

# COMPETITIVE POWERLIFTER SECRETS: WHAT THE DIET INDUSTRY DOESN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT WEIGHTS

If girls started getting under the bar with some serious weight, the market for diet books, gadgets, pills, food-like products, exercise gear, Spanxx, and so-called health/fitness magazines might just entropy.



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Apr 11, 2012 at 1:02pm | 213 Comments

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*Picking up a couple hundred pounds.*

I know a secret that could annihilate the bazillion-dollar diet industry. This is powerful knowledge indeed -- what would happen to the universe as we know it without late night diet infomercials, weight loss spam and the twin megaliths of women's "fitness" magazines and the weight loss industry?

It's not a miracle berry from some ravaged country halfway around the world. It's not anything French women know. It's not a home meal delivery, yoga DVD or a pill (prescription or otherwise). It's just this:

Pick up heavy shit.



*Pickup. Carry. Repeat.*

OK, I'm done.

Not really. Now I get to go into my only half-joking theory about the researchers in on this vast conspiracy with the diet industry to tell women to leave the heavy weights for the boys.

But first, the science waiver: I'm not a scientist. I dropped every science class I could in college until I was stuck with Botany my final semester where I earned the only D of my honor roll life. I hear what the research says, that it's a fallacy that muscle burns more calories than fat, or at least that it's minimal.

And I call bullshit. My experience is purely anecdotal, I'll grant you that. But I've been eating for as long as I can remember, and paying attention to what I put in my mouth and what I weigh. And I can

tell you that at no time in my life before I started throwing some serious iron around could I eat like a full-grown man and not grow into my husband's T-shirts.

So what the studies say is all well and good, but tell that to the metabolism inferno that lifting heavy weights built for me.



“They” will tell you that lifting heavy weights makes women bulky. They say that women should Build Muscle Tone! by wielding five-pound dumbbells (don't even get me started on the plastic and the colors). They may even say a woman should never lift more than three pounds (if they're listening to Gwyneth Paltrow's celeb-trainer Tracy Anderson that is).

If they stopped telling womenfolk this, and girls started getting under the bar with some serious weight, the market for diet books, gadgets, pills, food-like products, exercise gear, Spanxx, and so-called health/fitness magazines might just entropy. And we can't let that happen -- the world economy could hang in the balance.

So the bizarre untruth that heavy weights make a woman bulky will just keep making the rounds like a horrible 8th-grade rumor. You can do the research if you want -- Google will tell you all you want to know about the amount of testosterone a body needs to grow Arnold Schwarzenegger thighs (and even he needed a little extra-curricular help bulking up) and you and I don't have it.



*On a mission to gain five pounds.*

Tell me. Do I look bulky to you? I know, women aren't supposed to acknowledge if they think they are a perfectly fine and healthy weight. We should always profess to be on some diet or another. But I'm not going to play dumb here. I know what size I am. I also move heavy weights. Heavy.

My workouts included farmer carries -- lugging kettlebells half my bodyweight (each) -- down an alley and back, squatting more than one-and-a-half times my body weight for sets of eight reps, deadlifting nearly double my bodyweight for reps, bench pressing a couple pounds shy of bodyweight for sets of five, chin-ups with up to 30 lbs additional weight strapped to my person, push-ups with weights stacked on my back -- you get the picture? These were not light weights.



*Squatting 180 Pounds.*

Yet I am light. At 5 ft 1 and barely weighing in at triple digits, during this training I ate at least 2,000 calories a day. (Do you know how much the government thinks I should be eating? Nowhere near that.) I consumed almond butter by the spoonful, slabs of steak, bacon, avocados, loads of fat and calorie packed foods -- good ones.

At one point my coach decided I should gain five pounds for training. This took concentrated determination. Macarons with my quiche for lunch. Buttermilk fried chicken for dinner followed by cookies. A trip to a festival for a fried food extravaganza. A mountain of pasta for dinner. Milkshakes. Pizza. (I felt exceedingly gross, but that's beside the point.) It took drastic measures to gain five pounds and as soon as I stopped shoveling that stuff in my face I shed it.



*A weekend of food.*

Researchers can tell me until they're blue in the face that lifting heavy weights didn't do that. Or that I'm naturally slight -- OK, maybe. But I gained nearly 30 pounds when I got married (that, not knowing any better and listening to a misguided "trainer" at a women's gym I starved myself to remove), so I can sure as hell gain weight with the best of them. And I was halfway to that weight again when I started lifting.

Then -- over the course of a year -- I gained eight pounds of muscle while losing equivalent fat and suddenly I could eat like a college frat boy, and needed new, smaller clothes. I didn't gain a single pound [on a foodie's trip to Paris despite stuffing myself for over a week](#) like a duck for foie gras. So, again, I call bullshit.

As a food writer, this has been immensely useful to me. I intersperse my usual reasonable way of eating (I'm the annoying person at the restaurant asking if the meat is local, when I'm not "researching" I generally tend to eat Paleo, and you'll not find any poisonous high fructose corn syrup or partially hydrogenated anything in my house) with eating feats of epic proportions.

So, when following a 24-hour period that includes a homemade Pop Tart menu launch party; a research visit to a diner where I'm presented with plates of eggs and home fries, biscuits and gravy, shrimp and grits, and a cheeseburger and fries; and a tasting tour of a new brewery, I can still fit into my trousers, I have to be thankful for my parting gift from powerlifting: a metabolism that still runs

on high gear. And I have to believe it's a conspiracy involving the diet world, magazines, and researchers seeking to hide this secret from women.



*Weighted chin ups.*

Will we singlehandedly topple the diet industry with this information? I don't know. Somehow I don't see a lot of women making a beeline for the nearest weightroom. Maybe dieting sounds more appealing than getting calluses and all those muscles. I think those magazines will keep peddling their same prescriptions for tiny weights and diets every month. But at least now a few of us know better.