



The Evolution of The Naturally Intense Dietary System

By Kevin Richardson, Founder Naturally Intense System of Diet & Exercise™

*"Most of the change we think we see in life is due to truths being in and out of favor."
-Robert Frost*

In the quest to achieve the perfect meld of body, performance and overall health man has done perhaps too much. The line up of ideas and products are endless, from fad diets, and exercise trends to so-called cutting edge supplementation supposedly designed to take the human body above and beyond what it would be able to achieve on its own. They are all testaments to the intellectual capacity of our species, and equally the venal desire to make a profit, since it all translates into multi-billion dollar industries. The problem is that for all the theories and pseudo science that the media and advertisers promote, there is little that has any real bearing on the long term ability to get into optimal physical (*and spiritual*) shape. The real answers to the question of getting into shape are far simpler than many would assume. A simplicity that is hard to profit from and so it is a simplicity that is often stifled. However as the Zen koan goes, *"A man goes out with a lighted torch looking for fire to cook his rice. Had he understood what fire was, he would have eaten much sooner."*

This I believe is the case when it comes to the nutritional side of the bodybuilding and fitness lifestyle. I too have been enticed by the idea of creating a new and innovative idea that would revolutionize my own progress by spending years learning everything that I possibly could about sports nutrition, and in so doing I did learn a lot, however it lead me away from as opposed to towards where I think I should have been going in the first place.

How I came to eat as I do now, and how I advocate for the hundreds of successful clients that I have trained and advised over the course of my career, came as a direct result of my own successes and failures. Always curious and never satisfied with what I perceive as second hand information I learned that certain food combinations worked well to get my body into optimal shape while increasing my overall strength and energy levels. Taking my own improvements into consideration, I adapted those same principles to others. In retrospect I am fortunate, in that I was able to work with so many people and really observe how certain combinations of diet and exercise manifested themselves on a wide variety of individuals and body types. What was even more of a blessing was the realization that the principles worked in every single case for those that applied them.

In spite of the successes that I and those under my instruction were having, there was a point in time that really qualified as a *eureka* moment- where everything really began to make sense. On March 31st 2005, I started a strict diet to get ready for a photo shoot that was supposed to be done in May, the shoot ended up being pushed back to late October and I was able to maintain my body fat percentages in the low single digits for the entire time. What was more startling was that I continued getting bigger, more defined and stronger the longer that I stayed on my diet. You don't expect to see that much in terms of gaining quality muscle size and strength eighteen years into your career, but it was happening. The diet itself was by all means unorthodox. I had to maintain an incredible degree of muscularity for a long period of time and so my approach and planning had to be one that was very much 'out of the box'. I applied what I had learned during the two months of filming for my DVD, where I had to stay in shape for a prolonged period of time while still being as strong if not stronger than I ever was in my off season.

Without any regard for convention I focused only on what I knew worked. After the shoot I made a monumental decision, not to come off of my diet; and I have not done so to this day.

It sounded like I was going to place my health at risk by staying strict, but the reality was that I always placed my health over any cosmetic gain, and everything that I was doing was very much healthy, in fact health was and remains the key. I had found a way to naturally and safely reduce my body fat levels while still increasing my overall muscle mass and maximizing my performance and well being. I didn't feel the fatigue and listlessness that usually accompanies having your body fat at 5% or under. On the contrary it seemed very much to allow me to easily keep up with my overwhelmingly busy work schedule.

This spring marked my first year on my diet, with no breaks whatsoever. No changes for Thanksgiving nor Christmas and none looming ahead in the future either. Everyone has always believed that if you stayed on a 'strict' diet with no breaks for the occasional 'treat' that somehow it would have a negative impact on your health and the way you looked. Not only would it be bad for your health, I was told, but also no one could sustain the willpower needed to indefinitely monitor their daily food intake with no cheating allowed at any time.

I look back to the times in our collective past when everyone believed that the world was square, not out of experiential or scientific rationale, but simply out of a fear of venturing out into what appears to be difficult and unknown. However, the strides that we as a people have made always come when some are brave enough to challenge the horizon, and in a very real way that is what it took for me to realize that it is indeed possible to stay on your diet indefinitely and that there is a whole uncharted wealth that awaits those that are courageous enough to venture there as well.

The diet itself is one that takes into consideration the every human biochemical needs. There are fifty essential nutrients that are required for growth, maintenance, and repair of the body. These substances are divided into six categories, namely proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water.¹ Intake of each class of food is precisely regulated so as to prevent any deficiencies and so there is never any danger whatsoever of any ill effects from eating in this manner for prolonged periods of time, since there are no deprivations nor excesses.

