Consumption of Processed Foods Negatively Impacts Your Health

The Unprocessed Food Challenge captures social media to raise awareness

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Summary: Too many people depend solely on calorie counting in an attempt to maintain or lose weight. Perhaps a better approach would be to change one’s diet such that they only consume natural foods and completely avoid eating processed food. We have started the “Unprocessed Food Challenge”, marketed through social media that will hopefully get people excited about getting control of their diet and health.

Video Link: https://youtu.be/-iNl-v07TsQ

The Issue: Processed Food Addiction Is Betraying Our Natural Food Instinct
People that depend solely on calorie counting in an attempt to lose weight and eat healthy may have been approaching their health goals the wrong way. Consuming fresh produce, meats, poultry and dairy and food that has only been minimally processed combined with an increase in activity/exercise would dramatically improve people’s health. It is imperative for medical, nutrition and fitness experts to rally around a realistic campaign for changing the unhealthy lifestyles that plague many Americans today. Spreading awareness about the negatives of consuming processed foods that are high in calories, fat and sodium would provide the necessary momentum to initiate changes in people’s diets. Eating healthy could actually save the thousands of dollars spent on health care from consequences affected by poor dietary habits by avoiding surgery, preventing diabetes and obesity and frequent doctor and medication expenses.

Negative Effects
Processed foods have been linked to obesity issues, cancer, diabetes, and even a rise in blood pressure (1). The high sugar content affects the insulin response system in the body and contributes to the degradation of the cardiovascular system (2). In addition, the excess sugar makes the food more addicting alongside the extra artificial ingredients found within the same processed food product (3). The type of carbohydrates present in the food make the food less calorie dense and low in important nutrients that the body actually needs yet are packed with toxic oils (4). The nature of processed foods also affects the digestion system negatively compared to when the body takes in whole foods. Lastly, carcinogenic substances have been found in potato chips at alarming levels and at the expense of their consumer’s health.

High fructose corn syrup has been under heavy scrutiny in the past several years and for good reason. This refined form of fructose interacts with the body to make it consume more calories, which can lead to significant fat gain (5). The liver gets taxed for this since it is the main metabolizer for fructose. The way it is metabolized also damages the body since it is stored in the fat cells and has been linked to the rising obesity rates. Fructose found naturally in fruits should
also be limited, of course, but typically when fructose is consumed in fruit form the body would actually get important nutrients and feel more satiated as opposed to its refined form. The absorption of fructose lowers leptin concentrations, which leads to a higher intake of food (5). Plenty of junk food products contain high fructose corn syrup as well as common jars of pasta sauce used for dinner by some families. That is why it is important to check the label for its contents because this is not only found in sweets.

By design, most processed foods are engineered to stimulate the reward center in our brains (6). Their corresponding companies are more concerned with meeting revenue projections than putting out a healthy viable food product to no surprise. The issue with these products is that they usually have some combination of salt, sugar, and fat at high rates but yet the brain does not think that it is taking in any calories due to its lack of dense nutrient content (3, 6). Chips, for example, do not require much energy to breakdown since they practically dissolve in your mouth with ease. This allows the consumer to reach back into the bag for more as they don’t realize how many calories they have been taking in. An important part of this vicious cycle is opportunity cost. The dopamine does its job of inducing satisfaction when the processed food stimulates it, which discourages the consumer from eating foods that actually contain nutrients and fiber and real carbohydrates (6). Additives are also added for texture just as much as they are added for flavoring (7). Therefore, one would have to go through great lengths to convince their own body that eating less-stimulating healthier foods would actually help them feel happier in the long-term. The number of calories could really add up, especially for those that just eat out of boredom or while completing another task. Studies have shown that combining unprocessed or minimally processed foods with processed culinary ingredients actually provide more fiber and less fat while maintaining a lower energy density compared to ultra-processed foods (7).

Preservatives have been linked to cancer and other health detriments lately. Some examples are butylatedhydroxyanisole and butylatedhydrozyttoulene and the more harmful tertiary butyhydroquinone. They also affect the way people behave by manipulating the neurological system (8).

