

Dietary Trends From Our Ancestors

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › America faces a health crisis with a 700% increase in chronic disease since the 1930s, less than 10% of Americans have good metabolic health, and obesity rates have soared to 42.4% as of 2018
- › The reliance on processed foods and influence of large food companies have eroded traditional food cultures, contributing to confusion over healthy eating and a spike in diet-related diseases
- › Analysis of vintage cookbooks reveals a stark contrast between our ancestors' diet, which included whole-animal consumption, diverse animal products and natural carbs, and today's processed and restrictive eating habits
- › Past diets rich in meat, saturated fats, and year-round carbohydrates challenge modern misconceptions, highlighting the negative impact of vegetable oils and processed foods on metabolic health
- › By returning to a diet consisting of meat, butter, dairy, natural sugars, fruits, and well-prepared starches and vegetables, and avoiding modern processed and PUFA-rich foods, we can reclaim the health and nutritional wisdom of past generations

It's no secret that the health in America is declining, rapidly. And the food we consume daily plays a huge role in determining health outcomes. So, what did our great-grandparents eat during a time when the rates of chronic disease development were 700% lower and obesity was almost nonexistent?

What was NOT part of their diets

Vegetable oils

Dairy free cheeses

Tofu

Oat milk and nut milks

High-fructose corn syrup

A lot of raw vegetables

GMOs and heavy pesticide exposure in food

Artificial sweeteners

Nuts and seeds in excess (instead, part of condiments or in sweets on occasion)

Flour fortified with iron (metal shavings, which was implemented in the 1940s)

Processed food

Heavy chicken consumption

What WAS part of their diets

A wide variety of meat

Dairy

Nose to tail (using all part of the animal)

Starches (well-cooked potatoes and unfortified, non-GMO, low pesticide laden grains)

Fruit

Cooked vegetables

Sugar

Daily desserts (made with butter, not vegetable oils)

Animal fat, full with fat soluble vitamins

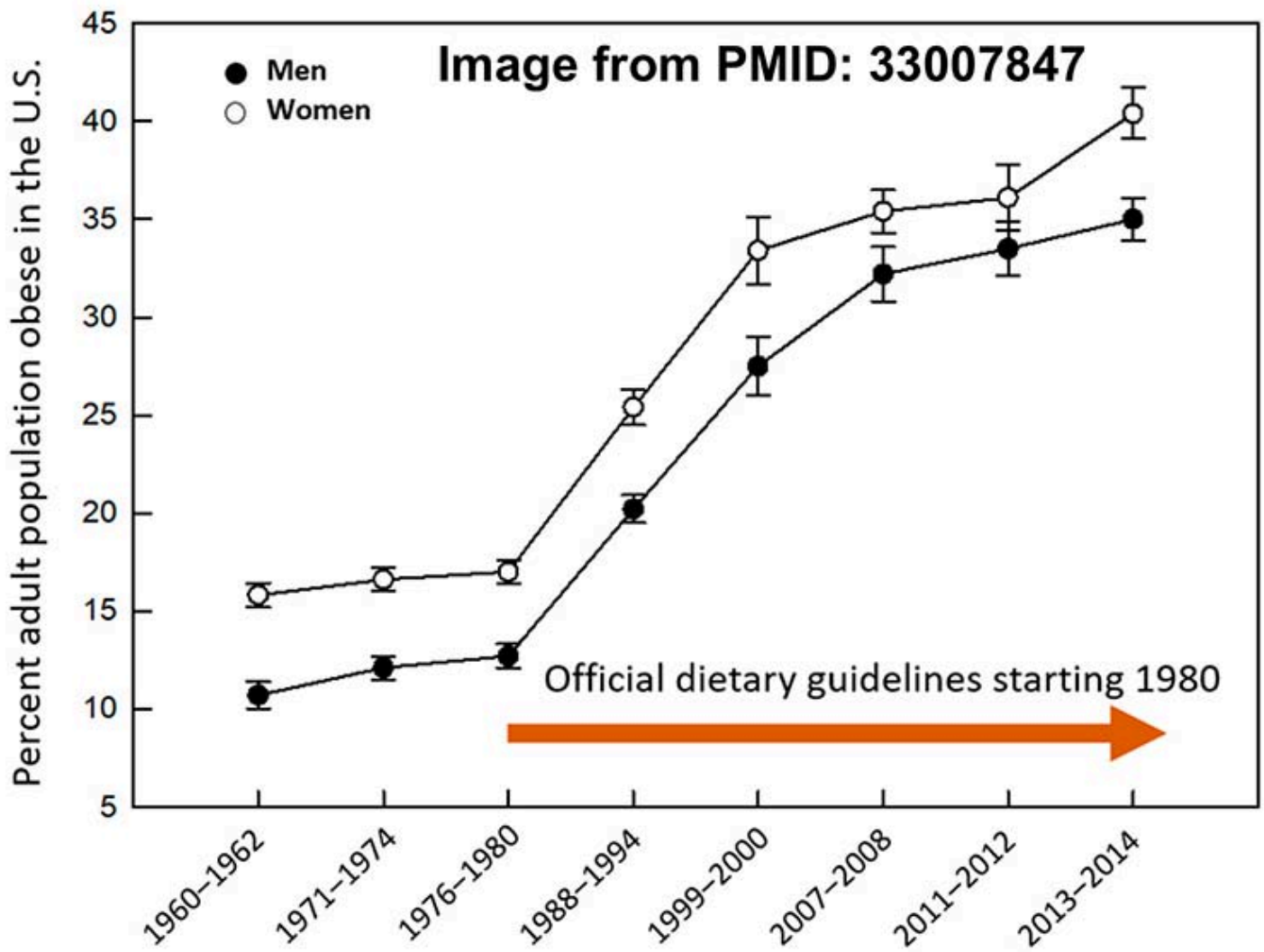
Let's dive in! And explore dietary trends from vintage cookbooks which can help reduce food fear and increase food awareness so that you can make more empowered dietary decisions that align with your intuition.

