



## Extreme Nutrition: The Diet of Eskimos\*

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- MINISTRONE SOUP

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Rumors have since circulated that traditional Eskimos have lived free of heart disease, cancer, and most other chronic diseases affecting western civilizations these days. Research published in the mid-1970s tried to explain this "Eskimo paradox" of living healthy with very few plant foods, on a high-fat, high-cholesterol, no-dietary-fiber diet. The omega-3 fish fats were noted as the miracle ingredient providing protection. Dietetic and medical experts have uncritically accepted this theory in the face of libraries filled with incriminating evidence to the contrary. They tell patients to eat more fish, poultry, and even red meat—like the Eskimos – and plenty of fish oil - in order to stay healthy.

### **Pushing the Nutritional Envelope**

Hunted animals, including birds, caribou, seals, walrus, polar bears, whales, and fish provided all the nutrition for the Eskimos for at least 10 months of the year. And in the summer season people gathered a few plant foods such as berries, grasses, tubers, roots, stems, and seaweeds. Frozen snow-covered lands were unfit for the cultivation of plants. Animal flesh was, by necessity, the only food available most of the time.

The fat, not the protein, from animal foods provided most of the 3,100 calories required daily for these active people. Plants are the primary source of all carbohydrates, including digestible sugars and non-digestible dietary fibers. Eating raw meat indirectly provided Eskimos with enough carbohydrates in the form of glycogen (found in the muscles and liver of animals) to meet their necessary nutrient requirements and keep them out of a starvation condition called ketosis. Muscle tissue contains almost no calcium, and as a result the daily intake was about 120 mg/day versus the 800 mg and more commonly

recommended for good health. Plants (not people) synthesize Vitamin C, yet the Eskimo was able to avoid scurvy with the 30 mg of vitamin C consumed daily found in land and sea animals. Recommendations for vitamin C are 60 mg/day and higher daily. Low levels of sunlight, and preformed vitamin D from fish, met the "sunshine D vitamin" requirement for Eskimo health. By the grace of environmental design, Nature made sure there was just enough nutrition for the Eskimo to survive.

Percent of Calories from Macronutrients from Various Diets				
	Eskimo	American	McDougall	Kempner
Fat	50	35	8	5
Protein	35	15	12	5
Carbohydrate	15	40	80	90

The McDougall Diet offers an ideal nutritional balance for the prevention of and long-term recovery from diseases caused by the American Diet. [The Kempner Diet](#) of rice and fruit takes diet-therapy one step further by allowing even greater recovery to bodies that have been burdened by excess protein and fat.

### There Is No Eskimo Paradox

The human being is designed to thrive on a diet of starches, vegetables and fruits. The Eskimo experience serves as a testament to the miraculous strengths and adaptability of our bodies. We can survive on raw and cooked meat, but we thrive on starches, vegetables and fruits. These hardy people survived living at the edge of the nutritional envelope, but not in good health. Here are some of the health costs they paid:

#### Eskimos Suffer from Atherosclerosis

Claims that Eskimos were free of heart (artery) disease are untrue. A thorough review of the evidence concludes that "Eskimos have a similar prevalence of CAD (coronary artery disease) as non-Eskimo populations, they have excessive mortality due to cerebrovascular strokes, their overall mortality is twice as high as that of non-Eskimo populations, and their life expectancy is approximately 10 years shorter than the Danish population."

Mummified remains of Eskimos dating back 2,000 years have shown extensive hardening of the arteries throughout their brains, hearts and limbs; as a direct consequence of following a carnivorous diet of birds, caribou, seals, walrus, polar bears, whales, and fish. The June 1987 issue of National Geographic magazine carried an article about two Eskimo women, one in

her twenties and the other in her forties, frozen for five centuries in a tomb of ice. When discovered and medically examined they both showed signs of severe osteoporosis and also suffered extensive atherosclerosis, "probably the result of a heavy diet of whale and seal blubber."

