

The Consumption Cleanse

Giving up 13 consumption habits in 13 weeks
for a better life and a healthier planet

Food

Written by Michael Blue

The Consumption Cleanse

Food

Written by Michael Blue

The Consumption Cleanse – Food

By Michael Blue

Copyright © The Consumption Cleanse
2016 by Michael Blue

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written prior permission of the author. The infringement of such rights may constitute an offense against intellectual property. For information, write to mike@theconsumptioncleanse.com.

The information contained in this book is intended to provide helpful and informative material on the subject addressed. It is not intended to serve as a replacement for professional medical advice. Any use of the information in this book is at the reader's discretion. The author and publisher specifically disclaim any and all liability arising directly or indirectly from the use or application of any information contained in this book. A health-care professional should be consulted regarding your specific situation.

Table of Contents

Section 1 - Introduction

Background

About the Book

Section 2 - The Consumption Cleanse: Food

Week 1 - Refined Sugar and Artificial Sweeteners

Week 2 - Beer

Week 3 - Confectionery

Week 4 - Soda and Bottled Drinks

Week 5 - Coffee

Week 6 - Land-Based Animals

Week 7 - Wheat

Week 8 - Deep Fried

Week 9 - GMOs

Week 10 - Dairy

Week 11 - Seafood

Week 12 - Food Additives

Week 13 - Less Is More

Section 3 - Conclusion

About the Author

Section 1 - Introduction

“I make myself rich by making my wants few.”

—Henry David Thoreau

BACKGROUND

WHAT'S WRONG WITH CONSUMERISM?

The intention of this book is not to persuade the reader of why our current consumption-based economic and global systems are not healthy. This book picks up where that explanation leaves off. The comprehensive and undeniable explanation of how we got here, how we value money and material possessions over well-being, and how we have become detached from the true measures of a good life has already been told by numerous brave scholars.

This book concerns what happens next. It concerns what happens at the personal level. It is about what I did and what you can do to address consumerism. But I would be remiss if I did not summarise

my thoughts about the consumerism problem to provide some context.

William Rees, an urban planner, notes, “It requires four to six hectares of land to maintain the consumption level of the average person from a high-consumption country. The problem is that in 1990, worldwide there were only 1.7 hectares of ecologically productive land for each person.”¹

This massive deficit has to be made up with something, and as such there are two main sources. The first source is your children and your grandchildren and future generations. The resources required to support this unsustainable level of consumption, such as wood, minerals, water, and air, are typically from non-renewable sources. So what this generation takes does not get replaced. The sources are finite, so the future generations will effectively pay it backwards. The generations to come will look back from their less plentiful world and ask why we did it. The second source is the expropriation of resources by wealthy countries from poor countries through trade, political swindling and corruption, or through military force.

I am not saying that capitalism is bad. Rather, the current, mostly unregulated variety of capitalism causes a deficit in geographical and generational resources. The current economic system dictates that the more things are produced and consumed the better we are doing. The gross domestic product (GDP) has become the holy grail of national success.

The problem with this all-important measurement is that it ignores the future. It ignores any non-monetary positive aspects of life such as happiness, leisure time, and human connection because nothing is consumed by these aspects of well-being. Bhutan recognises this deficiency and so includes kindness, equality, and humanity in a metric called gross national happiness (GNH). Economic and development plans must pass a GNH review based on a GNH impact statement in a way similar to how some countries such as the United States and Australia require an environmental impact statement to be submitted and approved. GDP also ignores the cost to any unfortunate countries or species that get in the way of ‘progress’. In fact, this measurement does not consider many of those who pay a price for extraction, production, consumption, and disposal of goods, which add to a nation’s GDP. For example, if more people are unhealthy, then more health products are consumed. According to the GDP this is only a good thing. If more environmental disasters occur, this is also a good thing as it generates massive cash flow from the clean-up. You can see that this measurement is inadequate and misleading.

To change the way that we measure success and to change the system that goes hand-in-hand with that measurement are monumental tasks. Even if it were acknowledged around the globe that it is a self-destructive and dated system that serves fewer and fewer with each generation, it would be some feat to switch to something better. It would certainly mean economic collapse in

many countries. But is that better or worse than a straight-up global collapse caused by that same broken economic system?

