



BE NATURALLY FIT

*Sugar-Free
Challenge*

Welcome to our Sugar-Free Month

Over the next month, we're going to break our sugar habit and experience balanced hormones, more energy, a refined palette, and maybe even a little weight loss. We will also discover new ways to create the foods we love. If you're sick and tired of being sick and tired, then sugar-free is for you.

For four weeks, I'll be sending you recipes and ideas for plant-powered meals and snacks, and (of course) green smoothies. All the recipes that I share are vegan, gluten-free, and packed with nutrients, plant-based proteins and whole foods that act like magic scrubbers to help your body process toxins out of your system. I have also put together an easy-to-follow sample meal plan and a shopping list to help you stay organized every step of the way.



This month is also the perfect time to kick-start other new habits, such as reducing your consumption of alcohol and removing processed foods from your diet. You'll be amazed at how good you feel after a month of making nourishing (and yummy) choices.

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So what's the problem with sugar?

Added sugar is the worst ingredient in the modern diet. It upsets your metabolism and contributes to other ailments and problems.

Some facts about sugar

Sugar has no essential nutrients. It provides “empty” calories.

1. Before sugar enters the bloodstream, it breaks down into two simple sugars: glucose and fructose. Glucose is already found in our bodies, our bodies produce it. Fructose is not.
2. Our liver metabolizes fructose into glycogen and too much glycogen can lead to hypoglycemia and/or diabetes.
3. Excess sugar can cause insulin resistance. Insulin is a hormone that regulates the metabolism of carbohydrates and fats. When cells are resistant to insulin, they are unable to use insulin effectively and this can lead to high blood sugar
4. Excess sugar upsets other hormones, especially the ones that tells us when we are full and satiated.
5. Sugar is addictive because it triggers the release of dopamine in the brain.



Empty calories, premature aging, hormones out of whack, less control over our food choices and harmful effects on our bodies. Wow! Convincing reasons for cutting out added sugar.

How to cope this month

It takes determination and willpower to go a whole month without sugar. If you are like most of us, you underestimate the amount of sugar you consume each day, so don't be surprised if you experience withdrawal symptoms. At first you will crave some sweetness, whether it's a cookie or a glass of wine, and you might even give in. If this happens to you, don't throw in the towel for the rest of the month! Just get back to it at the next meal.

My best advice is: don't get hung up on what you can and can't have. Keep it simple by choosing low-sugar fruit, and eating more veggies, protein and healthy fats.

A safe guide for each day is to aim for 15-25 g of naturally-occurring sugar. For example, a cup of coconut water has 11 g of sugar, so if you have coconut water in a smoothie, you will have used up some of your daily quota.

Make sense?

Your snacks are going to be a lot different this month, but breakfast, lunch and dinner may not need to change much. Eat lots of nourishing soups and roasted veggies and make sure you are getting enough protein, as it is needed to help the cleansing process. A good guide is the 80/20 rule: 80% whole, fresh, organic foods and 20% common-sense good foods. If you are a vegan (like me), you need to be generous with the nuts, seeds and leafy greens. If you are a vegetarian, eat lots of kefir, eggs and organic cheese for your healthy fats and proteins. If you're a meat-eater, stick to lean, organic meat.



Things We Won't Be Eating

1. Sugars that we add to our food. This one is easy as we control it. Here are some things we won't be indulging in:

- Maple syrup
- Honey
- Agave
- Sugar (of any kind)
- Molasses

2. Sugars that have already been added to our food (as in processed foods). This requires that you read labels to see whether sugar has been added. Here are a few no-no's:

- Balsamic vinegar
- Most packaged cereals
- Almost anything processed
- Packaged sauces and dressing
- Fruit yogurts
- Deli meats
- Almond milk (except for the unsweetened version)
- Fruit juices (more on fruit coming up)
- Crackers
- Frozen meals



3. Any type of alcohol, including wine, beer, and, if you want to take advantage of this chance to cleanse your system, even vodka. Vodka doesn't have any sugar added to it, but I'd like to encourage you to take this opportunity to steer clear of all alcohol.

4. High glycemic fruits. Fruits like mango, pineapple, banana and grapes all have a high glycemic index so try to keep these to a minimum for the month. These fruits are not bad for you and can be put back into your diet after this month, but, for now, try eating berries, apples, kiwis and citrus fruits instead.

