

A Real-Life Approach to
Fibromyalgia Relief

The
FIBRO
FOOD
FORMULA



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The Fibro Food Formula

A Real-life Approach to Fibromyalgia Relief

**By Ginevra Liptan, MD
with Anna Walker, NC**

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: The Whys Behind the Formula

Food additives and hypersensitivity

The Fibro Formula Do's and Don'ts

How to Improve Digestion

How to Heal a Leaky Gut

Chapter 2: The Fibro Food Formula

RED Foods: STOP

Step One: Avoid RED Foods Completely

Chapter 3: Step One: Avoid RED Foods to Lessen Pain Sensitivity

RED Foods to avoid

Hidden sources of glutamate

Artificial sweeteners to avoid

Chapter 4: What to Do When You've Been RED-Fooded

1. Speed Things Up

2. Rehydrate

3. Soothe and Nourish with Helpful Foods and Herbs

Rejuvenate With a "Treat Yourself" Mentality

Chapter 5: Step Two: For Better Energy Production Eat More GREEN Foods!

GREEN: GO and GO BIG!

Improving Mitochondrial Function

Protein Powerhouse Quick Snacks

Easy Breakfast Ideas

Eleven Super Foods for Mitochondria

Common Questions About GREEN Foods

Chapter 6: Fibro-friendly Cooking Tips

Tip 1: Pre-prepped is perfect

Tip 2: Delivery is delightful

Tip 3: Terrific tools

Tip 4: Batch cook basics

Tip 5: Meal Planning

Chapter 7: Step Three: Eat for Less Inflammation, Cut Out YELLOW Foods

Beginner Option A:

Beginner option B (B for baby steps!):

Advanced Option (the ripping-the-band-aid-off approach):

YELLOW foods

Common questions about YELLOW foods

Chapter 8: Step Four: Re-introduction of YELLOW Foods—Tasty Detective Work!

Good choices for gluten experiments

Good dairy experiment choices

Answers to common questions

Chapter 9: Overcoming Barriers and Avoiding Pitfalls

Real Life Obstacles

Pitfalls to Avoid

Chapter 10: Conclusion: Going Forward with The Fibro Food Formula

Chapter 11: GREEN Meal Ideas and Meal Templates

Breakfast Ideas

Easy Lunches and Dinners

Desserts

Recipes

Resources

About the Authors

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Introduction

When I developed fibromyalgia in medical school, changing my diet was the first treatment that actually made a difference in my symptoms. After I had pretty much tried and failed everything western medicine had offered me, a naturopathic doctor suggested I stop eating dairy. It was really hard to change my diet when I was just trying to survive. Too fatigued to cook, shopping hurt and my brain was a fuzzy mess. Sometimes a stale cookie was really all that I had in my kitchen for breakfast.

But within two weeks of stopping dairy I started to notice less achiness and fatigue. That is when I felt the first glimmer of hope that I could feel even a little better. I began to notice that I had more energy when I ate lots of protein, that eating anything with MSG made me want to crawl out of my skin, and that gluten made my knees ache. Diet remains a huge component of my fibromyalgia self-care program today, although I am the first to admit I am not perfect and definitely eat things that I regret later (because ice cream is a delicious temptress!).

My book, *The FibroManual: A Complete Fibromyalgia Treatment Guide for You...And Your Doctor*, includes dietary recommendations based on my own personal and clinical experience along with what I have learned from research studies. Essentially, *The FibroManual* covers the “why” and “what” of dietary change, but not the “how.” And in real life, knowing what you should be eating is a whole lot easier than actually changing how you eat, especially when you are flattened by fibromyalgia symptoms.

In reality, trying to shop, cook, and eat healthy food with fibromyalgia can feel like an insurmountable challenge. Talking with my friend Anna Walker, a holistic nutritionist with practical experience from her own struggles with autoimmune illness, we realized the need for a book with practical and fibro-friendly advice about food. That is how this book was born, and it serves as a companion to *The FibroManual*, containing the same dietary guidance but in a very simple, user-friendly approach and with keys to making it happen in real life.

I am very cognizant that when you have limited energy from an illness like fibromyalgia, you need to be very careful with how you spend that energy. I want to focus on the most important diet changes that enable you to spend your energy wisely and get the most bang for your energy buck, so to speak.

To use food as medicine for fibromyalgia you will need to find *your* optimum fibromyalgia food formula. So what exactly do I mean by a food formula? **The fundamental equation is simple: Eat less of foods that make you feel worse, and more of the foods that make you feel better. And, of course, to do it by expending as little energy as possible.**

There are some foods (chemicals really) that universally are bad guys for fibromyalgia, and some foods that universally are good for fibromyalgia (proteins and healthy fats). That part is easy. The rest is very individualized, and what might worsen one person’s symptoms might be fine for another. This is the realm of food sensitivities, where our immune system views certain foods as attackers and generates inflammation in response. And while there are some likely offenders that are common food sensitivities—*ahem, here’s looking at you gluten and dairy*—not everyone is sensitive to the same foods. So you will need to determine which foods trigger your own unique immune system to generate inflammation and pain.

I used to recommend Paleo and Whole 30 types of diets to my patients, as both are high on protein and cut out a lot of inflammation and pain-generating foods like gluten and dairy. But so many of my patients struggled with these diets because they were too labor-intensive and strict with on carbohydrates. Over time I slowly realized they are just not fibro-friendly, especially after I tried one myself.

At The Frida Center for Fibromyalgia, our whole staff tried the Whole 30 diet together, and it officially kicked my butt. I flamed out on day 17. Going so strictly off all carbohydrates made me grouchy and anxious. And I did not have the time or energy to make homemade mayo (store-bought mayonnaise is not Whole 30-compliant as it contains a small amount of sugar; so instead you are given a recipe to make your own mayo at home). Are you freaking kidding me? Waste all that time and arm power mixing mayo when I could just buy some that contains a little sugar at the store?

That is when I realized that these strict diets were not going to be do-able for most people with fibromyalgia. It certainly wasn't for me. So unless you spend all your time shopping and prepping and cooking food (or have a personal chef), these diets may not be realistic. Heck, even Oprah, a billionaire with a personal chef, has struggled mightily and publicly with eating better. I recognize also that following these diets can be expensive, and for patients on a limited budget they can be out of reach. Instead, *The Fibro Food Formula* is a real world, fibro-friendly, and budget-friendly book about eating for fibromyalgia.

That said, Whole 30 and Paleo diets are fantastic, and if you are able to eat that type of diet successfully you don't need to read this book! This book is for the rest of us, who are struggling to figure out what to eat to feel better, but in a fibro-friendly way.

Anna and I have worked together to address the two biggest barriers that I see patients struggle with. The first is not understanding exactly what they need to do. "Which foods contain gluten and what are good substitutes?" "Which foods are high in protein?" This eBook will knock out that barrier and answer all those questions for you.

The second, even more challenging barrier is that when you are laid out with pain, fatigue, and fog, sometimes shopping, cooking, and even eating food seems too hard. To surmount this, we have tried to include every possible technique to make eating better easier, simpler, and take the least energy possible. The good news is that as you start to feel a little better, preparing food gets easier. And who knows better than other fibromyalgia patients how to make food prep easier? So we will share other patients' fibro-friendly cooking tips and recipes. Knowing where to focus your limited energy resources is the key to making it happen in spite of fibromyalgia symptoms.

It may sound hard, but I promise, we have made it as easy and fibro-friendly as possible.

What does fibro-friendly mean? Basically it means keeping things easy and realistic, and using any shortcuts we can to lower the amount of energy you have to spend on food prep. Because if a recipe calls for you have to chop a butternut squash by hand and that makes your arm ache, are you going to choose to do that rather than eat something easy (like a cookie that is sitting there looking delicious and already made)? In reality, we are going to choose the cookie every time. So instead we suggest using pre-cut squash or replacing it with a softer vegetable. We will definitely not be telling you to make your own special mayo! And sprinkled throughout will be tips and shortcuts to make it as easy

and fibro-friendly as possible. *The Fibro Food Formula* is a real world, practical guide to one of the most important choices you make every day: what to put in your mouth.

Is diet the whole shebang as far as treating fibromyalgia? No, of course not. We must also address other aspects such as improving sleep quality, calming the body's stress response, and lowering muscle pain. You can learn how to do this for yourself, and give your doctors guidance on how they can best help you, in my book *The FibroManual: A Complete Fibromyalgia Treatment Guide for You...And Your Doctor*. But changing your diet is the most important foundational change you can make for yourself, and even without any other treatments can ease the pain, fatigue, and achiness of fibromyalgia.

Throughout the book, I will share my own personal experience with food, along with tips from real-life patients (thanks to all who contributed). Although the voice of the book is from me, throughout you will be learning from Anna, too, and I want to thank her for being such a wise woman, a good friend, and a great co-author.

To use food as a tool to fight fibromyalgia you don't have to have eat only kale and quinoa. Let us guide you towards a *reality-based* approach to food as medicine. You can do this!

Chapter 1: The Whys Behind the Formula

I know, I know. I said this book was only going to discuss the how, not the why. But I think the basics must be covered, because as humans we are much more likely to do something when we know the reasoning behind it. To really be effective in using foods to fight fibromyalgia, you need to understand why. It works so much better that way than just being told, “Eat this, not that!” Let’s start with a brief overview of what is happening in the body in fibromyalgia. Far more in-depth information can be found in *The FibroManual*, but it is important to understand the big picture to see why food can make such a big impact on symptoms.

Those of us with fibromyalgia deal with poor sleep, fatigue, brain fog, achiness, and muscle pain. We often have symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome as well, including abdominal pain, bloating, and alternating periods of constipation and diarrhea. Research on fibromyalgia is still a young field, as we are about 50 years behind where we should be because it took so long for it to be recognized as a “real” illness. But even today, we do know a great deal about what is happening in the body to cause all these seemingly unrelated symptoms.

Think of fibromyalgia as a chain reaction, beginning deep in the brain’s “danger response center,” which controls many of the basic housekeeping operations of the body, including sweating, breathing, and digestion. In fibromyalgia the danger response gets turned on, often by a trauma or injury, and does not turn off. It’s like a smoke alarm constantly going off even though there is no fire.

This activated danger signal initiates the fight-or-flight response, which has wide-ranging effects throughout the body. The constant activation of the fight-or-flight response prevents deep sleep, and leads to tense, painful, and inflamed muscles. Pain signals sent from the muscles to the brain eventually overwhelm the brain’s ability to process these signals, and the brain starts turning the volume up on everything. This causes a state of hypersensitivity to pain, touch, sound, smell, and light, making us feel like the girl who could feel a pea under 20 mattresses in the fairy tale “The Princess and the Pea.”

Food additives and hypersensitivity

Certain food additives, such as MSG and aspartame, are known to aggravate this already hypersensitized nervous system and increase pain levels in fibromyalgia. Avoiding these additives will lessen pain.

Once your body has absorbed nutrients from food, it must transform that fuel into energy for your cells, but it does this very inefficiently in fibromyalgia. Due to the effects of the chronic stress response in the body in fibromyalgia, energy production is impaired.

When the brain cells aren’t able to make enough energy to keep up with the body’s demand, we experience fatigue. When the muscle cells aren’t able to make enough, it results in muscle pain and weakness. Improving the ability to produce energy from nutrients is a key factor in restoring balance and reducing fatigue and muscle pain. To get better energy production, we need to increase protein and certain healthy fats.

The whole process of digestion from start to finish does not work as well in fibromyalgia. The chronic fight-or-flight response results in impaired digestion because it reduces stomach secretions and impairs blood flow to the stomach and intestines. When

digestion is impaired it leads to abdominal symptoms of nausea, bloating, and gas, and makes it harder to absorb nutrients.

The chronic fight-or-flight response also leads to increased permeability of the intestines, often called “leaky gut.” This increased permeability of the intestines allows large undigested proteins and food particles to enter the bloodstream and cause inflammation. A leaky gut makes us very prone to food sensitivities that worsen inflammation and pain.

The Fibro Formula Do’s and Don’ts

- Do eat lots of protein and healthy fats to improve cellular energy production
- Do improve digestion and heal a leaky gut
- Don’t eat food additives, such as MSG and aspartame, that worsen pain hypersensitivity
- Don’t eat foods that worsen inflammation

It can sound overwhelming thinking about all these changes at once, and this is where our diet is different. You will learn simple and easy ways to make these changes, keeping it real and fibro-friendly. Even if you only can accomplish one of these diet changes you will notice a difference. And you don’t have to eat perfectly all the time. But once you know what foods are in your optimum food formula, you at least know what to aim for!

In the next chapter you will learn how to eat more of the foods that make you feel better, and less of those that make you feel worse. But first, a good place to start right now is to improve digestion and begin healing your leaky gut. So grab your copy of *The FibroManual* and read Chapter 10. Start on those things while you are reading the rest of this book, planning out how to accomplish dietary changes. It is very helpful to start working on improving digestion, avoiding constipation, and healing a leaky gut before you start making diet changes. That way you will already be feeling better and have set yourself up for success. To remind you of the basics, here they are:

How to Improve Digestion

It is helpful to think about what digestion is: It’s the process in which food is broken down into very small particles that can be absorbed and used by the body. It starts with chewing—mixing food with saliva in the mouth. The food is then swallowed into the stomach where it mixes with gastric juice containing hydrochloric acid and pepsin, an enzyme that starts the breakdown of proteins. Stomach acid serves a vital role in the absorption of many nutrients, including protein, B-12, iron, magnesium, calcium, zinc, copper, and vitamin C. From there, food moves into the small intestine, where it mixes with enzymes secreted by the pancreas. These pancreatic enzymes break it into particles small enough to be absorbed by the cells of the small intestine, where most of the nutrients are absorbed. The remainder is then passed into the large intestine, where water and some minerals are ingested into the body. Finally, waste is eliminated through the rectum.

When digestion is impaired, it can cause nausea, bloating, gas, heartburn, and poor nutrient absorption. Most people with fibromyalgia are low on stomach acid and digestive enzymes, and benefit from taking digestive enzyme supplements with meals to help break down food. One of the easiest and most important ways to improve digestion is to chew food well (until liquefied) and eating slowly without distraction (TV, devices,

on the go, stressful situations). For more details on improving digestion, go to Chapter 10 of *The FibroManual*. If you suspect you have low stomach acid, you can also try a natural approach to increase stomach acid. Add 1–2 teaspoons of apple cider vinegar diluted in 6 oz. of water and drink just before a meal. Make sure to swish your mouth with water afterward to protect your teeth against the acid. Stop if it makes you feel heartburn or nausea.

How to Heal a Leaky Gut

A leaky gut allows large undigested proteins and food particles to enter the bloodstream and cause inflammation. Since digestion is impaired and our guts are more leaky, this makes us very prone to food sensitivities that worsen inflammation and pain. To improve symptoms, we need to both plug up the holes in our leaky guts *and* avoid those foods that make us feel worse. Sometimes after leaky gut repair, you may be able to tolerate some of those troublemaking foods again, and sometimes you may need to keep avoiding them. One of the best ways to assist in healing a leaking gut is to avoid those foods that are activating your immune system to allow for gut healing, and you will learn how to figure that out in later chapters.

Another way to improve a leaky gut is by avoiding constipation. The longer waste sits there the more it secretes chemicals that worsen leaky gut issues. Keep things moving in there! This may involve using gentle laxatives like senna, magnesium, or Miralax (polyethylene glycol), along with increased fiber and water. It's crucial to have a bowel movement every day. If you're not, you're constipated. For more detailed discussion of how to get pooping better, head over to *The FibroManual*.

You can also take the supplement l-glutamine 500mg three times daily on an empty stomach for two to three months. This is an amino acid that helps to protect the gastrointestinal tract from stress and inflammation and repair the intestinal walls. Supplementing with nutrients like zinc can also be useful (*I like Peptic Care ZC by Pure Encapsulations: take one capsule daily with a meal for two to three months. Remember to talk with your health care provider before starting any new supplements, however!*). Try to minimize the use of NSAIDS (like ibuprofen or naproxen), as these can worsen leaky gut. Finally, take some probiotic supplements (healthy bacteria like that found in yogurt).

Chapter 2: The Fibro Food Formula

Lots of GREEN FOODS minus RED FOODS = Less fibromyalgia symptoms.

After starting to improve digestion and leaky gut issues, now you are ready to start finding *your* optimum fibromyalgia food formula. Remember, the fundamental equation is simple: Eat less of foods that make you feel worse, and more of the foods that make you feel better, while expending as little energy as possible.

To keep it simple, Anna and I devised the Fibro Food Formula with a simple RED/YELLOW/GREEN framework. Just like a traffic light, RED means stop. YELLOW means caution/slow down, as you may need to stop. And GREEN means go.