Artificial dyes may seem harmless as they are used more frequently and many believe that they only change the color of the food. In actuality they are also linked with hyperactivity and even cancer like the preservatives that accompany them. Artificial flavoring can also affect the brain’s chemistry. Diacetyl is a common butter-like flavor added to microwavable popcorn, which may increase the consumer’s chances of acquiring Alzheimer’s. Certain flavorings and additives have been linked with ADHD as well.

The reason why most of us eat processed food is not only because it is ubiquitous in our food supply, but because popular grocery chains practice a common method of controlling the center of their shopping space with processed foods with the healthier alternatives hidden on the perimeters of the store. For example, one would have to do an entire lap on the outside of the store to acquire fresh meats and produce but travel a shorter distance to purchase the addicting processed foods. Fruits and vegetables are also sometimes kept on the complete opposite side of the unprocessed meat and dairy section. The cash registers are also centered in the middle of the store furthest from the produce and meat aisles.
**Forms of Processed Food**
The extent to which a product has been processed varies among different foods (9). Foods that appear healthy superficially tend to be the least processed. For example, pre-cut vegetables that have been pre-washed and packaged are technically considered processed. The same goes for certain jars of nuts and bags of dried fruits since they were processed out of convenience for the consumer. Therefore, even if the food itself was not directly manipulated the process of how it is delivered to the consumer makes a difference. Fruits and vegetables are considered more processed if they are frozen or found in the can aisle of your supermarket. At that point, preservatives were actually added to the food itself. Eating fish is great for your diet but tuna and sardines are typically canned at the peak of their ripeness and are processed to maintain its freshness.

The worryingly high processed foods are unfortunately the ones that we see so commonly used in most of our fridges and pantries. Some examples are artificial flavorings and colors and sweeteners added to many foods (9). A lot of soda and sugary fruit juices contain these but are usually marketed as alternatives to eating actual fruits (10). Other products that contain these are certain spices and oils along with mixes for baked goods. Not only are cookies inherently unhealthy for their high sugary content but they are heavily processed for extra flavoring. Crackers are also being packed with preservative, which contribute to its high sodium content. Energy and granola bars are no exception when it comes to adding preservatives and depending on the type of cereal, you might risk running into eating a highly processed breakfast unintentionally (6, 9).

Typically the quick meals that gain popularity for being filling, delicious and easy to make are the most heavily processed foods (3). Whether it’s a frozen breakfast platter or a classic microwavable ready to eat T.V. dinner, one inherently risks obtaining type 2 diabetes and adding extra weight unhealthily (2). Often times, families rely strictly on these meals because they are cheap and save them preparation time.

**Alternatives**
Since nowadays most foods are processed even if just by the packaging, the best plan is to just minimize the extent of which your foods are processed and the quantity of processed foods in your house in total (9). If the vegetables were just pre-washed and packaged in a plastic bag in the produce aisle, chances are that not much was done to change the natural state of the product. If the vegetable is stored in a can or in a boxed dinner in the freezer in the frozen aisle, then the vegetable loses its natural beneficial property. Ideally, picking out unpackaged vegetables on display that must be picked out by hand and kept in the plastic bag provided by the store in those proximal convenient rolls is the way to go. More focus should be on ultimately eliminating foods that were chemically processed and made from refined ingredients.

Most Americans cannot escape sugar completely but there are ways to plan your sugar intake. For example, fruits are ideal for the morning time as they help kick start your day with natural energy (6). A banana would be better than a chocolate bar or sweet cereal bar since it contains fiber and protein, which slows down the rate of sugar absorption in the body (3). Other breakfast options such as oatmeal are better off purchased in their plain form so that you could add your own sugar substitute. The same would go for yogurt, which actually tastes good with natural
honey or maple syrup. Most times even the yogurts that come with fruits are not good for you since the fruit is processed to maintain its freshness. Agave is another great alternative but nonetheless, the amount of any type of sugar should be kept as low as possible. In terms of low-fat and no-fat products, chances are that they may have a higher sugar or sodium content to compensate for the lack of flavor from removing the fat. Generally it is better to eat natural healthy fats from whole foods than to eat the processed version with less fat (6).

