

Food and Fitness



Was Man's Diet More Nutritious in the "Good Old Days"?

Did vegetables and fruits pack more nutrients then? Has our soil become nutritionally depleted leading to poorer quality produce? Is organically grown food more nutritious? Were food choices more healthful long ago? Should we return to the way of eating of our ancestors in the stone age? These are questions frequently posed by today's health conscious consumer.



Agronomists, or soil experts, say the possibility does exist that soil could become depleted. If farmland is over-used through intense cultivation and the nutrients are not replenished this could happen. However, farmers typically use either organic or chemical fertilizers to replace depleted nutrients.



While fertilizers can replace lost nutrients some sources claim that chemical fertilizers enhance rapid growth of crops, thereby not allowing fruits and vegetables enough time in the soil to develop full nutrient potential.

In a study reported in the December 2004 Journal of the American College of Nutrition Donald Davis reported "finding reliable declines in the amount of protein, calcium, phosphorus, iron, riboflavin and vitamin C over the past half century" in 43 differ-

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Happy Easter!

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Websites of interest:

- cdc.gov/nutrition
- paleodietandliving.com
- aicr.org
- realcajuncooking.com
- choosemyplate.gov

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Spring into Greens!

Green vegetables, that is! At last! Spring is once more upon us! Let's chase those winter blues away with a taste of hot, spicy Cajun food from the South. Or is it actually

food from the North? Although this cuisine is considered to be

"Southern" its roots are in our neighboring country, Canada.

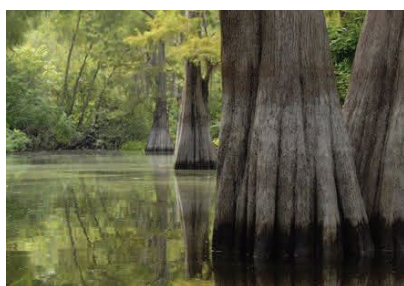
Cajun cuisine (or *Cuisine Acadienne*) is the style of cooking named for the French-speaking Acadian or "Cajun" immigrants deported by the British in 1755 from Acadia, Canada to the region of Louisiana now called Acadiana.

Approximately 6,000 Acadians refused to swear allegiance to the British flag because "they [were] most inflexi-

bly devoted to France and the "Romish Religion..."

www.blupete.com/Hist/NovaScotiaBk1/Part6/Ch17.htm

According to this history of



Nova Scotia, Acadians disembarked at the various ports of the English colonies. Some, if not by boat then by foot, made their

way through the territories we know today as the state of Maine and the Canadian province of New Brunswick.

Many continued their journey south, ending in the warm and hospitable climate of the Louisiana Territory. Many

settled around bodies of water in small communities that shared their religious convictions. After their establishment in Louisiana the

Cajuns developed their own dialect and a vibrant culture that revolves around music, storytelling, a bit of superstition and a distinctive cuisine.

Cajun cuisine could be called "rustic" because locally available ingredients predominate, and preparation is simple. An authentic Cajun meal is usually a three-pot affair, with one pot dedicated to the main dish, one dedicated to steamed rice, and the third containing whatever vegetables are plentiful or available.

Ground cayenne & fresh black pepper are also used often as spices.



(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cajun_cuisine)

In the culture of South Louisiana, the aromatic vegetables bell pepper, onion, and celery are called the "trinity" of Creole and Cajun cuisines. Research this term and you will find some variations on



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Spring into Greens/Was Man's Diet More Nutritious?

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what ingredients compromise this threesome. (Some refer to it as the “trinity times two”, adding garlic, green onion, and parsley as essential for flavor.) Roughly chopped and combined in cooking, this mix calls to mind the use of the *mire poix* in traditional French cuisine which blends



diced onion, celery, and carrots.

This month's recipe corner features a variation of the traditional Cajun gumbo. While gumbo is usually made as a hearty soup with chicken, seafood or sausage, Gumbo Z'herbes, when made with vegetable broth instead of chicken broth, is a vegetarian version, often served in the Lenten season preceding Easter.

