each day, and although her school does offer hot lunch, all of the items are gluten containing (pizza, macaroni and cheese, etc). I'm sure when she gets a bit older she'll be asking if she can have the hot lunch items – we'll cross that bridge when we get there. For now she's excited to help pack her lunch and bring her lunch box to school.

Zoe's lunches frequently contain some form of leftover from the previous night's dinner, coupled with fresh fruit, nuts or dried fruit. Here's a quick glance at a week of typical lunches to give you an idea of the things we send to school with Zoe.

- **Monday:** leftover hamburger patty, apple slices, unsweetened banana chips
- **Tuesday:** leftover taco meat, goat yogurt, fresh blueberries



A typical lunch for Zoe

- **Wednesday:** salami slices, 2 wedges of goat cheese, apple slices
- **Thursday:** leftover steak cut into bite sized pieces, 3-4 slices of baked purple sweet potato, almonds and dried cranberries
- **Friday:** leftover bbq chicken, carrot sticks, half of a peach, sliced.

BACON, SALAMI AND OTHER PROCESSED MEATS

Mystery Meats! This is an area of significant consternation for folks. Some people are so wrapped round the axle of “avoiding sugar” that the 2g of honey in their jerky causes them to rock in the fetal position, making mewling noises. Other folks are concerned with the meat quality and most especially ingredients like salt and nitrates. It’s outside the scope of this work to go deep on all these nuances but here is how we tackle this: We generally cook fresh the bulk of the meat we eat. HOWEVER! We do use generous amounts of things like pepperoni, salami and lunch meats. Most of these come from Whole Foods or the local co-op, so in theory they are good quality,

Save these for your busy times, when you are short on time

but I’d not get too sideways on this topic if your only option happens to be conventional products. Save these for your busy times, when

you are short on time.

School lunches are not a bad time for these. Friday evening when you and the kids are just smoked, doing some lunch meat and veggies rolls is NOT a bad option. Let’s try to put this in perspective: The aforementioned option is a good bit better than a microwaved “Hot Pocket”

or similar item. Is it how you want to feed yourself and family every meal of every day? Of course not, but I’d not shy away from using these items if they generally keep you eating “whole foods” and out of the processed carb scene.

INVOLVING KIDS WITH COOKING WHEN APPROPRIATE

One of the best ways we've found of getting kids excited about eating a given meal is involving them in the preparation. If they help prep it, they are pretty likely to at least try it. We never force our kids to eat anything, but we do insist on at least trying new items.

There are a few caveats to the kids in the kitchen story:

1. It does slow the process down.
2. You do have more of a mess.
3. You do need to be careful around sharp, hot or otherwise dangerous items. Keep those pan handles turned in such a way that grasping little hands cannot put a pot of cooking food onto a kiddo.

All that aside, kids love to help and this is teaching critical life skills while getting them

in contact with their food. One of the most oft cited excuses to not eating healthy is a lack of cooking skills. Well, here is an opportunity for us to get our kids started right. Nicki has Zoe help whenever she can, adding sliced tomatoes to salads, arranging sweet potato slices on a baking sheet, washing and spinning lettuce in a salad spinner, and of course whenever there's occasion to bake anything Zoe is the queen spoon wielding mixer. I will have Zoe help me add things to the soup pot after I have prepped and cut the veggies (I still handle the meat...food poisoning and kids is a great way to ruin your day.) We recently got Zoe a great little [kid knife](#). She loves helping to cut things – with assistance from us of course. She can help chop apples, cut lettuce and zucchini, slice mushrooms, etc.

WRAP UP — NO ROOM FOR GUILT!

Although my original post on this topic generated a mountain of positive feedback we did have a number of people who felt guilty about “not doing a better job.” I’ve actually avoided this kid topic as folks can get very cranky around kids and parenting. My sense is a lot of this prickliness stems from a sense of guilt. My mom lamented that she smoked through all of her pregnancies, and continued to smoke in the house with us kids. She grew up in an age when TV commercials told you which cigarettes were recommended by doctors! She did not know they were bad. If you are relatively new to this paleo/ancestral health scene, you did not know. We’ve got to ditch the guilt. Yes, knowing this stuff earlier might have been good, but that’s just not how things played out. What we need to do is figure out what we are going to do now. If your kids are largely grown and the die is cast in an unfavorable way I’ll tell you something that will profoundly improve their lives: You get yourself as healthy as possible so you can be a meaningful contribution to their lives for as long as possible. Get healthy so you age gracefully and are not a burden on your kids. Some of your good examples may rub off, some may not. When your kids have kids your good example may

influence how they raise your grandkids, and the fact you have taken care of yourself means you will be around to KNOW your grandkids. My dad never met either of my girls, my mom met Zoe once. My parents did not age well and other than Nicki’s dad (who eats paleo and can work me under the table) my girls are being raised without the benefit of grandparents. Instead of lamenting what is out of your control, focus on what you CAN control: how YOU eat. Who knows, this may influence your adult (or nearly adult) children.

A common comment we received in the original piece was that folks were surprised how reasonable and balanced our approach is. I really appreciate that and take the responsibility of my position seriously. That said however, I do not have all the answers. I have and will make mistakes. The story of gluten exposure may end up being analogous to my mother smoking. I THINK this is a good thing for the girls as there is some research which indicates avoidance of certain autoimmune diseases like type 1 diabetes. There are other studies however which suggest that early exposure reduces the likelihood of

things like peanuts allergy and celiac disease. No one knows the “right” answer and I’d not be surprised if this is a highly individual thing with inputs from the gut biome, genetics and other environmental factors. The point to this is we can

only do what we can do, it will never be perfect, but it will be better than throwing our hands up and just becoming another statistic of the junk food forest in which we live.

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