Reclaiming Our Lost Food Culture

Now, more than ever, there seems to be so much confusion as to what we should eat — what food is "good," what food is "bad." With such a large reliance on processed food and massive marketing dollars spent by large food companies, we've lost touch with food culture. In fact, we don't have food culture.

People are truly confused as to how we should eat, and how to form meals. And with chronic diseases, obesity, and autoimmunity on the rise, one thing is clear: what we are doing now isn't working. The chronic disease prevalence in the 1930s was 7.5%.¹ Today, 60% of the population has one or more chronic disease.²

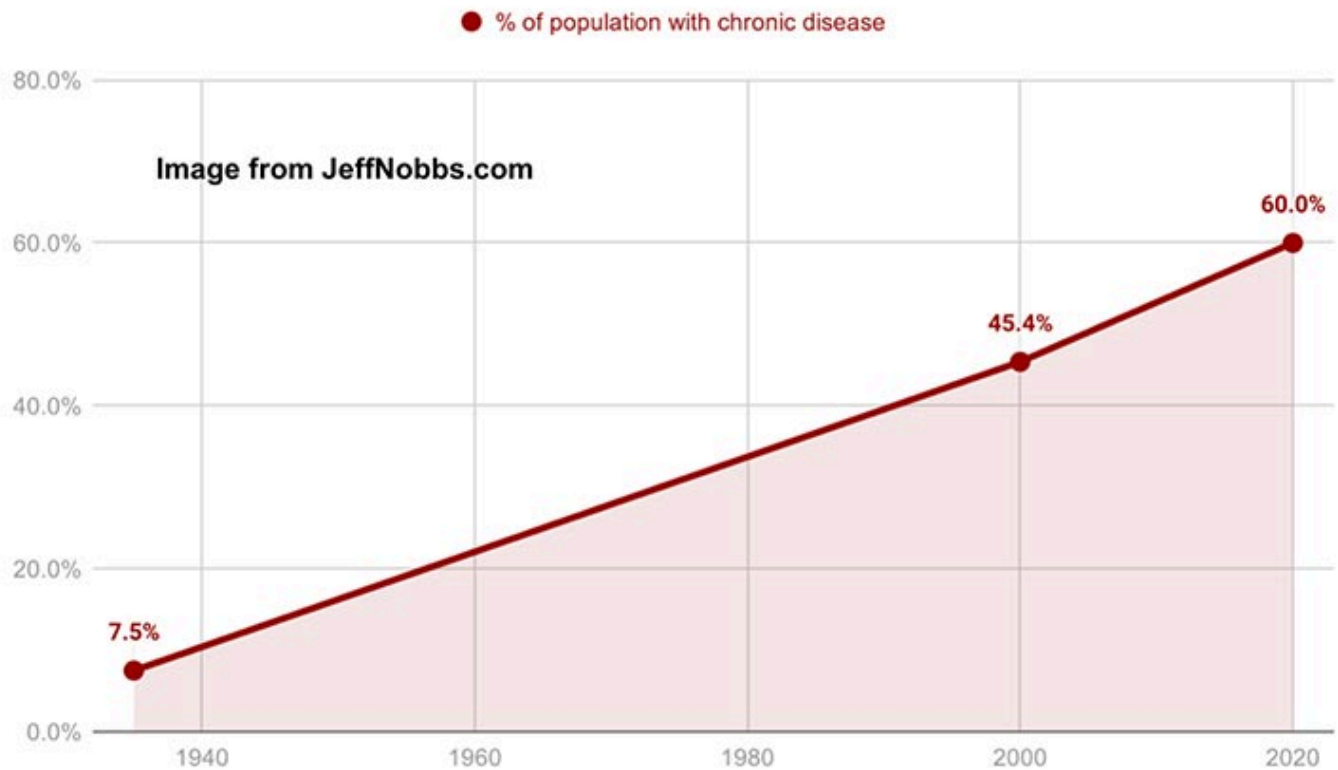
This is a 700% increase. A new 2022 study found that less than 10% of Americans have good metabolic health.³ And data from the CDC in 2018 reported that 42.4% of Americans are considered obese.⁴ Imagine what this number is in 2022!



And while science and technology are improving, America is the only developed nation with a **declining** healthy life expectancy and total life expectancy!⁵ And this data is before COVID-19.

Total life expectancy (TLE) is how long people within a population are expected to live. Healthy life expectancy (HLE) measures how long people within a population are expected to live without disease or disability. For example – someone lives disease free for 65 years, then develops heart disease at 65 and passes 10 years later. HLE = 65 and total life expectancy (TLE) = 75.

Chronic Disease Prevalence in America



A 1935 survey showed a chronic disease and disability prevalence of about 7.5% in American adults. In 2000, 45% of Americans had at least one chronic disease and today it's 60%.

