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Searching for Nutrition (Part 1)

1271 High Street, Auburn, CA 95603 • Phone (530) 823-7092 • order line (800) 359-6091
Hours: Tues. – Fri. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. • E-mail: mail@imageawareness.com web: www.ImageAwareness.com

August 2013 **Volume 9: Issue 8**

Introduction

This newsletter will focus on the manner in which traditional cultures chose and processed foods in order to obtain optimum nutritional value and superior health. Some of the things I will discuss will sound unorthodox, but remember this is the way people ate before 1900 when heart attacks were unheard of and allergies were rare.

Meat and Milk

Vilhjalmur Stefansson resigned his position as an assistant professor of anthropology at Harvard and headed north to the Arctic to study the nutritional adequacy of the diet of the Eskimos. He became stranded among the Mackenzie River Eskimos in 1906 and lived among them for eleven years. He lived as the Eskimos did on a diet which consisted almost entirely of raw and boiled fish. (Whalers had killed almost all the local game.)

The heads and tails of the fish were considered a delicacy and saved for the children. The Eskimos enjoyed fermented whale oil with their fish. They also enjoyed spoiled fish. Stefansson eventually became fond of rotten fish. Stefansson's health improved on this diet and he became an advocate of the idea that man could survive and experience health on a diet of meat and fish.

Weston Price, the dentist who travelled around the world in search of perfect teeth, found that peoples who lived primarily on fish, meat and dairy products (including the Masai) had superior teeth and physical development. A couple of quotes will convey the point,

"...in every instance these cattle people dominated the surrounding tribes. They were characterized by superb physical development, great bravery and a mental acumen that made it possible for them to dominate because of their superior intelligence."

"In the Masai tribe, a study of 2,516 teeth in eighty-eight individuals...showed only four individuals with caries. They had a total of ten carious teeth..."

"The Government of Kenya has for several years sponsored an athletic contest among the various tribes, the test being one of strength for which they use a tug-of-war. One particular tribe has carried off the trophy repeatedly. This tribe resides on the east coast of Lake Victoria and lives very largely on fish. The members are powerful athletes and wonderful swimmers."

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Meat

The healthiest meats will come from animals which are not fattened in a feed lot with corn and soy. Animals given natural forage and grass accumulate substantial quantities of omega-3 fatty acids in their tissues. Grain fed animals much less so. Corn and soy also receive some of the heaviest applications of pesticides and herbicides which are detrimental to health and can bioaccumulate in the bodies of animals when they are primary foodstuffs.

Complex protein foods like meat are easily damaged by excessive cooking. This makes the meat more difficult to digest and can introduce toxic substances into the food.

The process of digestion of protein is called hydrolysis from the Greek "water" and "to loose." The digestion of protein involves the insertion of water molecules between amino acids until the protein is disassembled into its smallest building blocks. Meat becomes more difficult to digest if it

dries out or if it is heated above 170 degrees Fahrenheit.

The best way to cook protein foods is with a very low temperature for a prolonged period of time in a moist environment. The low temperature loosens the bonds of the amino acids while the moist environment facilitates the insertion of water molecules between the protein bonds. This is why meat can become so tender when cooked at a low temperature in a crock pot. An added advantage of slow cooking is that it releases the flavor in foods by breaking food particles down small enough that the taste buds can identify the complexity of nutrients in the food.

Non-Muscle Meats

Healthy people historically did not limit their meat consumption to muscle meat. I can remember how my father loved liver and onions and my grandmother feasted on the brains and tongue of cattle. The bones were always put in the soup pot.

The parts of animals discarded today offered valuable nutrition for previous generations. Brains supplied omega-3 fatty acids and phospholipids for healthy nerve and brain cells.