RED Foods: STOP

Very likely to worsen symptoms so avoid completely during all steps

- All artificial sweeteners except stevia
- Foods additives like MSG (monosodium glutamate)
- Any foods that you have determined generate inflammation for you

YELLOW Foods: CAUTION

These are common trigger foods that may cause symptoms for up to 72 hours. Avoid these foods completely for 45 days in Step Three and reintroduce in Step Four

- Gluten (wheat, rye, and barley)
- Dairy
- High-lectin foods like corn, legumes (such as peanuts, soy beans, garbanzos, lentils, black beans, and pinto beans), and nightshade vegetables (peppers, potato, tomato, eggplant)
- Concentrated sugary foods: candy, soda, fruit juice, maple syrup, honey, alcohol

GREEN Foods: GO! Eat as much as you want

- All vegetables except nightshades (peppers, potato, tomato, eggplant)
- All fruits, emphasizing those especially those with lower sugar content like raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, apples, pears, and citrus fruits
- All meats
- Eggs
- Herbs and spices like ginger, basil, turmeric, rosemary, and thyme
- Nuts and seeds like raw walnuts, pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, hemp seeds, cashews, and almonds
- Healthy fats like organic avocado, coconut, olive oil, and ghee from grass-fed cows
- Fermented vegetables like sauerkraut, kimchi, and coconut yogurt
- Mineral rich sea vegetables (seaweed) like wakame and nori
- Filtered water and herbal teas like chamomile, nettle, peppermint, and damiana

GREEN Foods: go! Eat these foods in moderation

- White rice
- Rice cakes
- Alternative grains like quinoa, amaranth, and millet

- Non-dairy dark chocolate
- Dairy and gluten-free sweet treats like candied ginger, coconut macaroons
- High sugar fruits like cherries, mango, bananas, and grapes
- Black and green tea, coffee (Whole 30 does not allow caffeine—but let's be real, it can be a necessity with fibromyalgia!)



Throughout the book key points to remember will be highlighted with “*The Traffic Light of Importance*”

There are four steps in the Fibro Food Formula:

Step One: Avoid RED Foods Completely

There are some universally bad foods that worsen symptoms in everyone (technically, they're not foods, but artificial chemicals added to foods). The biggies are monosodium glutamate (MSG) and aspartame. We call these the RED foods, meaning *Stop, do not eat!* You start by simply avoiding these chemicals in your diet. If you don't eat much processed foods this might be easy for you. If you do, or if you frequently drink diet sodas, this step might be harder. **You can take as long as you need on this step before proceeding to the next step, or you can jump right in and do this step simultaneously with Step Two.** The next chapter goes more into detail about how to avoid these pain-enhancing chemicals.

Step Two: Focus on eating more GREEN Foods, continue to avoid RED foods, and eat YELLOW foods as usual

While avoiding RED foods, try to eat more GREEN foods, especially high protein. Protein needs are higher in fibromyalgia because we use energy less efficiently and struggle to keep stable blood sugar levels. So a gentle way to start improving your food formula is to avoid RED foods and eat more GREEN foods for a while. The GREEN foods are universally good foods: high protein sources like meats and nuts that help us keep stable blood sugar levels to lessen fog and fatigue, healthy fats like avocados to power cellular energy, and nutrient dense vegetables. These are the GREEN foods, meaning eat them freely and often.

Once you are ready, move up to the more advanced level, in which you do the important detective work to find out what foods trigger inflammation in your body.

Step Three: GREEN foods only for 45 days

For this more advanced step, you will eat *only* green foods for 45 days. This means no RED foods and no YELLOW foods. The YELLOW foods are ones that are commonly associated with food sensitivities and inflammation, such as gluten and dairy. Other offenders are high lectin foods, like corn and legumes, and high sugar foods. Almost everyone with fibromyalgia has some food sensitivities, but we are not all sensitive to the

same foods. *Do not panic!* There will be options to do YELLOW food experimentation more slowly, or more intensely, to find a pace that is doable for you. We also include a wide variety of easy breakfast, lunch, and dinner ideas that only use GREEN foods in Chapter 11, as well as tips to make cooking as easy as possible in Chapter 6.

Avoiding YELLOW foods completely for 45 days will calm your immune system and lessen the inflammation that contributes to muscle and joint pain, achiness, brain fog, and fatigue. It takes about six weeks for the immune system to clear out old antibodies, that is why 45 days is the magic number. Usually symptom reduction occurs around week two or three, but maximum effect seen at the six-week mark. If you can't last 45 days, try to at least get to 30 days. That will get you close enough to notice a difference. So the ideal is 45 days, but 30 days is acceptable.

Step 4: Strategically reintroduce YELLOW foods while eating GREEN foods and avoiding RED foods

So after eating *only* GREEN foods—no YELLOW or RED foods—for 45 days (or 30 days), you will cautiously add them back, one food group at a time, to see how you feel with them. This process helps you to decide if you are sensitive to a food or not.

If you add back dairy and you notice your joint pain flares up within 72 hours, that means for you, right now, dairy is generating inflammation in your body. If you want to make extra sure, go off dairy again for a few days, then try it again. If you notice the same pattern, guess what? In *your* Fibro Food Formula, you now move dairy from the YELLOW group into the RED group, meaning do not eat. Of course, humans being human, that does not mean you will never eat dairy again, but now you know what to expect if you do and you can make a knowledgeable choice (see Chapter 4: What To Do When You've Been RED-Fooded and Chapter 9: Avoiding Pitfalls and Overcoming Barriers to learn more about this). But honestly, if you know a food makes you feel awful, it really does become much easier to avoid.

Many of the dietary changes in our food formula are similar to those recommended by many popular diets like Paleo or Whole 30 diets, both of which advocate no grains, sugar, or dairy. However, these diets can be too strict and too labor intensive for someone dealing with fatigue and pain from fibromyalgia. They also tend to be very low in carbohydrates, which can flare up anxiety and worsen mood. To avoid this problem, The Fibro Food Formula recommends only moderate lowering of carbs.

Our approach empowers you to find what works for your body by experimenting with foods that are typically well tolerated (GREEN), sometimes tolerated (YELLOW), and typically not tolerated (RED). It also helps you to learn to listen and trust your body and learn that there is no “one size does that fits all,” and only with experimentation will you find *your* perfect Fibro Food Formula.

Now we move on to the nitty-gritty, and start with Step One, avoiding RED foods. Just the simple change of avoiding certain chemicals in your diet can make a huge reduction in symptoms. So if you are feeling fibro-fogged and overwhelmed after learning about all four steps, I want you to forget about those completely now. Just move on to the next chapter and start doing that *one* change of avoiding RED foods. Even if that is all you do from this book, you will get some benefit. Because why on earth would we want to keep eating chemicals that are making our pain worse? This begs the question

of why on earth anyone started putting such nasty chemicals into our foods anyway, but for now I will get off my soapbox and present to you... RED foods.

Chapter 3: Step One: Avoid RED Foods to Lessen Pain Sensitivity

The first part of The Fibro Food Formula is to eat less of the foods that make you feel worse, which we call the RED foods. Just like in a traffic light, RED means stop. There are some universal RED foods that almost everyone with fibromyalgia is sensitive to. These food additives are “dietary excitotoxins,” which means that they are irritating to the brain and spinal cord. **The biggies here are artificial sweeteners (such as aspartame) and glutamate (most commonly found in the food additive known as MSG, or monosodium glutamate).** They worsen fibromyalgia pain, so we recommend completely avoiding MSG and aspartame on an ongoing basis.

RED Foods to avoid

- aspartame
- saccharin (Sweet'N Low)
- sucralose (Splenda)
- monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- monopotassium glutamate
- glutamate
- hydrolyzed protein
- textured protein
- sodium caseinate
- calcium caseinate
- autolyzed yeast
- yeast extract

In addition to the nearly universal RED foods of glutamate and artificial sweeteners, many of us have pain flares when we eat other foods we may be sensitive to, such as gluten or dairy. But not everyone is sensitive to the same foods, which is why in Steps Three and Four we experiment with YELLOW foods to determine which cause a reaction for us. Any offending foods or food groups then move from YELLOW to our personal RED food group. More on that in later chapters, but for now let's dive deeper into the universal RED foods, those dietary excitotoxins that are well known to worsen fibromyalgia symptoms. They are also known as a common trigger for migraines and have been implicated as a trigger for seizures in some people with epilepsy.

Dietary excitotoxins (note that this word includes the term *toxin*) are those that contain high levels of glutamate, most commonly found in the food additive MSG (monosodium glutamate) and certain artificial sweeteners such as aspartame. The already sensitized fibromyalgia nervous system is extremely sensitive to the effects of excitotoxins, and several studies have shown that they worsen fibromyalgia pain. In one study, 80 percent of fibromyalgia subjects who did not consume any aspartame or MSG for four weeks recorded a significant reduction in symptoms. And when given a blinded MSG challenge (in which they were given either MSG or a placebo), those that received MSG noted a rapid return of their symptoms. (From my friend who worked on this study, the inside scoop is that several of the subjects given the MSG to drink in the blinded challenge

promptly vomited and developed migraines). Clearly *not* something humans should be ingesting, period.

I can always tell when I have accidentally eaten something that contains MSG. Within a few hours I feel a weird itchy burning sensation all over my body and any existing mild pain from tight fascia becomes severe pain. It is such an unpleasant experience that I work really hard to avoid MSG!

Glutamate is one of the most potent pain-enhancing chemicals found in our diet, most commonly in the form of monosodium glutamate (MSG), which is a flavor enhancer and food preservative. You might find MSG added to foods like Doritos, sauces, spice mixes, and to some food in Chinese restaurants. Unless a Chinese restaurant specifically says their food has no MSG, assume it does. Seriously, the food at Panda Express, staple of mall food courts everywhere, may be half MSG by weight and is pretty much a guaranteed fibro flare!

Looking for MSG on labels is straightforward, but for other sources you will need to be a label detective, because glutamate can sneak into our foods disguised as other terms include hydrolyzed proteins and autolyzed yeast extract, or even under generic terms like “natural flavoring.” Avoid any processed foods product that lists any of these hidden sources of glutamate. If it lists a vague descriptor like “natural flavoring” or “spices,” assume it contains glutamate and avoid.

Hidden sources of glutamate

(Read labels carefully!)

- monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- monopotassium glutamate
- glutamate
- hydrolyzed protein
- textured protein
- sodium caseinate
- calcium caseinate
- autolyzed yeast
- yeast extract

Another nasty chemical that can increase pain levels is the artificial sweetener known as aspartame, typically found in diet sodas. In addition to aspartame, almost all artificial sweeteners, including sucralose (Splenda) and saccharin (Sweet'N Low), can hike up fibromyalgia pain. Corn syrup can be inflammatory as well, so try to consume only cane or beet sugar. Believe it or not it, it is better to just eat real cane sugar! The best non-sugar sweetener is stevia, which is made from the leaves of a plant and is not a dietary excitotoxin.

Artificial sweeteners to avoid

aspartame

saccharin (Sweet'N Low)

sucralose (Splenda)

Just because avoiding red foods is the simplest change to make, it does not necessarily mean it will be easy, as artificial sweeteners can be very addictive. When I tell people to stop drinking all diet sodas, they often give a panicked look. But you don't have to stop them forever. Simply experiment by stopping them for one week, then add them back and see how you feel. I have not had a single patient that opts to continue drinking diet sodas after that. And if you're truly a soda addict and you need some fizz for life to be complete, try drinking kombucha or soda made with cane sugar. You can also try making your own with bubbly water and juice mixers, or if you must, drink the corn syrup regular soda. That is better than the aspartame option.

From My Case Files: Pam's story

Pam was a self-described "Diet Coke addict" who did not think she could stop drinking it. After much convincing, she stopped it for a week, and her pain levels dropped so much she didn't need to take as much pain medications. She didn't take any convincing to stay off Diet Coke after that, but for a special treat she started drinking cane sugar sodas occasionally and found that satisfied her cravings.

Have I convinced you why these chemicals are all RED foods that should be avoided at all costs? The most direct way to do this is to avoid processed foods, diet drinks, and all artificial sweeteners as much as possible. It is better for you to just use regular cane sugar, but stevia is also a great source for natural sweetness that is not an excitotoxin. If you are still needing to eat processed foods due to energy or financial constraints, make sure to become a vigilant label reader and choose processed foods free of excitotoxins as much as possible.



Avoid RED foods that contain food additives or artificial sweeteners that worsen fibromyalgia symptoms.

Chapter 4: What to Do When You've Been RED-Fooded

Knowing which foods are RED foods means you will never eat them again, right? Ha! If only that is how real life works. Either by accidental exposure to MSG in a restaurant, or through a moment of weakness around a Dorito or diet soda, you will still be exposed to RED foods on occasion. When that happens, you need an action plan to limit the duration and intensity of the flare.

And after you finish Steps Three and Four, determining which YELLOW foods activate your immune system, you may find some YELLOW foods have moved into *your* RED food category. So if you find gluten is actually a RED food for you, at some point you may accidentally or intentionally eat some gluten, and in that case you need to put in place the same action plan.

Interestingly, once you have cut out gluten, dairy, and MSG, you might find that when you do eat them, you have a stronger symptomatic reaction than before. This is mostly due to the fact that you now can clearly see the difference. We call these responses getting “gluten-ed,” “dairy-ed,” or “MSG-ed,” or more generally “RED-Fooded,” and they're often quite unpleasant experiences. Once you've identified that you're having a food-related symptom flare up, follow this action plan to lower the intensity and time you spend in that flare.

First: Recognize a food-based reaction

It's important to realize that a food-based reaction can be so much more than a stomachache or a rash. In fact, reactions to gluten, dairy, or MSG might mirror symptoms you'd typically attribute to fibromyalgia, like body aches, migraines, headaches, fatigue, and brain fog. Essentially you might feel all your usual fibro symptoms, but with increased intensity, or you might notice new and unique symptoms. For example, you might find that exposure to MSG immediately leaves you riddled with joint pain in your knees. Or maybe a seemingly innocent slice of pizza now leaves you stuck in the bathroom all night.

For others, the effects of eating gluten, dairy, or MSG might be less obvious or immediate. When you find yourself symptomatic from classic fibro symptoms, consider what you ate up to 72 hours earlier, as you could be having a delayed reaction. This type of reaction is explained in more detail in Chapter 7.

Next: Ditch the guilt

Now that you've identified that something you've eaten is giving you symptoms, it's important to let go of blame and guilt. Maybe you blame yourself (*I should have known not to eat that!*). Perhaps you feel angry (*That incompetent waiter made me sick!*) or scared (*I'll never eat at a restaurant again!*). If you're anything like me, you'll feel all three.

Most likely you'll also feel defeated and vulnerable. It's quite humbling when your kryptonite is a dash of soy sauce or hidden MSG. It's also hard to always follow the rules and not indulge every once and a while. Try not to be so hard on yourself if you've gotten sick, whether it was an accident or not. Let it go and focus on feeling better as fast as possible.

Finally: enact a “Feel Better Faster” game plan by speeding things up, rehydrating, and gently nourishing your mind and body:

1. Speed Things Up

Forgive us for stating the obvious, but the faster the gluten/dairy/MSG leaves your body, the better you’ll feel. Sometimes our bodies make the executive decision to reject those foods through some diarrhea. In that case, you can skip this step. For some people, it takes a longer time for their body to get rid of the offending intruder, which only prolongs suffering. Follow this protocol for a couple of days to help speed things along. One option is to take some vitamins and minerals that have natural laxative effects. Two top contenders are magnesium citrate (300–600 mg) and vitamin C (1,000–3,000 mg). You can try one of these or both together. Should you consider taking these at bedtime, you’ll likely wake up ready to say *adios* to whatever was ailing you.

Other people prefer over-the-counter laxatives such as Miralax (polyethylene glycol). We suggest you try natural solutions first, because laxatives can worsen existing symptoms like nausea and cramping. Whatever you do, remember to start by taking a small dose and see what happens. Like we mentioned, some people’s bodies do this for them naturally. The right dose for *your* body will be very obvious.

2. Rehydrate

Help your body to rid itself of what it sees as a toxic foreign invader by rehydrating with lots of water as well as easy-to-digest liquids and soft foods for a day or two. Try filling up a 20 oz. water bottle with water and a drop or two of a food-grade essential oil like peppermint. You can also add fruit and herbs like lemon, berries, and mint for a different flavor. Mixing things up makes drinking a lot of water more exciting and helps soothe a sad belly. Aim for at least four water bottles full of water a day (80 ounces total or 10 eight oz. glasses).