TLE measures how long we can keep sick people alive and incentivizes disease management. HLE directly relates to the number of healthy and happy years and incentivizes disease prevention.

You can analyze the following data⁶ from the World Health Organization by comparing the TLE or HLE from previous years in the U.S. The TLE in 2015 was 78.56 and in 2019 it decreased to 78.5. The HLE in 2010 was 66.7, which declined to 66.6 in 2015, and declined again to 66.1 in 2019. With a declining TLE and HLE and obesity on the rise, it's time to admit we are doing something wrong.

Healthy Life Expectancy (years)							
Country	2010	2015	2019	Country	2010	2015	2019
Japan	73.0	↗73.6	↗74.1	Australia	70.2	↗70.6	↗70.9
Switzerland	71.4	↗71.8	↗72.5	Germany	70.0	↗70.1	↗70.9
Cyprus	70.8	↗71.6	↗72.4	Greece	70.0	↗70.4	↗70.9
Spain	71.0	↗71.6	↗72.1	Slovenia	69.2	↗70.0	↗70.7
France	71.2	↗71.7	↗72.1	Belgium	69.2	↗70.0	↗70.6
Iceland	71.4	↗71.9	↗72.0	New Zealand	69.8	↗69.9	↗70.2
Italy	71.1	↗71.6	↗71.9	United Kingdom	69.4	↗69.7	↗70.1
Sweden	71.2	↗71.4	↗71.9	Chile	68.5	↗69.4	↗70.1
Luxembourg	70.5	↗71.5	↗71.6	Estonia	66.9	↗68.3	↗69.2
Malta	70.4	↗71.3	↗71.5	Czechia	67.7	↗68.3	↗68.8
Netherlands	70.9	↗71.1	↗71.4	Poland	67.1	↗68.0	↗68.7
Norway	70.2	↗71.2	↗71.4	Croatia	67.3	↗67.9	↗68.6
Canada	70.8	↗71.2	↗71.3	Slovakia	66.5	↗67.6	↗68.5
Ireland	70.1	↗70.7	↗71.1	Hungary	65.8	↗66.7	↗67.2
Denmark	69.4	↗70.5	↗71.0	Romania	65.4	↗66.3	↗66.9
Finland	69.6	↗70.7	↗71.0	Lithuania	64.3	↗65.3	↗66.7
Portugal	69.3	↗70.5	↗71.0	Latvia	64.3	↗65.8	↗66.3
Austria	69.9	↗70.4	↗70.9	USA	66.7	↘66.6	↘66.1

Source: World Health Organization (WHO) 12-04-2020

Data before CoViD

Decline in each of the last 2 measurement periods

But we didn't always have such widespread chronic health problems ...

Indicator	Location	Life expectancy at birth (years)		
		Both sexes	Male	Female
	United States of America			
	2019	78.5	76.28	80.73
	2015	78.56	76.31	80.8
	2010	78.56	76.27	80.8
	2000	76.69	74.12	79.17

Indicator	Location	Healthy life expectancy (HALE) at birth (years)			Healthy life expectancy (HALE) at age 60 (years)		
		Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
	2019	66.1	65.2	67	16.35	15.59	17.06
	2015	66.6	65.6	67.5	16.51	15.7	17.26
	2010	66.7	65.7	67.7	16.46	15.6	17.21
	2000	65.8	64.6	67	15.72	14.73	16.57

How did we get to the point where 60% of the population has one or more chronic disease and only 12% of the population is metabolically healthy?⁷ Well, we are certainly a little less active, and there are a lot more environmental toxins, that's for sure.

But what we eat every single day plays a HUGE role in determining health and metabolic outcomes. So, let's go back in time a bit to see what people were eating in a time when chronic diseases were not as widespread to gain some insight to the type of food that can support health. How can we do this? By analyzing vintage cookbooks.

Over the last few months, I have been moderately obsessed with reading old fashioned cookbooks from the 1700-1900 era. These cookbooks provide a great picture as to how families ate at the time. And how much food culture they had, that was passed down from generation to generation.

The nutritional wisdom continues to fascinate me as I learn more about cultural food preparation. So, let's dive into 10 trends I have gathered comparing these cookbooks to how most people eat today. (and what "mainstream" claims as "healthy.")

Trend No. 1: They Ate the Whole Animal

Meaning, nose to tail eating was just a normal part of everyday life. They didn't just eat skeletal muscle cuts like chicken breast, ribeyes and tenderloins like so many do today. No, nothing went to waste so they ate pretty much every cut on the animal and used the bones, tendons, and other collagenous parts to make broth, soups and stews.

The result was not only just less waste, but also a wider nutrient intake, and more balanced amino acids. Example recipes from "The Southern cookbook of fine old recipes," 1935.

Sweetbreads and Mushrooms

- 1 pair sweetbreads
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons flour
- salt and pepper
- 2 cups milk
- 1 pound fresh mushrooms

Parboil sweetbreads and remove all the loose membranes. Sauté in 1 tablespoon of the butter. Blend in 1 tablespoon of the flour; add salt and pepper to taste and 1 cup of milk. Simmer slowly until thickened. Wash and peel the mushrooms, sauté in the remaining butter, blend in the remaining flour, and add the salt and pepper and milk. When thickened, combine with the sweetbread mixture and put in a casserole. Cover with bread crumbs and dot with butter. Brown in a hot oven (400° F.) for 5 to 8 minutes.