Environment must trump economy. The economy needs somewhere to exist, doesn't it? The economy has become too central in our lives, and it needs to be replaced with something sustainable. So instead of bemoaning the current system and witnessing its slow and necessary death (with us in it), let us jump ship now. Start living in the new system. The new system is not based on consumption. It is based on genuine well-being, human connection, and community and does its best to get the hell away from the crazy idea that consumerism and a life-long pursuit of money will somehow bring you happiness.

START WITH YOURSELF

In order to start to right the wrongs of consumerism a behavioural examination at a personal level was required. As I have done throughout the Consumption Cleanse, I used myself as the case study. The first step was to accept that I was a part of the system in which I was programmed to work until retirement, earn lots of money, consume lots of stuff, and not think about the damage all this consumption was doing.

Then it was time to align my life with something closer to my true beliefs:

1. Other than those in poverty, riches do not satisfy appetites; they merely expand them.
2. Working to make money just to buy stuff you don't need is nonsense.
3. The consumption-based economy is a broken system.
4. Well-being and wealth should not be measured monetarily.
5. Frugal living and minimalism in themselves are a lot of fun and foster creativity.
6. Creating is more rewarding than consuming.
7. Why buy it when you can borrow it or grow it?
8. Why should anything you do not be fun?

And as I started to put actions into place to underpin these ideas, I found increasingly that I needed to work less. Some basic actions included:

1. I stopped buying useless things and started selling and giving away unnecessary assets and personal effects.
2. I lived the 'reclaim, repurpose, reuse, and recycle' motto.
3. I started growing what food I could instead of buying it.
4. I created an exit plan from my 'work-consume-sleep' cycle focused on exiting my expensive super-consumerist country.
5. I started looking into ways to make a minimal living that would contribute to my alternative view of how the world could be rather than support the current system and my role

in it. I focused on contribution and cooperation, not consumption and competition.

6. I started planning the Consumption Cleanse.

When this all went through the wash, I found myself with a one-way ticket out of my country with no belongings except for a few crates of books and memorable trinkets left with my supportive parents, a 15kg bag with all that I needed to survive, and a Frisbee. Fast-forward six months:

1. I live in a small house in Indonesia with my girlfriend.
2. My priority is my health and well-being and that of those close to me. I start my day at whatever hour I choose with meditation and exercise. After this there are no other ‘must do’ activities. I study languages and write when I feel like it.
3. I eat quite healthily with fresh produce bought daily from the local organic market. My diet is in line with *The Consumption Cleanse*.
4. I practice minimalism. I spend a minimal amount of money and as such do not need a job, let alone one in the corporate sector. I make a small amount of money from some hobbies that I enjoy. It’s enough, and I could never call what I do ‘work’.
5. My lifestyle is ever-improving as I find new ways to avoid using money. Sure, sometimes it’s not convenient, but I don’t need convenience; I have time.

WHAT IS THE MISSION?

I want to influence change at the individual level, for only there can it work. Governments and corporations work in collusion to support the existing system. That is fine, that is their job. But at the risk of sounding subversive, our job if we don't agree with the current system is to undermine it. Undermining happens from...under. It happens with people. Call me anti-establishment if you like, but throughout the course of history progressive change has usually started with the people. It has started in the face of power and in protest against the system of the day. Change is inevitable, and this one is undeniably necessary.

Environmental carnage is by and large at the bloodied hands of consumerism. If the enemy is consumerism and I needed to start with myself, then the logical next step was to reduce my consumption. My plan became to spend a year radically adjusting my life by consuming minimally and thoughtfully and to document it for anyone who might be interested in doing the same.

ABOUT THE BOOK

WHAT IS THE CONSUMPTION CLEANSE?

The Consumption Cleanse is essentially a record of my research and self-experimentation to eliminate unnecessary and harmful consumables from my life, once a week, cumulatively for 52 weeks. It is dissected into four books. Book 1 is all about 'Food'. Each category is chosen based on my selection criteria below, researched for supporting facts that confirm their unnecessary or harmful nature, and then removed from my life. Sometimes a category comes with an extraction plan, sometimes with viable replacements, and sometimes both. This is documented together with my own experience to be used as a guide when you take on the cleanse.