Around lunch time is when things start to get tricky. Sandwiches are a great option for eating healthy on a monetary and even a time budget. It is important to note that the choice of bread has a profound impact on the overall quality of the sandwich. Refined grains found in white bread are significantly worse for the body than natural whole grains. Refined grains spike the insulin levels similar to how our body reacts to simple sugars while sprouted grains are slow digesting and easier to digest as they provide the body with more vitamins and nutrients. Other great options are quinoa and millet.

Cold cuts provide a quick and easy protein source to obtain and enjoy by not having to worry about cooking or preparing it at all. However, the choice of cold cuts is essential in order to prevent consuming nitrates that help preserve the meats and cheese. Vegetables such as spinach, tomatoes, and lettuce are great options for fitting inside the sandwich while broccoli and carrots are great for eating as a side to the sandwich. The idea is to stick with fresh vegetables. Usually one can distinguish such by the way it is packaged since those with added preservatives are typically in cans or bags (9, 11).

Usually one can designate one day of the week to planning their dinners for the rest of the week. Dinner is also the most difficult and time consuming meal to eat as most people are already tired after a long day of work. It’s tempting to purchase canned foods like beans and vegetables for lunch and dinner out of convenience but often times the bulk of our sodium intake derives from these food products alone. People tend to still add their own salt on top of these products since they’ve been hardwired to desire salty refined foods after previous consumption (3). Therefore, you’re better off just finding foods that contain low sodium or none added at all.

Beef and fish and chicken are great sources of protein when it comes to meat options for dinner. They are filling and packed with important nutrients that the body needs to run efficiently. In addition their delicious taste is something to look forward to. The issue comes from how the meat is processed and by which company. In terms of fish, you always want to choose wild caught fish over farm raised fish. The farm raised fish are often times forced to live in tight spaces as a means of cutting costs for the company without any regard to the increased probability of the fish catching diseases. It’s not uncommon for antibiotics to be added to their water as well. Cows and chickens also face similar living conditions under the rule of certain companies. Some companies feed their cows corn instead of grass, what nature intended for them to eat, as a move to satisfy their bottom line. Grass-fed beef is a the better meat option health-wise, as the meat contains higher amounts of conjugated linoleic acids that humans can utilize for muscle growth (12).

The oil used for cooking meats also matters just as much as the choice of meat itself. Trans fats, which are in the process of being banned in the United States, are the worst fats for the body.
Sticking to monounsaturated fat and Omega-3 fatty acids are much better options especially for heart health. Coconut oil and extra virgin olive oil, for instance, are healthier than canola oil and hydrogenated oil (13).

It is a poor choice to eat food that has in its ingredients artificial dyes or flavoring. A lot of soda companies use these for marketing purposes or to enhance the taste (1). Some think that these additives help them to get you addicted to their product resulting in their ability to rake in huge profits (10). Most, if not all, fast-food restaurants also use lots of additives and chemicals in their food for similar reasons. Again, the cheaper the price for a large portion and the faster your food comes out, the unhealthier the food tends to be. Fast-food consumption over a significant period of time has been shown to increase your BMI (2, 14).

Raising the Stakes
Research has shown that monetary investment into a weight-loss challenge yields better results than if no wager had been placed at all (15). A study from Carnegie Mellon tested three groups of people battling obesity: one group was the control group whilst the other two groups utilized a financial incentive program throughout the weight-loss period. The third group used the same financial incentive plan as group two, but was told that the last 8 weeks after the 24-week weight loss period was simply for “weight loss maintenance”. The monetary investment involved contributing $3 daily and reporting their weight by text. If they met their weight-loss goal by the end of the month, then they would receive their deposit back plus that same amount that they invested matched from the researchers as a reward. However, they would not receive their deposit back if they failed to meet their goals.