Chicken Liver Ramekins

1 cup raw chicken livers
1 tablespoon butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon cream
2 tablespoons milk
3 eggs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mushrooms
chopped parsley, salt, pepper, and red pepper

Press the liver through a colander, beat the yolks of eggs and then add the cream and milk, butter, salt, pepper, parsley, and mushrooms. Place the mixture in buttered molds and cover with greased paper. Put the mold in a pan of water and let them bake from 15 to 20 minutes.

They utilized all parts of the animal – while Americans today seem to be obsessed with chicken breasts, tenderloins and ribeyes. The organs are often the most nutrient-dense parts of the animal, and bone in, "tough" cuts of meat often contain a lot more collagen relative to pure muscle meat.

Trend No. 2: They Ate Meat and Saturated Fat

Check out a few pages from the Table of Contents from "The Lady's Assistant for Regulating and Supplying the Table" from 1787. They did not exclusively eat meat, but the consumption of meat was considered a mark of a good diet, and its complete absence was rare (consuming low amounts was in the case of an extreme poverty diet).⁸ They did NOT fear saturated fat like mainstream still tells us to do. In fact, recent re-evaluations of the data used by Kellogg to demonize saturated fat in the 1900s are showing a different picture. Some researchers have instead demonstrated that "

[s]aturated fats from animal sources [are] inversely correlated with the prevalence of NCDs [non communicable diseases]."⁹

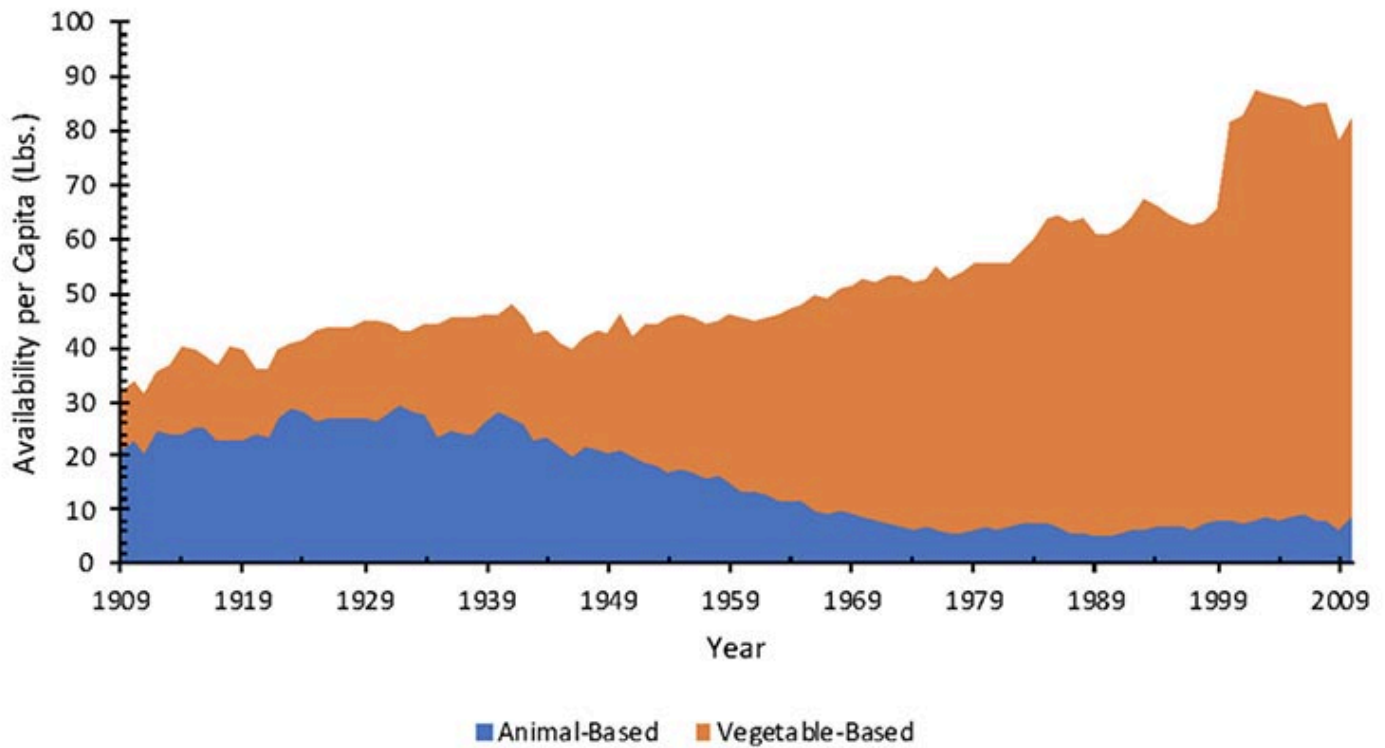
As illustrated in the paper, "Re-evaluation of the traditional diet-heart hypothesis: analysis of recovered data from Minnesota Coronary Experiment (1967-73)", published 2016,¹⁰ We are eating a lot more vegetable oils, and less animal fats relative to the early 1900s, and yet our health is declining:

"Available evidence from randomized controlled trials shows that replacement of saturated fat in the diet with linoleic acid effectively lowers serum cholesterol but does not support the hypothesis that this translates to a lower risk of death from coronary heart disease or all causes.

Findings from the Minnesota Coronary Experiment add to growing evidence that incomplete publication has contributed to overestimation of the benefits of replacing saturated fat with vegetable oils rich in linoleic acid."