I encourage you to follow *The Consumption Cleanse* verbatim. I've done the background work. I have been your guinea pig. You will not die. I am not dead. Based on my experience you will live healthier and happier with the only threat of obesity being towards you wallet.

I selected the 52 categories (13 for Book 1—Food) based on the following tests:

1. The extraction, production, consumption, or disposal of the item must be harmful to you, the environment, or both.
2. The item exists largely because of created demand and would be useless in a world that is healthy, happy, and free from the clutches of the dying economic system of today.
3. If the item has any utility, it should have viable alternatives that are not harmful to you or the environment.

WHY FOLLOW THE CONSUMPTION CLEANSE?

Why not do it? But in case that rationale doesn't do it for you, I'll throw you some other reasons to consider:

1. You only need to read one chapter a week over a three-month period for Book 1, in time for your chosen 'Liberation Day' each week.
2. I provide plenty of referenced scientific research that will make you want to stop consuming the items in the cleanse.

3. I provide extraction plans and replacements where appropriate to make your exit as painless as possible.
4. I document my own experience. I am your lab rat. I have done this cleanse and can tell you that I feel great; my wallet is fatter, and my belly is thinner. Prior to leaving my country and prior to the cleanse I weighed 95 kilograms. The last free scales I stepped on, shortly after the last food item was cleansed, told me I weighed 78 kilograms.
5. As you consume less you will spend less. You will need less money, and therefore you will have less need to work. Perhaps you can get off the hamster wheel altogether, as I did.
6. With all the poisons and toxins that I've removed from my diet, my body feels healthier, and my mind seems sharper. Yes, it is true that I was starting from a low base.
7. Future generations will thank you. Currently, the finite resources we continue to consume at an unsustainable rate will not be available for future generations.
8. You know reducing consumption is the right thing to do.

A friend of mine who was reviewing this book asked me if I really thought that one person's taking on this challenge could make a difference. My answer is that making a difference only happens one person at a time. That's how massive change happens. If you act, people see this, and perhaps someone else will act. The conversation starts to change, inspiration takes hold, and then societal behaviours change. But none of this will happen unless you start with yourself.

Besides, it does not have to be miserable. I am a specialist in having fun. Fun is my main game. Since I started my extraction process from consumerism, I have never had so much fun and been so healthy.

HOW TO DO THE CONSUMPTION CLEANSE

Here are the simple instructions that you need to follow the Consumption Cleanse:

1. Decide to take the challenge and to become healthier and happier almost immediately.
2. Choose a day of the week that will become your Liberation Day, the day you cease consuming the item from that week forward. I chose Saturday and had a lot of fun binging on the item on the Friday night beforehand.
3. As you quit each item you will stay quit of it until the end of the proscribed fifty-two weeks, and I'd say beyond that for most items.
4. Read the chapter for each week in advance of Liberation Day so that you can take any actions you need to prepare, such as stocking up on replacements. This will also prepare you for the extraction plan and any withdrawal symptom remedies, if applicable.
5. Stick to the schedule religiously, so that quitting these consumables becomes a habit in itself.

6. Every chapter represents one week and one item that you will stop consuming. Each chapter is set out in the same way. I describe precisely what it is, how much we earthlings consume of it, why we consume it, why it is bad for us and the planet, and finally I detail the cleanse itself. The cleanse covers extraction methods, replacements, and the benefits to you and the planet.
7. At the end of each chapter is a dashboard that details the actions that need to be taken before and during the week in question. I also include a menu of what to eat and what not to eat.

Throughout the course of your reducing your consumption you are no doubt going to have ‘blowouts’, by which I mean you might not be able to help yourself. This is fine. It’s bound to happen. The main thing to ensure is that the blowout is contained. Don’t let it go beyond that day, and don’t let it spread to other categories. It may even be beneficial, as with me and coffee, an item in the cleanse.

I recall a particular day when I had been overly ambitious about how much red wine I could drink the night before. I convinced myself that I needed a coffee. I did not need that coffee. After one single espresso (I used to drink five double espressos every day.), I found myself with cold sweats, visibly shaking, my stomach turning, and in a very nervous disposition. I felt awful. It actually vindicated my decision to quit coffee. So if you do have a blowout, pay attention to

how it makes you feel; chances are it won't feel that great, and it will only strengthen your resolve.