The results were able to show just how effective financial incentives are in terms of aiding with weight-loss goals. The two groups that utilized the daily deposit plan showed no significant differences amongst themselves so the author grouped these two together and compared them with the control group, which had no financial incentives, for statistical purposes. Participants on the financial plan lost significantly more weight than the control group: the average weight loss for the group that invested money was around 8.70 pounds while the control group had only lost an abysmal 1.17 pounds on average.

In another study, the effects of monetary incentives in terms of exercise adherence in adults was investigated (16). They applied behavior economic principles to see how adults would react to investing in themselves to reach their fitness goals by reviewing public literature about the topic. Since meeting the minimum dose of exercise is rare amongst adults, further investigation about convincing adults to adhere to their regimen has been expanding. After surveying eleven studies, previously sedentary adults had reacted favorably to the financial incentives put into place every single time and some studies have even shown that incentives can prolong their adherence to at least one year. Only a couple of studies showed evidence of exercise adherence even after the incentive was removed. Nonetheless, there is some promise in terms of the positive effects that economic incentives can have in transforming out society into making the right decisions for our health.

The effects of financial incentives for weight loss between individual and group-based incentives were also investigated (17). This study found that group-based incentives were more effective
than individual incentives. Some factors responsible for this could be the threat of peer pressure by seeing their fellow members gains the reward that they had failed to earn. Another factor could be that most people are optimistic about their performance capabilities when compared to others and there was a high reward if their members did not meet their weight expectations. They had made a twist on the group-based plan that appears on the show “The Biggest Loser” by rewarding all participants and not just the one competitor that survives the challenge until the end. The authors found the show’s model to be demotivating to others.

Studies have shown that providing a financial incentive for reaching exercise and health goals can have a positive impact if done correctly. The Unprocessed Food Challenge aims to provide the possibility of losing $10 if the contestant does not complete the challenge. The purpose of making the $10 go to a local charity is so that the contestant does not feel demotivated and actually feels less guilty for failing. That is not to say that this will undermine the significance of losing the challenge, but this is to prevent participants that find this challenge easy to make a quick dollar off of people that are trying to improve their lives. Those that eat unprocessed foods for most of their lives will therefore try to inspire others to make the right food choices.

**Community Action: Unprocessed Food Challenge**

In order to raise awareness about unhealthy eating and its causal relationship with obesity, an online Facebook challenge was created. As of late, social media has provided the optimum platform to start up challenges to get people to discuss important matters by incorporating a game. The best and most recent example is the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. It raised awareness (and money) for the ALS Foundation with great success. This challenge, however, will connect Instagram and Facebook to broaden the audience and to increase the feasibility of posting and sharing photos.

For the Unprocessed Food Challenge, the idea is for the individual to begin to include more unprocessed foods in their diet. The level of processing that is associated with different types of food varies depending on the product, however for the most part most Americans tend to lean towards keeping more than half of their diet composed of processed food. The idea is that if everyone realizes that a larger percentage of the individual’s diet comes from ultra-processed sources, one would then change the way one eats and in turn feel the positive effects of eating more natural foods.

The number of calories and weight of the food will be ignored so that the main focus could be on the source of their food as opposed to its intrinsic qualities. The purpose of this is to deter those that stick with low-calorie processed foods as a means of improving their health when in fact they’re better off substituting those products with items that have slightly higher calories, but come from a natural source. Unprocessed foods have more fiber, protein, and natural vitamins and minerals that help the body feel more satiated and energized when compared to processed foods.