In a similar manner, the addition of liver to the diet can provide a valuable source of nutrients to support the important detoxification activity of the human liver. Dr. Benjamin Ershoff conducted a study of the benefit of desiccated liver many years ago. He fed the product to rats for 12 weeks. He found that rats not fed liver could swim in cold water for about 13 minutes, while most rats fed the liver could swim for over two hours. That is quite a nutritional boost!

Price was particularly taken with the Neur people who had a special fondness for eating the liver of animals and considered it so sacred they would not touch it with human hands. He wrote, "I was particularly interested in their food habits both because of their high immunity to dental caries which approximated one hundred percent, and because of their physical development."

The bones and ligaments provide valuable minerals for construction of strong bones and molecules called glycosaminoglycans (glucosamine, chondroitin and hyaluronic acid) for healthy joints.

Many of these are available as supplements, but why not try and bolster the diet by consuming these parts of healthy animals?

A medical industry has been built around supplementing people with glandular extracts from animals. The principle is that "like cures like." Some supplement companies provide glandulars from different tissues with the idea that these supplements will support comparable glands in humans.

We also tend to discard the fat of animals. The fat of a grass fed animal will supply the valuable omega-3 fatty acids. Even cholesterol is an essential nutrient. Cholesterol received negative press when researchers fed oxidized or rancid cholesterol to laboratory rabbits. They developed blockage of the arteries. Subsequent studies conducted in the 1970's have shown that cholesterol which is not oxidized is 500 times less atherogenic than the oxidized product.

Consuming the flesh of sick animals is not going to make an individual healthy. We can only be as healthy as the food we eat.

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Milk

It is often argued that milk was designed for baby animals and cow's milk is not fit food for human beings. It cannot be denied that there is a good deal of allergy to dairy products. On the other hand, dairy products are champions when it comes to nutritional content.

Roger Williams wrote, "Those who have experimented with feeding animals milk and milk products know that its value as a well-rounded food is outstanding and difficult to match with any other common food. Almost any animal consuming a diet free from milk or milk products will have its condition improved if some milk is added to its diet. This effect is brought about not only by the minerals and vitamins, which are extraordinarily well balanced, but also by the excellent balance of the amino acids in milk proteins. Proteins with nutritionally excellent amino acid makeup are hard to come by."

Certified raw milk is a wonderful food. The inherent nutritional value of the food is not damaged by heat and the certification process tests for disease causing organisms.

Most of the milk sold today is every bit as much a product of commerce as white sugar and flour. One of the worst scams ever perpetrated upon the American population was the pasteurization and homogenization of milk. Another scam has been the emphasis on nonfat dairy products. All of these changes deteriorate the quality and health benefits of dairy products.

Pasteurized Milk

When the pasteurization of milk was being introduced in the 1920's, it was accompanied by attempts to outlaw the sale of raw milk. At this time doctors and scientists generally recognized the superiority of raw milk. The following is a quote from the decision of a Missouri judge in a 1926 attempt to ban raw milk:

"It was shown that doctors generally require raw milk for ailing babies and children; that children who could not flourish on pasteurized milk usually improved in health and flourished on raw milk. There was other evidence to show that one reason for the satisfactory healthfulness of raw milk is that it increases the vitality and resistance of a child because it is easier to assimilate; that the destruction of pathogenic germs by pasteurization was more than counterbalanced by the superior quality of raw milk."

The judge also noted that practical observation by both parents and professionals substantiated the notion that raw milk was superior to pasteurized milk. The research of Francis M. Pottenger, Jr. further illustrates the inferiority of heated dairy products.

Catherine Shanahan discusses the superiority of raw milk at length. She suggests that the casein protein in raw milk clumps around the most digestible form of calcium phosphate. This delicate clumping structure prevents sugar in the milk from destroying the essential amino acids. Heat breaks up this complex structure knocking out the calcium phosphate and causing the casein to form a tight, hard knot resistant to digestion and allergy provoking.