Was it really the meat that caused health issues? No. High PUFA diets lower metabolic rates and hinder glucose metabolism. Our great-grandparents didn't eat super high fat diets, but the fat they did consume was rich in saturated fat. Animal fat consumption went down, while vegetable oil and PUFA-rich fat consumption went up.¹¹

Animal- Vs. Plant-Based Added Fats and Oils Per Capita (1909-2010)



Trend No. 3: They Ate Carbs All Year Round

Carbs consumed were largely fruits in season (citrus, for ex in Jan. melons, for ex in summer), jams and jellies, honey, sugar, potatoes, flour in baked goods, and bread.

Here are examples of a "Bill of Fare" (meal plan) with some receipts (recipes) for the month of January (winter) – top menu – and August (summer) – bottom menu. Both from "What Shall We Have to Eat?" 1893.

Carbohydrates were consumed all year round, and a lot of them! They definitely ate in season, but they went through extensive preparation (think jams and jellies) to ensure access to carbs 365. Here are a few examples of grape preservation from "The Lady's Assistant for Regulating and Supplying the Table," 1787. (Note: In old English, "s" was written as "f", so "fugar" = sugar)

To preserve green Grapes.

TAKE the largest and best grapes before they are thorough ripe, stone and scald them; let them lie two days in the water they were scalded in, then drain them, and put them into a thin syrup; heat them over a slow fire; the next day turn the grapes in the pan, and heat them the day after, then drain them; put them into clarified sugar, give them a good boil, scum them, and set them by; the next day boil more sugar to blow, put it to the grapes, give all a good boil, scum them, and set them in a warm stove all night; the day after drain the grapes, and lay them out to dry, first dusting them very well.

To preserve Bell Grapes in Jelly.

TAKE the long large bell or rouson grapes, pick off the stalks, stone them, and put them into boiling water; scald them thoroughly, take them from the fire and cover them close, to prevent the steam from evaporating; then set them over a very gentle fire (but not to boil) for two or three hours; take them out, put them into clarified sugar that has boiled till it blows very strong, more than will cover them, and give them a good boil, scum them; boil a little more sugar till it blows very strong; take as much plum-jelly as sugar, and give it a boil; then put the grapes to it; let them all boil together, scum them well, and put them into pots or glasses.

Trend No. 4: They Ate a Lot of Calories

Americans are now fatter than our ancestors, despite eating similar (or less) calories. They were NOT afraid to eat! The more money you had – the more food you ate. Being hungry and eating a lot was seen as a good thing. (The word "diet" wasn't commonly used). Now, you have people normalizing 1600 calorie diets, and people are eating the same calories as what was recommended for 9-year-old children in 1915. From "Cookbook 365", 1915.

Caloric is a unit measure of heat used to denote energy-giving power of food. The following dietary estimates, based on food as purchased may be of interest:

Per Day.	Proteid. Grams	Fat. Grams	Carbohydrates. Grams	Calories.
Man at hard labor.....	150	150	500	4060
Man at light labor.....	125	125	400	3310
Woman at light labor.....	100	100	320	2650
Child of nine years.....	78	45	280	1890

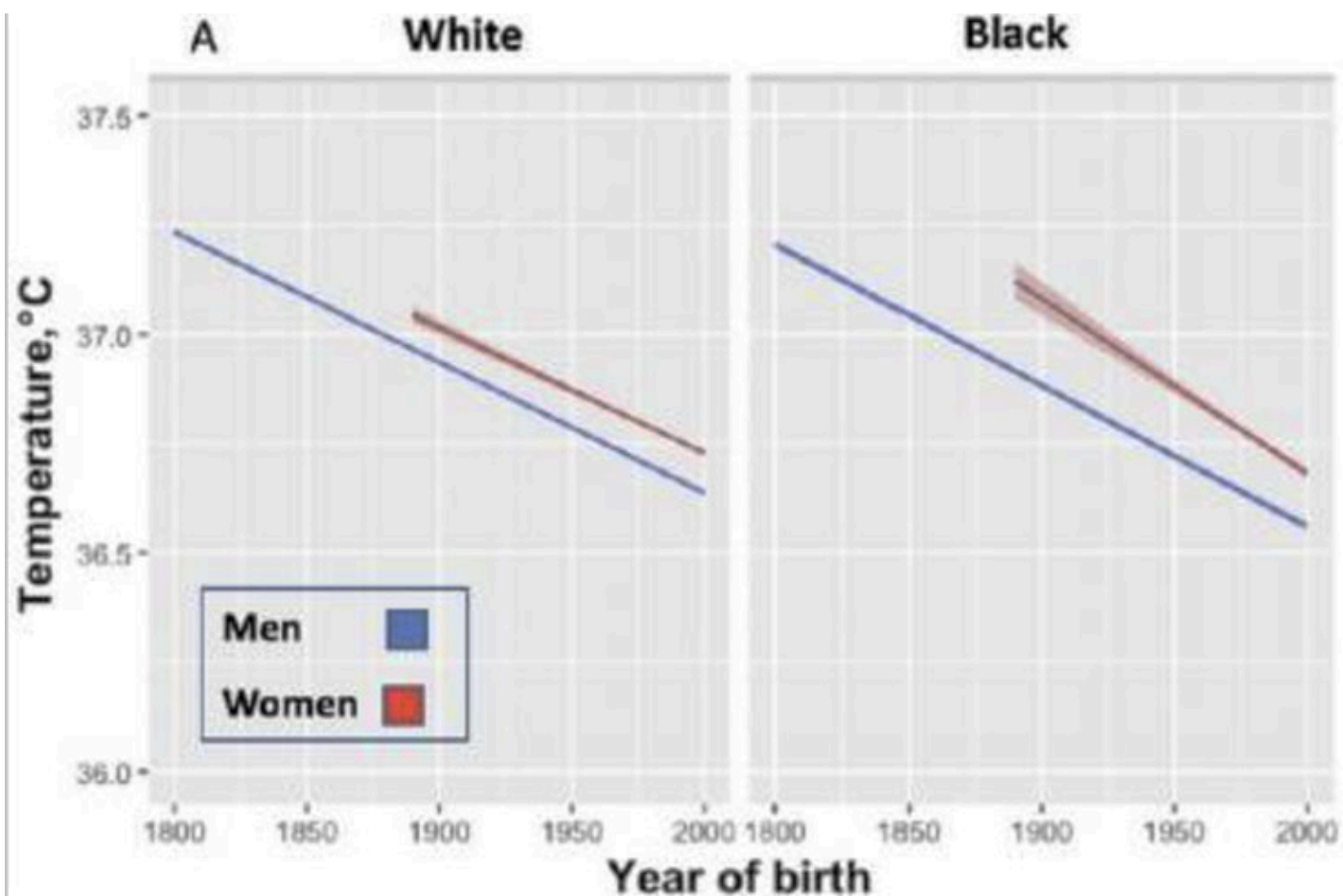
As discussed above, one of the biggest changes between then and now is the TYPE of fat in our diet (which changes the types of fat inside of our bodies. And this dietary fat switch has hindered glucose metabolism and downregulated our metabolisms).

