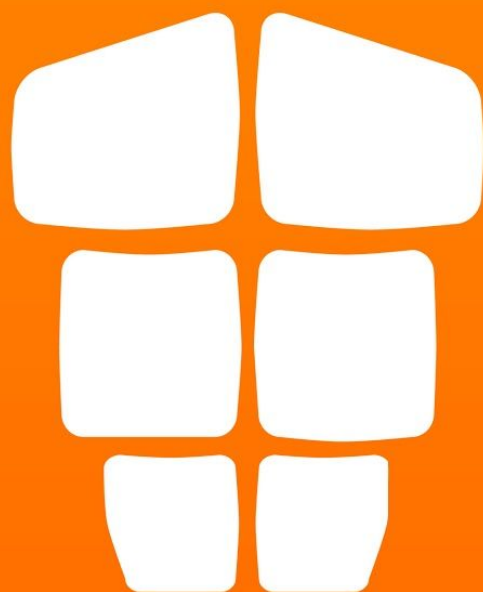


The
SHREDSMART
program



**How to Think, Eat and Lift
For a Lean and Muscular Physique**

Radu Antoniu

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Why Fitness?

Since the beginning of history, humans have been trying to find answer to an ageless question: **How should we live?**

What's our purpose on this earth? What should we do with our time? What goals should we pursue?

The answer to this question still eludes us. Perhaps because there is no answer. Each person has the freedom to pursue whatever they want in life.

Although we may not be able to identify an universal purpose of human existence, I personally think we all fundamentally pursue the same thing: **we want to be satisfied with our lives and minimize suffering** (our own suffering and that of other conscious creatures).

Now modern research tells us that not all patterns of living are equal in producing life satisfaction and minimizing suffering. Some habits and life choices are almost always correlated with happiness, health, enthusiasm, and motivation while other habits and life choices are correlated with disease, regret, anger, and desperation.

For example lying, sedentarism, obesity, laziness, alcoholism, pornography use, and ignorance are correlated with disease and suffering while integrity, physical activity, low body fat, self discipline, eating nutritious food, intimate relationships, and education are correlated with health, happiness, and fulfillment.

That means, at least to some extent, there is *a correct way to live*. Science can give us hints about how we should live.

That's what I'm interested in.

I want to live life the right way. I want to know what goals we should pursue, how we should use our time, what moral code we should have, and how we should structure our society and economy to minimize suffering.

This motivation now stands behind all my work. Through my videos, articles, and programs I want to present guidelines for how we should live to be happier and be better people in general.

Which brings me to fitness and the goal of the ShredSmart program.

Maintaining a low body fat, eating nutritious food, working out regularly, and pursuing strength gains in the gym are all habits and life choices which are conducive to health, vitality, enthusiasm, motivation, and happiness. Therefore fitness is part of *the right way to live*.

The reasons for that are obvious. Maintaining a low body fat reduces the risk of disease, makes you more attractive (which can boost self confidence and relationship satisfaction), and strengthens self control. Eating nutritious food promotes general health and vitality while working out regularly boosts happiness levels and teaches self discipline. Pursuing strength gains gives your life more purpose and teaches persistence and grit, some of the most valuable character traits a person can have. If you imagine your ideal life, I'm sure having a healthy, lean, and muscular body would be part of that picture.

Now with that said, I understand that fitness is not the only worthwhile goal in life. In fact, I believe fitness should take only a small part of our time and attention so we can focus on other things.

That's the goal of the ShredSmart program - to teach you the fundamentals of getting lean, muscular, and strong so you can easily automate your fitness habits.

So let's get started!

The Physique You're Going To Built With ShredSmart

I believe one of the main reasons people fail to stay motivated on their fitness journey is because they lack a clear vision of what they're working towards. Blurry goals have little pull power.

From my experience, most men don't want to get huge. Their fitness goal is to have a slim waist, clearly defined abs, round shoulders, thick upper back, wide chest with a line down the middle, well developed arms and athletic legs. The look Hollywood actors have in movies:



This is a much clearer vision than most gym regulars have but it still doesn't tell us what we need to do to get to that level. We need numbers. And this is where strength standards are very useful. **In natural lifters strength and muscle development go hand in hand.** Actually, the relationship between strength and muscle size is precise enough to predict how a person will look at certain strength standards.