### **Eskimos Suffer from Severe Bone Loss**

Their low-calcium diet and lack of sunshine (vitamin D) are only minor factors contributing to the extensive osteoporosis found in recent and ancient Eskimos. Alaskan Eskimos older than age 40 have been found to have a 10% to 15% greater deficit in bone mineral density compared to Caucasians in the US. This research published in 1974 on 107 elderly people concluded, "Aging bone loss, which occurs in many populations, has an earlier onset and greater intensity in the Eskimos. Nutritional factors of high protein, high nitrogen, high phosphorus, and low calcium intakes maybe implicated."

Protein, and especially animal protein, consumed in excess of our needs places serious burdens on the body. The liver and kidneys work hard to process the excess protein and excrete its byproducts along with the urine. As a result of this extra work, Eskimos have been reported to have an enlarged liver while living on meat, and to produce larger than average volumes of urine in order to excrete the byproducts of protein metabolism. The bones also play a role in managing excess animal protein (acidic by nature) by neutralizing large amounts of dietary acids. In this process bone structure and bone mineral content are lost through the kidney system, depleting the bones into a condition called osteoporosis.

### **Eskimos Are Infected with Parasites**

Diseases of animals are readily transmitted to humans when eaten. One example is trichinosis (an infection with the roundworm *Trichinella spiralis*), which is found in about 12% of older Eskimos; a result of eating raw and infected walrus, seal, and polar bear meat. In most cases this parasite infestation causes no symptoms, but illness and death can result.

### **Meat-derived Chemical Pollution**

Since the 1970s the diet of the Eskimo has contained high levels of toxic, organic pollutants and heavy metals. These lipophilic chemicals are attracted to and concentrated in the fatty-tissues of land and sea animals. As a direct result of the traditional Eskimo diet (now contaminated by industry wastes), the bodies of these Arctic people contain the highest human concentrations of environmental chemicals found anywhere on Earth: "levels so extreme that the breast milk and tissues of some Greenlanders could be classified as hazardous waste." Eskimo women have been found to have levels of PCBs in their breast milk five to ten times higher than women in southern Canada. These chemicals cause and promote many forms of cancer and cause brain diseases, including Parkinson's disease.

## Nutrition Has Gone Downhill for the Eskimo

The notion that consuming meat, fish, and fish oil will promote health and healing has captured the attention of the scientific community in large part because of the misinterpretation\*\* of the Eskimo experience. But life has gotten worse for the Eskimo. Over the past 50 years their traditional diet has been further modified with the addition of western foods. Rather than using a hook, spear, or club to catch their meal, as in the past, people living in this part of the world use the "green lure" (the dollar bill) and catch their meals through an open car window at the local fast-food restaurant. Obesity, type-2 diabetes, tooth decay, and cancers of the breast, prostate, and colon have been added to the Eskimo's traditional health problems of artery disease, bone loss, and infectious diseases.

People living in the frozen north these days have heated homes and drive around in comfortable SUVs. The challenging environment their ancestors barely survived through required a carnivorous diet. Those days of needing 3100 calories a day to counter the freezing cold and hunt for dinner are gone. The idea that current epidemics of obesity and sickness in these Northern people would be best fixed by returning to the old ways of carnivorous diet would not work unless they also returned to living in igloo homes and hunted their lands for every meal. Physicians and dietitians now caring for these people suffering from the western diet with the addition of too much traditional food (ancestral meat) should be prescribing a starch-based diet to help them lose excess weight and cure common dietary diseases.

\*The term "Eskimo" comes from a Native American word that may have meant "eater of raw meat." The word "Eskimo" has come to be considered offensive, especially in Canada. Many prefer the name "Inuit," which means "the people" or "real people." However, "Eskimo" is the term used in the scientific and historical literature and will be used here.

\*\*Misinterpretation is easy because:

- 1) People love to hear good news about their bad habits.
- 2) Nutritional, even when false and harmful, is used to sell meat, fish, and other foods.
- 3) The media love headlines that sell their products, like "The Eskimo Diet proves the healthful benefits of meat."