If you are having any loose stool or diarrhea as part of your body’s response to the offending food, or if the gentle laxative approach turned out to be not so gentle, make sure you are replacing all the salts and minerals you are losing as well. You can drink things like Gatorade or sports drinks, but you can do much better than a sports drink filled with tons of added sugar, artificial colors, and high fructose corn syrup. Rehydrate and replenish those electrolytes with this easy recipe:

Ditch the Gatorade Recipe

- Half a glass of water
- Squeeze of lemon
- Splash of fruit juice or coconut water
- Dash of Celtic or Himalayan sea salt

3. Soothe and Nourish with Helpful Foods and Herbs

Bone Broth

When we got the flu growing up, nothing beat chicken noodle soup. Think of bone broth as a grown-up version of this tummy friendly classic. Bone broth is slow cooked stock made from cartilage-rich joints and bones. We promise it tastes a lot better than it

sounds. It's like the rich and flavorful broth you get at your favorite pho restaurant (minus the potential MSG!).

Bone broth can work wonders, as long as you can tolerate it. However, it does contain some natural glutamate, so if you are very sensitive to glutamates in foods or prone to headaches you might find bone broth makes you feel worse, not better. For this reason, we consider bone broth a YELLOW food. Give it a try and see how you feel, preferably during a time when you're feeling pretty well. If you do find bone broth works for you, try to keep some in your freezer for times of need.

How does bone broth help?

For many people, bone broth is incredibly healing and soothing. It supports your hard-working immune system, encourages the growth of healthy gut bacteria, helps repair the gut lining, and improves joint pain. The healing properties come from the gelatin, collagen, amino acids, and minerals in the broth. In case you're still not convinced, know that it also is reported to have the added benefit of reducing cellulite and wrinkles.

How do I consume bone broth?

You can drink it in a mug with some sea salt or use it as the base for soup. It's also great to have on hand to use in place of expensive and nutrient-poor store-bought chicken broth.

How do I make bone broth?

Making bone broth is easy and affordable. Depending on your taste preference, you can use beef, chicken, or pork bones. A simple way to do this is to use two organic rotisserie chicken carcasses (free after you eat the chicken) in the recipe for bone broth in the recipe section. To increase the healing properties, add in optional chicken backs, necks, and feet.

If cooking it isn't your thing, or if you're not feeling well enough to cook, many companies sell frozen bone broth. Check the freezer section at your grocery store (Costco, Whole Foods), or consider ordering online from Vital Choice.

Diluted Juices, Smoothies, and Soups

Just like bone broth and the electrolyte replenishing drink, diluted juices, smoothies, and soups are an excellent way to get a lot of nutrients while giving your digestive system a break. Try buying fresh-pressed vegetable juices and diluting with 2/3 juice and 1/3 water. On their own, juices, especially fruit juices, raise blood sugar too quickly. By diluting them with water, you can cut back on the sugar intake.

As you're feeling better, try blended fruit smoothies that have added protein and fat or heartier soups and stews. For a smoothie that will stay with you, try combining almond milk with a frozen banana, one or two tablespoons of almond butter, and a scoop of collagen peptides for a gut-healing protein source. If you're sensitive or allergic to nuts, substitute water in place of the almond milk and sunflower seed butter in place of almond butter. If you are prone to headaches (again, that tricky glutamate!), be careful with collagen peptides and try a pea or rice-based protein powder instead.

Herbal Remedies

The FibroManual outlines a protocol for healing your gut long term, but here we're focusing on immediate, short-term relief for moments of crisis. Before you're popping anti-acids, consider a more natural solution.

Marshmallow root and aloe vera are particularly soothing after you've eaten something that makes you symptomatic. With marshmallow root, you mix the powdered root into hot water and drink it like a thick tea. You can also mix it with honey and eat it. Marshmallow root is like a soothing hug for your ailing intestines and considered to be very safe. You might be able to find it at your health food store or coop, but it's also available online at Mountain Rose Herbs or the Herb Pharm. Like bone broth, it's best to keep this on hand if it works for you so you can use it when you need it. Aloe vera is more commonly available at grocery stores. You can drink small amounts cold or at room temperature. It's very soothing for acid reflux as well.

Since a food-based reaction to a RED food is generating inflammation, which is actually what makes it feel so awful, consider adding some natural anti-inflammatory herbs. One of the best is turmeric. This is a spicy orange powder that has been used as an anti-inflammatory and pain reliever for hundreds of years in India, and is often called the "herbal ibuprofen." It can be made into a tasty healing concoction called turmeric milk: 1/2 teaspoon of Vietnamese cinnamon, one half teaspoon of turmeric, and a dash of black pepper in a cup of coconut milk. Simmer for 10 minutes, then sip and enjoy. (If you are sensitive to night shades skip the black pepper).

Rejuvenate With a "Treat Yourself" Mentality

There's so much emphasis on what to eat and what to take when you eat something wrong for your body, but it's just as important to remember to give your body and mind a rest. There's a reason you feel utterly exhausted—your body is waging war right now. So try to give your mind and spirit some TLC as well.

Rest

For the next couple days get as much sleep and rest as possible. When your coworker/kid/partner is driving you nuts, just ask yourself *Is this of great importance?* and then let it go. When all else fails, remember the wise Polish proverb: "Not my circus, not my monkeys!"

Pain relief and mood boosters

You probably already have some of your favorite ways to relieve pain and improve your mood during symptom flares. Here are some of our favorites in case there's something new for you to try:

- Use a heating pad (electric or microwavable) and ice packs
- Light that scented candle you save for when company comes over
- Move: Stretch, walk, and do some light yoga if you feel up to it (deep breathing also counts here!)
- Take an Epsom salt bath (one or two cups) to soothe your muscles
- Get some sunshine and spend time in nature (even your backyard or balcony)
- Do a detoxing charcoal face mask
- Consider using a topical cannabis balm or salve (marijuana) and rubbing on your painful abdomen or other hot spots, if you live in a state that has legalized marijuana or if

you have a medicinal marijuana card. You heard us right; we both believe in the pain-relieving power of topical cannabis, particularly as it doesn't make you feel "high." There are also some hemp-based CBD creams that contain no THC and are more readily available. If you want to learn more about cannabis and hemp-based treatments head over to Chapter 21 of *The FibroManual*.

- Other topical products that can help include those with arnica and homeopathic pain relieving topical creams, such as My Pain Away Fibro Cream ([link](#)).
- Moisturize with essential oils: Combine coconut oil with your favorite calming essential oils (like lavender or rose) and use as a lotion. After all, you might feel like crap, but you certainly don't have to smell like it!



Make your own RED food game plan by finding ways that work for you to speed things up, rehydrate, and gently nourish your body, mind, and spirit. Write down your plan and put it somewhere you can find it fast if you start to feel a food-based reaction coming on, because once you are flared and foggy it is hard to remember anything!

Chapter 5: Step Two: For Better Energy Production Eat More GREEN Foods!

Okay, so now that you have learned why you need to avoid RED foods, and what to do if you have accidentally eaten a RED food, you are probably wondering what you *should* be eating. This is where our friends the GREEN foods come in. Essentially, these are foods that make you feel better; nutrient dense vegetables, proteins, and healthy fats. Remember, the goal of The Fibro Food Formula is to eat more of the foods that help you feel better and less that make you feel worse.

The Fibro Food Formula:

Lots of GREEN FOODS minus RED FOODS = Less fibromyalgia symptoms

GREEN: GO and GO BIG!

Eat as much as you want. Experiment with what makes you feel your best!

- All vegetables except nightshades (peppers, potato, tomato, eggplant)
- Leafy greens like arugula, kale, bok choy, romaine, and spinach
- Crunchy vegetables like cabbage, carrots, and cucumbers
- Starchy energy vegetables like sweet potatoes and squash
- Fruits, especially those with lower sugar content like raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, apples, pears, and citrus fruits

NOTE: Choose organic fruits and vegetables as much as you can

- All meats
- Fish and seafood like salmon, sable fish, oysters, clams, and shrimp
- Red meat like beef and lamb
- Pork
- Chicken and turkey
- Processed high-quality meats like grass-fed hot dogs or salami with no nitrates

NOTE: Aim for wild fish, grass-fed red meat, and organic pasture-raised pork and poultry as much as your budget will allow

- Eggs (including mayonnaise, but see note later in this chapter)
- Herbs and spices like ginger, basil, turmeric, rosemary, and thyme
- Nuts and seeds like pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, hemp seeds, cashews, almonds, and walnuts
- Healthy fats like organic avocado, coconut, olive oil, and ghee from grass-fed cows
- Fermented vegetables like sauerkraut, kimchi, and coconut yogurt
- Mineral rich sea vegetables (seaweed) like wakame and nori
- Filtered water and herbal teas like chamomile, nettle, peppermint, and damiana

GREEN: go! But go smaller.

Eat these foods less frequently and in smaller amounts than green foods above

- White rice
- Rice cakes
- Alternative grains like quinoa, amaranth, and millet
- Non-dairy dark chocolate
- Dairy and gluten-free sweet treats like candied ginger, coconut macaroons

- High sugar fruits like cherries, mango, bananas, and grapes
- Black and green tea, coffee

The best food sources for fibromyalgia tend to be high in protein and healthy fats. These nutrients are the fuel that powers the cellular furnaces called mitochondria, which make energy to think and move from the fuel we ingest. As you have learned, the fight-or-flight over-activation in fibromyalgia impairs the ability of our mitochondria to make energy efficiently. So we have to give them supercharged foods.

A single cell in the human body may contain as many as 1,000 mitochondria, which are like engines that create energy from fuel. Imagine each of your cells as a car, and the mitochondria as the engine of the car. The food you eat is the gas, and how far you can drive on a tank is related to how efficiently the car's engine makes energy from that gas—the gas mileage. Chemicals released during the stress response are major regulators of fuel metabolism and push the mitochondria to make fuel quickly—but not efficiently. This means in fibromyalgia we have cells that generate energy inefficiently and use up a lot of fuel, like a car that gets bad gas mileage.

From My Case Files: Tara's Story

I always ask my patients at their first appointment with me what they had for breakfast, because that tells me a lot about how well they are fueling their cells. Tara told me that for breakfast she had a cup of coffee and half a banana. And for lunch she had eaten nothing. So it was around 3:00 pm, and all she had fueled her cells with was caffeine and a little fruit sugar. The last protein she ate was almost 21 hours previously, with dinner the night before. This was definitely *not* helping her to feel less fatigued or foggy during the day.

The brain is the largest consumer of energy in the body, but proportionally to other organs has fewer mitochondria. So the mitochondria in our brain cells work very hard, making it especially sensitive to mitochondrial dysfunction. Mental fog and fatigue reflect a brain that is not getting adequate fuel.

The muscle cells also suffer, because the fight-or-flight nerves tell them to quickly produce as much energy as they can from stored fuel in order to fend off a threat. Due to constant muscle tension, they also burn through fuel, like continually idling a car with very bad mileage—you go through a lot of gas!

Improving Mitochondrial Function

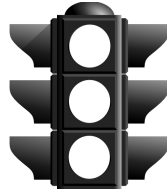
To restore balance to energy production we need to use high-quality fuel in the form of nutrition that will improve the “mileage” of your cell's engines. The fuel that mitochondria love best is protein and healthy fats.

Let's take a quick science break to learn about proteins and fats and how they affect the body.

The word *protein* comes from the Greek word *protos*, which means “of prime importance.” Your body, after water, is largely made up of protein. Protein is used by the body to build, repair, and maintain body tissue. Protein consists of amino acids, usually referred to as the “building blocks of protein.” High protein foods include meat of all types, eggs, nuts, beans, and cheese.

Protein helps power our mitochondria to produce a steady level of energy and avoid a low blood sugar crash. Mitochondria function best with stable blood sugar levels, so don't skip meals and eat frequent high protein snacks! Protein also fuels our adrenal glands to better regulate blood sugar levels. So eating more protein helps keep a steady blood sugar level. And our brains function best when given a steady amount of sugar at all times. The best way to do this is to eat some protein every few hours.

The goal I give my patients is to eat at least 80 grams of protein per day, but ideally 100 grams. If you look at what you ate yesterday and calculate out how much protein was in those foods, I bet it was less than that. How much protein had Tara eaten by the time she had her mid-afternoon appointment with me? Zero. Zero grams of protein. So the mitochondria in her body and brain were starving and her blood sugar levels were low, worsening fatigue and fog. For an interesting wakeup call about protein, I challenge you to figure out how many total grams of protein you ate yesterday using WebMD food calorie counter calculator ([link](#)).



Aim to eat at least 80 grams of protein every day to fuel your cells

Average protein content of typical foods:

- 1 large egg: 6 grams
- 3 oz. chicken breast: 28 grams
- 3 oz. steak: 26 grams
- 3 oz. salmon: 22 grams
- 3 oz. tuna: 22 grams
- 1 tablespoon of peanut butter: 7 grams
- 1 oz. almonds: 6 grams
- 1 oz. pumpkin seeds: 9 grams
- ½ cup quinoa: 4 grams
- ½ cup lentils: 9 grams
- 6 oz. Greek yogurt: 18 grams

Keep in mind for Step Two that we are only asking you to eat *more* GREEN foods. You don't have to eat *only* GREEN foods, and we are definitely not expecting perfection. If you are someone that never eats breakfast, spend a few weeks trying different easy breakfast options and see which ones you like and can make happen in your life. Try boiling a dozen eggs and snacking on hard-boiled eggs for a week. See how your body feels when you feed your cells more targeted nutrition for fibromyalgia and hit that 80 grams of protein a day, and eat 10-20 grams of protein every few hours all day long.

Protein Powerhouse Quick Snacks

- Dry roasted pumpkin seeds
- Nuts and nut butters

- Turkey and beef jerky
- Grain free granola (usually mixture of nuts, seeds, coconut flakes, raisins, cinnamon, etc.) Kitchfix is a good brand
- Hard-boiled eggs
- High quality lunch meats that do not contain nitrates
- Hemp seeds (also called hemp hearts): add to oatmeal, granolas, or eat on their own

Breakfast. It really is the most important meal of the day, and when you skip it you start out with an energy deficit. Most of us know the importance of a “nutritious breakfast,” but some mornings that’s just too much to accomplish. Just eat *something* with protein in it. It does not need to be fancy. It does not even need to be a breakfast food. So expand your horizons and consider leftover dinners for breakfast. I also am a big fan of Umqua Oats “Fruit and Nut Kickstart” instant oatmeal, which contains some seeds and nuts bringing its protein content up to 8 grams on its own. Just add hot water and in a few minutes, oatmeal is ready! To add extra protein punch, mix in a spoonful of almond butter, which makes it creamy and rich, and throw in some hemp seeds.

Easy Breakfast Ideas

- Apple with nut butter
- Rice cake with nut butter
- Hard-boiled egg
- Leftovers from dinner
- Protein powder in a smoothie mixed with hemp milk
- Oatmeal with lots of walnuts and raisins
- Oatmeal with several spoons of nut butter mixed into it
- Overnight Oats (see recipe in Chapter 11)
- High quality lunch-meat

Finally, a word on nuts. You might have noticed that peanuts appear on the YELLOW foods list. This is because they are not actually a nut. Peanuts are actually a legume and are high in lectins, which can trigger inflammation for some folks. Some people tolerate peanut butter fine and it can be a cheap and easy source of protein. Others will need to avoid peanuts and peanut butter as they can be inflammatory for some people. You will learn more about this in the chapter on YELLOW food experiments, but for now just consider expanding beyond peanut butter into other nut butters, such as almond or cashew butter, are less potentially inflammatory options.

Fats are high-energy food sources made up of fatty acids. Some fatty acids our body cannot make on its own. These are called essential fatty acids and come in two main types: omega-3 and omega-6. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids are the absolute favorite food of the mitochondria.

Eleven Super Foods for Mitochondria

- Almonds (raw, not roasted)
- Avocado
- Grass-fed beef/buffalo
- Blueberries

- Broccoli
- Green tea
- Pomegranates
- Salmon (wild, not farm-raised)
- Seaweed
- Spinach (organic)
- Hemp Seeds

Our body uses fat as a building block for certain hormones, enables us to process certain vitamins, and supports immune and nervous system health. Fats are also yummy and give us the feeling of satiety (feeling full). Fats are found in foods like butter, avocado, olive oil, cheese, ice cream, eggs, meats, and oily fish.

So we can help mitochondria to make energy by giving them easily-digestible fuel. They love healthy fats, so eat foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids like avocado, egg yolks, cold-water fish like salmon, and grass-fed beef. Cook with and eat high quality oils like coconut and olive oils.

And a note on hemp seeds: Rich in protein and omega-3 fatty acids, this might be the perfect food for mitochondria. And no, they will not get you high (no THC). They are also high in fiber to keep you regular!