The FIT CLUB Meal Plan



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
BREAKFAST						
Lemon Water Sugar-Free Granola	Lemon Water Overnight Cooked Oats (page 10)	Lemon Water Strawberry Chia Parfait (page 10)	Lemon Water Overnight Cooked Oats (page 10)	Lemon Water Spinach Eggs with Seedy Toast	Lemon Water Overnight Cooked Oats (page 10)	Lemon Water Pancakes with Peanut Butter (page 11)
SNACK						
Green Smoothie (page 12)	Grapefruit	Tamari Almonds (page 12)	Green Smoothie (page 12)	Yogurt with Blueberries	Grapefruit	Matcha Latte
LUNCH						
Chickpea Salad Sandwich*	Stuffed Avocado (page 16)	Broccoli Salad (page 13)	Hummus Wrap loaded with veggies	Walnut Meat Salad*	Leftover Soup	Tomato, Cucumber, Avocado Toast
SNACK						
Apple with Almond Butter	Raw Veggies	Hard-boiled Egg	Tamari Almonds (page 12)	Raw Veggies	Tamari Almonds (page 12)	Hummus with Rice Crackers
BEFORE DINNER						
Apple Cider Vinegar Water	Apple Cider Vinegar Water	Apple Cider Vinegar Water	Apple Cider Vinegar Water	Apple Cider Vinegar Water	Apple Cider Vinegar Water	Apple Cider Vinegar Water
DINNER						
Sweet Potato Chili: make a double batch!*	Burrito Bowls*	Thai Veggie Zoodles (page 14)	Black Bean Burgers*	Cauliflower, Potato and Leek Soup with Lentils (page 15)	Nutty Pea & Quinoa Bowl*	Pizza with Salad*

Prep your pantry

Our sugar-free month will be easier to follow if you reset your kitchen. Take some time to pull everything out of your pantry and fridge to fully assess what you have in your eating zone.

Once you've got it all laid out (on the kitchen floor or table), take a look through your supplies and sort out what you want to throw out, donate, or keep.

If you find yourself with any canned goods, pastas, etc. that you won't be using, set them aside to donate to your local food bank. Throw away any overly-processed foods and sugar-packed snacks. Not only will you be avoiding temptation, you'll also be freeing up space for the tasty, wholesome food that's coming your way.

Sugar-free Shopping

YOU'LL BE EATING MORE:

- fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables (organic when possible)
- leafy greens and herbs (organic when possible)
- healthy fats: avocado, nuts, seeds, olive and coconut oil
- seasonings: all spices, all dried herbs, black pepper, miso, sea salt, vinegar, gluten-free tamari
- herbal teas, coconut water, and nut milks
- water: drink at least half your bodyweight in ounces of filtered water daily

YOU'LL BE EATING LESS:

- high glycemic fruits like bananas and mangos
- dairy products, wheat and gluten
- caffeine (limit 1 cup per day)

Your initial grocery bill might be higher than usual, but remember that you are prepping for a new lifestyle.



Sugar-Free Grocery List

Pantry

- chia seeds
- hemp hearts
- pumpkins seeds
- sunflower seeds
- almonds
- cashews
- walnuts
- large flake oats
- red lentils
- chickpeas
- can of coconut milk
- coconut oil
- coconut water
- tahini
- olive oil
- coconut vinegar/apple cider vinegar
- vegetable broth
- unsweetened applesauce
- black beans
- curry powder
- cumin
- turmeric
- red pepper flakes
- cinnamon
- vanilla
- stevia (I recommend vanilla stevia)
- allspice
- spelt flour

Fruits and Veggies

- celery
- cucumbers
- spinach
- broccoli
- zucchini
- carrots
- cauliflower
- leeks
- red potatoes
- red pepper
- red onion
- snow peas
- green onions
- avocado
- frozen berries
- bananas
- green apples
- garlic
- cilantro
- lemons
- limes

Fridge

- unsweetened almond milk (or whatever milk you like)
- yogurt or dairy-free yogurt

Bread

- sprouted sugar-free bread
- whole wheat or rice tortillas (I like the flax multigrain kind)
- buns if you plan to make Black Bean Burgers.

Commonly asked Questions

What fruits are best for our sugar-free month?

Fruit is an excellent source of vitamins and nutrients and are Nature's candy. The complex carbohydrates in fruit come in the form of both soluble and insoluble fibre which means the natural sugars are released slowly and cause less of a spike in blood sugar.

Some fruits that are very sweet and high in fructose are grapes, bananas, mangos, and pineapple. Fruits that are better for us this month are all berries, green apples, lemons and limes, citrus in small amounts and even one kiwi is fine.

Can I eat dark chocolate?

Well this is a challenge so I would try not to:) But if a small square of 90% organic dark chocolate once in a while is going to help you stay on track and make you happy, that's fine.

Are there any vegetables I should be avoiding? (I heard that squash has a lot of sugar)

NO! Don't worry about the sugar content of vegetables. Yes, carrots, beets and peas are higher in sugars than spinach, but they are all very nutritious and are an important part of the cleansing process.