In essence, the most effective diet for getting into shape and the one that I follow is a reversion to the past instead of a reliance on the present or any futuristic trend. The macronutrient (with regard to total dietary energy) breakdown of 40-45% carbohydrates, 20-25% fats and a variation of between 35-40% protein [*The variations reflect daily compensations based on activity and recuperation*] may sounds somewhat extreme and away from the contemporary food pyramid theories, but stands firmly as the end result of long years of trial and error. Most importantly, it is what I have found to work best, not just for me, but for others as well. Ironically, this is similar in both content and ratio to the diets that studies show our ancestors followed for the better part of our relatively short existence as homo sapiens.

During the Paleolithic Period, from about 2 million to 15 000 years ago, the human species made its greatest strides in term of physical and mental development with a diet high in protein and fats coming from a wide variety of sources with a moderate amount of carbohydrates. It makes sense thus, to look to the ways of that period if you are interested in maximizing your potential. According to research gleaned from fossilized fecal matter from that era (called coprolites), scientists were able to report that humans ate a diet of almost 34% protein (which is significantly more protein than is consumed in today's average Western diet) and from various animal sources. Fats made up 21% of the dietary energy intake while carbohydrates made up approximately 45%.² Sound familiar? It should!

The foods eaten by humans (I dislike the term 'man' in reference to us as a species) at this extraordinary period of our development were also the foods that make up the foundation of what is today considered 'clean eating'. While cereals and grains were not yet part of the diet, neither were foods such as alcohol, salt, sugar, pastries, cookies, dairy products and the like. Absent from the diet is all of the processed foods, foods that would not be a part of the human diet were it not for the Industrial Revolution and the mass production of refined foods to feed the ever growing population centers.

Now while many naturalists advocate the Paleolithic Diet in its entirety, I do not. Nor do I subscribe to the idea that we need to totally abandon modern life in order to live optimal lives in terms of health and fitness. Such a proclamation would be absolutely absurd. There are many advantages to modern living that do much to increase our lives and level of health, modern sanitation and hygienic measures, shelter and protection from harsh climatic extremes and physical trauma. Professional medical care, the elimination of the stresses of a nomadic lifestyle and protection from seasonal nutritional deprivation thanks to the modern food system that we enjoy in the western world are all true advances and play large roles in our **potential** health and longevity. That being said these advances have proven to be in many ways our downfall as well, but if used in conjunction with a way of life that takes focus more towards our needs as opposed to our wants, we can then live lives that are truly enhanced.

The basic diet itself, which forms the basis of my diet and the Naturally Intense System comprises of :

- ***Meat of all kinds, red meat included, chicken and fish (bones and organ meat included)***
- ***Eggs***
- ***Fruit (whole fruit of different kinds eaten in moderate amounts)***
- ***Vegetables (although not in extremely large quantities)***
- ***Nuts***
- ***Select cereals such as old fashioned oats***
- ***Grains such as rice but excluding modern processed incarnations of whole grain breads, pasta and cereals.***

All of these foods are eaten with regard given to individual energy requirements, requirements that can change on a daily basis.

Historically, grains and cereals such as rice and oatmeal did not exist during the Paleolithic era, but I do believe in their value in as long as they are consumed in very moderate quantities. While arguments exist that humans should shun any food that came after the dawn of the agricultural age some 10,000 years ago, my response is that if evolution is to be taken as a valid theory, then there is no reason why

the process would have stopped. That being said humans have been eating grains since the beginning of the Neolithic period when humans began harnessing fire. These foods were added to our diets without any increase in dietary induced diseases which stands in stark contrast to the pandemics that have recently arisen as a result of refined foods produced for the first time during the period of the Industrial Revolution.

Microevolution- an adaptation over a relatively short period of time is a reality, and the introduction of grain and cereals to our diet is a logical one that has existed for several thousand years. They enhance the diet when used judiciously, however the more processed grains do not fall into this category. There will never be a time when the human body adapts to trans fats, high sugar and low fiber foods, however foods such as oatmeal, rice and the like have proven themselves over centuries as being of value. On a diet to maximize muscle and decrease body fat, they are invaluable aids, as are potatoes and other ground provisions.

Now I will concede that it is a challenge to eat in this manner at all times, but it isn't impossible. From a health perspective, being able to maintain your weight through proper diet for your entire life, without the ups and downs and the consumption of foods that are inherently unnatural to the human diet is far better than working hard to get your weight down only to have it go up again at the end of your period of dieting and the resumption in eating processed foods. Research has shown that losing weight then regaining it increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, weakens the immune system and may be a factor in osteoporosis. Cycling your weight up and down can also be a trigger for psychological pathologies as well such as eating disorders and depression.^{3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10} It does not matter how good you look, what is important is the ability to maintain a healthy level of conditioning at all times, something that very few in the fitness field ever consider.