Eat more healthy fats to fuel your mitochondria

Now a word on vegetables. We all know that vegetables are good for us, and that we should eat more of them. Part of why they are so vital is because veggies tend to be high in fiber and nutrients. In particular, dark leafy greens and sulfur-rich veggies (like broccoli, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, bok choy) contain vital nutrients that help the body to support detoxification. The body does most of its detoxification in the liver, where it both inactivates toxins and changes them to a form that is easy to get rid of. Our livers work really hard to get rid of chemicals we are exposed to such as medications, food preservatives, and toxins in the diet like pesticides or heavy metals. The least toxic diet incorporates lots of organic, unprocessed whole foods that are grown without pesticides. We can also limit our exposure by avoiding plastics and using glass containers whenever possible. Consider using mason jars or glass containers to store leftovers. If you do use plastic Tupperware make sure to never microwave food in the plastic containers.

Finally, there are two foods that are GREEN foods but that need to be eaten carefully due to risk of heavy metal exposure if eaten too often. The first is tuna, and the second is rice. Fish is definitely a great source of protein, and canned tuna is a super easy protein source. However, tuna can have high levels of mercury, so try to eat no more than 1–2 servings of tuna per week. Our body can process and get rid of some mercury, but if you eat it every day, it will overwhelm your body's ability to get rid of it and you'll get a

buildup of mercury which can cause more health issues, the last thing anyone with fibro needs!

The other source of heavy metals in the diet we need to be aware of is arsenic, in particular in rice. Although rice and rice cakes are a great substitute for gluten and are generally well tolerated, if you eat rice too often you can get a buildup of arsenic. So limit servings of rice to no more than 3–4 per week. Another source of exposure to arsenic is rice-based protein powders, which is why it is best to use only high quality supplement-grade rice protein powders made by reputable supplement companies that source their products carefully and submit to third party testing to ensure they contain no arsenic. I like Pure Encapsulations Pure Lean powder and Thorne Research MediClear powder. Or you can use nuts and seeds to make your own protein powder! Whole nuts and seeds ground up in a high-power blender (hemp seeds are especially high in protein) can be added to smoothies or other recipes calling for protein powder.

At this point you may be saying to yourself that this all sounds well and good, but *how on earth* am I supposed to prepare and eat more of these foods when I am already too fatigued to get the grocery store or cook? The key is using shortcuts, and the next chapter details tips and tricks to eat more GREEN foods that will help improve energy and make it easier to shop and cook and eat. Gaining an improvement in symptoms is what enables you to accomplish steps Three and Four, where you experiment with YELLOW foods to determine which make you feel worse and get those the heck out of your life!

But don't stress about YELLOW foods now. Just focus on continuing to avoid the RED foods and adding more GREEN foods to your diet. And even if that is all you accomplish, and you never address the YELLOW foods, you will have made a difference in your symptoms. But hopefully after spending time adding in more GREEN foods you will want to feel even better and find out which YELLOW foods might be causing you problems. But it's fine to spend as long as you need working on Step Two. Or stop there. The Fibro Food Formula is not about perfection.

Common Questions About GREEN Foods

Does quality (grass-fed, pasture-raised) really matter?

It absolutely does! Eating animals fed a conventional diet (soy, corn, antibiotics) can lead to more inflammation. Try to buy the best ingredients you can afford when it comes to animal products.

Grass-fed (red meat) and pasture-raised (eggs, poultry, pork) are the best, but if these options aren't available to you, aim for "organic" and make sure your meat is "raised without antibiotics." Look for farmers or butchers in your area who can offer you a deal if you buy in bulk and fill your freezer. For example, you can often buy $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ of a cow, which will give you plenty of grass-fed steak and hamburger dinners for the whole year.

How much does organic matter for fruits and vegetables?

We suggest aiming for organic because pesticides are toxins that can cause major problems in the body. For example, too many environmental toxins can cause symptoms like headaches, fatigue, chronic pain, and digestive distress. Check out your local farmers market and try to buy what is in season. During winter months, don't be afraid to buy frozen fruits and vegetables at your grocery store to save some money. Frozen fruits and vegetables are frozen at peak freshness and are extremely nutrient dense. However, check the back of the package to watch for added sugar.

It's also okay if you can't afford to buy all organic fruits and vegetables. Consider downloading the Environmental Working Group's guide, *Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce* ([link](#)), which will help you understand which conventional fruits and vegetables are OK to buy because they tend to be less contaminated by pesticides, and which ones you should avoid or only buy organic.

But wait, I heard I needed to be entirely Paleo (no grains at all)?

Certainly, if you can do a completely Paleo diet, that is a very healthy and anti-inflammatory diet. But it is usually not realistic for people with fibromyalgia for two reasons. A strictly Paleo diet is very low carb, which can cause mood swings and anxiety. It is also a very labor-intensive diet, which is also not realistic or doable for people dealing with fibromyalgia.

That is why we added some of the most well-tolerated grains to the GREEN foods list. However, while these are not commonly foods that are associated with food sensitivities, there are rare people that are sensitive. So if you notice any symptoms after eating rice, rice cakes, quinoa, amaranth, or millet, it may be worth a trial of going strictly grain free. If you have celiac disease or another autoimmune disease as well as fibromyalgia, consider going grain-free for a month or two and see how you feel. You are your own best data point! Experiment and see what works for you. Check out the "Resource Section" at the end of the book for Paleo and grain-free resources.

I am confused. Can I eat regular mayonnaise?

The Whole 30 and Paleo diets recommend avoiding store bought mayonnaise as it contains soybean oil and sugar or corn syrup. Instead they advocate making your own mayo at home (see my rant about how that is not a fibro-friendly in the Introduction) or buying a Paleo mayo (no sugar and uses avocado oil) at the health food store. Store bought Paleo mayos are delicious and a really good choice health wise but can be pricy. The fibro-friendly recommendation is to use Paleo mayo if you can afford it, if not use regular mayo, ideally one with sugar not corn syrup.

What if I am a vegetarian?

This is a tough one, because so many of the high-protein sources that our body can most readily access are from animal sources—meat and eggs. If you are a vegetarian, you can find your own Fibro Food Formula, but you are going to need to keep in legumes as protein sources, use nuts and seeds for snack, and go heavy on protein powder. If you're a vegetarian that eats eggs, eat more of them. We completely respect the decisions that lead people to vegetarianism, but unfortunately, it is not the best therapeutic diet for someone with fibromyalgia. Following a plant-based diet that incorporates small amounts of some animal products like eggs, fish, and organ meat can go a long way.

Chapter 6: Fibro-friendly Cooking Tips

“I’m hungry, tired, hurting, and am so psyched to cook a labor-intensive meal!” said no one with fibromyalgia ever.

So now you know that you should be eating more GREEN foods. But knowing what to eat is only half the battle. Now we will help you devise your battle plan to do this in the most fibro-friendly, real-life, and doable way. Because when you feel exhausted, it’s hard to make it off the couch, let alone grocery shop and prepare a homemade meal.

Our motto is to keep things as easy as possible and fibro-friendly when it comes to grocery shopping and cooking. Enlist short-cuts when it comes to the shopping and prepping. For example:

- Buy pre-chopped vegetables at Trader Joes
- Order groceries online
- Get small amounts of “fancy salad” (kale/sesame, etc.) at a health food store and then extend it by putting it on top of lettuce or other veggies
- Frozen vegetables that cook in the bag
- Get tools to make eating healthier more fibro friendly and involve less slicing dicing and other arm heavy labor (e.g.: small chopper and a spiralizer)

In this next section, you’ll see the resources we utilize to make our lives easier. Just a quick note before we divulge our kitchen secrets. We are not endorsed by any of the following companies to sing their praises. We’re sharing our favorite resources that we use ourselves. If you’d like to try them, we include links at the end of the book.

Tip 1: Pre-prepped is perfect

We want your focus to be on healthy eating, not chopping or prepping. Surprisingly, **Costco** can have an incredible selection of affordable fibro-friendly products. We’ve seen products like frozen bone broth, pre-made frozen grass-fed burgers, organic dried fruit, nuts, hummus, and lots of organic produce. Product availability at Costco does vary by the location. If the idea of navigating the chaos of Costco isn’t an option, you don’t have to miss out. Consider sending a friend or family member with a detailed list or using a Costco-friendly grocery delivery service, which we’ll talk about in a minute.

Whole Foods and **Trader Joe’s** both have an excellent selection of pre-chopped vegetables. If you’re making soup, you can buy pre-chopped mirepoix (onions, celery, carrots). Fresh is great, but don’t forget to look in the freezer section. Frozen vegetables get a bad rep but are dense nutrient resources when vegetables are out of season. For example, Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s have frozen cauliflower “rice” which is just cauliflower cut into rice shape. You can use it as a rice substitute, and it’s a healthy, fun, and easy way to get some extra veggies into your diet.

In the fresh produce section, many Whole Foods stores have noodle-like spiralized vegetables that you can use in place of pasta. Yes, these pre-cut items do come with a higher price tag. Consider eating at restaurants less often and using that money towards healthier, prepped foods.

Tip 2: Delivery is delightful

If you're suffering from brain fog, fatigue, or pain, shopping itself can be an unnecessary energy suck. Now more than ever, this is an easy problem to solve with grocery delivery service. You might be skeptical about not picking things out yourself. Rest assured, delivery services train their workers to pick produce at peak ripeness so they might find an even riper avocado than you would.

National grocery delivery services we like:

Instacart (includes Costco)

Amazon Prime Now

You might also find that your local grocery store offers delivery services. Other stores offer online shopping with in-store pick up where you pay ahead of time and groceries are brought out to your car. We've found that despite the small delivery fee, we save money on groceries because we only buy what's on our list instead of being tempted with extra treats.

Online shopping and meal delivery:

Unlike grocery stores, online stores often offer free shipping once you meet their minimum ordering requirements. Consider a service like **Thrive Market**, an affordable online market for organic and natural products, for pantry staples like rice, quinoa, chips, nuts, dried fruit, canned items, cleaning, and household products. Like Costco, you pay an annual membership fee for access to lower prices. They make it easy to use, and unlike with Costco, items are delivered right to your door!

Thrive Market does not sell items that need to be refrigerated. For wild fish and bone broth our delivery choice is **Vital Choice**. We can't sing the praises of this fantastic company enough. We stock our freezers with 4 oz., easy-to-cook, sashimi grade wild salmon, halibut, and tuna that cost a fraction of a meal at a restaurant. We'd also recommend their albacore tuna packed in olive oil. Their website has great instructions on how to easily and quickly defrost their products, and their customer service is outstanding.

If you need a little inspiration in the kitchen, consider using a gluten-free friendly meal delivery service like **Sun Basket**. They send you already portioned, family-friendly, and easy-to-prepare meals made with organic ingredients. What could be easier!

Look into **Daily Harvest Smoothies**. These are great, but a bit pricy. You can also make your own smoothies at home with frozen fruit, a banana and coconut yogurt. *However never eat a smoothie without adding protein!* Even a smoothie with just fruit and vegetables is a huge wallop of sugar with no protein, and remember you need protein to fuel your cells. So make sure to add a protein powder to your smoothie, ideally at least 20 grams. Rice or pea-based protein powders tend to be the best tolerated. If you are sensitive to lectins, choose rice-only protein powder. Avoid soy or whey-based protein powders, as they tend to be more inflammatory. Or grind up hemp seeds and use that in place of protein powder.

Tip 3: Terrific tools

When you can use a tool to limit time in the kitchen, just do it! Cutting with old dull knives takes much more arm power and energy, so if yours are really old, consider

buying a new really sharp cook's knife. Or just get your current knives sharpened, some hardware and tool stores will do this for you, or you can buy a tool for about \$20 that you can use at home to keep your knives sharp.

Here are some other kitchen tools that can help:

- Rice cooker
- Slow cooker (crock pot)
- Instant pot
- High power blender (like the Nutribullet or Vitamix)
- Stick blender for soups (or Vitamix)
- Thermos (take soups and other hot items to work)
- Veggie noodle spiralizer like the Inspiralizer

Tip 4: Batch cook basics

Eating and preparing real food can be very time consuming. However, when faced with an empty fridge, it can be all too easy to rely on processed foods or expensive takeout.

One of the best ways to set yourself up for success is to cook a lot at one time. Instead of making one pot of soup, double or triple the recipe and keep it in your freezer. Turn the oven on once and use it for multiple reasons: 1. Make a giant steak and slice off pieces during the week for lunches. 2. Roast multiple trays of vegetables (pre-chopped from the store). 3. Bake potatoes and sweet potatoes.

Choose two or three days a week when you can cook in bulk. Simple "recipes" like vegetables tossed in olive oil and roasted in the oven last a long time in the refrigerator and go a long way toward making meals interesting and healthy.

Make extra and keep in the fridge:

- Protein: hard-boiled eggs, roasted or rotisserie chicken, large steak, slow cooked meats or stews
- Oven roasted vegetables like carrots, brussel sprouts, broccoli, mushrooms, diced sweet potatoes
- Baked starches like whole roasted sweet potatoes or regular potatoes
- Grains like quinoa and rice

Pantry and fresh items to have on hand:

- Nut butters like almond, cashew, peanut, sunflower seed butter
- Mixed greens for salads like arugula, spinach, and butter lettuce
- Chopped vegetables (by you or bought pre-chopped) like cabbage and cucumbers
- Spiralized veggie noodles like zucchini and sweet potatoes
- Fermented vegetables like sauerkraut or kimchi to use on salads and with meat heavy meals
- Nut milk products like coconut yogurt and almond milk (carrageen-free)
- Pasture-raised eggs
- Fresh organic fruit and vegetables for snacks like apples, berries, carrots, and cucumber
- Protein powder to add to smoothies, ideally rice or pea-based protein
- Containers of premade organic guacamole to slather on burgers, rice cakes, salads

Handy to have in the freezer:

- Bone broth for soup or stews, or when you're not feeling well
- Soups like extra chicken soup or blended vegetable soups
- Frozen organic fruit like blueberries, cherries, raspberries, and bananas for smoothies
- Frozen organic vegetables like kale and spinach, both of which are easy to add to a tomato sauce or into a green smoothie
- Frozen protein like vacuum-sealed packs of wild fish, grass-fed ground beef, steak, stew meat, frozen hamburgers (Costco has a frozen gluten-free salmon burger that is delicious and easy to make and is a staple at my house)

Tip 5: Meal Planning

Some of us do really well with meal plans or meal templates, others find it suffocating and stifling. If it appeals to you, find easy meal templates and recipes that are heavy on GREEN foods in Chapter 11. The meal templates and recipes included in that chapter also have no YELLOW foods in them, but even if you are not working on Step Three they are still great ideas for meals that are rich in GREEN foods. If meal templates and recipes appeal to you, or if you feel completely freaked out and just *want someone to tell you exactly what to eat already*, head to Chapter 11 now for some guidance.

Other great advice:

From Jordan S.: “Subscription food services are my jam! **Daily Harvest** ([link](#)) is one of my favorites. They mail you soups or smoothies right to your door. Most of the ingredients are organic, which is great. Then you simply add your liquid of choice, blend, and eat! Couldn't be more simple. All of the packaging is recyclable, and you can tune the liquids to your dietary needs. I usually use half almond and half coconut milk as I try to avoid dairy and soy.”

From Sandra S., Susan C., Christine B., and Paul L.: “Cook in quantity when you have the help or energy. Having leftovers to easily heat up or items frozen to thaw out when you just don't have the energy to cook from scratch is a lifesaver.”

From Jennifer C.: “There is lots of info online about ‘freezer-crockpot’ cooking. Basically, you fill Ziploc bags with all of the ingredients (minus any liquids) for a crockpot recipe. On the outside of the bag, write directions (e.g.: Add a can of chicken broth and two cups water, cook on low six hrs). Then, when you're having a bad or busy day, all the prep is done and you just toss it in and turn the knob.”

From Amanda C.:

- “1. Frozen vegetables and berries to save prep work
2. Vegan mayo makes sauces creamy without the dairy
3. Hempseed seems to help my symptoms, so I add a quarter cup of hemp hearts to my morning oatmeal (along with berries and cinnamon)”

From Jacovia D: “I love my pressure cooker! I hardly ever use my oven as I can make fresh home cooked meals in under 30 minutes which is fab if like me you cannot stand at the cooker for too long due to the pain and tiredness!”



To make food prep easier look at pre-prepped and delivery options. Make sure to have the right tools on hand and stock your pantry with some basics, and batch cook when you can. Use meal planning and meal templates if those help you.