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ent fruits and vegetables. He attributed these declines in nutritional value to efforts to improve growth rate, size and pest resistance of crops by farmers.

Some sources say that foods grown organically may have 40-58% more of some nutrients such as vitamin C, zinc, iron, and polyphenols. When crops are organically fertilized bacteria in the soil must first act upon organic matter to make the nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium available. This would indeed require more time to produce the same nutrients from the organic fertilizer that are readily available to soil from chemical fertilizers.

It appears that our biggest health risk with regard to vegetables and fruits continues to be that we just don't eat enough of them. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that only 32.5% of adults meet the

target of 2 or more fruits and 3 or more vegetables daily. The American Institute for Cancer Research recommends that 2/3 of your plate be filled with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension recommends 4 fruit servings and 4-5 vegetables servings daily.

Tips to increase vegetable and fruit consumption:

- Keep bags of frozen vegetables handy for a quick addition to any meal.
- Have a fresh, raw salad every lunch and dinner. Vary the ingredients.
- Add cut up fruit to salads.
- Add berries or banana to dry cereal or oatmeal.
- Add green grapes to chicken salad.
- Add pineapple and mandarin orange sections to coleslaw.
- Increase portion sizes of vegetables while shrinking meat or chicken portion!!!

Recipe Corner

Gumbo Z'herbes

(from the French phrase *des herbes* or gumbo “of grasses”)

“First, you make a roux...”

½ cup olive oil

¾ cup flour

Many Cajun recipes begin with a roux, but **every** gumbo begins this way!

1 bunch mustard greens

1 small head cabbage

1 bunch or bag baby spinach leaves

1 bunch kale

1 bunch parsley

1 bunch green onions

1 red bell pepper, chopped

3 ribs celery, chopped

2 small white onions, chopped

3 pods garlic, minced

2-3 quarts chicken or vegetable broth

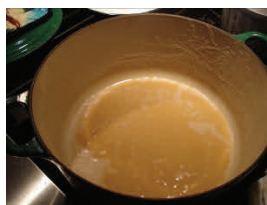
2 bay leaves

1 tsp. ground cayenne pepper

1 tsp. dried thyme

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Gumbo Filé (ground sassafras leaves which add flavor and thicken the gumbo)



For roux-making cast iron cookware is a must due to its heat-retention characteristics. A 7-quart pot is big enough to contain this finished gumbo.

Heat the oil in the cast iron pot over medium-high heat. When a tiny pinch of flour dropped into the oil sizzles, vigorously whisk in the flour, continuing to stir until all lumps are gone. Because of the simplicity of this gumbo, I like to use extra flour. A thicker roux creates a silkier gumbo in the end. The extra flour can add texture in the absence of seafood or meat.

At this point, switch from a whisk to a spatula or flat-ended spoon. A wooden implement is a good choice, as it won't absorb heat from the pot or roux, keeping your hand safely cool during the long stirring.

Keep stirring; over the next 12-15 minutes the starches in the flour will cook and caramelize. At first,

you'll see bubbles forming and the roux will look a little like pancake batter. Keep stirring. Don't answer the phone; don't text anyone. Stay committed. **STIR.**

After 7 or 8 minutes, the flour's texture will change a bit. The mixture will no longer be pasty, and it will darken. A light, nutlike, toasted aroma wafts up from the pot; the texture will thin a little, and stirring is easier. Keep stirring. Enjoy your “roux facial” of vapors rising from the pot.



At the 10-12 minute mark, stirring is key. The roux's texture changes again. It is granular, noticeably thicker, and no oil separates at the edges. The color is much darker – past “peanut butter” and into dark caramel. Make it as dark as you like.



