

ROBB WOLF'S PALEO Food Matrix

To whatever degree The Paleo Solution has been helpful to people is actually just an outgrowth of how helpful many thousands of people have been in the process of writing the book, blogging and generating the podcast. My interaction with folks has allowed me to take the concept of Paleo nutrition and refine its application to nearly any situation: fat loss, muscle gain, disease reversal. It's almost like this stuff works!

Well, it works, but only dependant upon some simple circumstances: If/when you choose do it. That's what the Food Matrix is about, the doing of Paleo nutrition. I came upon this idea from an "inspiring" moment provided by one of our clients. We'll call her "Lysa." Lysa is a bright woman, quite successful in her chosen profession, but she was Hell-bent on failing at her training and nutrition. Lysa had an excuse for everything. Ironically however, this lack of flexibility on Lysa's part became some of the best inspiration I have had and provided ideas that have helped tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people.

Lysa came into the gym one day and the following exchange ensued:

- Lysa: "I'm bored."
Me: (Internally: OH GOD...here we go...) Externally: "Hey Lysa, Bored with what?"
Lysa: Huge inhale and then the following was said in one breath, nearly one polysyllabic word-it's like she started speaking German: "I'm-just-bored-with-eating-this-way."
Me: "Ughhh...could you flesh that out for me?"
Lysa: "I'm just bored with this whole Paleo thing." Lysa said Paleo the way a Southern revivalist preacher might say "porno". It was a dirty, dirty word.
Me: "How often do you eat a sandwich?"
Lysa: "Almost every day."
Me: "Do you find that boring?"
Lysa: Said as if I am the biggest idiot in the world: "Well, of course not, sandwiches have bread."
Me: Internally: "God, please kill me where I stand."

As you might guess, I did not make much progress with Lysa. But I did learn something that has allowed me to call BS on the "I'm bored" notion. Folks are either carb addicted (like Lysa) lazy, or both. Lazy? Like, unmotivated? YEP. Isn't that being mean and judgmental?

No, it's being honest and insightful after working with people for over a decade. People often make this Paleo thing far more difficult than it needs to be and come up with a dizzying array of excuses. I'm going to do my best to make sure you do not fall into some of these traps and oddly enough, Lysa will help me.

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The Food Matrix is actually Lysa's gift to the world and here is how it works: To dispel the notion that you are bored (and to show you how easy it is to make fantastic meals quickly AND with few ingredients) we will consider a few items we can get from virtually any supermarket. Perhaps a few items are exotic, DO NOT split hairs. If your local supermarket is missing a few of these items it does not invalidate the concept. Ok, let's consider our food options and after the introduction of the food matrix we can consider how to customize this for your specific needs.

PROTEINS (27)	VEGETABLES (24)	FATS (5)	HERBS & SPICES (25)
Chicken breast	Asparagus	Coconut oil	Allspice
Chicken thigh	Avocado	Olive oil	Basil
Flounder	Artichoke hearts	Macadamia oil	Cardamom
Snapper	Brussels sprouts	Avocado oil	Cinnamon
Trout	Beets*	Lard	Celery seed
Halibut	Carrots		Dill
Mackerel	Celery		Fenugreek
Bass	Daikon		Garlic
Salmon steak	Zucchini		Ginger
Salmon fillet	Fennel Root		Curry-Red
Shrimp	Kale		Curry-Green
New York steak	Chard		Curry-Yellow
Rib eye steak	Dandelion greens		Oregano
Round steak	Spinach		Cillantro
Ground beef	Acorn Squash*		Nutmeg
Beef ribs	Butternut Squash*		Rosemary
Rump roast	Yam*		Thyme
Beef stew meat	Sweet Potato*		Garam Masala
Pork loin	Red pepper		Bay Leaf
Pork chop	Yellow pepper		Salt
Pork ribs	Green pepper		Herbs de Provance
Baby back ribs	Red cabbage		Chili powder
Bacon	Green cabbage		Paprika
Pork roast	Napa cabbage		Cumin
Lamb chops			Black pepper
Lamb rack			
Venison steaks	*dense carbohydrate – eat in moderation until leanness goals are reached		

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So that leaves us 27-proteins, 24-veggies, 5-fats and 25-herbs & spices. If we take one item from each column we get $27 \times 24 \times 5 \times 25 = 81,000$ DIFFERENT meals. Divide that by 365 (1 different meal per day) and you will not see the same meal for 221 YEARS. I hope Paleo works really well, because you will need to establish a new human longevity record to ever see the same dinner, and this simply from the short list of ingredients listed above.

Most of these meals can be prepared in the following manner:

1. Put some oil in a pan.
2. Brown some meat in that oil for a minute
3. If you are using a hearty herb/spice like ginger, add it before the meat, if it's delicate like basil, add it when the dish is almost done.
4. Add veggies.
5. Stir it a time or two, cover and set a timer for 5-10 min.
6. If it's done, eat! If not, set a timer again.

This process is how I cook better than 90% of my meals, and they turn out GREAT. You can see some of this on [The Road Forager: Home Cooking videos](#). What this all boils down to is "boredom" does NOT exist. Laziness might, boredom, absolutely not. We are not even considering combo meals, with multiple spices, veggies etc. There is, in fact a nearly infinite number of meal combinations, just in this matrix. We are not even considering ethnic foods, fusion cooking or considerations of cooking techniques like braising vs. baking vs. broiling.

NEED MORE HELP?

Do you have specific goals like fat loss or mass gain? Check out the [sample meal plans](#). If you need more guidance, maybe my [30 Day Paleo Transformation guide](#) will be helpful - it's an interactive digital book that will get you through your first 30 days with no problems! Want to hit the grocery store without breaking the bank? I tackle that in my [Paleo Diet Budget Shopping Guide](#).

Giddy-up Buttercup! Now that your excuses are done, it's time to go cook. Below you'll find a blank Food Matrix chart that you can print out and fill in with proteins, vegetables, fats, herbs and spices that you and your family enjoy to customize meals based on that. But don't limit yourself, get out there and try some new things. Throwing one new ingredient into the mix can change the whole game for that meal.

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PROTEINS	VEGETABLES	FATS	HERBS & SPICES