

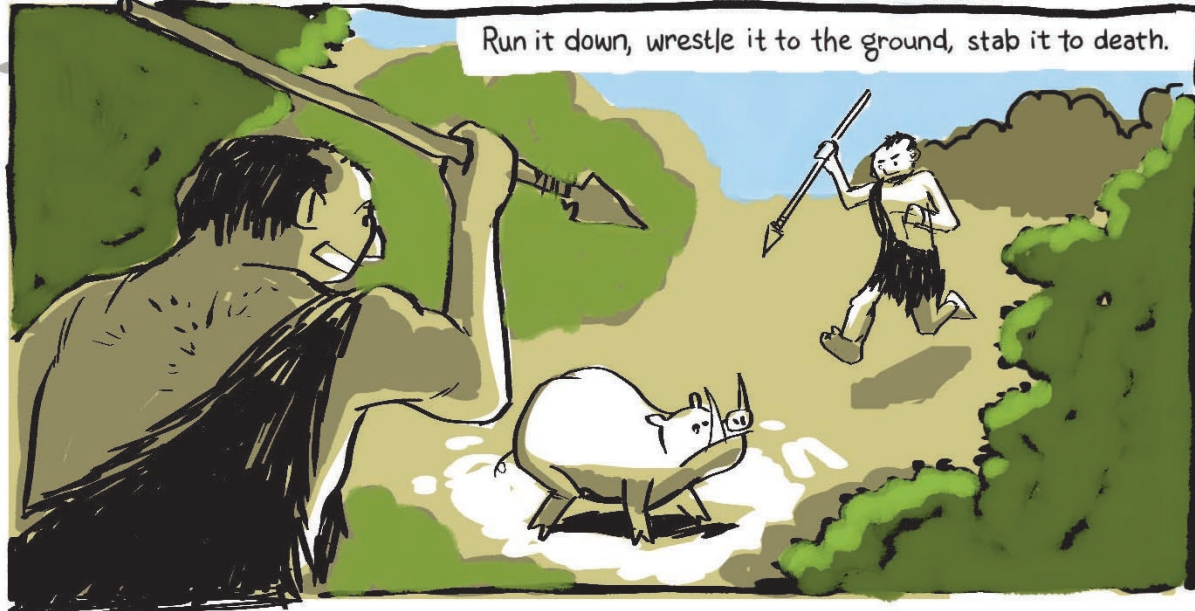
THE CAVE MAN'S GUIDE TO EATING RIGHT AND BEING HEALTHY



Finally, here's a doctor-approved way to eat all you want — juicy, grilled ribs, rare steaks and other greasy, fun food.

BY HARRY JACKSON JR.
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Here's the recipe:



Next, while fighting off predators who want to take the carcass away from you, gut it and tie it to a pole.



Illustration by Brian Williamson | Post-Dispatch

Secrets from the cave

Exercise

WHAT THEY DID

There was no such thing as Paleo-aerobics. Moving meant life. Not moving meant death. Modern humans took from that several tendencies that only exercise can cure. For example, the fight-or-flight hormone, cortisol, teamed with adrenalin and prepared people to deal with danger. Today, nonviolent stresses — a tax audit, a cranky boss or a traffic ticket — bring about the same secretions of the hormones, which can be harmful.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The least healthful invention for modern humans undoubtedly was the chair — at home and at work. The more you use it, the less you move. That drastically reduces your need for calories. That means that fight-or-flight hormone, cortisol, lingers, erodes body parts and generates fat stores that normally would be used to outrun a bear.

Because there's no battle, you must create artificial combat: exercise. The more exercise you get, the better. The more you do, the more benefits you get: regulated appetite; efficient use of stress hormones; hungry muscles that burn more fat, even at rest; improved moods and clearer thinking processes.

For a standard, the U.S. Department of Agriculture says you need 30 minutes of moderate exercise each day to maintain good health.