Continue the gumbo by

Recipe Corner

prepping an odd number of leafy greens. Folklore holds that an even number used in the gumbo is unlucky. Seven is the usual number. For this batch, we use leafy mustard, cabbage, spinach, kale and flat-leaf parsley. Other commonly used greens include beet tops, carrot tops, or turnip greens.



Wash the greens well, and tear out any tough central ribs. About 6 quarts of torn greens flavors 4 to 6 quarts of gumbo.



Quickly stir in the chopped onions to arrest the roux's browning. Cook the onions in the roux for about 5-10 minutes. The roux will stick to the onions, which will begin to brown at the edges. Next, stir in the chopped bell peppers and celery. Cook,



stirring often, until the veggies begin to soften. Then, stir in three cloves of garlic, finely minced.

Now, add two to three quarts of room temperature chicken or vegetable broth (depends on the size of your pot) and as many of the washed, torn greens as will fit into the pot. Put the lid on and cook over medium heat for 15 minutes, or until the greens have wilted sufficiently to accommodate the remaining greens.

Once all of the greens are stuffed into the pot, add 1 whole bay leaf, black pepper, and cayenne pepper. Stir the seasonings into the simmering greens. Add one more bay leaf, crushed lightly, and the dried thyme to the mix-



ture. Cover the pot, and cook the greens at least an hour, stirring occasionally.

Once the greens are tender, stir in the chopped parsley and chopped green onions. The juice of a lemon is nice, too. Add the salt, pepper, a few shakes of cayenne pepper, and simmer for an additional half hour.

If the gumbo is too thick for your taste, add a little water. If it is too thin,



uncover and simmer for an additional 1/2 hour. Serve over hot, cooked long-grain

rice. Sprinkle a little filé atop each bowl, or pass the filé at the table.

(A version of this recipe appears at <http://bouillie.us/2009/02/25/lenten-gumbo-zherbes-and-how-to-make-a-roux/>)



Recipe Corner

Smothered Green Beans

1 lb. fresh green beans
2 Tablespoons olive oil



1 onion, sliced thinly
½ cup chicken broth
Salt to taste, if desired
Black pepper, freshly ground

To prepare fresh beans, wash, snap the ends off and rinse. Place olive oil and chopped onion in a heavy skillet. Cook on medium-high heat. Stir to caramelize the onions. The onions are perfect when they start turning brownish in color. Be careful not to burn them!

Add green beans, ½ cup chicken broth or water, salt, and pepper. Turn heat to medium and stir. Cover, allowing green beans to cook. Leave covered for 20

minutes, stirring occasionally. Add more broth if necessary. Check often so as not to burn the beans!

Recipe modified slightly from Daphne Olivier @ www.my-food-coach.com

Maque Choux or Cajun Corn

4 ears fresh corn
2 medium sized tomatoes



2 Tablespoons olive oil
1 small white onion, chopped
½ red bell pepper, chopped
2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
½ cup chicken broth

Remove husks from corn and cut from cob with a large sharp knife. Set aside while preparing other vegetables. Boil 2 cups water and drop tomatoes into hot water for just a minute. Remove from boiling water and take off the skins. Cut tomatoes into small pieces and remove most of the seeds.

In a 1-2 quart saucepan, heat olive oil and add the trinity—chopped onion, bell pepper and garlic. Sauté these vegetables for a few minutes then reduce heat. Add corn, chicken broth and tomatoes.

Cook on low heat for about 30 minutes. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste if desired.



Paleo What???

Recently there has been a surge of interest in what we can call a "paleo experience" (paleo is short for Paleolithic or early Stone Age times). "Paleo" dieting has received much attention. So, in the spirit of the cave man, let's think about "paleo" exercise.

Frankly speaking, Alley Oop probably didn't pump iron and go for daily runs with the goal of preventing heart disease. He more likely stayed active and strong in order to be able to outrun the predators who were trying to eat him. You might say his very life depended upon it!