Chapter 7: Step Three: Eat for Less Inflammation, Cut Out YELLOW Foods

At this point, please take a moment congratulate yourself for everything you have accomplished already. You have worked on improving digestion and healing a leaky gut, learned how to avoid RED foods, and what to do when you are exposed to a RED food. You are fueling your cells better by eating more GREEN foods and using shortcuts to make cooking easier. Strong work! Now it is time to progress to Step Three.

In this step, we find out which of the YELLOW foods cause you problems. In order to do that, you need to avoid them completely for 45 days. You can do all the YELLOW foods at once, or one at a time, and we will guide you through the process. This is not easy, but you can do it.

This step is so important because food sensitivities are one of the biggest sources of inflammation in fibromyalgia and where we can make a huge impact on symptoms. A food sensitivity means that food particles cause an immune reaction, just like a cold or flu virus causes an immune reaction. But in this case your immune system is mistaking a tiny little particle of cheese protein or gluten for a flu virus, triggering the common symptoms we experience when our immune system is fighting off a virus, such as muscle aches, fatigue, and headaches.

Food sensitivities are very common in fibromyalgia. A study of 40 fibromyalgia patients found that *every single one* tested positive for multiple food sensitivities. Half of the subjects maintained their usual diet and lifestyle (the control group), and the other made dietary changes to avoid their trigger foods (the treatment group). At three and six months, the treatment group felt substantially better, with less pain and fatigue.

Why do certain foods make us feel worse? Well for that we have a leaky gut to thank. Because our gut is more porous, it is easier for larger, poorly digested food particles to enter into our bloodstream, where they encounter our immune system. To the immune cells, these larger food particles look like an attacker, so the forces of the immune system are triggered to fight off the attackers. And certain of these larger food particles are more likely to generate a fight response from our immune cells. But we are all genetically different and so is our immune system. This is why the task is to find what foods are more likely to trigger an immune response for *you*.

So what are the symptoms of your immune system trying to defend you from the “gluten attackers”? Symptoms of excess inflammation include brain fog, fatigue, joint pain, flu-like muscle aching, rashes, sinus congestion, or headaches. They aren’t usually felt right away; the response happens over several hours or days.

I was amazed to find that when I stopped eating gluten, the constant ache in my knees went away. Now I can always tell when I have accidentally eaten something with gluten because my knees flare up. They are my gluten-sensors!

What I tell my patients is that most people with fibromyalgia do have some sensitivities, but not all to the same foods. We’ll figure out your specific needs by avoiding the most common triggers: gluten, dairy, and foods with high sugar or high lectin content. These are the YELLOW foods. Not everyone is sensitive to gluten, dairy, high sugar or high lectin foods (nightshade vegetables, corn, and legumes). But these are the four most common food groups that are perfectly primed to anger your immune system.

It takes about six weeks for your body to get a clean slate by completely clearing out old antibodies, so you need to stick with it for at least that long before slowly adding back those food groups one at a time. If they *are* a problem, you will notice improved pain levels off them and an exacerbation of symptoms when you add them back. Keep in mind that you might feel worse before you feel better as your body adjusts to the changes, so give it the full 45 days.

In my experience, I started to feel less flu-like aching after about two weeks of avoiding dairy, and about three weeks after stopping gluten. Some of my patients notice changes sooner; one noticed a dramatic reduction in headaches three days after she stopped eating high lectin foods. Others don't see anything until the end of the six weeks. Others really don't notice much while they are avoiding foods, and it only becomes obvious which foods bother them once they start adding YELLOW foods back in Step Four.

From My Case Files: Kerrie's story

Brain fog was making it really hard for Kerrie to perform her job as a nurse who reviewed patient charts. When she started avoiding gluten, she found within a week her brain fog had dramatically improved.

There are two ways to address the YELLOW food experiment. Beginner, which involves splitting YELLOW explorations into several phases, or advanced, doing it all at once. The beginner options are easier and less overwhelming but will take much longer to accomplish. For that reason, I highly recommended trying the advanced option if you feel up to it, so you can get the data you need as quickly as possible. That said, be realistic with yourself, and whatever feels right to you is the right approach. There is no one perfect way to do this. It is whatever feels doable and right for you, right now.

The key is to get started. Whichever pace or option you choose, after 45 days and a "clean slate," you move to Step Four to test whether you are sensitive to a food by adding back *one* YELLOW food group and observing yourself closely for three days for any negative effects. At the end of Step Three and Four, you will know if dairy, gluten, high lectin, or high sugar foods generate pain and inflammation and move them to *your* RED foods list.

Beginner Option A:

If your diet is heavy in gluten or dairy, or if you are already feeling overwhelmed and doubtful about your ability to make any dietary changes for 45 days, I suggest starting with this beginner approach. In this version, you don't avoid all the YELLOW foods at once; rather you split the 45-day trial into two rounds, the first one you avoid only dairy and gluten, and don't worry about high lectins or high sugars. This approach is more manageable for most people to accomplish, and since gluten and dairy are by far the leading troublemakers this will be revealing for the vast majority of folks. At the end of the end of each round you would add those YELLOW foods back (Step Four) and observe for symptoms. Then once you have determined how much of an issue gluten or dairy might be for you, move to round two. In the second round, you would avoid high lectin and high sugars. Then repeat the process of Step Four, adding back those foods, to

see if they are troublemakers for you. The disadvantage of this option is that it will take longer to find which YELLOW foods you may be sensitive to.

Beginner option B (B for baby steps!):

If even this beginner approach feels too hard, another option is to do the even slower and simpler approach to avoid each food group one at a time. This will take longer, as you have to avoid each YELLOW food group (gluten, dairy, high lectin and high sugar) one at a time, for 45 days. If you choose this approach, start with the most likely problem food for you. Usually this is the food group you eat most often. If a typical breakfast for you is yogurt, and lunch and dinner often include cheese, cut out dairy first. If gluten is a major part of your diet (toast for breakfast, sandwich for lunch, pasta for dinner), go for gluten first. If your diet is heavy on sugar, start with avoiding high sugar foods. Finally, if you survive on corn, beans, and potatoes, start with the high lectin foods first.

Advanced Option (the ripping-the-band-aid-off approach):

If you prefer to do it all at once and just get it over with, then for the 45-day trial you would avoid all four YELLOW food groups at once: gluten, dairy, high-lectin, and high-sugar foods. This is my recommendation if you can swing it, as it limits how long you need to be strict about your diet.

Completely avoiding all high-sugar foods, gluten, dairy, and high-lectin foods: No problem, right? Seriously, this is when people generally start to panic about never eating delicious foods ever again. The important thing to remember is this is just a short-term experiment and not forever. And you are simply gathering data about how these foods make you feel. Then you can make whatever choice you want about foods, but it will be an informed choice. Read more about overcoming barriers and avoiding pitfalls in Chapter 9. This part can be hard but can make such a big difference in symptoms. If you need to skip ahead, read that chapter for some emotional support and then come back to this page, that's fine. We'll be here when you get back.

Okay, now take a few deep breaths as we move into the nitty-gritty details of the YELLOW foods, common trigger foods that may cause symptoms for up to 72 hours, so **slow down and proceed with caution.**

YELLOW foods

- Gluten (wheat, rye, and barley)
- Dairy
- High-lectin foods like corn, legumes (such as peanuts, soy beans, garbanzos, lentils, black beans, and pinto beans), and nightshade vegetables (bell pepper, potato, tomato, eggplant)
- Concentrated sugary foods: candy, pastries and baked goods, soda, fruit juice, sweeteners such as maple syrup, honey, agave, sugar, corn syrup



It is important to read labels, as many packaged foods contain hidden ingredients, for example soy sauce contains wheat! (there are gluten-free soy sauces available).

Let's clarify what exactly falls into each YELLOW group and some possible substitutions.

Dairy:

Does not include eggs or clarified butter, called ghee

Does include:

- All cheese (cow and goat)
- Butter
- Cow milk
- Goat milk
- Ice cream
- Yogurt
- Sour cream
- Cottage cheese



While avoiding dairy products (milk, butter, cheese, ice cream, yogurt, sour cream), here are some possible substitutions for everyday items:

- **Milk or cream:** replace with hemp or nut milks. Hemp milk is very rich and creamy and a good substitute for cream in coffee.
- **Butter:** replace with Earth Balance butter substitute, ghee is acceptable
- **Ice cream:** replace with coconut or rice-based ice creams

Gluten:

Does not include gluten-free oats or rice

Does include:

- Wheat
- Rye
- Barley



While avoiding gluten here are some possible substitutions:

- **Bread:** replace with rice cakes, or wrap sandwiches in lettuce leaves
- **Pasta:** replace with gluten-free options made from quinoa, rice, or millet
- **Soy sauce:** replace with gluten-free/wheat-free soy sauce

- **Hot cereals:** replace with gluten-free oats, amaranth
- **Cold cereals:** replace with puffed rice or 100 percent oat cereals (Cheerios)
- **Crackers:** replace with sweet potato chips, rice crackers, and rice cakes
- **Baked goods:** home made with almond flour (recipes in appendix), or gluten-free flours, but use only in small amounts.

High-lectin foods:

Does not include sweet potatoes, yams and squash

Does include:

- Legumes (beans, including peas, peanuts, soy beans)
- Corn (chemically a close cousin of gluten and very high in lectin. This includes corn syrup and corn starch)
- Nightshade vegetables (bell peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant)



Tips on avoiding high lectin foods:

- **In place of tomatoes or spaghetti sauce** you can use dairy-free basil pesto or olive oil
- **In place of peanuts and peanut butter:** use other nuts and nut butters such as almond or cashew
- **While you are avoiding high-lectin during this trial, some of the meal suggestions in the last chapter will need to be modified to avoid the high-lectin foods including tomatoes and peanuts**
- **Often even lectin-sensitive individuals can tolerate high quality pea based protein powder, but if you find pea protein bothers you, instead use rice-based protein powders**
- **Know that the method of preparation can modify lectin contents in food, meaning you may react to raw tomatoes but feel fine with cooked tomatoes or tomato sauce**
- **Often when avoiding gluten, corn is used as a replacement, for example corn tortillas instead of flour tortillas at a Mexican restaurant. While doing the advanced option, avoiding all four yellow groups at once, corn as high lectin food is not an option as a gluten replacement. However, if you are doing the beginner option and taking it one food group at a time, then you can continue eating corn until you get to the high-lectin trials.**

High-sugar foods:

Does not include stevia

Does include:

- Candy
- Pastries and baked goods
- Jam
- Fruit juice

- Honey
- Sugar
- Corn syrup
- Maple syrup
- Alcohol
- Soda
- Agave



Tips on avoiding high-sugar foods

- **Remember that a sweet tooth still must be fed, so during this trial eat fruit, use stevia as a sweetener, and allow yourself sweet treats from the GREEN foods**
- **More than any other food groups sugary foods are tied to our emotions and often used as an emotional pick me up. If you feel avoiding high sugar foods is going to be a battle for you, then make sure to read the Obstacles and Pitfalls chapter first!**
- **Alcohol is high in sugars, so during the avoiding high-sugar trial period, no alcohol.**

Let's talk a little more about sugar here, because it can be a huge issue for some people and it's important to make sure that it is your body reacting to the sugar, not the yeast in your gut causing those symptoms. Sugar on its own can certainly trigger our immune system to cause inflammation. Many of my patients have already figured out on their own that sugar makes their fibromyalgia symptoms worse. Another way high-sugar diets can cause problems involve yeast, tiny fungus that live in our intestines and also really like sugar. Many of us with fibromyalgia have an overgrowth of yeast in our intestines, and as they eat sugar they release toxins that are bad for us and trigger more inflammation. If you feel much better while avoiding high-sugar foods, make sure you look carefully at whether you might have an issue with yeast overgrowth.

Here are some signs that yeast overgrowth might be a problem for you (learn more ways to specifically address this issue in *The FibroManual*):

- Chronic skin and nail fungal infections such as athlete's foot and toenail fungus
- Recurrent vaginal infections, rectal itching, or vaginal itching
- Skin issues such as eczema, hives, or rashes
- Strong sugar or alcohol cravings
- Irritability, mood swings, depression
- Difficulty concentrating, foggy brain, "drunk feeling"
- Digestive issues such as belching, bloating, nausea, or diarrhea

When talking about avoiding high sugar foods in my office, I find this is usually when people start panicking and thinking, *Wait, I can never eat pasta or cake or ice cream again?* And my answer is to think of it as a temporary experiment to gather the knowledge about whether certain foods make your symptoms worse. **Once you have the knowledge, then you can make an informed choice about whether to eat a food.** Ice cream is one of the most delicious foods on the planet, the ultimate comfort food. But it

makes me feel *so* awful, with more pain, more fatigue, and upset stomach, that I avoid it because I have decided it is just not worth it. Sweets are one of the main quick energy boosters many of us rely on, and are some of the biggest comfort foods we use to soothe our emotions. Learn how to avoid this pitfall and still give yourself some sweet treats in Chapter 9.

Also keep in mind that down the road you can fine tune and find out how much and what types of foods within a specific group you may tolerate (for examples yogurt might be fine but cheese is a no); sort of the gray zone between RED and YELLOW foods (this would really be the ORANGE zone, I guess!) But to gather data for this initial trial, we have to be strict.

Common questions about YELLOW foods

Can I eat at restaurants? Do I have to cook every meal?

It's best to cook the majority of your meals to minimize accidental exposure to RED and YELLOW foods or cross-contamination. However, we encourage you to use as many shortcuts and tools as possible and keep meals super simple. When you do go out to eat, pick a gluten-free friendly restaurant and order carefully. Explain your dietary restrictions to your waiter. Sushi is typically a safe bet as long as it's gluten-free friendly. Remember to use coconut aminos or gluten-free soy sauce and avoid anything fried like tempura. A simple meal to order at any restaurant is a plain piece of protein (grilled chicken, salmon, or steak, no butter), a sliced avocado and a side salad or steamed broccoli. Boring? Sure, but still satisfying and full of good protein, fat, and veggies.

Wait, what the heck is a lectin again?

Lectins are a form of protein found in nearly all plants. They bind to the sugar molecules called polysaccharides that cover the surface of most cells in your body. Lectins can worsen leaky gut and trigger immune reactions in many people. In fact, many of the foods most commonly associated with food sensitivities are high in lectins, including corn, dairy, and gluten. We can't avoid lectins completely because they are present to some degree in all vegetables. But avoiding high-lectin foods during the 45-day trial will help to determine exactly how much trouble they give your immune system. Note that peanuts are a legume and are high in lectins, so other nut butters like almond butter are often a better choice. Interestingly, the method of preparation makes a huge difference for lectins; you might not tolerate fresh tomatoes, but you might tolerate tomato sauce, etc.

Aack! Why 45 days?

It takes that long for your immune system to clear out old antibodies that are floating in the blood stream from past encounters with foods. It is important to read labels, as many packaged foods contain gluten or dairy ingredients. It takes about six weeks for your body to completely clear out old antibodies, so you need to stick with it for at least that long before slowly adding back those food groups one at a time. If they are a problem, you will notice improved pain levels off them and an exacerbation of symptoms when you add them back.

Is lactose-free cow milk allowed during dairy-free trial?

No, even lactose-free cow milk contains many other substances that can trigger an immune response.

Chapter 8: Step Four: Re-introduction of YELLOW Foods—Tasty Detective Work!

Okay, so now comes the fun stuff! You have successfully avoided the YELLOW foods for 45 days and given your immune system a “clean slate.” Now we put on our detective hats and add back one YELLOW food group at a time and observe closely for three days for any negative effects. If you add back a YELLOW food and it worsens any of your symptoms, it means you are sensitive to that food group.

The symptoms of food sensitivities to watch for are brain fog, fatigue, joint pain, flu-like muscle aching, rash, sinus congestion, headaches, or worsened irritable bowel. Symptoms aren't usually felt right away—the response happens over several hours or days. This is why we need to eat *one* YELLOW food item and then observe your symptoms for three days (72 hours).



During Step Four experiments keep a food and symptom journal to identify reactions

How does this work in real-life? Pick whichever YELLOW food group you ate most commonly before the 45-day trial. We are most likely to develop food sensitivities to the foods we eat the most often. Often these are either gluten or dairy. So for example, if bread and pasta used to be a staple of your diet before you did the 45-day avoidance trial, then you would pick either of those foods to add back. On day 46, you would eat two pieces of deliciously gluten-full bread. And then the next day go back to avoiding all YELLOW foods including gluten. It is best to keep the food you use as your test to one that is mostly gluten, such as bread, pasta, or crackers. Avoid using sweet treats or baked goods as your trial, as these contain lots of other troublemakers like sugar and often dairy. Same for things like pizza that contain both gluten and dairy.