Meat

WHAT THEY DID

For cave men, meat, which was hard to come by anyway, could run or stand and fight. Either event would require a tremendous expenditure of energy on the part of the hungry hunters. Still, when they ate, they rationed their servings to four to six ounces. Of course, there would be more after a particularly successful hunt, but between kills and during trips, they ate only enough to quench their hunger. Primitive humans also fished a lot.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Nibble. The hunter-gatherer ate small bites — a handful of this and a slice of that. When you eat meat, just eat four to six ounces — about the size of the palm of your hand. Load up with more vegetables, fruits and nuts to fill the empty space in your stomach.

Fruits and vegetables

WHAT THEY DID

They ate what was in season. This meant grasses, roots, melons, gourds, leaves and grains that ripened at varying times of year, ensuring a varied diet.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Vary your diet by eating seasonally or mixing up what you eat. Considering that most people eat what the produce department has for sale, your option is to buy different things at different times. Berries fluctuate seasonally. They're rich in antioxidants and nutrients and can satisfy a sweet tooth. As for fruits and vegetables, resist peeling. Most nutrients are within 1/8 of an inch of the skin of a fruit or vegetable. Peeling fruits and vegetables is a waste. The less you cook them, the better.

Grains

WHAT THEY DID

True agriculture — gathering seeds and growing edible plants in a confined environment — didn't begin until about 50,000 to 20,000 years ago. Grains became popular because they could be stored for months dry and made edible again when mixed with water. More often than not, grains were eaten whole, or pounded and mixed with water or milk to create a paste that was the predecessor to bread.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

It's unlikely you'll start making paste from whole grains you find in health-food stores, so buy whole-grain products.

Sugar

WHAT THEY DID

In nature, foods that taste sweet tend to be edible. Foods that aren't sweet often are poisonous. One theory is that people, mainly children, who ate poisoned vegetables often died before they could reproduce. Children who would only eat sweets made it to adulthood — which in primitive days may have been ages 12 to 15 — and made babies who liked sweets.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Ply your sweet tooth with fruits, berries and nuts. That way, calories are accompanied by nutrients, antioxidants and a high percentage of water.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Agriculture; Joan O'Keefe, registered dietitian and author; Lori Jones, dietitian with St. Louis University

Not only is the scenario above a fairly good depiction of cave-man life, but more doctors and researchers are saying that your body is probably designed for cave-man life more than the life you're living.

Surprise: Humans have not evolved much further physiologically than Alley Oop, researchers say.

"We are not only evolved from hunter-gatherers, but we genetically still are," said Dr. James O'Keefe, a cardiologist in Kansas City and co-author of "The Forever Young Diet & Lifestyle" (Andrews McMeel, 288 pages, \$22.95).

"Socially and technologically, we have evolved light-years from our hunter-gatherer ancestors," he said. "But the DNA in each of the 100 trillion cells in our body is largely the same as it was in our Paleolithic forefathers. And these were not necessarily cave men. The Eskimos, Plains Indians, native peoples in the South American jungles and far reaches of undeveloped Africa were hunter-gatherer societies until just the past two generations or so."

So people no longer chase their meat, dig for roots, climb trees for fruit and forage plants for leafy vegetables. Instead, they sit staring into bright screens, with their only exercise consisting of a walk from the car to the processed-food aisle of the grocery.

Know thyself

"We have Stone Age genes in a Space Age society," said Frank Booth, a biologist and geneticist who teaches in the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Missouri at Columbia. "Technology has changed, and our genes have not."

"Ten thousand years ago, we had to go out and search for food and get food. Now, we have the same genes in the drive-through lane."

The result is that bodies meant to hoard calories because of feast-or-famine conditions thousands of years ago now reside in a perpetual feast and constant physical leisure, whether at work or at home.

The evolution of obesity

The timeline for the hunter-gatherer lineage starts roughly 75,000 to 50,000 years ago. Still, the human animal and its predecessors have been around for quite a while. Tools and artifacts date back 2.5 million years. Genes still floating in our cells date back 2 and 3 million years.

But as technology encroached, humans as a group did less and less physical labor for fewer hours a day. Starting about 200 years ago, farmers started using machines that did the work of dozens of people. Displaced workers moved to industrialized cities.

Food became plentiful with the development of agri-science and groceries instead of home gardens. Leisure time increased. More recently, assembly lines morphed into offices. Collars turned from blue to white. By the last quarter of the 20th century, more Westerners worked at desks than on the land or in factories.

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