Section 2 - The Consumption Cleanse: Food

WEEK 1 - REFINED SUGAR AND ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS

“Sugar is the next tobacco, without a doubt, and that industry should be scared. It should be taxed just like tobacco and anything else that can, frankly, destroy lives.”

— Jamie Oliver

What white powdery drug with worldwide distribution is behind mass addiction and directly and indirectly related to 8 million deaths globally per year? You guessed it: sugar.

Allow me to set the record straight. Sugar itself is not evil. It occurs naturally in many foods. It is adding excess sugar to your dietary intake that is the problem. It's not that medical folks out there are saying that a teaspoon of sugar will strike you down mercilessly in the street, but there is a growing body of research that demonstrates the connection between sugar and obesity. Obesity all by itself isn't a major killer, but heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers (endometrial, breast, colon, kidney, gallbladder, and liver) are, and they are often caused by obesity. On top of that, sugar ingestion can lead to heart disease and diabetes even in people with healthy weights. From many sources, I know that the worldwide deaths from these conditions in 2012 were 23.3 million, including heart disease at 17 million, of which 23% can be attributed to obesity; diabetes at 1.5 million, of which 44% can be attributed to obesity; certain cancers at 2 million, of which between 7% and 41% can be attributed to obesity; and obesity itself 2.8 million.² There you have your yearly 8 million deaths from excessive consumption of the crack cocaine of the sweetener world.

WHAT ARE REFINED AND ARTIFICIAL SUGARS?

Stuff just tastes better when it has some sweetness in it. The issues are what we should avoid and what we should use to get this effect while not killing ourselves to get it.

This chapter concerns the adding of sugar and artificial sweeteners to your food and drinks. Because sugar is such a monster topic, food and drinks manufactured with added sugar such as soda and confectionery are covered in separate chapters.

So let's look at added sugar first. Whether it is raw (cane sugar), white, or brown sugar, all sugar is processed or refined to some degree. To make raw sugar, machines juice the sugar cane, and to that juice lime is added to achieve the desired ph. balance and to rid the resulting liquid of impurities. This is then evaporated and passed through a centrifuge to get sugar crystals, which are then dried further to get the light brown substance known as raw sugar.

To make white sugar, sulphur dioxide is added to bleach the cane juice prior to evaporation. Phosphoric acid, calcium hydroxide, or carbon dioxide is used to remove the impurities from the result, which is then passed through a carbon filter before being crystallised in a vacuum. This is then left to evaporate to get white 'table sugar'. Sounds appetising, doesn't it?

Brown sugar, I was surprised to discover, is even more processed than table sugar. It is, in fact, table sugar mixed with molasses. Inviting molasses to the party does mean that brown sugar contains more nutritional value than white sugar, and so it could be said that it is healthier. But it is akin to saying poking your eye out with a hot iron is okay for you as long as you rub aloe vera on it afterwards. Brown sugar is a source of minimal dietary potassium, calcium,

magnesium, and B vitamins but has all of the same negative health effects as table sugar.

In terms of nutritional value, calories, and your body's metabolism, there is no meaningful difference between these types of sugars. But if you simply must eat sugar—though hopefully you won't after reading this—choose raw sugar as it involves fewer processing steps, consumes less energy, uses fewer resources and chemicals, and produces less waste. Surprisingly, brown sugar is the worst choice because it is more processed than white sugar.

Concerning artificial (sugar free) sweeteners, there is a veritable cornucopia of products, all of which should be avoided: Aspartame (Equal, Splenda, and Nutrasweet), acesulfame potassium (Sunett, Ace K), and saccharin (Sweet 'N Low).

The third category of sweetener after sugar and artificial sweeteners is 'natural alternatives', which are not associated with the many negative health effects, including death, like the first two are. These can continue to be consumed in moderation. This category includes raw honey, blackstrap molasses, pure maple syrup, cinnamon (sugar free), stevia (sugar free), and Xylitol (sugar free).

HOW MUCH DO WE CONSUME AND WHY?

Our love for sugar may not at first appear to herald the end of life as we know it, but, in fact, it does bring us closer to that end a lot faster. It has been progressively sneaking its way into our diet so much so that it is now added into 80% of the food sold in supermarkets.³ It is appearing in increasing amounts and causing a devastating amount of disease and death such that it has overtaken tobacco as a leading cause of death.

