

DANA MICHELLE NORRIS

AUSTIN, TEXAS

michelle@ancestralmomentum.com , www.instinctcatering.com

I've been paleo for about 7 years. I'm the Co-Owner & Executive Chef for Instinct Catering, Events & Supper Club in Austin, Texas as well as a Co-Founder and Partner of Paleo FX with my husband, Keith Norris.

Before I decided to change my lifestyle, I wasn't in poor health but I wasn't in optimum health, either. I did, however, suffer with being borderline celiac, and completely unaware of it. At 39 years of age, I weighed between 175 and 180 pounds. I worked out haphazardly. I would get a burst of inspiration and get on a workout kick and start "eating healthy" and lose 15 to 20 pounds, only to gain it back and yo-yo once more. Sound familiar? My specialty as a chef prior to going paleo was Italian, so we ate a lot of homemade pasta, bread, and pizza. I made fresh salads, vegetables and meats. I've not ever been one for processed foods, so there wasn't a big change for us there - but the bread, pasta, and sweets were toughest to give up. Imagine if you had a stomachache every time you ate; well, that was me. I suffered from IBS, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, fibromyalgia, with severe migraines and daily throbbing dull headaches. The migraines and headaches were at times completely debilitating. I would be bedridden for days with a migraine and more often than not, it was accompanied by nausea and vomiting. At the time, I took three different preventive medications every day. I went in for cranial botox shots every two months. I took a medication for migraine onset to try to stave it off. Although it rarely worked, it was well worth those few times when it did. I also took one of two other medications for a full blown migraine, depending on whether it was accompanied by nausea or not. It seemed everything was a trigger for a migraine. My husband Keith had been eating paleo for about a year, not eating any of my traditional Italian dishes when the family ate dinner. Before going paleo, he LOVED these dishes. When I questioned him and asked, "Are you really never going to have my pasta or pizza again?" He said, "No." Keith was not one to beat you over the head with anything, but every time my stomach hurt after eating, he would casually mention, "I really think you should get checked for celiac."

Well, one time he finally convinced me to look into it. I was tested for the anti-bodies and my test came back negative. I later learned that this was fairly typical. The doctor started discussing a biopsy of my colon and while he was explaining the procedure to me, he was literally falling asleep. I thought to myself: "There is no way I'm allowing him to cut into me!" I also was puzzled as to why this was the next step at all. Invasive surgery?!? Why wasn't that the last resort? It seemed far more intuitive to me to try eliminating the offensive foods from my diet and evaluating the effect of that before cutting someone up. So I opted to do that on my own.

Once I started eating paleo, my stomach aches, bloating (which I hadn't noticed until it was gone), IBS, chronic fatigue syndrome, and fibromyalgia all improved almost immediately. Also - something I wasn't even really aware of - my knees were swollen and ached a lot, and I had



a dull ache in my lower back. I got used to the idea that I had some early form of arthritis in my joints – but once I went paleo, it was gone, completely gone. It's funny how things become "your normal" until you find out what "true normal" really is. I have since learned about the systemic inflammation that grains cause and in retrospect, the changes were a given. All these improvements were clearly noticeable at about the three weeks into eating paleo. The biggest and most amazing thing - something I never expected - was that my daily throbbing headaches disappeared. This has been the best improvement of all, a dramatic improvement to my quality of life. Imagine if you had a constant dull headache, all the time, and suddenly like that it was gone...Hallelujah!

It would take some time, but the migraines that had come at least once or twice a week are now under control and now I might get one once every six months if I am under a lot of stress. I do still take a preventative med, Flexeril, at the lowest dose possible, as a muscle relaxer. For full blown migraines I still take Imitrex, also the lowest dose. I anticipate being completely off of these meds within the next year.

I'm now 46, I eat a fairly strict paleo diet: I take heavy cream in my decaf coffee, I don't eat grains at all, and very little sugar. My sweets consist of fruits or small amounts of 85-90% dark chocolate, at most. I weigh between 130 and 135, and I exercise regularly training with my husband, Keith Norris of Efficient Exercise. We eat fresh meat or eggs and vegetables for almost every meal. We're very passionate about this lifestyle so we created our own website (www.ancestralmomentum.com). We feel so strongly about this lifestyle that we created the successful and popular Paleo FX Symposium (www.therealpaleofx.com). We hope to be able to bring this lifestyle to the masses - not only to bring about a healthier society, but to help combat our growing healthcare crisis. This is why we do what we do.