Yes, fat gain is the result of too many calories IN relative to calories OUT (burned). But there has been a major change in our metabolisms, reducing the calories OUTSIDE of the equation.

Dr. Speakman, one of the leading metabolism and obesity researchers in the world, has found that there has been a reduction in BMR (basal metabolic rate) despite an increase in active energy expenditure. So, while some Americans may consume too many calories for their needs (and this can lead to weight gain), a huge red flag is that the basal metabolic rate (BMR) of our nation is DECLINING.

This statement is supported by a steady downward trend in our body temperature, as metabolic rate can be assessed by body temperature. Image below from a January 7, 2020 study in the journal Elife titled "Decreasing Human Body Temperature in the United States Since the Industrial Revolution."¹²

Body temperature has declined, implying lower metabolic rates (since heat is generated as a byproduct of energy production). A lower metabolism means that in order to maintain (or lose) weight, we have to eat less calories. With food abundance, you can now see why it is VERY easy to gain weight.



While obesity is a complex topic that requires a very nuanced conversation, our ancestors ate a lot of calories and remained lean since they had strong metabolic rates. A 136% increase in our dietary linoleic acid (an omega-6 PUFA) since the early 1900s has come with a reduction in our metabolic rates.

The type of fatty acids you consume (which impacts the type of fat inside of your tissues) is playing a significant role in the CALORIES OUTSIDE of the energy balance equation (your metabolism).

Trend No. 5: They Ate a Wide Variety of Animal Products

Meaning, they didn't just eat chicken (which Americans seem to prioritize these days). Each animal provides a unique set of nutrients, and some are higher in certain nutrients than others. For example, beef and lamb are high in zinc. While pork is high in Vitamin B1. Again, this diversified protein intake (beef, poultry, wild game, pork, seafood, and dairy) resulted in a diverse intake of beneficial nutrients.

Trend No. 6: They Ate a Wide Variety of Vegetables, But Mainly Cooked

I do NOT think raw kale smoothies were on the menu! We are not ruminant animals who have complex digestive systems to break down thick cellulose fibers in raw veggies. We need easy to digest food! They made sure the vegetables and potatoes they consumed were well cooked – which made digestion easier and reduced antinutrient levels.¹³

Trend No. 7: Daily Sugar Consumption in the Form of Homemade Desserts

Yes, sugar is low in nutrients. But no, sugar is not inherently toxic. In the context of an otherwise nutrient-rich diet, sugar can be metabolically supportive. Our great-grandparents consumed moderate amounts of sugar in homemade desserts daily.

Their desserts were largely made from unfortified flour, sugar, butter, eggs, and milk. (No sugar alternatives, margarine, faux-eggs, or nut milks). "Desserts were also regularly served, often fruit or dairy-based – apple pies, rice or tapioca puddings, stewed or fresh fruit like gooseberries or cherries, in season."¹⁴ From "The Common Sense Cookbook", 1894.

Molasses Cake.

Two eggs, cup of molasses, one-half cup light brown sugar, one-half cup of butter, two thirds of a cup of sour milk or butter milk, small even teaspoon of soda, flour enough to make not a very stiff batter, one-half teaspoon each of cinnamon and cloves.

Plain Ice Cream.

Boil one pint of milk and one pint of cream. Beat two eggs very light, add one cup of sugar, a little salt; mix well, and add to the boiling milk. Turn into the double cooker and cook awhile. When cold add two tablespoons of any kind of flavoring. Add more sugar if necessary, and freeze according to directions given.

Orange Cream.