What if I have to eat out?

No one wants to be tied to the kitchen for the whole month and it's not easy to eat out and avoid sugar altogether (it will be in all the sauces and marinades) so stick to salads, veggies, lean meats and bean dishes. If you are out for sushi, just order the sashimi and salad as the sushi rice had lots of sugar in it.

Which grains are the best?

Whole grains like buckwheat, millet, oats, sprouted brown rice and quinoa are best. Wheat flours are fine in moderation but they convert into sugar once they enter the bloodstream so make sure you eat whole wheat rather than "white" flour so that you are getting added nutrients and fibre, or better yet, buy sprouted grain breads (with no sugar added, of course).



Recipes

Overnight Cooked Oats

This recipe serves two, so alter it to suit your family.

2 cups of water
1/2 cup of almond milk
1 cup of large old-fashioned regular oats
1 tsp of cinnamon
dash of vanilla
1/8 cup of chia seeds
1/8 cup of hemp hearts

Bring the water and milk to a boil and add the oats, cinnamon and vanilla. Stir and cook for 30 seconds. Turn off the heat, add chia and hemp hearts and stir. Cover and let sit overnight on your stovetop. In the morning, reheat the oatmeal by turning the heat on low. You might need to add another splash of milk.

To make this breakfast extra special add raspberries, coconut flakes, slivered almonds, or pumpkin seeds.

Strawberry Chia Parfait

Serves 2

1/4 cup chia seeds
1 cup coconut milk (substitute almond milk if desired)
1/2 tsp of vanilla
1 cup of strawberries, rinsed and quartered
optional: 1-2 drops of vanilla stevia

Stir the chia seeds with coconut milk, vanilla, and stevia and leave in the fridge for at least an hour. Serve with fresh strawberries.

To make this extra special add Yoso Coconut Cultured Yogurt or your favourite unsweetened yogurt.



Almond Banana Pancakes

Yes, it's okay to use one banana to sweeten this entire batch of pancakes. Just don't cover your pancakes in maple syrup! Use fresh berries, yogurt or a nut butter instead.

Makes 12-14 pancakes

2 cups of spelt flour
 1 1/4 almond milk
 1 large ripe banana
 1 tbsp of cinnamon
 1/2 tsp of sea salt
 1 tsp of vanilla
 1 tbsp of baking powder
 1 egg (optional)
 coconut oil for cooking.



Place almond milk, banana, and vanilla (also egg if using) in blender and blend until smooth. Mix all the dry ingredients in a bowl and add wet to dry. Heat a large pan and add a bit of coconut oil. Pour about 1/4 cup of batter per pancake into the pan and cook until done.

Sugar-Free Granola

This is a must for an easy snack or a healthy breakfast. Serve with almond milk, your favourite unsweetened yogurt and/or fresh berries.

1 cup of almonds
 1 cup of cashews
 1 cup of walnuts
 1 cup of pumpkin seeds
 3 cups of regular large flaked oats
 1 tbsp of cinnamon
 1 tbsp of allspice
 1/2 cup of unsweetened applesauce
 1/2 cup of melted coconut oil.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Combine all the dry ingredients in a large bowl. In a smaller bowl combine the melted coconut oil and applesauce and pour this mixture over the nut/oat mixture. Place on a baking dish and spread out evenly. Bake for 40 minutes making sure to stir every 15 minutes to ensure it cooks evenly. Allow the granola to cool completely before storing in a glass jar.

Green smoothie

Smoothies will be garden fresh this month so we can use fewer high GI fruits and more berries and green apples

This green smoothie is ultra cleansing.

- 1 green apple
- 1/2 lime peeled
- 1/2 cucumber
- 2 celery stalks
- 1 large handful of spinach
- 1 1/2 cups of coconut water

Blend until smooth.



Tamari Almonds

To satisfy your salty, crunchy snack craving! One batch is enough for the whole week.

- 1 cup of almonds
- 1 tbsp of tamari
- 1 tsp of vanilla

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place the almonds in a bowl and pour tamari and vanilla over the top. Stir well. Allow to sit for 10 minutes so the almonds can absorb the liquid. Spread the almonds on the baking sheet and drizzle any remaining liquid over top.

Bake for 10-15 minutes. When they are ready, the almonds will be dry to the touch and golden. Let cool completely before storing in an airtight container.

Broccoli Salad with Lemon Tahini Dressing

Broccoli really is a classic superfood. Extremely high in nutrients (and pretty high in plant protein) and low in carbohydrates. This flavourful raw broccoli salad makes a great lunch!