So if you want to look a certain way, all you need to do is reach the strength standards associated with that look. The great thing is that if you have low body fat you can look great at different levels of muscle development. This means you can aim to be bigger or slimmer, depending on personal preference.

Let's take a look at three levels of muscle development so you can identify exactly what type of physique you want to build:

Level 1: Intermediate Strength Standards



Examples: Henry Cavill in Immortals; Cam Gigandet in Never Back Down; Brad Pitt in Fight Club

Bench Press: 1.1 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Incline Bench Press: bodyweight for 5 reps

Standing Shoulder Press: 0.7 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Weighted Chin-ups: 0.2 of bodyweight attached for 5 reps

Back Squat: 1.3 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Deadlift: 1.5 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Body fat: 6-8%

Waist measurement around navel: ~42% of your height

[Click here to calculate your intermediate strength standards](#)

This is a level of muscle development you can achieve pretty easily in 1 or 2 years of consistent training. Most gym regulars fall into this category. But the reason they don't look anywhere near as good as the actors in the picture above is because they don't have low body fat (which is more important for aesthetics than overall muscle size).

Level 2: Proficient Strength Standards



Examples: Daniel Craig in Casino Royale; Dustin Clare in Spartacus; Stephen Amell in Arrow.

Bench Press: 1.3 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Incline Bench Press: 1.1 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Standing Shoulder Press: 0.8 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Weighted Chin-ups: 0.3 of bodyweight attached for 5 reps

Back Squat: 1.6 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Deadlift: 1.9 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Body Fat: ~10%

Waist measurement around navel: 43-44% of height

[Click here to calculate your proficient strength standards](#)

Reaching this level of muscle development requires training consistently for at least 2-3 years. Persistence and grit are also required because progress becomes slow and unpredictable. At this level you are stronger than most gym

regulars. Self confidence is also amplified because you know you can achieve difficult, long-term goals.

Level 3: Advanced Strength Standards



Examples: Chris Evans in Captain America; Chris Hemsworth in Thor; Henry Cavill in Man of Steel.

Bench Press: 1.5 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Incline Bench Press: 1.2 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Standing Shoulder Press: bodyweight for 5 reps

Weighted Chin-ups: 0.4 of bodyweight attached for 5 reps

Back Squat: 1.9 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Deadlift: 2.2 x bodyweight for 5 reps

Body fat: ~10%

Waist measurement around navel: 43-44% of height

[Click here to calculate your advanced strength standards](#)

Reaching this level of muscle development requires at least 3 to 5 years of consistent training with a clear progression model and an emphasis on good nutrition. At this level you are among the strongest in an average commercial gym. The discipline and persistence developed carry over in all other areas of your life.

The Importance Of Low Body Fat For Aesthetics

If your goal is to have 6 pack abs and very good muscle definition then in addition to reaching certain strength standards you also need to have low body fat. In fact for aesthetics maintaining a low body fat is *more important* than overall muscle size. If most gym regulars dropped their body fat percentage from the average 15-18% down to 7-10% they would look similar to Henry Cavill, Cam Gigandet, and Brad Pitt in the pictures shown for the Intermediate Strength Standards. That would be a way more impressive transformation than if they gained two or three kilograms of muscle.

For most men, body fat percentage correlates with waist measurement around the navel. When you gain fat your waist goes up and when you lose fat your waist goes down. This is why waist measurement is also listed as a standard below the pictures. If you want to drop to a certain body fat percentage you can aim for the corresponding waist to height ratio.

Waist compared to height	Body Fat %
Waist is 42% of your height	6-8%
Waist is 43% of your height	8-10%
Waist is 44% of your height	10-12%
Waist is 45% of your height	12-14%

You can use the [ShredSmart Body Fat Calculator](#) to estimate your body fat percentage with this method.