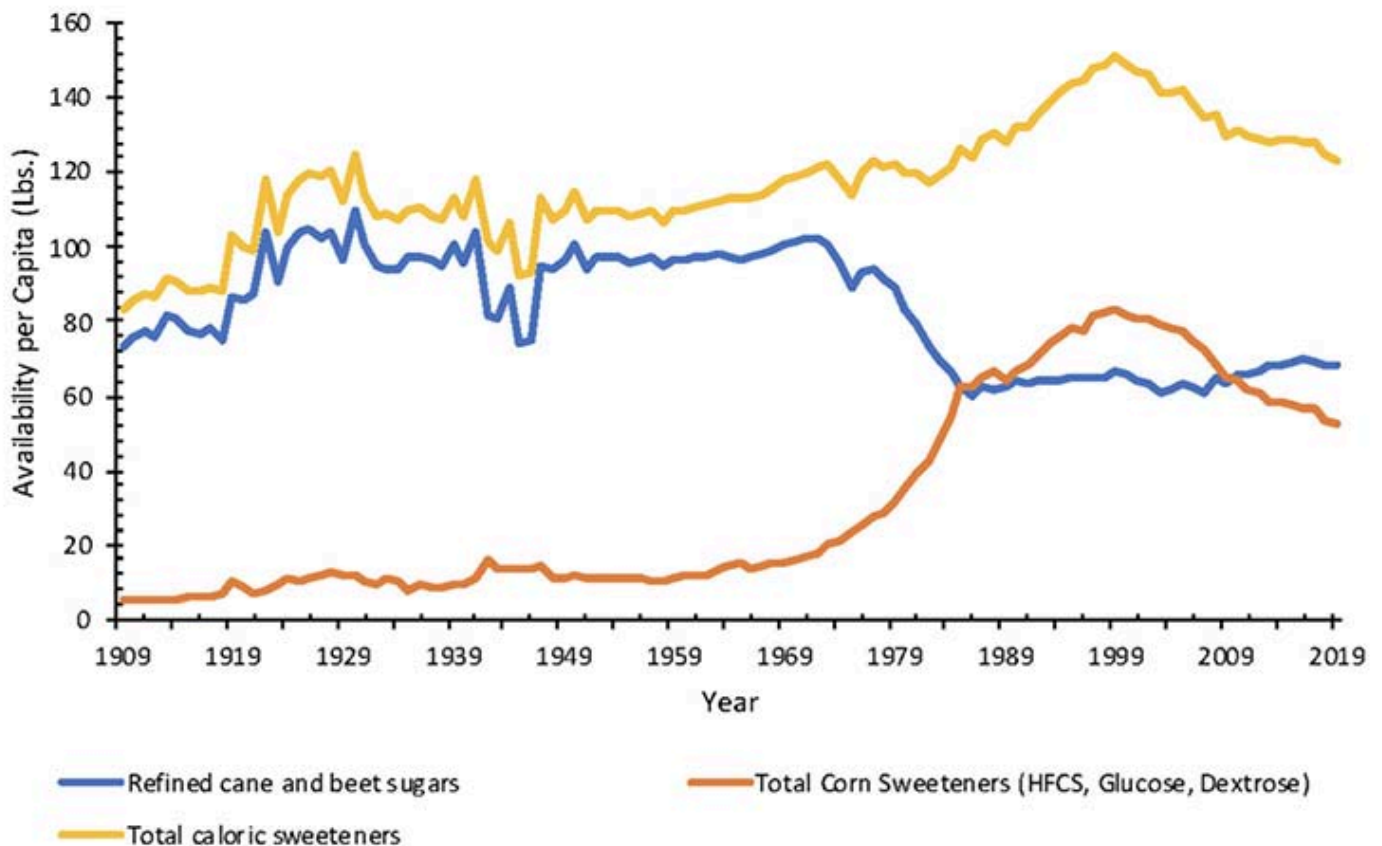
One pint of cream, juice of three oranges and a little of the grated rind, a cup of sugar, the yolks of three eggs, one ounce of gelatine. Soak the gelatine in half a cup of cold water. Grate the rind and squeeze the juice of the oranges in the gelatine. Strain, and add the sugar. Take half the cream and put it in a double boiler; add the yolks to the milk. Stir, and when it begins to thicken, add the gelatine. When it begins to cool add the orange juice and sugar. Beat and add the remainder of the cream. Put in molds and serve with whipped cream.

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Relative to the early 1900s, we currently consume similar amounts of cane and beet sugar. Again, sugar is often demonized, but is it the sugar ingredient, or the food the sugar is commonly packaged in? (like Twinkies, doughnuts, cakes, etc. that contain fortified flour, preservatives, dyes, and vegetable oils)

Consuming sugar in homemade baked goods (without vegetable oils) in the context of a well-rounded, nutrient-rich diet is not toxic. As you can see in the graph below, from the paper "United States Dietary Trends Since 1800: Lack of Association Between Saturated Fatty Acid Consumption and Non-communicable Diseases,"¹⁵ refined sugar (blue) is similar today to levels in the early 1900s.

Caloric Sweetener Availability Per Capita (1909-2019)



Trend No. 8: They Ate Refined Flour

Refined flour WAS a part of their diet through daily treats, baking bread and was regularly used in sauce recipes. However, their flour was not fortified with iron (metal shavings, which was added to our flour and implemented in the 1940s), was not from genetically modified grains, and was not coated in high amounts of pesticides (like Glyphosate). So, grain sourcing in today's day and age is vital. From "Buckeye Cookery," 1890.