**Earlier Unprocessed Food Challenges**

Many of the earlier Facebook and Unprocessed Food Challenges have died out for one reason or another. Googling “Unprocessed Food Challenge” in late July of 2015 brought up several hits. Some of which included:
Many of these other Facebook and Unprocessed Food Challenges have died out for one reason or another. A lot of previous challenges were created on blogs and did not expand from there. A significant obstacle that blogs face is bringing viewers to their websites. Most blog users overcome this by posting the hyperlink of their blog page onto their Facebook page. However, not all blogs have a corresponding Facebook page. They will still receive a good amount of hits on the internet without syncing to Facebook, but their chances increase by using this worldwide social media platform. In addition, blog users must have their viewers submit their email addresses in order to deliver updates and notifications to their audience. With Facebook, all their followers have to do is join their page and they will receive notifications whenever the page admin makes any updates.

By using Facebook and Instagram for the Unprocessed Food Challenge, participants do not have to register for a new website. All users are already signed up and can begin the challenge almost immediately by a click of a button. In addition, Facebook and Instagram are now dominating the social media platform market as is evident by the rise in the stock price of Facebook. Facebook currently owns Instagram, as well.

One other successful page (‘Eating Rules’) that combined an unprocessed food challenge via Facebook did not emphasize the challenge part. It had originally started off as a blog but ultimately moved onto more popular social media platforms. The challenge found on eatingrules.com was only for October 2014 and was mostly created as a means to discuss unprocessed foods. Although the challenge that we create will incorporate that aspect, the larger focus will be on the challenge itself. In addition, monetary wagers will be put into place to raise the stakes. It is even recommended that money won from the challenge is donated to a local charity of choice by the victor.
Walking the streets to gain a sense of the community and to figure out where health conscious citizens like to unite and where foodies enjoy exploring healthy and natural foods was a great experience. Coming from Jersey City, NJ; the first place inspected was actually a park within two minutes walking distance from a local public school. Leonard Gordon Park, also known as Mosquito Park by the locals, hosts a Farmers Market every Saturday from 8:00am-3:00pm from June 20th – November 27th, 2015. After speaking with the Executive Director and Founder of Jersey City Parks Coalition, Mr. Clifford Waldman, about promoting the campaign at this Farmers Market, he gave permission to hand out brochures that was produced to advertise the social media challenge and he thought that this was a great idea. This market only had one vendor/farmer selling fresh fruits and vegetables. The gentleman running the farm business Asprocolas Acres located in Millstone, NJ. He was there with his friends and family and they informed me of the types of equipment and techniques that they use to produce natural crops. There was not much traffic here and they discussed which Farmers Market locations have the most customers. After explaining to him that this is the first year that this park has had a Farmers Market, he realized that it will take more time for people to come here as opposed to the nearby Stop and Shop that they are already familiar with. The goal was to convince the locals that these Farmers Markets provide healthier alternatives to the groceries sold at commercial grocery stores such as Stop and Shop.

The Whole Foods Market in Edgewater was contacted about the competition; however, their Media Marketing office has yet to reply back. Senator Cory Booker is attempting his own dietary challenge of abstaining from sugar, pasta, bread, and carbs as a way to promote healthy eating. He posts on his Instagram and Facebook page everyday what he eats and how he has been holding up. ‘Direct Message’ was utilized to reach out to him via Instagram about the Unprocessed Food Challenge, but he has also yet to reply. On the Facebook page, an article written by Jeff Tolvin from the Rutgers News website was posted about Dr. Ron Weiss and his creation of the nation’s first farm-based primary care clinic called Ethos Health. Mr. Tolvin could not give me Dr. Weiss’ contact information, and he said that he could possibly write an article about the Unprocessed Food Challenge once it gains enough popularity. It would be ideal to get Dr. Weiss to promote this campaign to his patients, especially since his clinic is located here in New Jersey.

After attempting to get a big name company and a big name public figure to help promote the project, an emphasis was placed to focus this campaign on the local community and then work up from there. The first local vendor visited was Lilian’s Organics health store located in Downtown, Jersey City. The manager’s name is Karen Gilbert and she liked the challenge and also gave permission to leave brochures and flyers at her restaurant. She said it would be imperative to meet her friend Eddie, who works at Subia’s Café, which is within walking distance from her store. After meeting with Eddie, he also gave permission to advertise the Unprocessed Food Challenge at his health store that also has space for customers to eat there. One idea was to post table ads so that they can see it while they eat.