Now one might also argue academically against the validity of such a long term approach, citing a need of some sort for foods filled with trans fats and preservatives as a necessary treat. However it is hard to argue with increased performance, strength, endurance, muscle mass and mental acuity. That the fact that you end up looking like you belong on the cover of a magazine is a very solid counter argument. Very subjective analyses, I agree, but it is difficult to dispute my success and the successes of the many that have followed this path.

Important also is that eating in this fashion requires a divorce of sorts from the narcissistic incentive to look good at all costs. Narcissism is usually the primary motivational factor for people to get into shape. It isn't their health as much as it is that they are unhappy with the way they look, or believe that they do not look good enough in the eyes of others. The bodybuilding and fitness/figure world as a whole is founded on this obsession with body image just as much as the general public tends to be, but the reality is that it is very unlikely that anyone with this thought process could sustain such a long term diet, as the ability to remain steadfast in this manner of eating comes not as a concern for the cosmetic, from a sincere sense of caring for one's inner being.

The human body cannot be quantified only by what can be seen. There is a spiritual dimension to as well, and the pursuit of health has to encompass and make considerations that allow for spiritual growth as well as physical. If you remain focused only on how small you can get your waist to be, or how muscular your arms are, then there is little stopping you from eating in a way that may be harmful to your body in the long term, nor is there anything stopping you from using either legal or illegal substances to realize your goal. There is no questioning how much damage the diet pill or anabolic steroid will do to your body, only the push towards the attainment of a certain look. Sadly, the reality is

that the look will always be fleeting, and as a person it is difficult to grow if you are fixated on something as inconsequential as how many abdominal muscles you can count on your stomach.

Narcissism should be if anything a transient occurrence, one that can lead to something positive if the individual is able to learn to take care of their body out of a real place of self love, and not conceit. To do so requires a focus on taking care of the self. You do end up in terrific shape, but that is merely an outer sign of an inner health, which is the way it should be.

The accepted Western diet is a failure and any affirmation that it is occasionally acceptable to ingest foods that are known to not be good for you is a tragic lack of self control and self reliance. Society looks down on those that use illegal drugs or smoke cigarettes, saying that it is never right to knowingly poison your body, while at the same time maintaining that a little bit of the very foods that we know to be responsible for everything from cardiovascular related diseases to diabetes are fine in moderation. This idea of moderation has been slaved to an acceptance of the absurd. Can you argue for the use of poisons in moderation? Ovid said, "**Medio tutissimus ibis**" if you walk in the middle, you shall be the safest, but no rational thinker can agree that this applies to doing that which brings us harm.

Going further with today's moral and ethical standards, what makes eating fast food or drinking a soda any different from using heroin or cocaine? Social acceptable behavior doesn't make it acceptable to the human body, no matter how much we want it to be so. The communal wanting for that which is unnatural to be accepted as good has been the challenge of every civilization, and it is always in the end up to the individual to make their own decisions, based on what is, rather than what the crowd makes it out to be.

The widespread dietary induced pathologies such as heart disease, hypertension, adult onset diabetes as well as the rampant rates of obesity testify to the unnatural nature of eating foods that have no place in the human diet. The innumerable money making dietary ideas that come by every couple of months are equally unnatural and in many cases immoral, as their creators fixate on the presentation of a product that will provide them with material reward, rather than a genuine public service to help humanity. These fads come and go like the ebb and flow of the tides- but are always counterintuitive to the rational thinker- the truth however, though often paradoxical is almost instinctive and never goes out of fashion.

If you wish to spend money to following the dietary ideas a pot-bellied-self proclaimed guru or celebrity that the masses hold today in favor, then this path is not for you. Nor is this for those who would rather spend their money on potentially dangerous and unregulated untested supplements, diet pills and or anabolic steroids to achieve their goals instead of relying on the patience and consistency.

The Naturally Intense System of Diet & Exercise™ isn't a fad, nor is it one that most can expect to be able to follow right away. It takes patience, awareness and a real desire to commit to a lifestyle as opposed to a passing trend and that is what the approach exemplifies. Excelsior.

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Information contained in this article is not meant to treat, diagnose illness, nor substitute for medical counsel and is intended for purposes of information and education only. Consult your physician before modifying your diet or starting any exercise program.

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