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RATIONAL EVIDENCE-BASED COMMENT FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS. WE SAY EXACTLY WHAT WE THINK

Misleading Headlines: "Starchy carbs, not a Paleo diet, advanced the human race" [really?]. **Modern Foragers:** The Kitava Study. **News Flashes:** Paleo Diet best for Diabetes. **Recipe:** Cashew Pudding. **Q&A:** Bone Broth; Bitter Almond Safety. **News Flashes:** Why Peoples of Developing Nations are Liable to Diabetes; Humans have Stomach Acidity like Scavengers. **Human Behavior:** Female Bosses Trouble Men. **Unintended Consequences:** Why Fish-oil Supplements Work Poorly. **Lectures:** Palm Springs; Oxford UK.

Misleading Headlines

"Starchy carbs, not a Paleo diet, advanced the human race" [really?]

Q. This is the newspaper article: <http://bit.ly/1VUp2ws>. I would love your input!

A. This is another egregious example of newspaper headline distortion just to create controversy and sell newspapers. The casualties are thinking people who are knocked off balance.

The newspaper article refers to a scientific paper [1] written with Professor Jennie Brand-Miller as one of the authors.



Jennie Brand-Miller

'GI Jennie' (as she is affectionately known) is a doughty pioneer of LOW GLYCEMIC DIETS. She has countless scientific articles on GI (glycemic index) to her name plus a number of books, of which the last is 'The Low Glycemic Diet'.

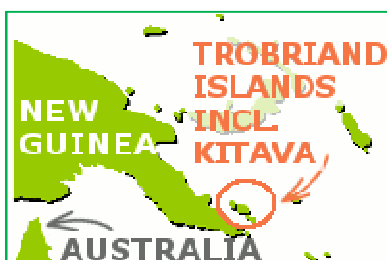
So what is going on? What is all this about starch suddenly? As usual, the truth is not what you are led to believe and is much more nuanced.

Her article is a good read and a useful review of the state of knowledge concerning the ancestral (or Paleo) diet.

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Modern Foragers

The Kitava Study



Who? Kitava? This is a remote tropical island, part of New Guinea's Trobriand Archipelago, to the north of Australia.

In the words of Swedish anthropologist Staffan Lindeberg, "it has one of the last populations on Earth with dietary habits matching those of Homo sapiens in its original habitat" [2].

In my view this is an exaggeration: the Kitavans "lived exclusively on root vegetables (yam, sweet potato, taro, tapioca), fruit (banana, papaya, pineapple, mango, guava, water melon, pumpkin), vegetables, fish and coconuts". This is the diet of a lush tropical island, not that of a harsh and austere savanna landscape.

Even so, we can learn much from the Kitavan's excellent state of health. They have no stroke or heart disease and they stay in good shape for whole of their lives.

"The elderly (who can live up to 100 years) remain active up until the very end, when they begin to suffer fatigue for a few days and then die from some type of illness or rapid degeneration."

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News Flashes

Paleo Diet best for Diabetes

A clinical study was carried out on 29 patients who had diabetes and coronary heart disease [3].

Fourteen of the patients consumed an 'ancient' (Paleolithic, 'Old stone Age') diet eating lean meat, fish, fruit, vegetables, root vegetables and nuts, and avoiding grains, dairy foods and salt.

Fifteen patients followed a Mediterranean diet with whole-grain cereals, low-fat dairy products, fruit, vegetables and 'healthy' refined fats.

After twelve weeks, the blood sugar rise in response to carbohydrate intake was markedly lower in the Paleolithic group (-26%), while it barely changed in the Mediterranean group.

At the end of the study, all patients in the Paleolithic group had normal blood glucose.

The main difference between the groups was a much lower intake of grains and dairy products and a higher fruit intake in the Paleolithic group.

The researchers also observe that 'bioactive substances' in grains (e.g. wheat lectin) and dairy products (e.g. casein) interfere with the metabolism of carbohydrates and fat.

The authors remark: "'Healthy diets' based on wholegrain cereals and low-fat dairy products are only the SECOND BEST choice in the prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes. [Just so!]"

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Recipes

Cashew Pudding

Yield 2-4 servings

This recipe is so delicious that you will not be able to resist it. Experiment by adding cinnamon and other tasty enhancements to this recipe.

1 cup raw cashews (130 g, 4½ oz)
2 cups water or 'milk' of coconut or almond
2 tablespoons honey
1 tablespoon erythritol
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1/4 cup chia seeds (35 g, 1 'good' ounce)

1. Mix the cashews and water and blend on high speed in your mixer until smooth.*
2. Blend in the honey, erythritol and vanilla extract.
3. Mix in the chia seeds.
4. Pour the cashew mixture into a jar and shake very well.
5. Store in the fridge for up to 3 days.

*If you soak the cashews for several hours it will make for an even richer, creamier treat. Be sure to discard the soaking water.