Good choices for gluten experiments

- Bread
- Pasta
- Crackers

Bad choices for gluten experiments

- Cookies
- Pastries and other baked goods
- Pizza

For scientific experiments, we want to make only *one* change at a time and keep all other variables the same—meaning you are still avoiding all other YELLOW foods, and still avoiding RED foods and eating lots of GREEN foods. Then for 72 hours after eating

those two pieces of bread, you observe your symptoms. It can be really helpful to keep a food and symptom journal during these food experiments to keep track of your symptoms.

If you are sensitive to gluten, you might wake up the next morning with a headache. The following day you might feel achy as if you were coming down with the flu. Then by day three, you may feel back to your usual. If by day four, you feel the answer was not clear, try bread again, but this time a larger serving. And repeat the “observing yourself for symptoms” experiment for 72 hours.

If you don’t feel any worse or any different with two trials of adding back that YELLOW food group, that means it may not be a problem food for you. Still keep it in the YELLOW file in your mind and eat only in moderation, because it is not a food that adds much nutrition. Instead you still want to focus on eating GREEN foods like protein, health fats, fruits, and vegetables as much as possible.

What if you try bread twice and it makes you feel awful both times? This means your body thinks gluten is a foreign invader and you should move it to a RED food for you, meaning do not eat. Now does this mean you *never* can eat gluten again? No, of course not. It means you can choose to eat gluten, but knowing how it makes you feel you likely will choose it a lot less frequently. Maybe only a few times a year at special occasions where you want to eat Aunt Edna’s famous homemade chocolate cake. See Chapter 9 for more details on avoiding RED foods, and Chapter 4 on what to do if you accidentally eat a RED food. As you strengthen your digestion and your gut is less leaky, you may be able to tolerate gluten more easily.

So you ate gluten several times and determined how it made you feel. Next you move on to the next group, usually this would be dairy. So let’s say you used to drink a glass of milk every night with dinner before the 45-day trial. Now you could, keeping all other variables the same, have a glass of milk with dinner on day 46 and then observe symptoms for 72 hours. Or you could eat some cheese.

Just as with gluten experimentation, we are aiming for pure dairy products here, not ones that contain other problem foods, too. So good choices are milk, sour cream, or cheese. Bad choices are ice cream, yogurt, or pizza. Yogurt is not a good choice because it is generally the most well-tolerated form of dairy, so your reactions if you have any will be subtler and harder to spot. You repeat the same pattern as you did with gluten experiment. Eat a dairy product on day one, keep all other variables the same, and then avoid dairy for the next two days and observe for 72 hours. Then rinse and repeat, do it again. If you added dairy back twice and noticed no symptoms, congratulations! You can keep dairy in YELLOW and eat it in moderation. If you had symptoms when adding back dairy, move it to the RED foods and avoid it as much as possible.

Good dairy experiment choices

- Milk
- Cheese
- Sour Cream

Bad dairy experiment choices

- Ice Cream
- Yogurt
- Pizza

Next up we attack the lectin group. I like to use corn for this experiment, ideally corn on the cob, corn tortillas, or popcorn. Same pattern here, but remember that cooking food can lessen the lectin content: While raw red peppers might cause you problems, roasted might not. So when adding lectins back in, try both raw and cooked versions of foods to compare. If you are sensitive to one high-lectin food, you are likely sensitive to others, like legumes and nightshade vegetables.

But there is more variability in this food group than others. It's worth going through each one separately. For example, first trying peanut butter, then potatoes, then raw tomatoes, then cooked tomatoes, then corn, etc. Remember that preparation method makes a big difference. It is worth the time to do separate experiments for both raw and cooked lectin foods, because potatoes can be such a great grain substitute, and legumes can be quick protein sources. Baked or roasted potato is good choice for that experiment, and for legumes use lentils or hummus.

Answers to common questions

What if I do the whole trial—avoiding high sugar, high lectin, gluten, and dairy for 45 days and then adding back—and notice no difference?

This means that you may have some sensitivities to foods that are not in any of the YELLOW food groups. Consider seeing a holistic MD, naturopath, or nutritionist to help you find any hidden food sensitivities.

Further options to try:

- Try a strict paleo diet that cuts out all grains, including rice and oats. See answer below to Do I need to go strictly paleo?)
- Avoid the food binder called xanthan gum, often found in salad dressing and in gluten-free breads and gluten-free flours, which can be inflammatory for some folks and is often a reason for a failure to feel better while avoiding gluten. If you are sensitive to both gluten and xanthan gum, and you simply replace wheat bread with xanthan gum filled gluten-free bread, you are not going to see any benefit!
- Look for hidden sources of gluten, dairy, or excitotoxins in your diet
- Talk with holistic MD or naturopath about getting blood testing for food sensitivities, as described in Chapter 14 of *The FibroManual*.
- Make sure to work on other aspects of fibromyalgia care as well, including sleep, gentle movement and myofascial stretching, and hormone balancing as outlined in *The FibroManual*.

If I am sensitive to one gluten food like bread, will I be sensitive to everything else in that food group (pasta, cookies, etc.)?

This varies depending on the food group. For gluten, if you are sensitive to one gluten item, like pasta, you are likely to be sensitive to all forms of gluten. However, it can vary for other food groups based how things are prepared, especially in the dairy and lectin groups. For example, some people who are sensitive to dairy can tolerate yogurt and cheese, as the proteins are more broken down than in milk or ice cream. Others might tolerate white cheese but not yellow cheese. I have found through experimentation that I can tolerate white cheese like Havarti fine, but cheddar triggers inflammation. Very careful experimentation is the only way to determine these differences.

Lectins are another area where preparation can make a huge difference, especially cooked versus raw. Even if raw tomatoes cause you problems, you may be able to tolerate cooked tomatoes in spaghetti sauce, as cooking breaks down some of the lectins. Also, you may not tolerate steamed soy beans, but fermented soy beans made into tofu might cause you no problems, as the lectins are pretty broken down by the process of fermentation. Again, this takes time and experimentation to figure out, and it's safest in the beginning to just avoid all foods in any YELLOW food groups you were sensitive to.

If I have a reaction to a YELLOW food does that mean I will always have the same reaction for the rest of my life?

It depends. Sometimes with improvement in digestion and leaky gut, over time you may find down the road you may be able to tolerate some yellow foods. Sometimes even with digestion and leaky gut improvement, your body will still react to that yellow food forever. I have found that how much of a yellow food you eat can make a big difference. For example, a bite or two of gluten chocolate cake might not cause me any problems, but eating a whole slice will trigger an intense reaction.

Okay so I am sensitive to all those YELLOW foods. What am I supposed to eat?

If you have multiple food sensitivities and are worried about your shrinking diet, you will benefit from focusing on strengthening your digestion and doing some intensive repair of leaky gut to enable you to tolerate more foods (see Chapter 10 of *The FibroManual*). This also may be a good time to seek out guidance of holistic MD or naturopath, or a nutritionist for further diet guidance.

Do I need to just go strictly paleo?

Certainly, if you can do a completely paleo diet, that is a very healthy and anti-inflammatory diet. But, it is usually not realistic for people with fibromyalgia for two reasons. A strictly paleo diet is very low in carbohydrates, which can cause mood swings and anxiety. It is also a very labor-intensive diet, which is also not realistic or doable for people dealing with fibromyalgia. That is why we added some of the most well-tolerated grains to the GREEN foods list. However, while these are not commonly foods that are associated with food sensitivities, there are rare people that are sensitive. So if you noticed any symptoms after eating rice, rice cakes, quinoa, amaranth, or millet, it may be worth a trial of going strictly grain free. If you have celiac disease or another autoimmune disease as well as fibromyalgia, consider going grain-free for a month or two and see how you feel. You are your own best data point! Experiment and see what works for you. Check out the "resource section" at the end of the book for paleo and grain-free resources.

Is sourdough bread gluten free?

True sourdough has a lower gluten content than other wheat breads but is not gluten free. It has less gluten because of its unique fermentation process. So if you are sensitive to gluten, it can be worth an experiment to see how well you tolerate sourdough.

However, this does not apply if you have celiac disease (see next question).

If I am sensitive to gluten, does that mean I have celiac disease?

Not all people who are sensitive to gluten have celiac disease. Celiac disease is a fairly rare condition in which the body's immune reaction to gluten causes injury to the wall of the small intestine. It is diagnosed by testing for specific antibodies to gluten or by a small bowel biopsy that shows damage to the small intestine, which can cause problems with the absorption of nutrients. Gluten sensitivity means that your body responds to gluten negatively, but not by causing an immune reaction that damages the small intestine.

Chapter 9: Overcoming Barriers and Avoiding Pitfalls

Food—what we choose to eat and not eat—is a powerful weapon in the fight against fibromyalgia, but also one of the most challenging to use. Why? Because knowing what to do is simple, but actually doing it can be hard, for a few reasons. The first is that we have emotional attachments to foods, and we often use food to comfort ourselves. So many of my patients tell me that they reach for foods, especially carbohydrates and sugar, when dealing with pain. This is where the term “comfort foods” comes from. We also use food as a quick energy boost.

I definitely crave chocolate and sugar in the afternoons when I am feeling tired. I know it is too late to have any caffeine, so I go for something sugary. And then I will crash in a few hours. So if I do give in to my sugar fix, I try to pair it with some protein.

The second and most significant block to using food in the fight against fibromyalgia is that fatigue and pain can make cooking, preparing, and even eating food too exhausting to even contemplate sometimes. I like to compare fibromyalgia to carrying an invisible 200 lb. backpack. Imagine going to the grocery store and cooking a meal carrying that, and you have some idea what might make eating well with fibromyalgia difficult! So people with fibromyalgia often tend to survive on energy bars, snacks, or pre-made meals. I remember in medical school going to see a holistic doctor who asked me what I had eaten that morning, and sheepishly confessing that my breakfast had consisted of a chocolate chip cookie.

Finally, making changes are hard, especially when you are not feeling well. Humans like routine and we like stability. We do best when we have support from others going through the same. This is why, as we were writing this book, we solicited advice from fibromyalgia sufferers about tips and tricks they had learned over the years. And if emotional eating is a huge barrier for you, counseling can really help. Working with health coaches and nutritionists is a great idea. If you choose to work with a health coach make sure it is one who has specific training in fibromyalgia (find one at www.fibromyaliacoachinginstitute.com)

The key is identifying what your barriers to making diet changes are, and then finding ways to address them. Know that you are not alone if you are struggling to make diet changes! Also, don't feel you have to be perfect. I am always drawn to cookbook and blog titles like *Mostly Macrobiotic* and *Imperfect Paleo*. Because aiming for dietary perfection is so overwhelming it can stop me in my tracks from even trying.

Real Life Obstacles

Following a new way of eating is never about just knowing what to eat. If only it was that simple! In this next section we're going to problem solve five major stumbling blocks to following your fibro friendly diet.

Obstacle 1: How do I make meals that work with my new gluten-free/dairy-free/excitotoxin-free diet and my family of picky eaters?

Family-friendly swaps:

- **Gluten-free pasta** for regular pasta. (Try Barilla brand. It's so good, they'll never know!)

- Stir-fry with gluten-free **tamari soy sauce** or **coconut aminos** instead of teriyaki or soy sauce
- Keep a **frozen dairy-free/gluten-free pizza** on hand for you for when there's take-out pizza
- Use **ghee**, which is like butter but without the dairy proteins, in the place of butter or canola oil in recipes
- Swap regular mayo for **avocado oil mayonnaise** to avoid harmful oils like canola and soybean. Consider alternative spreads like fresh avocado or hummus.
- “**Hide**” **vegetables** like cauliflower in blended soups. Grate carrots and zucchini into tomato sauce.
- Ditch conventional hotdogs for **organic-grass fed hotdogs** and serve with Udi's gluten-free hot dog buns. Do the same for other meat products like sausages and hamburgers.
- Try a **gluten-free dairy-free cake mix** for celebrations like the cake mixes from Pamela's Products ([link](#)), which are sourced throughout national health food stores like Whole Foods.

Obstacle 2: I can't cook all the time. What store-bought pantry items can I eat when I'm in a pinch?

- Boxed organic gluten-free dairy-free soups like the “Imagine” brand
- Pre-cooked rice packets
- Quick cook gluten-free oats or frozen gluten-free oatmeal
- Organic lunch meat, sausage, jerky, and salami
- Frozen pre-cooked organic and grass-fed meatballs and burger patties
- Gluten-free dairy-free frozen dinners or burritos like Amy's brand (watch out for “yeast extract,” which is really MSG!)
- Plain rotisserie chicken (organic is best)
- Salted nuts, trail mix, or Kind bars

Obstacle 3: I'm hungry between meals. What kinds of snacks can I keep on hand?

- Olives (some stores sell to-go packs)
- Raw nuts and seeds like walnuts, almonds, pumpkin seeds and cashews (individual packs at Trader Joe's)
- “SeaSnax” seaweed
- “The New Primal” brand beef jerky
- Nut butter packets
- Lunch meat or small serving of protein left over from dinner (steak, chicken thigh)
- Lara bars or other all fruit and nut bars
- Clif Builder bars, which have 20 grams of protein each and are dairy and gluten free
- Hard-boiled eggs

Obstacle 4: I'm out in the world, hungry, and not prepared. What do I order at...?

- *Starbucks*: a small pack of salted nuts and the “egg and cheese protein tray” (eat the fruit and hardboiled eggs, ditch the cheese and roll).
- *Fast food*: double burger patty in a lettuce wrap with ketchup and mustard.
- *Deli order*: deli meat with tomato and mustard wrapped in lettuce

- *Not gluten-free friendly restaurant*: grilled chicken breast, steamed vegetables like broccoli or spinach, side of sliced avocado, and a baked potato.

Obstacle 5: I screwed up and ate gluten/dairy/MSG and now I feel horrible!

Don't freak out or beat yourself up. Proceed to Chapter 4 where we give you strategies to feel better fast.

Pitfalls to Avoid

Pitfall 1: Waiting for perfection

There is never a perfect time to start the diet and you don't have to be perfect. You can imperfectly muddle along and still find the Fibro Food Formula that works the best for you. But you do have to start. And if the holidays come during your six weeks and you eat some gluten, not the end of the world. The next day, get back on track and observe yourself for symptoms. Use it as a learning tool. Don't start a well-I-already-fell-off-the-wagon-so-I might-as-well-go-big week-long binge of gluten (ahem, not that we have ever done that ourselves).

The key is to accept right up front that you don't have to be perfect. Just do the best you can with where you are right now. Find your best food formula that helps ease your symptoms and do the best you can to follow it. But first you have to figure out the formula that is right for you and do some experimenting. Then you will have gained the knowledge of what foods make you feel worse and which make you feel better. And as they say, knowledge is power!

From My Case Files: Jenny's story

Jenny always had a good reason why she couldn't start making diet changes; because the holidays were coming up, or she was going on vacation, or had to eat up the food in her pantry first. She went on like this for two years, until I finally gave her the ultimatum that she needed to just start, even if it was not the perfect time, or she should stop seeing me and wasting her time and money.

Pitfall 2: Mourning all the foods you can never eat again!

This is not an all-or-nothing proposition, and thinking about it in catastrophic terms makes it much harder. The best way to think of it is as a temporary time in which you are gathering information on how certain types of foods make you feel. Then, with that knowledge, you can make a choice about whether to eat it. But at least once you have gathered the information, you can make an educated decision.

For me, ice cream makes me feel so bad that I really don't even want it anymore. But once or twice a year I have to remind myself of this! As for gluten, I have found that I can tolerate a certain amount, I know my limit, and I decide if that birthday cake is worth feeling cruddy for a few days. Sometimes that answer for me is yes, and sometimes I think not. If it is a Friday and it is my birthday and it is a homemade cake that is my favorite cake and I can crash for the weekend, I'll likely decide yes. If it is just a store-bought crappy cake and I have to work the next day, I will think better of it.

From My Case Files: Lisa's story

Lisa told me that for weeks prior to starting avoiding gluten and dairy, she found herself crying into her ice cream and grieving the last pizza she would ever eat in her life. You can imagine this did not make it easier!

Pitfall 3: I will never find a substitute for my favorite foods

If pasta is your favorite food and you love making homemade pasta, it is going to be hard to give up pasta for 45 days. But there are always substitutes you can find, and maybe you will create the best non-gluten pasta creations anyone has ever made!

From My Case Files: Jessie's story

Jessie told me going without creamer in her coffee for six weeks would make her life not worth living, so she couldn't go dairy free. Finally, with much prodding, she tried hemp milk instead, and realized she actually liked the way it tasted better and it didn't make her feel bad like dairy does.