## Featured Recipes

### OVERNIGHT MULTIGRAIN CEREAL

Prep Time: 2 minutes

Soaking Time: overnight

Cooking Time: 8 minutes (microwave)

Serves: 2



**Ingredients:**

2/3 cup steel cut oats  
1/4 cup pearly barley  
2 1/2 cups water  
1 sliced banana

**Instructions:**

Place the oats, barley and water in a 2 quart microwave-safe bowl. Mix well, cover and refrigerate overnight. Uncover bowl, place in microwave and cook at high power for 4 minutes. Stir and cook for 4 minutes longer. Divide into 2 bowls and top with sliced banana. This is a fast way to cook steel-cut oats, resulting in a delicious, chewy breakfast combo.

Hint: This may also be cooked on the stovetop. Place the soaked grains and water into a saucepan and cook uncovered over low heat until the water is absorbed, about 12-15 minutes.

**MCVEGGIE BURGERS**

Prep Time: 30 minutes  
Baking Time: 30 minutes  
Makes 16 burgers

**Ingredients:**

20 ounces firm water-packed tofu, drained well  
12.3 ounces silken tofu  
10 ounce package frozen chopped spinach, thawed

1/2 cup water  
1 large onion, chopped  
1/2 pound mushrooms, chopped  
3 cloves garlic, pressed  
3 cups quick oats  
2 tablespoons soy sauce  
2 tablespoons vegetarian Worcestershire sauce  
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
1 teaspoon paprika  
1 teaspoon lemon juice  
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper



## Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place both kinds of the tofu in a food processor and process until fairly smooth, stopping several times to scrape down the bowl. Transfer processed tofu to a large bowl and set aside. Drain the spinach well and press any excess water out with your hands. (Spinach should be very dry.) Set aside. Place the water, onion, mushrooms and garlic in a large non-stick frying pan. Cook, stirring frequently until onion has softened and all liquid has been absorbed, about 10-12 minutes. Set aside. Add the oats and the seasonings to the tofu mixture and mix well. Add the spinach and mix in well, using your hands. Add the onion mixture and continue to mix with your hands until all ingredients are well combined. Take a small amount and form into a ball shape (a bit larger than a golf ball), then flatten into a burger-sized patty about 1/4 inch thick and place on a non-stick baking sheet or use parchment paper. Repeat this process until all the mixture is used. (It will help to lightly moisten your hands several times during this process.) Bake for 20 minutes, then flip over and bake an additional 10 minutes. Cool on racks after removing from the oven. Serve in a whole wheat bun with your favorite condiments.

Hint: These may be prepared ahead and refrigerated or frozen for future use. They reheat well in the microwave, in the oven, or on a grill or griddle.

## MINISTRONE SOUP

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cooking Time: 3 hours

Serves: 8

### Ingredients:

1 1/4 cups dried red kidney beans

8 cups water

1 onion, chopped

1 teaspoon minced garlic

1 stalk celery, sliced

1 carrot, sliced

6-8 fingerling potatoes, cubed

1/2 cups fresh green beans, cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces

1 cup tomato sauce

1/4 cup parsley flakes

1 1/2 teaspoons basil

1 1/2 teaspoons oregano

1/2 teaspoon marjoram



1/4 teaspoon celery seed  
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper  
1 15- ounce can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed  
1 15- ounce can chopped tomatoes  
1 zucchini, chopped  
1 1/2 cups shredded cabbage  
1/2 cup uncooked whole wheat elbows

#### Instructions:

Place the beans in a large pot with water to cover. Bring to a boil, cook for 2 minutes, turn off heat and let rest for 1 hour. (To eliminate this step, soak beans overnight.) Drain off water. Add onion, garlic and 8 cups of fresh water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and cook for 1 hour. Add celery, carrot, potatoes, green beans, tomato sauce and all the seasonings. Return to a boil, reduce heat and cook for 45 minutes. Add the garbanzo beans, canned tomatoes and zucchini. Cook for another 30 minutes. Then add the cabbage and pasta and cook for an additional 30 minutes. This is our favorite vegetable soup. It makes a wonderful meal with a loaf of fresh bread. It also reheats well and we like to have it for several lunches during the week.

Hint: I have many varieties of minestrone that I make throughout the fall and winter months, but this one is our favorite. You may use any type of uncooked pasta that you like, we also like spaghetti broken into 2 inch pieces in this soup. To change the flavor of this soup a bit, stir in a tablespoon or two (or more) of oil free pesto.