Questions

Bone Broth

Q. *What is your take on bone broth? It seems to be big in part of the paleo community.*

A. Foragers delighted in breaking bones open and sucking out the marrow. However, they had no means of boiling up bones.

As far as I can see, the Paleo bone broth recipes do not go in for breaking up the bones first, which seems to me to defeat the object.

In spite of that, there is a bit of a Paleo fetish about bone broth: my view is that it is a positive thing, but not worth going to a lot of trouble over unless you get at the marrow as well.

Bitter Almond Safety

Q. *I've begun buying unpasteurized organic raw almonds imported from Spain but a few per bag taste very bitter. These, I understand, contain cyanide. This taste reminded me of apricot kernels I used to eat as a kid.*

And what about pasteurization, aflatoxin, and salmonella? Can pasteurization itself be unhealthy?

A. Almonds come in two varieties, sweet and bitter. Normally only sweet almonds are allowed for human consumption. One or two bitter ones in a bag is acceptable and probably not harmful.

Indeed bitterness (but not necessarily cyanide!) can be advantageous. See Dr Guenter Noell's article '*Bitterness is not all Bad*', [August 2005](#) [4].

With regard to contamination with aflatoxin (a nasty fungus) or salmonella (a nasty bacterium), this is where we have to have a touching faith in the integrity of those people operating the food chain.

But being pragmatic, we personally, do not let such considerations worry us. The same with California's pasteurization – unwanted, unloved but not a big deal.

As for apricot kernels, yes, as a kid you did run the risk of cyanide poisoning! See '*Apricot Kernel Cyanide*', [Feb 2004](#) [5]

News Flashes

Why Peoples of Developing Nations are Liable to Diabetes

Obesity and diabetes are rising fast amongst the middle classes of developing countries like India and China. Sure, increased prosperity and a richer food supply have something to do with it.

However, there is another phenomenon to consider: epigenetics – where the environment alters the way genes switch on and off. See

'*Ancestor's Lapses Visited on Us*', [Dec 2010](#) [6].

Basically, the ancestors of peoples of under-developed countries spent hundreds of generations in conditions of under nourishment. As a result, their genes have been switched on to store energy in times of plenty.

In a study on rats, the researchers found that, after 50 generations of food deprivation, the descendants were 8 TIMES more likely to develop diabetes when put on a normal diet [7].

Now that food is more plentiful, those same genes are active when there is no need. This is in contrast to Western populations whose epigenetics have had time to switch back to normal functioning.

My View? Through no fault of their own, hordes of people are now struggling with poor health just because of the way their ancestors lived.

Truly, with today's dysfunctional lifestyles, we are storing up immense difficulties for our descendants.

For more on transgenerational epigenetic effects, see:

- '*You are what your Mother ate*', [May 2005](#) [8]

- '*Paleo Denial – the Argument II*', [Dec 2012](#) [9].

Humans have Stomach Acidity like Scavengers



Hooded vulture

Researchers into scavenging species find that they have high stomach acid levels, chiefly to kill off harmful bugs [10].

However, they were surprised to find that humans have equally high stomach acid levels. As they say: "the acidic human stomach prevents frequent

colonization of the gut by large numbers of food-borne microbes, regardless of whether they are beneficial or pathogenic."

"Meanwhile, the literature shows that medical treatments -- from surgery to antacids -- can significantly alter the acidity in a human stomach."

"This raises significant questions about how humans have evolved, our species' relationship with food over time, and how modern changes in diet and medicine are affecting our stomachs, our gut microbes and -- ultimately -- our health."

My View? Foragers obtained much of their meat by scavenging. (*Deadly Harvest*, [Chapter 1](#), page 21 [11]). As anthropologist Pat Shipman observed, "Meat-eaters scavenge when they can and hunt when they must."

Moreover there are reports from the Eskimo to the Hadza, that they regularly eat putrefying meat, even if it makes them a little queasy [12].

So that leaves us with that hanging question: what mischief are we doing to ourselves by monkeying around with our stomach acidity? Is this seriously affecting the microbial profile in our colons?

Human Behavior

Female Bosses Trouble Men

According to research by the *Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, men feel threatened by female supervisors and act more assertively toward them than male bosses. [13].

"Self-assertive behavior by men toward female bosses could disrupt the workplace dynamics, stifle team cohesiveness and negatively affect team performance" says lead researcher Ekaterina Netchaeva.

My View? For most of human history, no one had a boss. It is actually demeaning for anyone to submit to the orders of someone else.

What about differences in male/female psyches? In forager times women would tend to work

together 'collegially'. (That is, they share collaboratively all decision-making and share responsibility collectively.)

In contrast, men would mostly work independently and competitively; they are not naturally team (or 'collegial') players.

However in each forager band a man would emerge who would be looked upon as suitable to take on leadership responsibilities for the whole band. He only held this position by consensus and he could readily find himself replaced.

Thinking about the modern workplace from a psychological point of view, we see that its arrangements cut across our savanna -bred natures. It is not surprising that it is the source of much stress and mental illness. I talk about this at length in: '**The Modern Workplace for Men and Women**', *Deadly Harvest*, [Chapter 8](#), p.204, and,

'*Stress of Jobs for the Boys II*', [Dec 2009](#) [14].