With the advent of modern technology our lives have changed dramatically, but the need for fitness has not. Human bodies were made to move. Moving is part of living. It is necessary for health. In fact, some medical professionals believe that diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer,

among others, are associated with inactivity.

Interest in "paleo" lifestyles is based on a belief that we have gotten away from what our bodies were genetically engineered to do—that we have strayed from our "primal blueprint".

So, how does this apply to today's human being? How can we return our bodies to their prime? How can we erase the influence of years of genetic re-programming that has lead to our 21st century bodies? A regular exercise routine is part of the solution.

Mark Sisson proposes "10 Irrefutable Primal Laws" in his book, *The Primal Blueprint*. For the purpose of explaining "paleo" exercise, we will refer to Primal Laws #3, #4, #5, and #7 from Mr. Sisson's book.

Primal Law #3:

Move around a lot at a slow pace.

Our prehistoric ancestors had to move. They were

nomads, following the seasons, following the food sources. Thousands of years later, Thomas Jefferson stated, "Walking is the best possible exercise. Habituate yourself to walk very far".

Just what is moving "at a slow pace"? You should move at a pace that allows you enough breath to talk.

If you are huffing and puffing, you are moving at a fast pace and can slow down.

You can move in other ways too—ride a bicycle, inside or outside, take a hike, row a boat, go swimming. Just move, move, move.

Primal Law #4:

Lift heavy things.

Lifting things helps to build strong muscles. Strong mus-



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Paleo What???

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cles are im-
portant to help
you maintain
your activities
of daily liv-
ing—things like
bathing, dress-
ing yourself, making your
bed, cooking a meal, shop-
ping, carrying groceries, do-
ing the laundry.

You can build strong
muscles by strength training
with free weights, or stretch
bands also called Dyna-
Bands, or household items
like cans of food or cartons of
milk.

The “heavy” things that
you lift don’t have to be so
heavy that you have to strain
to lift them. They should just
be items that provide some
resistance when you lift them.
Try lifting these weights 8-10
times and do this 2 or 3 days
per week.

Primal Law #5:

Sprint once in a while.

Cavemen were tor-
mented by predators. There
were times when they needed

to get out of a situation fast—
the original fight or flight, do
or die ex-
perience.



As
we age we
may not
be able to
sprint like

we did when we were young-
er! But, there are times when
we may need to move a little
faster, such as crossing a busy
street. Spending a few se-
conds or minutes during your
daily exercise routine picking
up the pace, going a little
faster, will help train those
fast twitch muscles.

Primal Law #7:



Play!

Since most of the time he was
probably worried about eating
or being eaten Stone Age man
may not have had much time
for play! But if **you** find a

form of exercise that is fun
you will be more likely to
look forward to doing it and
to sticking with it.

- Walk or ride your bicycle with friends.
- Find interesting places to explore while you exercise.
- Choose scenic courses and imagine how they must have looked to our Paleolithic ancestors.
- Walk with your children and grandchildren.
- Walk at home.
- Walk while on vacation.
- Walk with your pet.

Source:

www.paleodietandliving.com





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News You Can Use

Sitting Can Kill You!

A group of 222,000 Australians aged 45 and older were surveyed about length of time sitting during a typical day. Those who sat for 11 hours or more were 40% more likely to die within 3 years regardless of how physically active they were otherwise. 3-26-12

Archives of Internal Medicine



Gastric Bypass Sur- gery—Cure for Dia- betes?

In an Italian study of 60 obese patients with Type 2 diabetes those who had gastric bypass surgery for obesity were able to stop taking all diabetes medicines within 15 days of surgery. Results were similar at 2 years out.

*3-26-12 New England Journal of
Medicine*

Obesity Linked to Poorer Mental Skills in Seniors

In a South Korean study of adults between ages 60-70 an association was found between obesity, especially abdominal fat, and reduced memory and thinking skills. However, the study did not prove obesity caused poor mental skills.

3-21-12 Age and Aging