Supermarkets are the dealers of the sugar cartels. There is so little healthy sugar free food in supermarkets that it usually takes up less than one aisle and is even labelled for you as ‘health food’. For consistency, I’d like to see the other twenty-three and a half aisles labelled ‘unhealthy food’.

We are consuming way more sugar than we need. It is delivering abundant human and planetary misery for absolutely no gain whatsoever, given that it has zero nutritional value. “Americans currently consume 22 teaspoons of sugar per day,” says Bethany Doerfler, RD, LDN, and a clinical research dietician at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago. That’s more than three times as much as what’s recommended by the American Heart Association. As for children, the number is actually higher at 32 teaspoons per day. And it is getting worse. In 1900 the United States consumed about five

pounds of sugar per person, per year. This skyrocketed to 150 pounds per person by 2000.

The World Health Organisation puts the safe amount of sugar in a healthy diet at no more than 10%, whereas the US sugar industry has claimed that 25% of our diet can safely consist of sugar—a disagreement with an obvious agenda. Companies selling sugary junk know that we drool over sweet stuff, they know how addictive it is, and they know that sugar actually makes consumers consume more (the physiological explanation will come later). It's a win-win for these companies, and it is a lose-lose for people and for the earth. It is an unnecessary consumable that chews up global resources in its growing, processing, marketing, selling, eating, and finally in the health care required to deal with its effects.

If this poison is so bad for us, why are we consuming so damn much of it? The answer is that sugar is addictive. When we consume sugar, dopamine is released into the brain to invoke pleasure. The addict, once hooked, embarks upon the road to obesity and towards a plethora of other health problems. Cravings are real, and because sugar is the crack cocaine of the sweetener world, when we add it to our food and drinks, we need *more*. “Studies are showing that in some people and animals, the brain can react to sugar very much like it can to drugs and alcohol,” Doerfler says. That’s why when you cut added sugars from your diet, you might feel deprived for a few days.

Joel Fuhrman, author of *The End of Dieting*, says, “When your body is overloaded with waste, you feel more uncomfortable when not eating that food. It’s like stopping coffee.”

As for sugar’s chemical compadre, we consume artificial sweeteners because they have the same sweetness we are addicted to and we think that this is a safe way to get our fix. It is not. It is the equivalent of thinking that your addiction is resolved by coming off heroin and jumping on morphine. The important thing to note is that while artificial sweeteners are not sugar and hence have different effects on the body while avoiding some of the negative impacts of sugar, artificial sweeteners come with a whole new raft of health issues.

WHY ARE REFINED AND ARTIFICIAL SUGARS BAD?

Other than its unbeatable addictive qualities, limited nutritional value, and vast swathes of earth that are cleared in order to grow it, why is sugar so bad for us?

First, it is important to note that glucose is actually required by our brains and cells to function. Lactose is primarily in dairy, including mothers’ milk, so it follows that this also is required by the body, particularly young bodies. Sucrose, which is half glucose and half fructose, is what makes our food sweet. The primary reason why

added sugars are so bad for you is that they contain a large quantity of fructose.

Glucose is essential and can be metabolised by pretty much every cell in the body. If we don't get it from the diet, our bodies make it from proteins and fat. Fructose, however, is not essential to our functioning in any way. Fructose is bad. The only organ that can metabolise fructose is the liver. When large amounts of fructose enter the liver and it is already full of glycogen, most of the fructose gets turned into fat. Some of the fat gets shipped out, but part of it remains in the liver. The fat can build up over time and ultimately lead to non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. This process is the leading cause of obesity, which can lead to diabetes and other related ailments such as high blood pressure and cholesterol. Fructose is present in fruit, but in small quantities and accompanied by plenty of vitamins, minerals, fibre, and water. Also, because it's not easy to overindulge in fruit, fructose from fruit is excluded from this discourse.