Pitfall 4: Being too strict and going completely carb-free

Many of us need some carbohydrates, and if you go too strictly carb-free you will not be able to tolerate it. This is often why fibromyalgia patients crash and burn on paleo or Whole 30 diets. The fibro body still needs some carbs to stabilize mood and energy. That is why rice and rice cakes, gluten-free oats, quinoa, and other gluten-free grains are in GREEN foods. But most of us are not eating enough protein, so more protein and less carbs (but not no carbs) is the best formula for most fibro patients. For me, the Whole 30 diet was too low in carbs, and I found myself hungry, anxious, and struggling to choke down yet another spoonful of almond butter without a rice cake to spread it on.

From My Case Files: Debbie's story

Debbie emailed me four days after starting the Whole 30 diet and said, "I am hungry and anxious all the time and I can't take this anymore." She went from a mostly carb-based diet to the drastic change of eating only vegetables and meat. After adding in some rice and sweet potatoes her anxiety eased.

Pitfall 5: Depriving yourself of all comfort foods

We have to be realistic that changing our diet is not going to mean suddenly you will never use comfort foods to soothe your emotions anymore. It makes so much more sense to allow yourself some comforting tasty treats that do not make you feel bad. Because life with fibromyalgia is hard enough, and we don't need to deprive ourselves of every treat. The moral of the story is whatever we deprive ourselves of we will crave, and eventually crash and binge on that.

Part of why I flamed out on day 17 of the Whole 30 diet was because I often use sugar to bribe or reward myself to do something hard or go to sugar to soothe my emotions. And with all sugar being forbidden, I felt emotionally adrift. Had I modified the diet to allow myself some dark chocolate, candied ginger, or raisins, to reward and soothe myself I would have been more successful.

Chapter 10: Conclusion: Going Forward with The Fibro Food Formula

The fundamental equation of The Fibro Food Formula is simple: Eat less of foods that make you feel worse, and more of the foods that make you feel better.

Another way to say this: Lots of GREEN FOODS minus RED FOODS = Less fibromyalgia symptoms.

After completing all four steps you will have found your own Fibro Food Formula. This means you have determined what foods make you feel worse (the RED foods) and what to do if you accidentally eat one (honestly, the Dorito just fell into my mouth!) and how to quickly get through a RED food flare. Seriously, write down your RED food game plan so that next time it happens you can just do it without even thinking about it. Or make an actual emergency kit with magnesium, vitamin C, and other tools we talked about in Chapter 4, and open in case of emergency RED food exposure!

As part of the Fibro Food Formula, you have also learned which foods make you feel better: nutrient dense vegetables and healthy fats along with lots of protein. Continue to focus on eating as many GREEN foods as you can. When in times of stress or flares, you may fall off the wagon and start eating less protein and vegetables, and more carbs and prepared foods. When I get stressed I will often go into an all sugar extravaganza, which of course only makes me feel worse. It happens to all of us. The key is to recognize it, not beat yourself up over it, and get back on the GREEN wagon as soon as you can. Make it as easy as possible for yourself to do so by making sure you have the right tools in your kitchen and that your pantry is stocked. If emotional eating is making things harder for you, seek counseling or coaching assistance.

Finally, you have done the detective work to find out your food sensitivities, and which YELLOW foods are actually RED foods in your Fibro Food Formula and should be avoided completely, and which are still in the YELLOW group, meaning okay to eat in moderation. Even if you tolerate a YELLOW food, strive to eat them only in moderation have the bulk of your foods come from the GREEN group.

Strong digestion and a well-sealed gut (not leaky) will go a long way towards enabling you to tolerate small amounts of RED foods and prevent any other foods from moving into the RED food sensitivity zone. So make sure you don't neglect your digestion and gut health.

Even if you did not find your body has any negative reactions to a YELLOW food like gluten, try to eat gluten less often (meaning don't have toast for breakfast and a sandwich for lunch every day). These foods are still in the YELLOW group because they are the ones most likely to trigger the immune system, and constant exposure to YELLOW foods can trigger development of sensitivities to that food in the future. Food sensitivities can change over time, so stay tuned into your body and watch closely for signs of food-based reactions. We tend to develop sensitivities to foods we eat often, so the best way to prevent developing future food sensitivities is to vary your diet. For example, don't eat yogurt every day for breakfast, some days have eggs, or an apple and peanut butter. A strong digestive tract and a healthy, non-leaky gut, are also the best protectors against developing future food sensitivities.

And finally, remember we are not expecting perfection, just do the best you can and always give yourself a generous helping of self-compassion and kindness.

Chapter 11: GREEN Meal Ideas and Meal Templates

It can be hard to remember what to eat on a good day, let alone when you're not feeling your best. The easiest way to ensure you have a fibro-friendly meal on your plate is to follow this simple formula:

The Fibro Food Formula Basic Meal Template for meals heavy on GREEN and with no yellow or red foods:

Protein + Healthy Fat + Veggies + Starch/Fruit (optional)

What is a fibro-friendly protein, vegetable, healthy fat, or starch?

- Sources of protein: Animal products like eggs, meat, and fish. Seeds and nuts (if tolerated).
- Sources of Veggies: Sulfur-rich vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage. Crunchy veggies like cucumbers. Leafy greens like spinach and arugula.
- Healthy fats: Olive oil, coconut oil, ghee, avocado, nuts, seeds, fat in healthy animals (grass-fed red meat, pasture-raised egg yolk, wild fish).
- Starch/Fruit: Root vegetables like sweet potatoes, taro and yucca root. Squashes like spaghetti, delicata, and acorn. Gluten-free grains like rice, quinoa, and amaranth. Fruit like bananas, plantains, berries, grapes, apples, mangoes, pears, cherries, and melon.

Ideally, all meals follow the Protein + Healthy Fat + Veggies + Starch/Fruit (optional) formula. However, in real life, things aren't always so perfect. We're okay with that.

We'd like you to **prioritize protein and healthy fat at breakfast, while loading up on protein, healthy fat, and veggies at lunch and dinner**. Some people find this simplified approach easier to follow.

You'll notice starch is listed as optional because some people do best when they reduce grains and starchy foods altogether. However, if you aren't reacting to foods like sweet potatoes, white potatoes, and white rice, enjoy them! Many women do not feel their best on a super-low carbohydrate diet (hello, anxiety!).

We're going to walk you through different ideas for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Our hope is you can find a handful of meals that taste good and are easy enough to make to help you start your 45 days. Once you know what appeals to you (chicken vs. fish) and what's feasible (cooking vs. pre-cooked), looking up recipes online will be easier.

It will also be a good test to see what staples you like having on hand (rice, sweet potato, rotisserie chicken, tuna). If you find you're eating the same foods all the time, don't sweat it. For 45 days, it's better to be monotonous and eat what makes you feel good and what works for your life and symptoms. You can introduce variety when you have more energy and feel better from finding your Fibro Food Formula.

Breakfast Ideas

Each of these breakfasts contains healthy protein and fat, while some include the ingredients of starch, fruit, or vegetable. For the bolded items, there are recipes at the end of the book. The following breakfast ideas are GREEN friendly unless you have ruled out

one of these foods in your Fibro Food Formula. If you're short on time in the morning, make these the night before and reheat at work in a glass container.

- Breakfast 1: **Green Smoothie** with organic bacon or sausage.
- Breakfast 2: Two hard-boiled eggs, one sliced avocado, oven-roasted vegetables left over from dinner
- Breakfast 3: Rice cakes with 2-3 tablespoons of almond butter
- Breakfast 4: Dairy-free yogurt parfait: Combine unsweetened coconut yogurt, ¼ cup of raw nuts and/or seeds, fresh or frozen raspberries, and a drizzle of honey.
- Breakfast 5: Sweet Potato “Bagel”: Lox (cured salmon) with lemon juice and avocado or regular mayo on a sweet potato round (peel and microwave the sweet potato and cut into rounds). Optional: Trader Joe’s “Everything but the bagel” seasoning on top.
- Breakfast 6: Oatmeal with ¼ cup walnuts, two tablespoons ground flax seeds, and organic blueberries (fresh or frozen).
- Breakfast 7: Nut butter protein “mylk” shake: Combine two scoops of rice protein powder with two tablespoons nut butter (almond, cashew, sunflower seed), nut milk, and one frozen banana and blend on high.
- Breakfast 8: “Leftover” egg scramble with a side of oven baked fries: Combine dinner leftovers (ground beef, roasted vegetables) into two or three eggs and scramble.
- Breakfast 9: **Super Creamy PB&J smoothie**

Easy Lunches and Dinners

Formula: Protein + Healthy Fat + Veggie + Starch/fruit (optional)

Each one of these simple lunch or dinner ideas contains protein, healthy fat, and vegetables. Remember, healthy fats can include what you're cooking with, like olive oil or ghee. Some also include a starch or fruit. For the bolded items there are recipes at the end of the book. The following ideas are GREEN friendly unless you have ruled out one of these foods in your Fibro Food Formula.

- Lunch and Dinner 1: Lettuce wrap turkey sandwich: Nitrate-free organic turkey deli meat in a lettuce wrap with cucumber slices, one smashed sliced avocado, and mustard. Pack a banana or an apple as dessert.
- Lunch and Dinner 2: Thigh or breast from a plain rotisserie chicken, **Simple Sweet Potatoes** and a side of mixed greens tossed in lemon and olive oil.
- Lunch and Dinner 3: **Veggie Meat Sauce** and zoodles (spiraled zucchini) or rice.

- Lunch and Dinner 4: Pre-cooked protein, quinoa, and roasted broccoli: Set quinoa to cook in your rice cooker. Pre-heat your oven to 350°. Place store-chopped broccoli (or brussel sprouts) on a baking sheet and toss with olive oil and salt. Bake until crispy. Serve with a piece of steak, chicken, grass-fed nitrate free hot dog, or other protein that looked good at the grocery store deli counter, or cook for yourself if you're up to it. Eat for dinner or pack in container to reheat for lunch.
- Lunch and Dinner 5: **Salmon “Teriyaki”** with sautéed kale salad and steamed white rice with ghee.
- Lunch and Dinner 6: Burger and fries: Wrap a burger patty (homemade or frozen) in a lettuce wrap (butter lettuce or romaine) and top with avocado and mustard. Serve with **Oven Baked Fries**.
- Lunch and Dinner 7: Chicken salad on greens with chips: Dice organic chicken breast and combine with walnuts and avocado (fruit), avocado oil mayo or regular mayo. Season with salt and pepper. Serve over mixed greens with a side of plantain or other grain-free chip or cracker.
- Lunch and Dinner 8: Argentinean tuna salad: Combine a can of tuna (wild if possible) in olive oil with olives, capers, lemon juice, and sliced cucumbers. Serve over a bed of white rice.
- Lunch and Dinner 9: **Egg salad** over salad greens with gluten-free seed crackers for dipping.
- Lunch and Dinner 10: **Butternut squash soup** with a side steak (home cooked or from grocery deli).
- Lunch and Dinner 11: Asian noodles with a fried egg: Cook rice noodles in boiling water. Rinse and set aside. In a pan, sauté veggies of your choice (broccoli, spinach, kale, bok choy) until cooked. Remove any water and keep the heat on low as you mix in the rice noodles, two or three tablespoons of almond butter and tamari gluten-free soy sauce or coconut aminos to taste. Stir until combined. Optional: top with a fried egg or two (makes a delicious sauce) Other great toppings include sesame seeds, kimchi, and roasted seaweed.
- Lunch and Dinner 12: Healthy microwave meal: Sweet potato (peeled, scored, and microwave for five–six minutes), a side of organic frozen vegetables (microwave) topped with ghee, and an easy pre-cooked protein from the fridge or grocery delivery (nitrate free deli meat, rotisserie chicken, smoked salmon).
- Lunch and Dinner 13: Chicken, rice, and greens: Thigh from rotisserie chicken, roasted or sautéed green vegetable (broccoli, brussel sprouts, kale, bok choy, collard greens), and white rice with ghee.

- Lunch and Dinner 14: Lemon pepper tuna: Rice cookers are our friend! Make some white rice, when it comes out hot from the rice cooker, melt ghee on it, put drained can of tuna, frozen green beans that you have microwaved, sprinkle with lemon pepper to taste.
- Lunch and Dinner 15: Easy salmon salad: Drain a can of salmon (preferably wild), add mayo or smashed avocado, lemon, and salt. Stir. Serve in lettuce cups and/or with taro chips.
- Lunch and Dinner 16: Breakfast for dinner: Fry two or three eggs in ghee and serve over white rice or a baked sweet potato. Side salad of mixed greens with lemon and olive oil as dressing.
- Lunch and Dinner 17: Fast chicken soup: Defrost pre-made (homemade or store bought) bone broth. Add in sliced rotisserie chicken and microwave frozen vegetables and season with sea salt. Optional: top with crunchy plantain chips, add white rice and a dash of lime for more flavor.
- Lunch and Dinner 18: Deconstructed sushi: Fill large Sea Snax sheets of seaweed with lox (cured salmon) or tuna, a fat of your choice (avocado, mayo, almond butter with coconut aminos), and sliced cucumber. Roll each one before eating like a hand roll. Optional: Add some white rice.

Desserts

For these bolded recipes, check the recipe section in the next chapter.

- Dessert 1: **Gluten-free dairy-free gingersnaps**
- Dessert 2: **Gluten-free dairy-free blueberry muffins**
- Dessert 3: **“Chocolate” protein pudding**
- Dessert 4: Dates with almond butter
- Dessert 5: Dates rolled in coconut (available pre-rolled at grocery stores)
- Dessert 6: **Frozen banana or coconut ice cream**
- Dessert 7: Dark chocolate (75% or darker)
- Dessert 8: Coconut macaroon

Recipes

Notes on recipes: all are gluten free, but a few contain dairy so when you are avoiding dairy, skip or modify those recipes marked as ***dairy**. A few recipes contain high-lectin foods, so when you are avoiding lectins skip or modify those recipes marked as ***high-lectins**.

For recipes calling for protein powder, we recommend high quality rice or pea protein, but you can also use nuts and seeds ground in a high-power blender (hemp seeds are especially high in protein!). Read more about protein powder in Chapter 5.

Simple Sweet Potatoes

Ingredients:

- Sweet potatoes
- 2 tablespoons ghee

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°
2. Cut sweet potatoes lengthwise into quarters and put on cookie sheet (non-stick or use parchment paper) that has been liberally coated with ghee.
3. Cook at 400° for about 20 minutes, then flip them and cook for another 10–15 minutes, until soft and golden brown.

Green Smoothie (serves 1–2)

Ingredients:

- One medium size banana (cut and frozen into 2–3 pieces)
- One ripe avocado
- Handful of organic spinach
- 8–16 oz. water or nut milk to get everything moving
- Optional: organic orange

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a high-power blender and blend until everything is one smooth mixture. If you crave more sweetness, add a peeled orange for a Creamsicle-like flavor.
2. Put in refrigerator until chilled and then enjoy.

Super Creamy PB&J Smoothie *contains lectins if use peanut butter

Ingredients:

- 1 banana
- 1 cup frozen blueberries
- Two tablespoons nut butter (almond, cashew, sunflower seed, peanut)
- Enough dairy-free milk (almond, hemp) or water so it can blend all the way

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a high-power blender and blend until everything is one smooth mixture.
2. Chill in the fridge until cold. The fat from the nut butter keep it from separating and makes it super rich and thick. This is a great breakfast or snack recipe to make the night before.

Bone Broth

Ingredients:

- Enough cartilage-rich bones like chicken necks, backs, feet, or rotisserie chicken carcass to fill half of your pot
- 1–2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar or lemon
- Bay leaves
- Water
- Optional: celery, carrots, and other vegetables

Directions:

1. Put cartilage-rich bones in your slow cooker or a large pot.
2. Cover the bones $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way with water.
3. Add 1–2 tablespoons of apple cider vinegar or a squeeze of lemon to help leach the minerals from the bones.
4. Add optional herbs like a bay leaf for added flavor or veggies like carrots and celery.
5. Set slow cooker or stove on low for 24 hours. If you find you're sensitive to glutamate, cook on the stove on low for 8 hours.
6. Strain broth through a thin mesh strainer and into a container. You know you cooked it long enough and used enough bones if your refrigerated broth jiggles like soft jello.
7. Enjoy with a dash of sea salt, a squeeze of lime, or as stock in soup.