Homogenized Milk

Homogenization forces milk through tiny holes under intense pressure breaking the fat particles into a smaller size but also changing their structure. The fat in milk is normally surrounded by a lipoprotein membrane similar to the membrane around the cells of the body. This phospholipid membrane prevents fat globules from combining with one another. The membrane contains proteins which make the fat resistant to bacterial attack while sending a message to the digestive tract that the contents are a food and not a foreign invader. This structure also allows the digestion of milk without the secretion of bile by the gallbladder.

The calcium phosphate in processed milk combines with the fatty acids to form a kind of soap. This is called saponification. This soapy substance is irritating to the digestive tract of many people.

Processed milks have only half to one sixth the bioavailable minerals present in raw milk.

Xanthine oxidase is poorly absorbed from raw milk, but is readily absorbed from homogenized milk. Once released into the body this enzyme can contribute to heart disease and asthma.

Ultra High Temperature

Powdered milks are often powdered using high temperatures. These milks are deficient in lysine as a result of the heat applied to them. Feeding this milk to rats caused rampant tooth decay.

One of the recent innovations in milk processing is UHT milk (this stands for ultra high temperature). UHT milk can be shipped in unrefrigerated trucks and can sit on a shelf for months without spoiling. Most bacteria would die trying to live on it due to its poor nutritional value. When milk is heated above 191 degrees Farenheit the number of white blood cells begin rising in the digestive tract as the body treats the milk like a lethal foreign invader. UHT milk is heated to 300 degrees Farenheit.

Fat Free or Low Fat

Americans have been convinced that fat free milk is healthier than whole milk. Dr. Roger Williams contested the notion that milk fat contributes to heart disease and argued that a low fat diet was more likely to cause heart disease. He wrote,

"These data suggest that adequate whole milk, including the butterfat, and essential trace minerals actually protect against cardiovascular damage. This, we have noted, concurs with other findings of the African tribes who live on a diet of raw whole cow's and goat's milk, a 60 to 65 percent butterfat diet, yet are virtually free of coronary heart disease....not only was the saturated butterfat of whole milk not to blame, but its inclusion in the diet was vital to the health of the cardiovascular system. It was the lack of adequate nutrients in a diet totally *free* of fat that caused medial atherosclerosis and renal damage. Butterfat, itself, appears to protect *against* atherosclerosis!"

Cultured Dairy Products

One of the most common problems with consumption of dairy products is intolerance to the lactose or milk sugar in such products. These individuals lack the digestive enzymes (lactases) involved in breakdown of milk sugar (lactose). The most common indication of lactose intolerance is intestinal gas and bloating after consuming milk.

One way around this difficulty is to culture dairy products. Cultured dairy products have greatly reduced quantities of lactose and are often well-tolerated by those who can not drink milk.

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1271 HIGH STREET, AUBURN, CA 95603
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Most traditional cultures not only consumed raw milk, but they also converted a good deal of their milk into kefir, yogurt, cheese, buttermilk, and similar products. These cultured milk products contained living bacteria of a highly beneficial nature. The bacteria also converted many of the nutrients in the milk into a more digestible form.

The healthiest cultured dairy products contain living cultures of beneficial organisms. Extensive research has been conducted on traditionally cultured dairy products. The most beneficial organisms in these cultured products have been isolated and are available in probiotic supplements. Such supplements are considered by many physicians and nutritionists to be among the top four or five most generally beneficial of all supplements.

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BIOACCUMULATION

The bioaccumulation of toxins in the food chain is probably the best argument for vegetarianism today. I do not think that vegetable foods are inherently superior in their nutritional value for human beings. Animal foods often provide the same nutrients in a more concentrated form. Vegans are at increased risk of some nutrient deficiencies (eg. iodine, vitamin B12).

Vegetables are at the bottom of the food chain which means that they will often have lower levels of toxins than animal foods.

It is worth the time and expense to avoid toxins in both plant and animal foods. This generally means purchasing organic foods or finding a farmer who does not use toxic chemicals.

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