

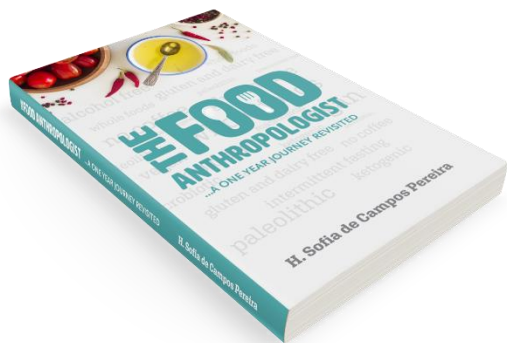
Welcome to the first issue of the Best Health newsletter of the year! I am looking forward to a great 2019, full of learning and new adventures. How about you? As you read through this issue, I hope it inspires you to explore your health and push your limits. May this holiday season and the new year be the best one yet!

I apply a scientific approach towards a personalized “roadmap to health” that suits your unique body, lifestyle, preferences, and goals. For more, see www.besthealth.life or send me an e-mail at sofia@besthealth.life.

Sofia C Pereira, PhD, Health Coach



The Food Anthropologist's Toolbox - How a one-year long food journey changed my life



I am in awe that eighteen months have passed since I initially published my book, *The Food Anthropologist*. Thanks to great feedback, I have revisited and revised my diary of the one-year experimental period through 30-day food challenges including whole foods, macrobiotic, paleolithic, vegan, intermittent fasting, dairy & gluten free, and ketogenic.

It was a pleasure to re-read and edit the original book, and to see the long-term impact that 12 months living through popular diets had on my and my family's eating. Furthermore, the whole project turned out to provide huge lessons in self-discipline and will power, as well as on the importance of focusing on the process rather than the result.

The tools acquired from the experience have indeed turned into long-term and highly valuable lessons. The widening food knowledge helped me develop a stronger sense of my body's nutritional needs as well as the practical tools needed to meet those needs. When it comes to self-discipline, there was obvious strength gained from completing each challenge, which in turn empowered me to face increasingly difficult food limitations with curiosity and a positive mindset.

Although none of the challenges were easy, they made me realize how resilient and adaptable my body is. Not surprising, considering a recent publication in a special edition of *Science* focused on diet and health. In the review article *Dietary fat: From foe to friend?* the authors discuss that the quality of food we ingest is far more relevant than whether it is mostly composed of fat, carbs or protein. We are indeed a resilient species when it comes to nutrition! Wholesomeness is the most important thing to focus on.

Now, as time passes, the lessons learnt are apparent every single day. For one, I (and my entire family) eat less starchy carbs like bread. Also importantly, my kids are exceedingly aware of the difference between whole foods and processed or refined ones. I love that we eat a much more varied diet, and rarely eat simple pasta or rice dishes that were once weekly or monthly staple meals. In truth once the year was finished, the limitations ceased to be limitations, and became variants of eating styles.

As a beach ultimate player and frequent gym goer, I can think of many examples of how I use my food toolbox to maximize the results of my workouts. Since I generally go to the gym in the afternoon, I make sure to have a healthy meal/snack rich in complex carbs and with some protein about 90 min before hitting the weight room. After strength training, my post-workout meal generally involves some animal protein (such as eggs or dairy), which I crave.

The thought of optimizing food for my workouts brings me to something else that I think is interesting. Both my husband and I are in our early fifties and practice sports regularly at night on a lit beach. We both notice a growing difficulty in seeing well, especially if one of the lamps has blown out. However, eating fatty fish or taking fish Omega 3 supplements helps us see better.

All in all, I am very happy to have embarked on this food journey and believe it has made me and my family stronger and healthier. From a practical perspective, I just love my food anthropologist's toolbox... full of wholesome ingredients and cooking styles to play with and adapt to an ever-changing life!

Treat yourself this Christmas and enjoy laughing your way through a quirky year of learning about personal limits and exploring food science. It is also a perfect gift. [The food anthropologist ... a one year journey revisited](#) is available worldwide on Amazon ([Germany](#), [Spain](#), [UK](#), [US](#),) as an eBook or in paperback. If you live in the Lisbon area and want a copy, [contact me](#).

