

Four Pillars of Health

Public Comment to the Sonoma Valley Unified School District by Lauren Ayers, 11-9-10

Hello Educators and Parents,

Last month I mentioned Jared Diamond's article about the role of grain in undermining humanity's health in the past 10,000 years since we began agriculture. It was titled "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race."

A pioneer of nutrition who visited 17 traditional cultures, he wrote that their diets, even though they differed a lot from each other have "all provided ... at least four times the minimum requirements." But when trading posts arrived, those foods were replaced by "white flour products, sugar, polished rice, jams, canned goods, and vegetable oils [which] invariably failed to provide even the minimum requirements." That pioneer was Dr. Weston Price, a dentist from Cleveland who wrote *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*. Note how the list of low-nutrition foods sounds like a school menu.

Why do we spend millions on new curricula, additional teacher training, and remedial programs if simply nourishing children's brains could help them think better? As Dr. Catherine Shanahan writes in *Deep Nutrition*, "The witches of Salem weren't possessed; they were poisoned. Hurricanes aren't retribution for sinful behavior; they are explicable meteorological phenomenon." Put diesel fuel into most cars and you won't get far. In other words, Dr. Shanahan's book, which cites over 300 studies, explains how the most direct way to boost academic achievement is to improve the modern diet so that it is closer to the diet we all evolved on.

In her book, Dr. Shanahan describes the four pillars of good nutrition that are found in traditional cuisines around the world:

- I Meat cooked on the bone, and bone marrow
- II Organ meats
- III Fresh (raw) plant and animal products
- IV Fermented and sprouted foods

In line with Jared Diamond, Dr. Shanahan advocates that we eat much less food from grains -- that's the starch, sugar, and oil that make up 60% of the calories in our modern diet. Instead, she says we should rely on fat to produce energy. Her book rehabilitates animal fats, in particular fats from pastured animals rather than grain-fed animals, and points out that (1) every cell except red blood cells can burn fat instead of sugar, (2) every cell is 30 to 80 % fat (dry weight), and (3) unlike sugar, fat doesn't trigger the release of insulin, which promotes weight gain. Obesity in children is an epidemic so serious that the president's wife felt compelled to joined the effort.

When Dr. Price devised a nutrition plan for an orphanage, the meal included a bowl of a very rich stew made from vegetables, bone marrow, and fine cuts of tender meat." Dr. Price ended the meal with lightly sweetened cooked fruit, and rolls made from freshly ground whole wheat, which were spread with the high-vitamin butter. Each child was also given two glasses of fresh whole milk, which would have been raw instead of pasteurized, to maintain the integrity of the fat and protein. The menu varied from day to day by substituting other nutrient-dense foods like fish chowder.

Sally Fallon, who wrote *Nourishing Traditions*, says, "When I toss my dog a big smorgasbord of raw bones, organs, and muscle meat, he heads straight for the marrow before anything else, every single time." She adds that her dog then eats the liver, the heart, and, last of all, muscle meat.

For 50 years we've been told by experts that cholesterol is bad for us. Wrong! "Over the past century, as butter consumption dropped to less than one quarter of what it was (from 18 pounds per person per year to four), vegetable oil consumption went up five-fold (from eleven pounds per person per year to 59). . . . In 1900, heart disease was rare. Now, heart disease is the number one cause of death in both men and women." [page 170, *Deep Nutrition*]

We accept as scientific fact that obesity arises from consuming fat. But "Fat-free" foods don't sell well without extra sugar or salt, and the body converts excess fructose and sucrose into fat. That's why our fat-free fad hasn't slowed the obesity epidemic.