Here are the leading reasons you might consider to motivate you to get off refined sugar.⁴

1. **Known cause of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.**
(See above)
2. **Known cause of insulin resistance leading to obesity and type 2 diabetes.** (See above)

3. **Known cause of leptin (hormone) resistance.** Leptin is secreted by our fat cells. The fatter we are the more leptin is secreted. Leptin is supposed to tell the brain we are full and to stop eating. In obese individuals, the response to leptin isn't working right (leptin resistance), so the tendency is to eat more calories than needed. Willpower is no match for a leptin-based starvation signal. To reverse leptin resistance, sugar consumption has to stop.
4. **Known cause of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.** Sugar raises bad cholesterol and triglycerides and causes various other issues that can ultimately lead to heart disease.
5. **No vitamins or minerals.** Sugar contains only empty calories. Eating high-sugar foods that contain very little nutrients instead of more nutritious foods will likely result in deficiencies of those nutrients.
6. **Not a cause of proper satiety.** Studies show that fructose does not cause satiety like glucose does, which contributes to a higher calorie intake.⁵
7. **Bad choice of land use.** According to *Sistah Vegan*:

It is 2009, and sugar consumption continues to increase globally. Sucrose is a toxin and has no nutritional value to the human body. Isn't that a little strange? Particularly, since sugar cane is grown upon thousands of acres of land to produce sucrose. Eight hundred and thirty million people in the world are undernourished, and 791 million of them live in so-

called developing countries. Hence, what nourishing foods could these acres potentially grow if (a) sugar cane were no longer in high demand from the US (as well as the rest of the top consumers: Brazil, Australia, and the EU) and (b) the land was used specifically to grow nourishing foods for the population in the global South?⁶

As for artificial sweeteners, studies have linked artificial sweeteners to migraines, cancerous tumours, anxiety, and even weight gain amongst other ailments. The June 2010 issue of the *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine* states that aspartame, acesulfame potassium, and saccharin increase your desire to eat more.

I must confess that from my research, while some tests have been shown to be conclusive in rats, I have been unable to find any conclusive tests that have widespread acceptance about the negative effects of artificial sweeteners on humans. But given that artificial sweeteners are relatively new to the human diet, unless you are drawn to games such as Russian roulette, leave them out of your diet.

THE CLEANSE

Now that the damage that can be caused by sugar and artificial sweeteners has been exposed, the name of the game is to axe sugar from your diet. Because of sugar's drug-like behaviour in the human

body, kicking the habit is not as straightforward as simply taking everything in moderation. Alcoholics cannot just have one drink. Cocaine fiends cannot do just one line. The only way to handle such a true physiological addiction is the cold turkey approach. But you won't have to white-knuckle it because if you follow these suggestions, you will be able to reset your body's neurotransmitters and hormones and the sugar-free step will be as painless as possible.

I found this week to be relatively easy as I had not added refined sugar to my homemade food and drinks for some time. It is when I am eating out that I have to be on guard. I didn't realise how common place it was for cafés and restaurants to add sugar to their products, particularly to beverages. I find myself now asking wait staff to please not add sugar to smoothies and juices, for instance. Be alert. Sugar agents are everywhere.

1. **Start the day with protein.** Eat protein at every meal, particularly breakfast, to balance blood sugar and insulin and cut cravings. Eat organic, free-range eggs and protein shakes. Include nuts, seeds, lentils, other high-protein vegetables and fish in moderation in your meals.
2. **Eat plenty of vegetables.** Eat many non-starchy veggies including but not limited to greens, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, collards, asparagus, green beans, mushrooms, onions, zucchini, tomatoes, fennel, eggplant, artichokes, and peppers. Leave out potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash, beets, grains, and beans initially on account of their high

carbohydrate content. This will expedite the withdrawal process. After two weeks you will have lost weight and be feeling great. At this time you can slowly re-introduce those excluded vegetables.