Of course, this is just a guideline because some people naturally have wider or slimmer waists than the average. For example when I'm around 10% body fat my waist measurement (75 cm / 29.5 in) is about 41% of my height (183 cm / 6 feet). Based on this table I should be 6-8% which I know is too low.

But generally this is a very useful guideline for estimating body fat percentage. When your waist is below 44% of your height you can be sure you're pretty lean.

How You Will Get There

The first step to reaching your goal physique depends on your current condition. Obviously a skinny guy will not follow the same nutrition plan as someone weighing 230 lbs (104kg). Even though their long-term goal may be the same, in the short-term one must start by gaining weight and the other one by losing weight.

If you've enrolled in ShredSmart I assume your primary goal is to lose fat and get *shredded*.

Getting lean is always going to be the first step to looking great. The nutrition part of ShredSmart will show you how to set your calorie intake and structure your meals to lose fat quickly while minimizing hunger and cravings. If you want to estimate how much weight you need to lose to reach your goal body fat percentage, [input your current bodyweight and estimated body fat percentage into this calculator](#).

If your goal is to gain weight and build muscle because you're already lean, see the bonus guide named **How To Transition From Cutting To Lean Bulking**.

The training part of ShredSmart will show you how to build muscle and strength. The training programs can be used regardless of whether you're cutting or bulking.

Summary

- In natural lifters strength and muscle development go hand in hand. Because of that we can predict fairly accurately how muscular a person will be at certain strength standards.

- Having a low body fat percentage is essential for an aesthetic physique.
- Muscle definition contributes more to aesthetics than the amount of muscle mass you have.
- As long as you're lean you will look great even with little muscle development. It's up to you to decide how big you want to get.

Our Plan Of Action

Fat loss is caused by only one thing: a calorie deficit.

Calories are a measurement unit for energy. A kilocalorie (what we call simply calorie even though it's technically wrong) is the amount of energy required to heat up one kilogram of water one degree Celsius.

The amount of energy our bodies burn and the amount we can extract from different foods are measured in calories. All the foods we eat contain calories. Any movement we make (including breathing, digestion, fidgeting, etc.) burns calories. Depending on how much we eat and how much we move, 3 things can happen:

1. We eat about as many calories as we burn. In this case our weight stays the same. Most people maintain this equilibrium unconsciously over long periods of time. This is called maintenance.
2. We eat more calories than we burn. We steadily start gaining weight. This calorie surplus can be transformed into fat and/or muscle (if we train correctly).
3. We burn more calories than we eat. We steadily start to lose weight. That calorie deficit forces the body to tap into its own fat reserves for energy.

Depending on the size of the deficit, the way we train, and the macronutrients we eat, the body will obtain the extra energy from burning fat and/or muscle.

Several Methods, Same Cause

For most readers this concept shouldn't be new. However, many people may not be familiar with the role energy balance plays in weight loss.

Diet books rarely address this subject. Most diet authors realized people don't want to consciously eat less. That sucks. So they came up with diet rules that make people eat less in an indirect way. Some popular methods for weight loss include: low carbohydrate or fat diets, clean eating (or eliminating certain foods based on arbitrary reasons), eating only at specific hours, cardio, juice fasts, and many more.

All these methods work. But it's not the method that matters. The cause of weight loss or weight gain is always the same: the total calorie intake.

Basically in order to lose fat we must eat less. I know...shocking.

Why Most People Fail To Get Lean

In order to get lean quickly you must eat 20-25% fewer calories than your maintenance every day for as long as it takes to get the fat off.

Simple enough. The problem though lies in the "as long as it takes" part. Based on the [CDC anthropometric data](#), guys age 30 to 39 have an average body mass index (BMI) of 29. That's just one shy of the medical definition of obese. If you transform this BMI to body fat percentage, it comes out about 25%.

So for the average young guy to get a six pack, he needs to lose about 15% body fat. That means around 11 kilograms or 25 pounds! A healthy and sustainable fat loss rate is 0.5-0.8 kg per week or 1-1.5 lbs per week. Losing 7-11 kg (15-25 lbs) therefore takes 12-16 weeks of dieting.