4 cups of chopped broccoli
1 green apple diced
1 red pepper diced
1/2 cup of slivered almonds
1/2 cup of sunflower seeds
2 carrots, peeled and grated.
1/4 cup of minced red onion
1 tbsp of hemp hearts



Lemon Tahini Dressing

1/2 cup of tahini
juice of 1 lemon (or 3 tbsp)
2 tbsps of olive oil
1 clove of garlic
1 tbsp of coconut vinegar (can substitute apple cider vinegar)
1/2 cup of water
salt and pepper

In a bowl, combine the chopped up vegetables and apple with the nuts and seeds (minus the hemp hearts). In your blender or food processor blend the dressing ingredients until smooth.

Stir in the dressing, tossing until well mixed. Sprinkle the salad with the hemp hearts just before serving.

Thai Veggie Zoodles

This plant-based meal makes for a satisfying meal, but if you want to up the protein, add ground turkey or chicken.

Serves 2.

- 2 medium-large zucchinis, spiralized
- 2 large carrots, spiralized
- 1 red pepper, cut into thin slices
- 2-3 green onions, sliced into diagonal pieces
- 1 cup of snow peas, cut into thin slices
- 1 cup of chickpeas

Heat oil in a large pan, lightly saute the red pepper and snow peas for 1-2 minutes. Add all the other ingredients and turn down the heat. Pour Thai Sauce (recipe below) over the veggies and toss gently to coat the veggies with the sauce. Allow the mixture to simmer to thicken the sauce. **DO NOT OVERCOOK!**

Remove from heat and serve immediately.

Thai Sauce

- 1 can full-fat coconut milk
- 2 tbsps almond butter (or peanut butter)
- 2 tbsps tamari
- 1 tbsp freshly grated ginger
- 1 glove garlic, crushed
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes (omit if you have kids who can't do spicy)

Whisk sauce ingredients together in a medium bowl. Pour over zoodles when they are ready.



Cauliflower, Potato, Leek Stew with Lentils

This is an incredibly warming, nourishing soup that is great for any detox or cleanse. A great source of complex carbs, protein and healthy fat.

6 cups of vegetable broth (I recommend Pacifico brand)
2 cups of red lentils
1 head of cauliflower, chopped
1 can of full-fat coconut milk
2-3 red potatoes or sweet potatoes, cubed
1 large leek, sliced
2 tomatoes, chopped
1 tbsp of coconut oil
3 cloves of garlic
1 inch of peeled ginger, minced
cilantro for garnish



SPICES

2 tbsps curry powder
1 tsp turmeric
1 tbsp cumin
1 tsp red pepper flakes (omit if kids can't do spicy)
salt and pepper

Heat coconut oil in a large soup pot and cook leeks and garlic over medium heat for about 10 minutes. Add spices and ginger and cook for another 2 minutes.

Add tomatoes, potatoes and cauliflower and cook for another 5 minutes to coat the veggies in the curry you have created.

Add the remaining ingredients (coconut milk, broth, lentils) and simmer and stir for ten minutes. Turn the heat down and simmer with the lid on for another 20 minutes or until the lentils are soft.

I like the chunky texture of the stew but you could blend half for a creamier texture.

Garnish with a little cilantro!

Stuffed Avocado

Yum, healthy fats! This is a vegan recipe but free free to add meat and/or dairy. I have seen it on instagram with bacon and cheese, with chicken and cheddar, and with rice and egg. The point is that anything goes! For more ideas on this easy lunch idea, check out this link: <https://www.babble.com/best-recipes/11-vegan-ways-to-stuff-an-avocado>

an avocado
green onion
celery
half a red pepper
1 dill pickle
hummus
sea salt and pepper



Dice all the veggies up into small pieces and mix with a dollop of hummus, enough to bind it all together. Then spoon it into the avocado. Season with salt and pepper and enjoy!

Black Bean Burgers: www.ilovevegan.com/vegan-mushroom-black-bean-burgers

LINKS TO THE OTHER RECIPES ON THE MEAL PLAN

Walnut Meat: <http://pureella.com/vegan-mushroom-walnut-meat>

Chickpea Salad Sandwich: <http://www.thepurelife.ca/gluten-free-chickpea-salad-sandwiches>

Burrito Bowls: <http://ohsheglows.com/2015/11/02/diy-burrito-bowl>

Nutty Pea & Quinoa Bowl: <https://deliciouslyella.com/nutty-pea-quinoa-bowl>

Pizza: <https://www.benaturally.fit/3plant-based-pizzas>

Sweet Potato Chili: <http://cookieandkate.com/2011/sweet-potato-chili-recipe>

Black Bean Burgers: www.ilovevegan.com/vegan-mushroom-black-bean-burgers

Thank You!



Thanks for joining us on our **SUGAR-FREE MONTH**. I hope you find it useful and inspiring.

Rebecca