Another store that would be great to work closely with is the George Street Co-op and the George Street Co-op Café located above it. John Leary, the store manager, is waiting to receive
approval from his general manager about promoting this project. This would be an excellent store to work closely with, especially considering that this store was created from fellow Rutgers students. The obstacle with getting them on board is that their store sells items predominantly for vegans and vegetarians, which makes sense since the Rutgers Vegetarian Club created this store. They may not want to attach their name to the Unprocessed Food Challenge, which condones eating meat as long as it is from a fresh and natural source.

Rutgers Gardens hosts a Farmers Market on Fridays at 11:00am – 5:00pm from May through November on Ryders Lane just off of Cook Campus. Their Farmers Market was visited twice and it was great meeting with a diverse crowd of both vendors and customers. During the first visit, several brochures about the challenge were handed out to the vendors. Most were on board and some have said that it seemed like it was too much work. Remaining undeterred, however, a harder push was made to convince others about the benefits of this Facebook page. Upon leaving the market the first time, the Event Coordinator, Mary Ann Schrum, said that she liked the page idea and allowed for this campaign to reserve a table at the market to promote the challenge for the next visit. We were very thankful for her huge support and made sure to work on the pitch before the second visit. During the second visit, the table was set up on the inside and guests were greeted as they walked by. By the end of the second visit to Rutgers Gardens, five more people ‘Liked’ the Facebook page and became followers on Instagram as well.

Another Farmers Market visited was the New Brunswick Community Farmers Market. It was smaller than the Rutgers Gardens Farmers Market, but was created so that additional members of the community could have access to healthy food. One program that they have is called “Market Bucks”, which is an additional $5 that you get to spend at the Farmers Market after you spend $10 in benefits from SNAP/EBT, WIC, or Senior Farmers Market Checks. The idea is to provide fresh produce to the community at a reasonable cost that is either the same price or better than you would find in a grocery store. One tip that the vendor provided was to create the Unprocessed Food Challenge brochure in the Spanish language.

My goal is to increase the challenge’s popularity amongst the demographic that already participates in eating natural and healthy foods. The objective is to have them help spark the momentum necessary to include those that heavily rely on processed foods to join in on the challenge and make the necessary lifestyle changes.

**Facebook Description Box:**

Below is a description from the Facebook website:  
[www.Facebook.com/UnprocessedFoodChallenge](http://www.Facebook.com/UnprocessedFoodChallenge). The Instagram page is:  

Unprocessed Food Challenge

No processed food consumption for 7 days straight. Think you can do it? There is only one way to find out.
Test your limits and join in on the #UnprocessedFoodChallenge with the support of friends and family members around the world via Facebook and Instagram (@UnprocessedFoodChallenge)!!

Start by challenging yourself first and post on this page how you feel mentally and physically throughout the week, any obstacles that you've approached, and share with us ideas or recipes that have helped you overcome these hurdles. In addition, take photos of what’s in your grocery cart and keep tabs on how much you spend (eating unprocessed food doesn’t need to be more expensive). Share your pics of your meals to assist others in reaching their goals. Don't be shy about sharing your success stories as well!

Did you lose weight? Do you have more energy or a better outlook on life?

Once you feel comfortable enough, challenge a friend or fellow participant to a friendly competition to see who can best stick to eating ONLY unprocessed foods for a mutually agreed upon amount of time (7 days minimum works best).

Here are the Rules:
1) Track your food consumption via our Instagram and/or Facebook page by uploading a picture of each and EVERY meal or snack that you consume during the challenge.

2) You MUST tag your competitor in the caption of the meal photo with the hashtag #UnprocessedFoodChallenge alongside the ingredients and meal prep info.

3) The first person to consume a processed food item must alert the other competitor that they have not completed the challenge.

4) If both competitors complete the challenge, then the time period is simply extended until one competitor consumes processed food.

