

*Nick and Choose* { NICK ALTSCHULLER }

## PRESSING ISSUE

An adventure in clean living and running on empty



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**T**HERE ARE MANY REASONS TO go on a hunger strike. People forgo food to protest an injustice, or to seek spiritual enlightenment. But because Jared Leto drank spicy lemonade for 10 days and dropped a few pounds is kind of a silly reason to skip breakfast.

Like adopting babies and naming them after the toaster or whatever's in the fruit bowl, juice cleansing is a celebrity trend that's difficult to grasp. When her normal diet of tree bark and sunlight begins to weigh her down, Gwyneth Paltrow turns to organic pressings. Salma Hayek recently launched her own juice brand. But like an actor confused about a role, as I prepared for my own cleanse, I had trouble finding my motivation.

I'm not an unhealthy guy. I work out. I eat right. In fact, making the leap to 1 percent from skim required some deep reflection. As a result, I'm thin, and probably not juicing's target audience. Removing mastication from my day wasn't the root of my hesitation; it was the 1,000-plus calories I'd be removing from my diet. Skinny I can handle; scrawny I have a problem with.

Micki Oliva of Blueprint Cleanse assured me that I wouldn't waste away after three days of "Renovation," the first of their three cleansing levels. (The top level is "Excavation," which I avoided, as the name had me picturing small men with pickaxes at work in my colon.)

For motivation, I settled on the excuse of a pre-holiday diet. After three days of no solids or booze, I could feel justified in making a Thanksgiving sandwich bigger than the family dog or asking my boss to hold my legs for a keg stand at the company party.

Day 1: Blueprint recommends starting your morning with some water and lemon, so as to awaken the palate. As a breakfast lover, that's like waking the kids up for Christmas and throwing their presents out the window.

It's surprisingly easy after that. Out of your day's menu of six 16 oz. bottles, two are of a blend called "Green Juice," a slightly bitter liquefied salad that's not unpleasant, though it makes your inner Charlton Heston suspicious. "P.A.M" (pineapple, apple,

mint) is, in fact, delicious (and probably even better with rum). By the time you get to your nighttime dose of cashew milk, the biggest surprise is that going an entire day without food is actually a piece of cake.

Day 2: Still no rumble in my belly, but the cleanse began to affect my head. By 3 pm, I felt spacey and my words came in slow motion. Basically, I was stoned. Each bottle would reawaken my system, but while I still wasn't pining for food, I was missing the fun in our relationship.

That night I watched friends eat dinner, which is no way to spend a Friday. As I sucked down a beet juice, one buddy dug into steak tips and described his recent culinary adventures in Hong Kong. I threw some salt crystals in my mouth, desperate for variation.

Day 3: According to Oliva, the working principle of the cleanse is that you're letting your digestive system rest, giving your body extra energy it can use "to help clean itself out."

I slept for 11 hours. I felt no extra energy (nor any changes in my gut). In a small dream before waking, I pictured a plate of French toast. Remembering I couldn't eat, I thought, "What do I have to get up for?" That's not a healthy way to start a day.

The one part of my body that was supercharged was my nose. I could identify items cooking on a stove top two rooms away. I could list components to a cabernet's bouquet, when I usually say things like, "It smells like grapes." My body could go on for days, but my brain was ready to eat.

On the morning after my cleanse, I weighed myself to find I'd dropped a pound and a half. I then bought a large coffee with cream and a muffin the size of a brick, which I troweled with jam. For lunch I had a salad. Everything in moderation. Which makes a three-day cleanse extreme.

I didn't feel cleaner or more virtuous, just perhaps more aware. The food world is industrialized. Bad cantaloupe can kill. One-hundred-ninety-five bucks worth of juice is too steep a price, but we could all be more mindful of what we put in our bodies. It's a theory easier in design than in practice, but at least it's something to chew on. \*\*\*

Send your stories and suggestions to [nick@improper.com](mailto:nick@improper.com).



It's what's for dinner.

## Impersonals

### OCCUPY ELSEWHERE

**A**WORD OF ADVICE: As your server, I understand your desire for a lovely evening out. You want to sit and enjoy your meal. But spending \$100 doesn't mean you have the table for the entire night—especially in a busy restaurant. Occupying a table long after you've finished dinner, dessert and coffee, and after you've only tipped me 15 percent, is rude. It's time to move on to the bar, the lounge or your house. There are options. I'm trying to make a living, and that means turning a table.

*Still waiting*

**To the handsome redheaded mailman:** Thank you so much for showing me that chivalry isn't dead. It took me by pleasant surprise. You can lick my stamp anytime.

*Priority express*

**To the obnoxiously loud bros passing around the Jack Daniels on the B Line:** OK, we get it. You have a miserable office job, no girlfriends and plenty of repressed homoerotic tendencies that you try to overcompensate for by yelling about sports and Jäger bombs. You want to forget your miserable lives, but could you try to do it elsewhere?

*Frustrated MBTA rider*

**To the bar-crawling Sasquatch in need of a shower:** When you're carrying your hipster banjo or whatever it is on your back, you're taking up extra room on the sidewalk. How about trying to be considerate and giving other people room to maneuver, rather than making them dodge your swinging rat sack?

*An actual musician*

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