3. **Eat lots of good fats.** Along with protein, eat plenty of good fats at every meal to balance your blood sugar and fuel your cells. Good fats are found in nuts, seeds, extra virgin olive oil, coconut butter, coconut oil, and avocados, and there are omega-3 fats in certain fish (subject to the subsequent chapter on seafood).
4. **Pack healthy snacks.** Whether you're at home, at work, or on the road, keep ration packs of healthy snacks on hand to dig into when you feel the need to consume sugar. Snacks can include any of the ingredients mentioned above. This can be something as simple as a trail mix of nuts and seeds that you can graze on instead of snack food at airports, fish jerky that you can whip out when you are drawn to a confectionery machine, canned fish or oysters that you can unpeel at a moment's notice, and any other favourite made from protein, good carbs, and fats.
5. **Avoid inflammation.** Studies show that inflammation triggers blood sugar imbalances, insulin resistance, pre-diabetes, and type 2 diabetes. The most common source of inflammatory foods other than sugar, flour, and trans fats are hidden food sensitivities, most commonly gluten and dairy. Stay away from gluten for the same two weeks as with the excluded vegetables above. You'll notice a difference in

you energy levels and cravings, and if you have symptoms of intolerance, they should disappear in this time as well. Note that subsequent chapters deal more comprehensively with gluten and dairy.

6. **Get enough sleep.** Not getting sufficient sleep causes sugar and carbohydrate cravings by affecting your appetite hormones. Studies have shown that humans deprived of two hours of the recommended eight hours of sleep per night experienced increases in hunger hormones, decreases in appetite-suppressing hormones, and increases in cravings for sugar and refined carbohydrates.
7. **Use natural alternatives.** When something absolutely, positively needs to be made sweeter, use one of the natural alternatives to sugar. When you have a choice between something sweetened with processed sugar and something sweetened by a natural alternative, choose the latter.

There is no need to add refined sugar and artificial sweeteners in your food and beverages when there are loads of natural alternatives. Natural alternatives deliver the sweetness that you seek and add their unique flavour and health benefits.

1. **Raw honey.** Raw honey is packed full of flavonoids and antioxidants that reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers along with vitamins, minerals, and enzymes that

help boost your immune system and protect your body from bacteria. Honey also has a low hypoglycaemic index that will help reduce blood sugar spikes. Generally speaking, the most nutrient-dense honeys are the darker varieties.

2. **Blackstrap molasses.** Molasses is a by-product of sugarcane processing and contains high levels of iron, calcium, copper, and manganese. It has a toasty, slightly bitter flavour and high levels of antioxidants.
3. **Pure maple syrup.** Packed full of polyphenols, a plant-based compound that works as an antioxidant, maple syrup also helps with muscle recovery because it is a source of manganese, a mineral used in the muscle recovery process. It also contains zinc, iron, calcium, and potassium and is a great alternative to use for baking.
4. **Cinnamon (sugar free).** My personal favourite, cinnamon is not only plant based and completely sugar free, it also tastes great. You can use cinnamon sticks or powder, but be wary of some cinnamon powders as they are blended with refined sugar. Can you believe sugar has even infiltrated its own alternatives? Cinnamon helps to reduce sugar cravings by controlling blood glucose levels by minimising insulin spikes after meals. It has also been shown to lower LDL-cholesterol and triglyceride blood levels. Ceylon cinnamon is the true form of cinnamon, and it is widely considered the best for blood sugar control and losing weight.

5. **Stevia (sugar free).** Stevia is a sweet-tasting natural herb commonly used in tea, coffee, and desserts. This natural sweetener extracted from the leaves of the stevia plant contains several nutrients including phosphorus, calcium, proteins, vitamins, magnesium, zinc, and sodium. Make sure your stevia product does not contain maltodextrin, dextrose, or any other sugar derivative.
6. **Xylitol (sugar free).** Sugar alcohols such as xylitol, sorbitol, and erythritol are natural sweeteners that contain fewer calories than refined sugar, about two calories per gram on average. Refined sugar contains four calories per gram. While sugar alcohols can raise your blood sugar level, they won't affect your blood sugar as much as other sugars because your body doesn't completely absorb sugar alcohols. The Mayo Clinic warns that when eaten in large amounts, typically more than 50 grams, they can have a laxative effect.

Coconut palm sugar or syrup, a common natural alternative, is not included in this list due to environmental concerns. Once the sap is extracted for its sugar, the plant does not produce coconuts anymore. For coconut production to remain the same, it would be necessary to cultivate more land or reduce coconut consumption to obtain more coconut palm sugar.

Also avoid sweeteners derived from palm oil. Living in Indonesia has opened my eyes to the massive devastation to the forests and its

inhabitants at the hands of the rapid expansion of palm oil plantations.