See also:

'*Jobless Husbands Seek Divorce*' [August 2011](#) [15].

'*Boss's Gender Impacts Stress*', [June 2011](#) [16]

'*Career Women Will Die Out*', [Oct 2007](#) [17].

Unintended Consequences

Why Fish-oil Supplements Work Poorly

As was first demonstrated with Eskimos some 50 years ago, a diet rich in oily fish gives them low blood pressure, low cholesterol levels, low levels of inflammation and no strokes, arteriosclerosis or heart disease. See '*Eskimo Health*' *Deadly Harvest*, [Ch 4](#), p 92 [18].

However, the puzzle is that when patients are dosed with fish-oil supplements, there seems to be little benefit.

Now I have been vociferous in pointing out that such supplementation is doomed to failure if nothing is done at the same time to reduce omega-6 intake, notably from vegetable oils like sunflower, safflower, peanut and corn.

However, there is another, unexpected factor. To my surprise, the manufacturers monkey around with the fish-oil before they put it in the supplement. They chemically detach the fatty acids on the triglyceride molecule from the glycerol backbone [19]. For how this works, see: '*Positive sources of omega-3*', [Nov 2012](#) [20].

They then concentrate these free fatty acids as 'ethyl-esters' which is how most synthetic fish oils are sold. Result? These synthetic fish oils are POORLY ABSORBED in the digestive tract.

My View? As ever, beware of short-cuts. There is no substitute for AUTHENTIC food!

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"Starchy carbs, not a Paleo diet, advanced the human race" [really?]



It also tries to open up a debate about the role of starches in the ancestral diet.

Jennie Brand-Miller points out that large brains need plentiful supplies of glucose to function properly – and that starch would be an obvious source. However, she also acknowledges that other sources would come from other carbohydrates both of plant origin (oligosaccharides, inulin, fruit sugars, honey and so forth) and animal origin (in the form of glycogen).

Moreover, the body is capable of making glucose from both fat stores and amino acid (protein) sources. Finally, in the case of glucose starvation, the brain uses ketone bodies to function. This state is deliberately induced by the so-called ketogenic diet – one which is totally free of starches and sugars but high in fat, see [April 2012](#) [21].

Interestingly, humans do have starch digestion enzymes so presumably they are preserved because starch is part of the ancestral diet. This is not surprising: starch is present in all

kinds of plant foods not normally considered 'starchy' – examples are various tree nuts, not to speak of chestnut which is relatively rich in starch, glycemic and not strictly Paleo.

Foragers would often roast nuts and tubers which suggests that they knew something instinctively: starch digestion enzymes only work efficiently on COOKED starch – so GI Jennie discusses the role of cooking in human evolution.

None of this is new...

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The Kitava Study



This parallels what happens with San, Hadza and other hunter-gatherers – but rare in Western societies where many years in ill-health at the end of life is the norm.

Comparing the Kitavan diet to that of Sweden, Lindeberg points out:

Less than 0.2% of the caloric intake came from Western food, such as edible fats, dairy products, sugar, cereals, and alcohol, compared with roughly 75% in Sweden.

The intake of vitamins, minerals and soluble fibre was therefore very high, while the total fat consumption was low, at about 20%, and salt intake is only a third of that in Sweden.

Due to the high level of coconut consumption, saturated fat (in the form of lauric acid) made up an equally large portion of the overall caloric intake as in Sweden but in Sweden the saturated fat is the more harmful palmitic acid.

My View? This study comes on the heels of studies of the TRADITIONAL ways of life on the blessed islands of Crete [22], Okinawa [23], and Sardinia [24]. Their (traditional) diets often vary from the Paleo ideal, but they share one thing in common: very low intakes of cereals, dairy, alcohol, sugar and refined oils.

That was then and, today of course, everything has changed and moved away from the traditional way of eating.

Also other lifestyle factors were important: hard, physically active

lives, with plenty of sunshine, good company and the absence of western stresses.

Today, regrettably, industrial Western eating habits have taken over in these islands, and their modern populations now suffer the same ill-health as the rest of us.

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Paleo Diet best for Diabetes

My View? This is one of the first clinical trials of the Paleo diet and it shows a clean pair of heels even to the Mediterranean diet!

These results echo those obtained by Professor Kerin O'Dea who cured diabetic aborigines by returning them to The Bush for seven weeks. See 'Food for Diabetics' [Aug 2013](#) [25].

Advance Notice

For details and updates:

<http://bit.ly/bond-event>.

LECTURE: (Open to the public) **January 20, 2016, Palm Springs Library, CA, USA**

LECTURE: (Open to the public) **March 16, 2016, Oxford, UK** For Speedwell Trust, Green-Templeton College, Oxford University.



Deadly Harvest: Geoff's latest work encapsulates current thinking on lifestyle anthropology. www.deadlyharvest.com



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