Note: This piece was adapted from <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/the-food-anthropologists-toolbox/>. Published on December 4, 2018



Keeping the Christmas Spirit Alive

The Christmas season is here again, and I am going to focus on making this holiday season pleasant and warm, a time for celebration with family and friends. Last year I found Christmas to be complicated and realized that this time of year generally is. There seems to be so much expectation around Christmas and New year that it often does not bring out the best in us.

The holiday season can be stressful. It is very hard in times of suffering the loss of a loved one or undergoing family drama, or for those that are alone and don't want to be. Family brings on another set of issues and the extra time spent together is likely to bring on tense moments. Family members know exactly how to twitch your nerves, it comes with the territory. Staying positive and not taking things personally is key. And if touched, try to keep it momentary... it is easier. I personally am going to focus on listening as my way to enjoy this time of year.

Preparing food and gift lists and dealing with crowded stores can also be stressful. I have long noticed that this time of year does not bring out the best in us. Last year, while doing some last-minute shopping with my mom, she was pushed out of the way by a rushed shopper. And there is always plenty of nastiness, especially in lineups. I hope that we can all take the time to connect with those around us! Avoiding being in a rush and appreciating that everyone is in the same boat helps. If possible, I like to connect to those around me.

We can all learn by being open to what it means to be human in all its forms, ages, colors, races, genders. During this season, empower the elderly and those with disabilities and appreciate that they are also celebrating. If you are older and/or disabled, try to communicate your needs in a positive manner. Positive connection is a must, much more important than gifts.

Hopefully, we will be able to keep what is important always in mind and not get caught up in the materialistic aspect of the season. If our priorities aren't screwed, this is a time to rejoice being alive and to be generous to each other. Making sure to take time for yourself to ground is important, and it helps your overall mood. Keep active physically, as it will keep you happier. Go for walks, a run, the gym, or whatever you normally do when you are active.

And enjoy connecting and appreciating life. What better way to celebrate the solstice? And then we can look forward to the days getting longer again.

The *Pegan Diet* – in a nutshell

Paleo + Vegan = Pegan

I remember thinking how difficult it would be to go from paleo to vegan in my own food experiments and love the idea of trying Mark Hyman's (MD) Pegan diet. Essentially, the Pegan diet combines the Paleo belief that processed foods and products of modern agriculture (such as dairy, grains, and legumes) are harmful to the body with an emphasis on fruits and vegetables that Hyman associates with veganism. Hyman advocates eating fresh, local, organic, and sustainably raised foods.

I am a believer in variety but will not completely exclude wheat or it's ancestors like barley and rye from my diet. I enjoy whole grains, in food and fermented in wonderful breads. But in moderation and exploring baking great breads made from other non-gluten containing cereals (oats, corn, rice) as well as sweet potato, bananas, seeds and nuts. But back to Pegan, I think it may be a great way to start 2019... Although I don't look forward to cutting out dairy again, I am curious.

<https://www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/1015p20.shtml>



Jump for your health

Our body depends on circulation of the lymphatic system and the cardiovascular system for lymph and blood flow, respectively. The cardiovascular system is a closed network of organs and vessels pressurized by the heart, whose primary purposes are to deliver nutrients, immune factors, and oxygen to tissues and to carry away waste products for elimination.

The lymphatic system is also a network of vessels but does not form a full circulating system and is not pressurized by the heart. The main function of the lymphatic system is to transport lymph, a fluid containing infection-fighting white blood cells, throughout the body. Unlike the cardiovascular system which has a pump, the upward motion of lymphatic fluid is on the motions of the muscles and joints. The lymphatic system therefore flows better when you are physically active.

It has been shown that the up-and-down rhythmic gravitational force caused by jumping on a trampoline causes the lymph system's one-way valves to open and close, increasing lymph flow. Exercise, eating healthy, lots of water, good stress management, and replenishing sleep are all influencers of both cardiovascular and lymphatic systems. Massage is key for the lymphatic system, especially in those who have difficulty moving. For health tips on how to stimulate your lymphatic system, see:

<https://www.gaiam.com/blogs/discover/6-ways-to-boost-circulation-for-detoxing-and-immunity>

Keep in touch on social media

I am looking forward to 2019 and have a couple of exciting projects to see through. Contact me if you are interested in having a coach to develop your projects, to brain storm and provide accountability. Sustainable performance is a long-term goal, and lifestyle is key.

Also, keep in touch on social media on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Linked In](#), and/or [Twitter](#). Great holiday wishes to all!

