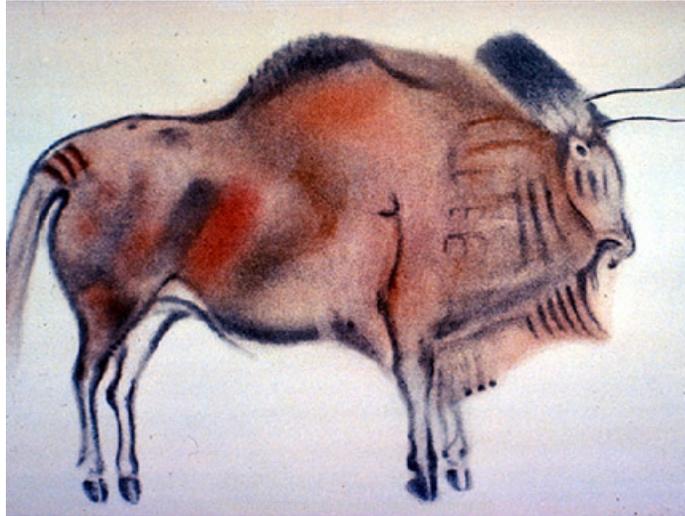


Diets from the Ancient Past

People are often interested in the newest developments in diet and nutrition. Sometimes new trends are linked to ancient ways of life. In the last few decades, people have looked to the past for secrets to good health. For example, the Mediterranean diet promotes eating a lot of fresh vegetables, whole grains, and olive oil. Another new program, called the caveman or Paleolithic diet, encourages people to eat like ancient hunter-gatherers. Followers of this diet say it can lead to better health. But is this new diet a fad or a balanced, healthy approach to eating?



A painting of a bison, found in the Altamira Caves of Spain, from around 12,000 BCE

The Caveman Diet

The caveman diet is based on what people think early humans ate. It consists of nearly all food that would be found by hunting, fishing, and gathering, so it is made up of foods that would not have been grown through agriculture. Instead, it is based on what people believe was eaten by the Upper Paleolithic hunter-gatherers, who lived from 40,000 to 10,000 years ago. These people typically lived where they could find food and water, and they often moved with the seasons or with the migrations of animals.

Not all people who follow the caveman diet eat exactly the same foods. In general, the diet consists of sources that are rich in protein. These include lean meats, wild game like deer or elk, eggs, seafood, shellfish, nuts, and seeds. In addition, the diet includes fruits, vegetables, and some natural oils. People who promote the caveman diet also stress that each of these foods should be eaten in the form possible. They encourage people to eat meat from animals that have been used on grass, not grain. They prefer to eat animals that have been allowed to graze in open fields.

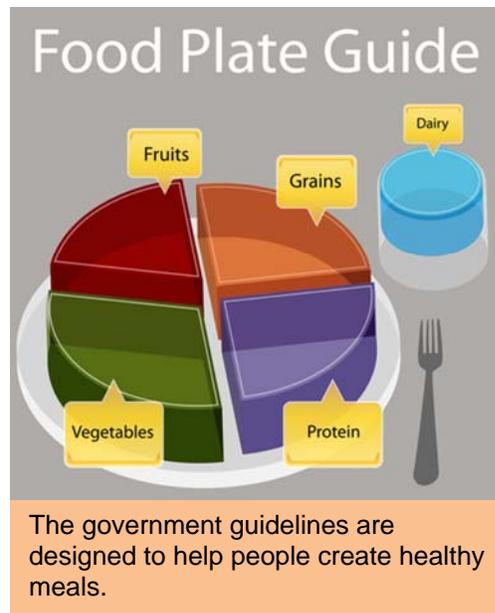
The caveman diet warns against eating many of the foods commonly found in the modern diet, especially the American diet. Those who support the caveman diet say people should avoid all dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese. They also say people should not eat grains, beans, soy products, peas, peanuts, starchy

vegetables, and products with salt or sugar. They believe people should avoid all processed foods like candy or chips. Eating this way, say supporters of the caveman diet, allows people to more closely follow the diet of our Paleolithic ancestors.

Benefits of the Caveman Diet

Followers of the caveman diet say it improves health because it counters the effects of eating farm products and pre-made foods. They believe that diets based on modern foods have led to high levels of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. They also note that modern hunter-gatherer societies, like the native peoples of Australia and Africa, had low levels of these diseases until they adopted modern diets.

Supporters claim the caveman diet is closer to what humans should eat because of their genetic makeup. They believe that humans simply were not made to eat grains, which have to be cooked to be digested. They also think that humans should not drink cow's milk or eat dairy products. Animals and grains were not domesticated during the Paleolithic ~~YU~~ so supporters of the diet ~~trnfo~~ eat foods that a Paleolithic person could have found in the wild.



People who support the caveman diet also stress that it is important to exercise like hunter-gatherers. Because they were always on the move, early humans burned the calories they ate. That means that they were lean and did not suffer from diseases that are related to obesity and inactive lifestyles.

Questions About the Caveman Diet

Although the caveman diet has its followers, there are doubters, too. Some nutritionists and scientists believe that a diet based so heavily on protein can cause problems, including high cholesterol levels. Also, they note that milk and dairy foods are excellent sources of calcium. That means that someone following the caveman diet needs to find other sources of calcium. Some also believe that any diet that cuts out whole grains and dairy is not a balanced approach to eating. Many believe a balanced diet is based on the government guidelines. These guidelines, called MyPlate, show people how to create a healthy meal with different food groups.

Some scientists question the claim that eating like a hunter-gatherer will increase health into old age. They argue that the lifestyles of hunter-gatherers should not be applied to humans living in today's very different world. For example, since hunter-gatherers were not likely to live past the age of 30, they did not become old enough to contract many diseases that are common today. Since people today live longer lives and suffer from more age-related illnesses, they need modern diets to help them adapt.

Still others believe that humans are extremely adaptable. They claim that for hundreds of thousands of years, people have been eating what they found close by. Those who lived near water ate a diet based on fish. Those who lived on the plains ate wild game and plants. Some European cultures have been eating a grain-based diet for at least 10,000 years. Scientists recently discovered evidence that eating grains goes back even farther than that. They found ancient grinding tools that were 23,000 years old that contained traces of barley and wheat. There are cultures in Asia whose diets are basically meatless. These Asian people have some of the lowest rates of diabetes and heart disease in the world. So, eating a meat-heavy diet is not the only way to prevent diabetes and heart disease.

So which side is right? Should people eat like ancient hunter-gatherers? Chances are that people will keep searching for ways to become healthy and fit through special diets. It is possible that what they will find is what most scientists and nutritionists, as well as parents, have always recommended—eating a balanced diet is the key to good health.

After reading the passage, answer the following questions:

- 1. What are the main foods eaten in the caveman diet?**
 - A. vegetables**
 - B. whole grains**
 - C. milk and dairy products**
 - D. meat, fish, eggs, and nuts**

- 2. Which foods are missing from the caveman diet?**
 - A. meats and eggs**
 - B. fish and seafood**
 - C. dairy and grains**
 - D. fruits and vegetables**

- 3. What do scientists and nutritionists recommend for a healthy diet?**
 - A. a diet based on plants**
 - B. a diet based on raw foods**
 - C. a diet based on protein**
 - D. a diet based on a wide variety of foods**

- 4. What is your opinion on the caveman diet? Is it positive or negative?
Explain your opinion with evidence from the reading passage.**