

## MARK SISSON INTERVIEW

### **How/By who did you first discover the paleo-principles? Did you instantly recognize them as an evidence?**

My first formal exposure to the paleo diet and fitness principles was through Art Devany's writing, but I was talking about evolution and adaptation in my book *Training and Racing Duathlons* in 1989. Opening paragraph, first two lines:

“The human body is the product of evolution. It is a survival machine resulting from millions of positively selected random mutations taking place over millions of years.”

As a former biology major with a real interest in human evolution, fitness, and diet, thinking about health in evolutionary terms was a no-brainer. Art's stuff, plus my own ideas about evolution and my experiences with chronic cardio and conventionally *healthy* dieting, started me on the path toward [the Primal Blueprint](#) (affiliate link).

### **How long did you follow the lifestyle you promote on [Mark's Daily Apple](#)? What was your main problems in implementing it?**

I've been eating, moving, and living this way for over ten years now. Giving up grains eleven years ago was the final *epiphany* that changed my life forever.

Honestly, I didn't have any real problems implementing it. To get more sun, eat more animals and plants, to cut back on the workouts - these were easy, effortless changes. Everything felt right and natural from the very start. The hardest thing was dealing with my family, I suppose. My wife was a vegetarian and my son is a vegetarian. I managed to convince her to start eating fish and shellfish, but have thus far made zero headway with my son. That's okay. I still love him!

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### **What benefits does it bring to you over extended period of time?**

It's made my life easier. I don't have to worry about missed workouts. I don't count calories. I don't worry about skipping a meal (or three). Rather than changing my life around to fit my training schedule, now I train to make my life more enjoyable. I'm free to do the things I like to do, rather than worry about the things I think I have to do.

Most of all, though, it's made me realize the importance of taking it easy, relaxing, and playing. I've learned how to let go of my hyper-competitive ways, and now I'm able to simply live in the moment and enjoy what life has to offer. The purpose of life is not to work.

### **What is for you the ideal macronutrient proportion, in percents, if you have to resume the diet you promote in this terms?**

I think that depends on a lot of things, especially your activity level. If you're a regular guy who lifts weights a couple times per week, goes for walks or hikes, and doesn't kill himself in the gym or on the track, a 50/30/20 ( $\pm 5\%$ ) split between fat, protein, and carbs should work fine.

If you're a Crossfitter or a mixed martial artist or total gym-rat, you might want to bump up the carbs to 30 or 40% (from sweet potatoes and other tubers) and drop the fat a bit, but only if you need those carbs for energy and recovery. But these are not hard and fast rules.

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### **What would you say to a chronic cardio guy to convince him that it's not the long-term way to go?**

Chronic cardio increases the cortisol:testosterone ratio. That means less lean mass, more abdominal fat, and worse recovery - the classic skinny-fat look that so many endurance athletes have. Chronic cardio induces systemic inflammation. Your body never quite recovers from all the miles, especially if you're putting in several long runs each week.

Acute inflammation is the normal response to exercise, but if your exercise is chronic, your inflammation will be chronic, too. Chronic inflammation is at the root of many (if not most) major diseases like heart disease and cancer. Chronic cardio makes you dependent on cheap carbs for energy.

Back in the day when I was running every day, I needed cheap refined carbohydrates (like bread and ice cream) to power my runs. Nowadays, I can go for a run and power myself purely using fat (both dietary and body). Chronic cardio is inefficient. Whether you're trying to burn body fat, improve athleticism, or simply get healthier, high intensity intervals, sprints, walking, and weightlifting are all superior to chronic cardio.

Oh, yeah: chronic cardio is also boring, grueling, and unpleasant. Who wants that? If you're running enough to make you hate it, you're running too much. Take it from someone who's been there, dude: it's not worth the pain!

### **Isn't better to rotate nutrient-dense food, such as offals, etc, than complete on a daily basis a diet with supplement? In which case do you strongly recommend supplements?**

In a perfect world, we'd be able to get all our required nutrients through food. It may be possible; I'm not totally sure. But for the majority of people, even those who stay on top of

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nutritional science, food just isn't what it used to be. At least in the US, soils are depleted of many minerals, making the actual levels in food far lower than the nutrient databases indicate.

Most people are eating store bought eggs from hens living in squalid conditions eating corn and soy, old produce that's been sitting on a truck or in a fridge for weeks, and meat from factory-farmed animals on an unnatural diet. Supplements are just an easy way to make sure you're getting the nutrients your food might be missing.

Furthermore, life is simply more stressful than it used to be. From work to money to traffic to politics stressing us out, to plastics leaching xenoestrogens and heavy metals in our oceans, we have to deal with a very different, far more toxic environment than our ancestors (even our recent ancestors). Smart supplementation can help us deal with these evolutionary discordant conditions.

**If you had to provide a very powerful single advice to Primal Alpha readers to improve their health, what will it be?**

Play more. Since you're a [Primal Alpha](#) reader, you're likely already avoiding grains, seed oils, sugars, and getting regular smart exercise, but I think everyone could use a lot more in their lives. Be in the moment, laugh, climb things, and look silly doing it. It's good for you.