12-16 weeks of dieting...

For about three months a guy needs to be conscious of how much he eats, resist cravings, and manage social events where he has to eat out. *That's the problem!* The patience. The waiting game. Habit change.

It's not that people don't know what to do to lose fat. They just don't want or can't stick to a fat loss plan for that long.

Most people can endure an extreme plan for a few days. Feeling miserable for a week or two to get to their goal seems a good deal. But we all know those plans don't work. Fat loss takes time. You can't lose 10-15 pounds (5-7 kg) of fat in week, not even if you fast the whole week! Losing 10-15 pounds of fat with no muscle loss takes 6-10 weeks at the minimum.

So what do we do? How can we possibly stick to a diet for that long? Well, it's quite easy when you know how to do it.

Two Ways To Reach Your Fat Loss Goal

There are two ways to stay in a calorie deficit for long periods of time:

1. Pure Willpower

This is the scenario where you know you have to eat less so you just do it. It doesn't matter how you feel, how hungry you are, or what social events you have to turn down. You do whatever it takes to be in a deficit.

That's admirable and it works absolutely great. However, what are you doing with your life? By doing this you can no longer do the things you wanted your physique for in the first place. Things like going out, hanging out with friends, or going on dates. You just defeated the whole purpose of being fit.

Pure willpower is not the way. So consider the next point.

2. Fitting Your Fitness Plan Into Your Lifestyle

This is where you learn to maintain a calorie deficit without making a fuss about it. You don't talk about your diet, you don't think about it – because it's normal.

This is key.

All lean people who are also sane know and use this secret. They engineer their food environment and eating habits so that they don't need to use willpower all the time.

I'm not going to lie, this is a skill and as all skills it needs to be learned. But if you'll take the time to understand this subject you will be amazed by how easy it is to reach your fat loss goals.

Fitting your fitness plan into your lifestyle comes down to mastering 3 pillars of successful fat loss.

The 3 Pillars Of Successful Fat Loss

1. Managing Hunger

This is the big one. Feeling satiated on fewer calories than you're used to takes a special approach. You have to trick your mind and body into thinking you're eating more food than you actually are.

In this program we're going to use two ways to do this:

- *Eating lower calorie foods so you can eat the same volume of food as before
- *Eating bigger meals less frequently so you get stuffed once a day even in a deficit

Both will work but it's best if you use them together.

Is it really possible to eat more food while dieting than you were eating before? Surprisingly, yes. You'll learn how to do it in the chapter on Food Choices.

2. Eliminating Cravings

Would you be willing to give up all your favorite foods so you can be as shredded as possible? That's exactly what some fitness models and bodybuilders do.

But our lives don't revolve around our physique like in their cases. We want to be lean and strong so we can enjoy our life more, not subtract from it. And delicious food is a pleasurable experience I think no one would like to give up on.

Here's the good news: You can still eat any food you want while staying in a calorie deficit and losing fat. You'll learn how to do that in the chapter on Intermittent Fasting.

3. Managing Social Events

Would you refuse to go to a restaurant with your wife on your anniversary so you can stick to your diet? One bodybuilder I know did just that so he can be as shredded as possible for an upcoming show. I admire his dedication a lot.

But would you be willing to eat almost all your meals at home so you can be as shredded as possible? Hell no! You want to be able to eat out spontaneously and not have to worry about your diet. You want to lose fat while enjoying life! You can do that.

In the chapter on Intermittent Fasting you'll learn how to plan your meals so you can eat out at night if you want. All while not compromising your fat loss results.

How To Lose Only Body Fat, NOT Muscle

If your goal is to get shredded, your main focus during a cut should not be just weight loss, it should be fat loss with muscle maintenance or growth.