5) To encourage each other, it is recommended that a small wager ($10) be placed to raise the stakes! The winnings are to be donated to a local charity chosen by the victor. Facebook has a new Messenger feature that allows users to transfer money, as well.

6) Have Fun!

This challenge was created to help spread awareness about food choices and the move to “unprocess your diet”. Most processed foods are a mishmash of chemicals and ingredients that that are likely high in sodium, sugar, calories, fats, and carbs. Our page also serves as a support group to discuss obstacles and to foster new ideas for overcoming them. Discover local businesses near you that specialize in cooking delicious, natural meals or that sell fresh produce to limit the steps from the farm to your plate. Make new friends and pick up innovative cooking and gardening tips, as well. Learning the source of your food is not only important, but is also very easy to do! So join in, give it a try and share your thoughts, pics, and results with others!
All feedback about our page is welcomed and encouraged!

References


I wanted to share with you a new Facebook group that I started as a part of a Colloquium class I took with Dr. Julie Fagan this summer. Many people are unhappy that they’re overweight; they may have even been told by a medical professional to lose weight. As you might have experienced, it’s not that easy to lose weight. Counting calories, sodium, carbs and fat makes eating a chore and takes the pleasure out of eating. We have an easy solution. Just eliminate processed foods and beverages from your diet and you’ll feel better and the pounds will seemingly melt away without effort. Processed foods and beverages are thought to be largely responsible for our well-known obesity epidemic. Additionally, consuming processed foods can result in significant increases in blood pressure and may influence incidences of diabetes, cancer and heart disease. If you convert to eating only unprocessed foods, you will no longer need to count calories or look at fat and carb content, as unprocessed foods are naturally lower in sodium, calories, carbs, and fat.

Start your switch to completely eating unprocessed foods today by joining in on the Unprocessed Food Challenge on Facebook and Instagram. By joining this community, you will be able to learn from others that have been eating unprocessed foods both for a long time and from individuals that have recently made the switch. Learn how others have overcome obstacles associated with cravings for processed foods. In addition to sharing tips and secrets, discover delicious meals that you can prepare and upload pics of the sumptuous meals that you’ve prepared. Upload pics of your grocery cart with fresh fruits and veggies and meats, poultry and dairy. Even place a wager with another “Unprocessed Food Challenge friend” to motivate you to reach your weight loss goal. For more information, ‘Like’ our Unprocessed Food Challenge Facebook page and follow the hashtag #UnprocessedFoodChallenge.

Ruben Moreno

Sent on July 29th, 2015
Dear Editor: (editor@eatingwell.com) and (http://www.nabroward.com/editor/)

An ongoing addiction issue has been plaguing America for quite some time without much improvement. One of the most underestimated addictive substances responsible for deteriorating
our health as a society is the addiction and dependence to processed foods. Processed food is so addicting that even with more research being released publicly about its negative effects, most people still depend on processed foods to make up most of their diet.

Common myths for why many refuse to switch to natural whole foods is because they fear that their food will taste disgusting, they fear that it will cost more money, and they believe that it will actually take more time to prepare and consume unprocessed foods if it made up most of their diet.

A new Facebook challenge was created to debunk these myths and to improve everyone’s lifestyle by making a game about the topic. The Unprocessed Food Challenge is a Facebook page (that is linked to the Instagram page @UnprocessedFoodChallenge) that allows people from around the world to challenge someone else to consume solely unprocessed foods for 7 days straight. One person pairs with one other competitor (either a friend or someone they meet on the page) and are required to upload pics of every meal that they consume with the caption containing the ingredients, meal prep info, and the hashtag #UnprocessedFoodChallenge. The competitor must be tagged in every pic that is uploaded. A friendly wager is usually placed in advance to encourage everyone to stick to the plan and is actually suggested to be donated to a local charity.

Please help spread awareness about the benefits of consuming unprocessed foods by joining and posting on this Facebook page. Many people will benefit with the help of a publication that emphasizes the importance of combining good taste with good health. Thank you!

Best Regards,

Ruben Moreno