Giving up sugar and artificial sweeteners must surely be compelling by this point. Other than there being less likelihood of collecting any number of the ailments mentioned above, the advantages below are just your icing (sugar-free of course) on the cake.

1. **You'll stop wanting sugar.** Once you have removed processed sugar from your diet and resolved your addiction, you will gradually lose the desire to eat anything with processed sugar in it. When you do, the blood sugar spike and subsequent comedown will reinforce why you decided to stop consuming it.
2. **You will consume less.** When sugar is taken out of your diet, for the reasons explained above, you will consume less, and the earth will thank you.
3. **Your energy will increase.** We tend to think that sugar-filled foods such as energy drinks are what we need to boost energy, but in fact sugar blocks your body's ability to keep your energy levels optimised. Without this sugar you would have a higher energy level naturally without the steep peaks and troughs in your blood sugar levels causing you to crash once the effects of the sugar rush wear off.

4. **You will lose weight.** Sugar and sugary food make you crave more of whatever it is in, which often is high in carbohydrates, processed or junk food, and drink. On top of sugar, these poor excuses for food probably have loads of other ingredients that are not good for you. By walking away from sugar you won't need to deal with all of those extra calories; you will feel less hungry and will almost certainly shed excess weight.
5. **Your gut will function more efficiently.** By eliminating processed sugar you are allowing your stomach and bowels (and other internal organs) to behave more naturally when processing what you have eaten. In one recent study sugar was shown to promote the growth of bad gut bacteria.⁷
6. **Your skin will look better.** Sugar may be affecting your skin from the inside. Many people report that their skin looks and feels healthier after they have quit sugar.

As my only sugar eradication effort involved times when I was eating and drinking out, this week did not pose much of a challenge for me, but it did feel satisfying to know that I was finally a hard-line anti-sugar preacher. Things were a bit tougher quitting confectionery, as covered in a later chapter.

One thing I did not expect was how much I could taste the ingredients in my smoothies and juices. Sugar had been homogenising them to such a degree that now I found myself

choosing different ingredients because the old ones didn't taste like I thought they did.

ACTIONS

- Watch Damon Gameau's, *That Sugar Film*

<http://www.thatstagram.com/film>.

- Stock up on sugar replacements so your sweet tooth has fewer options.

- Quit adding refined sugar to food and drinks on Liberation Day.

- Save yourself from a life full of sugar-related health issues.

MENU

Do Eat	Eat in Moderation	Eat If You Must	Do Not Eat
Cinnamon, Stevia	Raw Honey, Blackstrap Molasses, Pure Maple Syrup & Xylitol	Coconut Palm Sugar or Syrup	Raw (Cane), White or Brown Sugar Artificial Sweeteners Sweeteners Derived from Palm Oil

-
- ¹ William Rees. University of British Columbia. Retrieved from <http://www.globalissues.org/article/238/effects-of-consumerism>.
- ² European Association for the Study of Obesity. "Obesity Facts and Figures." Retrieved from <http://easo.org/education-portal/obesity-facts-figures>; World Health Organization. "Global Health Authority (GHO) Data." Retrieved from http://www.who.int/gho/ncd/mortality_morbidity/cvd/en; World Health Organization. "The Top 10 Causes of Death." Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs310/en>.
- ³ Damon Gameau. *That Sugar Film*. Retrieved from <http://www.thatugarfilm.com/film>.
- ⁴ Kris Gunnars. "Top 10 Reasons to Avoid Sugar as If Your Life Depended on It." Retrieved from <http://authoritynutrition.com/9-reasons-to-avoid-sugar>.
- ⁵ Monell Chemical Senses Center, University of Pennsylvania. "Dietary Fructose Reduces Circulating Insulin and Leptin, Attenuates Postprandial Suppression of Ghrelin, and Increases Triglycerides in Women. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15181085>; Yale University School of Medicine. "Effects of Fructose vs. Glucose on Regional Cerebral Blood Flow in Brain Regions Involved with Appetite and Reward Pathways." Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23280226>.
- ⁶ A. Breeze Harper. *Sistah Vegan*. New York, NY: Lantern Books, 2010, p. 24.
- ⁷ Brown, K. et al. "Diet-Induced Dysbiosis of the Intestinal Microbiota and the Effects on Immunity and Disease." *Nutrients*. 4(8).