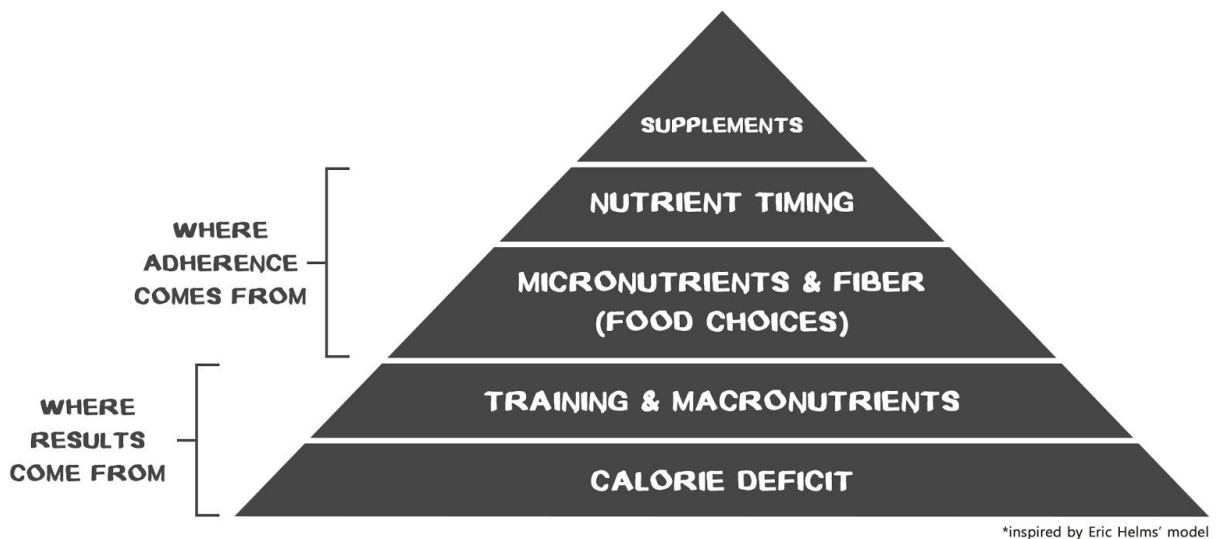
Losing weight doesn't necessarily mean your body composition (the fat to muscle ratio in your body) is improving. That is because some of the lost weight may actually be muscle mass. Crash dieters often experience this disappointment.

They lose weight fast in an effort to lose fat fast but discover that they look just as soft and flabby as before even though they are 3-5 kg (5-10lbs) lighter. Here's what I mean:



I'm sure this is not your goal physique.

To lose only body fat and keep all your muscle (or even gain muscle) you need to follow this fat loss hierarchy of importance:



The energy deficit takes care of weight loss but it is weight training and macros that determine what is being lost: fat or muscle.

You'll learn how to set your macronutrients (protein, fat, and carbs) and training routine so you don't have to worry about muscle loss. Actually, I expect you to gain muscle while cutting following the ShredSmart training program (unless you're very advanced).

How To Actually Do This Program

Finally, we'll address psychology. I did not add this part just to fill a few more pages!

Part 3 is probably the most important part of the program! Most people *already know how to lose fat*. I mean how complicated is it? You just have to eat less.

But knowing does NOT equal doing. You can read every page of ShredSmart and even memorize it and still be just as fat and weak as before!

In the final part of the program you'll learn how to make yourself APPLY what you learned. You'll love that part. You'll finally understand how to control yourself and do what you want to do.

Summary

- Fat loss has a single cause: a calorie deficit. A calorie deficit means eating less energy than your body burns in a day.
- All fat loss method (all diets, cardio, and other tricks) work because they create a deficit.
- The most efficient way to create a deficit is to eat less.
- The maximum rate of fat loss with no muscle loss is 1-2 lbs per week (0.5-1 kg)
- To get a six pack, the average guy needs to cut for 10-15 weeks. The reason most fail is because they use a restrictive diet plan which cannot be

sustained for that long.

- Even if you can get lean using a restrictive diet plan, the quality of your life would decrease, defeating the whole purpose of having a great physique.
- The key to successful fat loss is to make your plan easy to follow and enjoyable. This means engineering your food environment and eating habits in your favor so you don't have to rely on your willpower all the time.
- Weight loss does not equal fat loss. To lose fat and not muscle you need to do three things: have a moderate calorie deficit, eat enough protein, lift weights.
- Knowing does not equal doing. You probably already know what to do to lose fat. To actually apply the information in this program you will need to change the way you see yourself.