Oven Roasted Vegetables (serves 2–4)

Ingredients:

- 3 types of pre-chopped vegetables like:
 - Pre-cut and cubed package of organic butternut squash or sweet potato
 - Pre-halved organic Brussels sprouts
 - Pre-sliced organic mushrooms
- 1–2 tablespoons of olive oil or ghee
- Sea salt

Directions:

1. Wash, rinse, and dry vegetables
2. Pre-heat the oven to 350°
3. In a large mixing bowl, add vegetables and 1–2 tablespoons of olive oil or melted ghee. Toss vegetables until they are coated in oil or ghee.
4. Pour vegetables onto non-stick cookie sheets and bake for 25 minutes or until slightly brown and crispy.
5. Sprinkle sea salt over vegetables. Enjoy alone, as a side dish, dipped in your favorite condiment (ketchup, avocado mayo, hummus, guacamole), or scrambled into your morning eggs.

Oven Baked Fries (serves 2–4)

Ingredients:

- 2–4 sweet potatoes (1 per person)
- 1–2 tablespoons of olive oil or melted ghee
- Sea salt

Directions:

1. Pre-heat the oven to 400°
2. Wash, peel, and cut potatoes into ½ inch thick round slices. Leave as rounds or cut into “fry” shape by dividing rounds into three pieces.
3. In a large mixing bowl, add skinned potatoes and 1–2 tablespoons of olive oil or melted ghee. Toss the potatoes until they are coated in oil or ghee.
4. Pour potatoes onto non-stick cookie sheets. Bake for 25 minutes or until crispy and fry-like.
5. Sprinkle sea salt over fries. Enjoy dipped in your favorite condiment (ketchup, avocado mayo, hummus, guacamole).

Salmon “Teriyaki” (one 4–6 oz. fillet per person)

Ingredients:

- Wild salmon (4–6 oz. serving per person. Cut or use pre-portioned frozen)
- 1–2 tablespoons Ghee or coconut oil
- Coconut aminos

Directions:

1. Heat a pan and add 1–2 tablespoons of ghee or coconut oil.
2. When the pan is hot, add as many salmon fillets as you want without crowding them.
3. When the fish is halfway cooked, flip the fillets over and pour coconut aminos over them. You can use as much (a couple of tablespoons) or as little (just a splash) coconut aminos as you want.
4. Cook until the fish is done to your preference (seared or all the way through). Pour any extra sauce (ghee and coconut aminos) over the fish.

Egg Salad (serves 2–3)

Ingredients:

- 1 ripe avocado
- 6–8 hardboiled pasture-raised eggs
- Sea salt and pepper
- Lemon
- Optional: fresh diced herbs like chives, basil, or parsley

Directions:

1. Hard boil 6–8 eggs and chill.
2. Peel eggs and dice.
3. Mash one ripe avocado into the diced eggs.
4. Mix and season with salt, pepper, a squeeze of lemon, and chopped herbs.

Potato in a Pinch (serves 1)

Ingredients:

- 1 sweet potato (orange, white, or purple)

Directions:

1. Wash potato (you can also peel it if desired).
2. With a knife, cut multiple lines into the potato so steam can escape.
3. Place the potato on a paper towel and microwave the potato for six minutes on high.

Butternut Squash Soup (serves 2–4)

Ingredients:

- 1 package of pre-cut and cubed organic butternut squash (Whole Foods or Trader Joe's)
- 1 container of mirepoix (pre-chopped onion, carrot, and celery) (Whole Foods or Trader Joe's)
- 32 oz. organic chicken broth (homemade or store bought)
- 1 tablespoon of ghee or olive oil
- Sea salt and pepper
- Optional: freshly grated ginger to taste or 1 peeled and sliced organic apple

Directions:

1. In a large pot, sauté half the container of mirepoix in 1 tablespoon of ghee for around 5 minutes.
2. Add the butternut squash and stir as it browns.
3. Add in the optional peeled and sliced apple at this time. You can also grate some fresh ginger over the mixture. Remember, both the apple and the ginger are optional steps, so feel free to omit if they are too labor intensive.
4. When the butternut squash begins to caramelize (3–5 minutes in), pour 32 oz. of chicken broth over the mixture. Simmer until vegetables are very soft.
5. Blend with a stick blender or high power blender.
6. Season with sea salt and pepper. Serve alone or topped with pumpkin seeds and a dollop of ghee.

Veggie Meat Sauce

Ingredients:

- 1 lbs ground meat: grass-fed lamb, beef, pastured pork, or poultry
- Spaghetti sauce (unless avoiding lectins, then use instead one jar dairy-free basil pesto)
- 3–4 carrots, skinned
- 1–2 zucchini or summer squash

Directions:

1. Brown the meat in a pan with olive oil or ghee.
2. When meat is cooked, add a jar of spaghetti sauce (or dairy-free store-bought pesto if avoiding lectins).
3. Grate in vegetables like carrots and zucchini and let it simmer until vegetables are cooked.
4. Serve over spiralized zoodles, spaghetti squash, gluten-free pasta, or a combination.

Barb's Overnight Oats

Ingredients:

- 1 clean jar with lid
- 1/2 cup rolled gluten-free oats
- 1 cup non-dairy milk (e.g.: hemp milk, almond milk)
- 2 tablespoons nuts and/or seeds
- 1 teaspoons cinnamon (or other spices, like cardamom or vanilla extract)
- 1 scoop of rice protein powder
- Optional: 2 teaspoons chia seeds or some slices of fresh or frozen fruit/ berries

Directions:

1. Throw everything in a jar, screw the lid on top, shake, and put in fridge.

2. The next morning, add a dash of milk, stir, and enjoy!

Grandpa Robbie Eggs (for when you are sick of hard boiled eggs!)

Ingredients:

- 2 hard boiled eggs
- 1 teaspoon ghee
- Optional: sliced avocado

Directions:

1. Peel two hard boiled eggs, place in bowl and cut into small pieces.
2. Add 1 teaspoon of ghee and microwave on high for 20–30 seconds (make sure to put a cover on or it might make a mess).
3. Stir, then add salt and pepper to taste. Add some avocado after microwaving and enjoy with a rice cake or gluten free toast.

“Cheesy” Curls and Broccoli Casserole (for an occasional creamy comfort food treat!)

contains *high lectins

From Megan H.: “The recipe below—“Cheesy” Curls & Broccoli Casserole—is my gluten-free take on grandma’s chicken casserole. I hope you all enjoy it as much as I do!”

Ingredients:

- 1 package Butler’s soy curls
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup (gluten and dairy free)
- 2 bunches of broccoli, cooked
- ½ cup of dairy-free mayonnaise
- 1 ½ cups shredded non-dairy cheese
- 1 cup crushed and buttered gluten-free cornflakes (using Earth Balance butter)

Directions:

1. Cook soy curls according to package instructions, adding light seasonings (salt, pepper, etc. to taste).
2. Add broccoli and cook until al dente.
3. In 9 x 13 casserole dish, layer broccoli then soy curls.
4. Mix soup and mayo and cover soy curls.
5. Cover with cheese and crushed cornflakes.
6. Bake at 350° for 30–45 minutes.

Sweet Potato/Apple/Egg Breakfast Muffins (makes 12 muffins)

Ingredients:

- 1 large sweet potato
- 1 ¾ cups liquid egg whites (or 13 egg whites)
- 1/3cup crunchy peanut butter
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 medium apple, cored and chopped

Directions:

1. Prick sweet potato all over with a fork. Wrap in a damp paper towel. Microwave 6 minutes, until sweet potato is soft. Cool slightly, then peel and mash with a fork.
2. Measure out 1 cup mashed sweet potato for recipe and save any leftovers for another use.
3. Heat oven to 350° and coat a 12-cup muffin tin with cooking spray.
4. In a large bowl, beat sweet potato, egg whites, peanut butter, and salt until smooth. Stir in apple.
5. Pour egg mixture into muffin cups. Bake 24 to 26 minutes, until muffins are cooked through.
6. Cool completely before storing in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 4 days. Alternatively, egg muffins will keep in an airtight container in the freezer for up to 3 months.
7. Reheat muffins in the microwave, or in a 400° oven or a toaster oven on high for 5 minutes.

Easy Beef Stew contains *high-lectins

From Jacovia D: "I cook beef stew using my pressure king pro electric pressure cooker, Lovely comfort food!"

Put some diced beef in the bowl of the cooker and then add one chopped onion, 2 leeks, diced potatoes or you can throw in new potatoes to save peeling and dicing, add some shredded cabbage and a couple cups of red lentils. If making a large pot to freeze add 2 sachets of beef broth with water then Cook on Stew setting for 35 minutes for a delicious fast stew which is quick and easy to make and tastes even better the next day

Baked Penne contains *dairy and high-lectins

From Elaine W: I keep a jar of minced garlic in my fridge, my hands find it much easier than a garlic press or chopping up garlic cloves, and I just buy a bag of already shredded mozzarella cheese...easy peasy"

Ingredients:

- 16 oz. GF penne pasta (I use the brand Barillo found in pasta section)
- 1 lb Ground sausage
- 1 cup part-skim ricotta cheese
- 4 tsp minced garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 3 cups GF tomato pasta sauce
- 3/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Boil penne according to directions on package. Drain and set aside.
3. Brown sausage. Remove from heat and drain grease, if necessary.
4. In a large bowl, mix cooked sausage with ricotta, garlic, basil and 1 1/2 cups of the pasta sauce.
5. Add cooked penne to large bowl and toss gently to coat.

6. Coat bottom of a large baking dish with 1/2 cup pasta sauce. Add pasta mixture into dish and spread out evenly.
7. Add the remaining sauce over top then sprinkle with mozzarella. Bake until golden brown, about 30 minutes. At end of baking time, I like to give it a quick broil just to give the top a little extra browning.

Sweets

Note: Many of these recipes call for almond flour. If it's not available in your local grocery store, you can order it online at Amazon.com. I like Bob's Red Mill almond flour. It keeps best in the refrigerator. Almond flour has lower carbs than other flours and contains some protein.

Gluten and Dairy-free Gingersnaps (Makes about 23 cookies)

These have a bready texture, almost like a hybrid between a ginger snap and ginger bread

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup coconut oil, melted
- ¾ cup coconut sugar
- 3 tbsp blackstrap molasses
- 1 egg
- 1 ½ cup almond flour
- 6 tbsp coconut flour
- 1 ½ tsp ground ginger
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking soda

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350° and line a cookie sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, combine coconut oil, sugar, molasses, and egg.
3. Add in the almond flour, coconut flour, ginger, salt, and baking soda. Stir until completely mixed. Scoop into 2 tablespoon balls and roll in some additional coconut sugar.
3. Place 1–2 inches apart on the cookie sheet and bake for 12 minutes.
4. Remove them from the oven and gently press down so they are slightly flattened.
5. Return to oven for 3 more minutes.
6. Let cool on the cookie sheet for a few minutes before transferring them to a cooling rack.

Gluten and dairy-free Blueberry Muffins (Makes 8-12 muffins)

Ingredients:

- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- ¼ cup honey or maple syrup
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 tbsp coconut milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 ½ cup almond flour

- ½ cup tapioca starch
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp sea salt
- 1 cup blueberries, fresh or frozen

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. In a bowl beat the honey or maple syrup, vanilla, coconut oil, coconut milk, and eggs together.
3. Add the dry ingredients and mix in.
4. Fold in the blueberries
5. Evenly divide the mixture into a greased muffin tin.
6. Bake for 20–25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.
7. Remove from oven and let sit for 5 minutes before placing on a cooling rack.

Mini Sweet Potato Soufflés

Ingredients:

- 1 large sweet potato peeled and diced
- 1 peeled banana
- 3 eggs
- 1/3 cup pecans, walnuts, or almonds
- 1/3 cup flaxseed meal
- 1/3 cup coconut oil softened or melted
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- ¾ tsp cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp ground nutmeg
- Pinch of salt
- Unsweetened shredded coconut to sprinkle on tops

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°
2. Place sweet potato cubes in a microwave safe bowl, cover with water and microwave until fork-tender (usually around 7–8 minutes). Drain the water
3. Put the sweet potato and banana in blender and puree. Then add the nuts, flax seed meal, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Puree until completely broken down and smooth.
4. Add the wet ingredients: coconut oil, eggs, and vanilla extract. Puree until smooth.
5. Use silicone muffin liners for best results. If you don't have those, use 5 inch parchment paper squares pressed into the muffin liners. If you don't have parchment, use regular paper muffin liners (these stick a lot more).
6. Use an ice cream scoop to scoop out and pour ingredients into each cup, going for about ¾ full.
7. Sprinkle each soufflé with the shredded coconut

8. Bake soufflés for 25–30 minutes or until tops are a nice golden brown. The inside might still be a little soft
9. Try to let them cool a bit before you eat them, it will help them firm up a bit more and be less mushy.

Banana or Coconut Ice Cream

Ingredients:

- Bananas (2 per person)
- Coconut milk (only for coconut ice cream)
- Optional: toasted coconut, fruit, semi-sweet chocolate chips

Directions:

1. Cut bananas into three sections and freeze for at least 4 hours.
2. Blend frozen banana pieces in a food processor until smooth.
3. For coconut ice cream, add small amount of coconut milk to taste.
4. Enjoy alone or top with toasted coconut, fruit, or semi-sweet chocolate chips.

“Chocolate” Protein Pudding (Serves 1–2)

Ingredients:

- 1 ripe avocado
- 2 tablespoons nut or seed butter (almond, sunflower seed)
- 1 medium banana
- 1 tablespoon raw cacao powder
- Splash(s) of nut or seed milk (hemp, almond, etc.)
- 1–2 pitted dates (optional: for extra sweetness. Great as a dessert.)
- Optional: 1 scoop protein powder

Directions:

1. Blend all ingredients in a high-power blender or food processor.
 2. Chill and serve.
- Optional toppings include coconut flakes, walnuts, or banana slices.

Resources

Our Favorite Gluten-Free Recipe Blogs

Fed and Fit

www.fedandfit.com

Against All Grain

www.againstallgrain.com

Nom Nom Paleo

www.nomnompaleo.com

Iowa Girl Eats

www.iowagirleats.com

Balanced Bites

www.balancedbites.com

PaleOMG

www.paleomg.com

Autoimmune Wellness

www.autoimmunewellness.com

Cookbooks and Further Reading

The FibroManual: A Complete Fibromyalgia Treatment Guide for You and Your Doctor
by Dr. Ginevra Liptan

Practical Paleo, 2nd Edition (Updated and Expanded): A Customized Approach to Health and a Whole-Foods Lifestyle by Diane Sanfilippo

Fed & Fit: A 28-Day Food & Fitness Plan to Jump-Start Your Life with Over 175 Squeaky-Clean Paleo Recipes by Cassy Joy Garcia

Ready or Not: 150+ Make-Ahead, Make-Over, and Make-Now Recipes by Nom Nom Paleo by Michelle Tam and Henry Fong

Danielle Walker's Against All Grain: Meals Made Simple: Gluten-Free, Dairy-Free, and Paleo Recipes to Make Anytime by Danielle Walker

The Loving Diet: Going Beyond Paleo into the Heart of What Ails You by Jessica Flanigan

Gluten-free Food Brands

At the time of writing this, we use and would recommend the following brands:

New Cascadia Bakery
Udi's gluten-free bread
Canyon Bakehouse
Pamela's Products
Barilla gluten-free pasta

Services:

We've had good experiences with the following companies. We have no relationship to them but simply use them in our own lives:

Delivery:

- Instacart
- Prime Now
- Sun Basket

Online shopping:

- Thrive Market www.thrivemarket.com
- Vital Choice www.vitalchoice.com
- Mountain Rose Herbs www.mountainroseherbs.com
- The Herb Pharm www.herb-pharm.com

About the Authors

Ginevra Liptan, MD is a graduate of Tufts University School of Medicine, board-certified in internal medicine, and trained in functional medicine, a holistic approach that blends both western and alternative medicine. After developing fibromyalgia as a medical student, Dr. Liptan spent many years using herself as guinea pig to find successful treatments, and has fine-tuned her approach by treating thousands of patients.

She is one of the few clinical specialists in the world to focus solely on fibromyalgia, and directs The Frida Center for Fibromyalgia ([link](#)) in Portland, Oregon. She is the author of *The FibroManual: A Complete Fibromyalgia Treatment Guide for You and Your Doctor* ([link](#)) and several peer-reviewed medical journal articles about fibromyalgia.

Dr. Liptan's absolute favorite food is salmon, and she thinks cilantro tastes like soap. You can find more at www.drliptan.com.

Anna Walker, NC is a graduate of Georgetown University, where she studied psychology and public health. She then received her training in holistic nutrition at Bauman College.

Her professional and personal exploration of nutrition, psychoneuroimmunology, herbalism, movement, and art have helped her thrive while living with celiac disease. She works in digital education and currently serves as a curriculum writer and developer at Bauman College in the San Francisco Bay Area.

If Anna was stuck on a deserted island and could only bring one type of food it would be an avocado. She and Dr. Liptan initially connected over their mutual love of Frida Kahlo.