Part 1 - Nutrition

How To Set Your Cutting Plan

How To Set Your Macronutrients

There are 3 macronutrients that form the basis of all foods: protein, fats and carbohydrates. A fourth macronutrient would be alcohol but as we all know that is not found in most foods.

Each macronutrient has a certain energy value:

1 gram of protein = 4 calories

1 gram of carbohydrates = 4 calories

1 gram of fats = 9 calories

1 gram of alcohol = 7 calories

In most parts of the world, the energy value of a food is measured for 100g of product. That means the energy value of a food is determined by the macronutrients it contains in 100 grams.

For example: 100g of whole wheat bread contains the following macronutrients: ~9g protein, ~3g fats, and ~50g carbs.

The energy contained in 100g of bread would therefore be: 9g protein x 4 kcal + 3g fats x 9 kcal + 50g carbs x 4 kcal = 263 kcal.

I'm sure most of you know these things but it's always good to repeat the basics. Now let's find out how much you need to eat to lose fat.

Here is the calculator you need to use.

Macros Calculator
Body Fat Calculator

Weight *
78 lbs kg

Activity *
Lightly active (fits most people) ▾

Goal *
Normal Cut (-20%) ▾

Macro Options *
0.8g of protein per pound, 30% fat, rest carbs ▾

Calories

Maintenance Calories	2579
Target Calories	2064

Macros

Protein	27%	138 g
Fats	30%	69 g
Carbs	43%	224 g

At the top you just have to insert your bodyweight and how active you are on average. If you're sedentary most of the time, work out 3-4 times a week, and get about one hour of walking/physical activity per day go with lightly active. That fits most people.

As soon as you insert your bodyweight, your macros will be calculated automatically. That's it! You now know how much you need to eat for fat loss! Well, at least for now...you'll learn how to adjust those numbers as you lose weight in the chapter called How to Track Weight Change and Adjust your Calorie Intake.

Note: If your body weight is higher than 85 kg (190 lbs) the protein intake shown in the calculators is unnecessarily high. That's because it assumes most of your body weight is lean body mass. The maximum amount of protein you would benefit from is about 170g per day. If the calculators say you need to eat more than that, I recommend you reduce it to 130-150g per day.

Summary

- The ideal calorie deficit for cutting is around 25%. That means you should eat 25% fewer calories than your body needs to maintain its current bodyweight.

- Food is made out of 3 macronutrients: protein, fat, and carbs. Protein and carbs have 4 calories per gram and fat has 9 calories per gram.
- For the best results, your intake of macronutrients needs to be balanced:
 - get 25-30% of your calories from protein
 - get 30-35% of your calories from fat
 - get 35-40% of your calories from carbs
- A big calorie deficit combined with an unnecessarily high protein intake can lead to low testosterone levels and poor workout performance.

What Foods To Eat

You now know the number of calories and the macros you need to eat every day. But what foods should you eat?

On the topic of food choices, you should think like this:

- **Food quantity matters for weight change**
- **Food quality matters for health, performance, and adherence**

In other words, as long as you stick to your calories and macros, what you eat doesn't matter for fat loss. But it matters for health, performance, and adherence. So it's best to consider both the quantity and the quality of the food you eat. Here are the foods I recommend making up 80-90% of your diet:

Protein Sources

Animal products: lean meats (chicken, pork, beef, etc), lean fish (tuna, trout, halibut, etc), eggs, low fat dairy products (cottage cheese, greek yogurt, low fat cheddar, etc), whey or casein protein powders.

Plants: plant protein powders (pea, rice, hemp), legumes (beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas, soy), cereals (wheat, corn, oats), nuts (peanuts, walnuts, cashews, pistachios), seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, hemp), mushrooms, tofu, tempeh, seitan, veggie burgers.

Animal products are superior protein sources than plants. They have better amino acid profile for building muscle, better digestibility ratio and absorption, and they're made up almost entirely out of protein (they contain only small amounts of fat and carbs) which makes tracking macros very simple.

However, animal products are produced with a tremendously high environmental cost and the suffering of billions of farm animals. A few years ago I would have suggested eating lean meat and low fat cheese in virtually every

meal while cutting. Of course. Animal products are the best protein sources and over the course of my first three years of lifting I think I ate an entire farm of chickens. But now I've finally awakened to the fact that in order to reduce climate change, reduce animal suffering, and slow down the mass extinction of wildlife we should eat animal products only sparingly.

Now you're free to eat whatever you want. But having a plant-based diet is part of *the right way to live* at this point in human history. To learn why I invite you to read the bonus guide called **Vegan Diet: Is It Worth It?**

Carb Sources

Vegetables (tomatoes, bell peppers, carrots, eggplants etc), leafy greens (spinach, lettuce, cabbage etc), legumes (peas, beans, lentils, chickpeas), cereals (wheat, corn, oats, rice), tubers (potatoes, sweet potatoes), fruits (apples, bananas, berries, etc).

When cutting you should get most of your carbs from veggies and potatoes because those are the most satiating sources. You can also eat one or two pieces of fruit per day and small amounts of cereals such as bread, tortillas, rice, or pasta. What you should avoid are foods high in sugar: breakfast cereals, biscuits, cookies, chocolate bars, cakes, sodas, juices, etc. You should still have those foods in small amounts on a regular basis to keep cravings in check but they shouldn't provide more than 10-20% of your daily calories. That's because those foods are not filling or satiating.

Fat Sources

Animal products: fattier meats and meat products, fattier fish (salmon, catfish, carp, etc), eggs, fattier dairy products, butter.

Plants: oil (olive, coconut, sunflower, canola, etc), nuts (peanuts, walnuts, cashews, pistachios), seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, hemp).

You don't really need to worry about your fat intake. You'll inevitably eat fats along with your protein sources and by using oil for cooking. In fact it's going to be harder to minimize your fat intake than to make sure you're getting enough.

So those are the foods I recommend you eat on a daily basis. Of course, you can eat other things based on personal preference. But when making food choices you should have in mind the following criteria: satiety, cravings, micronutrients & fiber.

Satiety

Satiety is triggered by two things: how much your stomach expands after a meal and how many calories you consumed.

Because calories are fixed when cutting, your best strategy to maximize satiety is to eat mostly filling foods.

Foods differ a lot in their caloric content. This a big reason why many people have the impression they're eating very little but can't lose weight. They're scared of eating big meals but are ok with having a few high calorie snacks because they're small. That's completely backwards. They think in terms of food quantity and not calorie content.

For instance, instead of eating a Snickers bar from the vending machine at the office and a small bag of peanuts (both of which can have about 250 kcal) they'd be much better off eating a 500 kcal salad, a large portion of baked potatoes, or even two slices of pizza. They would find it much easier to maintain the deficit in this way.

Cravings

When I first learned about macros in the summer of 2013, I thought the best strategy was to eat as much quantity as I could for the macros I had. My thinking was: the more I eat, the less hungry I'll be.

So I was eating a lot of veggies, a lot of potatoes, and almost half a kilogram of chicken every day. It worked very well. I was never hungry, I had big meals but something was missing. I still felt deprived. I remember waiting for birthdays,

holidays, and other social events to have an excuse eat tasty foods. I frequently binged on fruits because they were the only sweet foods I allowed myself to have.

Only much later I realized that satiety is not all that matters. To truly enjoy your diet, you also need to address cravings. So that's what I did.

I've specifically made high calorie, *junk foods* part of my daily fat loss plan. I no longer waited for cravings to come, I eliminated them by eating tasty foods every day.

Don't be one of those people who have the all-or-nothing mentality and believe they must suffer to get results. This will just cause stress and in the end you'll either quit or binge out of frustration.

Micronutrients And Fiber

Vitamins and minerals are essential for health and sometimes play a big role in performance, well-being, and energy levels. For these reasons it's important to regularly eat fresh foods which are rich in micronutrients. You'll see that satiating foods are also the ones which contain the highest amounts of micronutrients.

When I say it's ok to include foods like chocolate, ice cream or other "dirty" snacks in a fat loss plan some people object by saying: *Oh my god you can't eat that every day! It's so unhealthy!*

But in reality we have no clear definition for healthy foods. No, really, what is healthy food anyway?

The best definition I've ever heard comes from Eric Helms PhD. I'm going to paraphrase him:

The truth is there is nothing inherently unhealthy about what people call dirty foods. There are very few foods if any, that are actively unhealthy, meaning that if you eat them once, they hurt your body. The only plausible negative

connotation associated with say a Twinkie, a Pop Tart, and other foods commonly labeled as “bad” is that they are relatively devoid of micronutrients, fiber, and protein.

*The reason they are labeled “unhealthy” is because they are empty calories so if they dominate your diet, you develop micronutrient deficiencies as a result. The deficiencies are what hurt your body. **Your diet should be inclusive rather than exclusive. Meaning, instead of excluding dirty foods from your diet, you should make sure to include nutritious foods in your diet.***

If nutritious foods dominate your diet, you get all the vitamins, minerals and fiber you need for health. And if you still have calories left for dirty foods, then including them in small amounts won't hurt your health.

Focus on eating protein and fat from natural sources and get a big portion of your carbs from a large variety of non-starchy vegetables and 1-2 fruits a day. These foods alone will ensure you're getting a full spectrum of vitamins and minerals. Vegetables and fruits also contain fiber. Men should get about 25g of fiber everyday and women about 20g.

What Foods You Bring Home Matters

Remember this rule: It's easier to design your food environment to work for you than it is to use willpower.

If you have cookies, ice cream, salty snacks or tasty ready-to-eat food in your house it will be hard for you to resist them. They almost start calling your name when you're hungry. Have you noticed that? You're working on your computer, or reading a book, or watching a movie and the image of those tasty snacks pops-up in your mind. After a while they start calling your name. You get up and go eat them.

Ok, maybe they don't call your name but the point is it's extremely hard to fight temptation when it's easy to give in. **For this reason I encourage you to make it hard for yourself to cheat and overeat.** Here's what I recommend:

- Don't store high calorie snacks in the house. Buy only the amount you intend to eat.
- If you buy more than you intend to eat in a day, choose multiple small packages instead of a single big one. Research shows people eat way less if they have to open multiple packages than they do when they open a single large package.
For example if you buy ice cream, buy multiple small cups instead of a very large one. If you buy potato chips buy multiple small bags instead of a large one.
- Keep all food out of sight. Every time you see food, your brain is wired to desire that food, especially when you're cutting. Store food in hard to reach places and you'll need less willpower to resist. For example store desserts and snacks in the back of the cupboard or fridge. Just having a few objects in front of those foods (essentially acting as obstacles for your hand) will drastically reduce your desire and willingness to eat them.
- For more information on how to engineer your food environment check out the books *Mindless Eating* and *Slim by Design* by Brian Wansink. They are super fun to read and incredibly insightful.

Summary

- Food quantity matters for weight change, food quality matters for health.
- To enjoy your diet you need to satisfy two needs: hunger and cravings. Eating just clean foods won't satisfy your cravings. Eating just tasty foods won't satisfy your hunger. You need to find a balance.
- "Dirty foods" don't harm your body directly. They negatively affect your health only if they dominate your diet. That's because they do not contain the micronutrients you need and you develop deficiencies as a result.
- Nutritious foods should dominate your diet - 80-90% of calories. 10-20% can come from foods with low nutritious value.

- You cannot rely on your willpower to resist eating too much. Design your food environment to work in your favor by making tasty foods and snacks hard to reach.
- Liquid calories should be avoided because they have only a very small effect on satiety.
- You should drink enough water to have at least 5 urinations a day. Drinking enough water makes maintaining the deficit easier because thirst can often be confused with hunger.