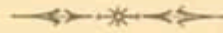
SOUTH CAROLINA BISCUIT.

One quart sweet cream or milk, one and a half cups butter or fresh lard, two table-spoons white sugar, one good tea-spoon salt; add flour sufficient to make a stiff dough, knead *well* and mold into neat, small biscuit with the hands, as our grandmothers used to do; add one good tea-spoon cream tartar if preferred; bake well, and you have good sweet biscuit that will keep for weeks in a dry place, and are very nice for traveling lunch. They are such as we used to send to the army, and the "boys" relished them "hugely."—
Mrs. Colonel Moore, Hamilton, Ohio.

Trend No. 9: They Did Not Eat Processed Food Out of a Bag

Home-cooking was the norm. In fact, processed food consumption has increased from <5% in the 1800s to now more than 60% today.¹⁶ Cooking and prepping food was a sacred activity, not an inconvenience. Many cookbooks viewed it as a cherished art form, passed from one generation to the next. From "Three Meals a Day", 1890.

FIRST WORDS.



THE science of cookery may very properly be classed among the fine arts, and certainly it is by no means the least among them; for, in the nature of events, a practical knowledge of scientific cooking touches more intimately our homes and home comforts, and influences the masses of the people as no other art, however lofty in its conception, or elevating in its results, may hope to do. The culinary art may truthfully be said to pave and prepare the foundation of all æsthetical arts; for, as a man is inevitably what he eats, so the characteristics of the cookery presented to his palate, are almost invariably reproduced in his life and works.

“Good Cookery,” says a contemporaneous writer, “is the foundation of good digestion; and good digestion is the foundation and first factor in sound thinking. The grain and wheat springing green,

Trend No. 10: They Did Not Voluntarily Fast, and Three Meals a Day Was the Norm

Check out some screen shots from various vintage cookbooks. From "Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management," 1907.

MEALS: THEIR IMPORTANCE AND ARRANGEMENT

CHAPTER LXIV

General Observations on Family and Wedding Breakfasts, Luncheons, Dinners, Teas, and Suppers

ONE of the chief considerations of life is, or ought to be, the food we eat, for our physical well-being depends mainly on diet. The perfect adjustment of diet can only be maintained by a combination of certain factors, of which suitable food and good cooking may be considered the most important.

One important consideration with regard to meals is their regularity, and speaking from the health point of view, it is most essential. A meal that we have waited for an hour too long is often one that we fail to appreciate ; and while to the healthy irregularity is dangerous, to the delicate it is injurious. It is not difficult to determine what are the best and most convenient times to take our meals, and when once these hours are fixed, the next thing is to insist on punctuality, not only for those who serve them, but for those for whom they are prepared. Food cooked to a nicety cannot afford to wait ; good things are spoilt, and waste and discontent are the result, if people are not ready to partake of what is prepared at a given time.

Many cookbooks contained Meal Plans that included three meals a day, which were termed "Bill of Fares." Here is an example from "The Queen of the Household," 1896.

FRIDAY.

Breakfast.—Cold roast beef, smelts, omelet, chipped potatoes, rice cakes, Graham bread, water cresses, radishes, cucumbers, tea and coffee.

TEA, OR LUNCH.

Kidney Toast.—(Take cold veal kidneys, cut in small pieces; pound the fat in a mortar, with salt, pepper, and a boiled onion. Bind all together with beaten whites of eggs, heap it on toast, cover with yolks beaten, sprinkle with bread crumbs, and bake in the oven.) Salt fish broiled, cold ham, raised biscuit, corn-bread, fruit, cucumbers, and radishes. Lemon cheese-cakes.—(Mix 4 oz. sifted lump sugar, with 4 oz. butter; then add yolks of 2 and white of 1 egg, the rind of 3 lemons chopped fine and the juice of $1\frac{1}{2}$, 1 Savoy biscuit, some blanched almonds, and 3 spoonfuls of brandy. Bake in patty pans.) Tea and cocoa.

DINNER.

Soup à la Bisque.

Fresh Mackerel.

Roast Lamb, with peas, asparagus, tomatoes, and lettuce.

Sweetbreads.

Lobster Pie.—Cut 2 boiled lobsters in pieces, and lay in a dish; beat the spawn in a mortar; put the shells on to boil in some water, with 3 spoonfuls of vinegar, pepper, salt, and some mace. A large piece of butter rolled in flour must be added when the good is obtained. Pour into the dish strained, strew in some crumbs, and put a paste over all. Bake only till the paste is done.

Dessert.

Rhubarb Pie.

Lemon Syllabub.—Grate the peel of a lemon with lump sugar, and dissolve the sugar in $\frac{3}{4}$ pt. of wine; add the juice of half a lemon, and $\frac{1}{4}$ pt. cream. Whisk the whole until properly thick, and put into glasses.

Strawberries, cherries, and bonbons.

From "What shall we eat? A manual for housekeepers. Comprising a bill of fare for breakfast, dinner, and tea, for every day in the year," 1868. (They often didn't use the word "lunch," — so they said "Breakfast, Dinner, Supper" instead of "Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.") This cookbook has a meal plan for every week of the year!

JANUARY.

MONDAY. *Breakfast*—Milk toast, rolls, broiled steak, fried apples. *Dinner*—Roast duck, apple sauce, beef stew, mashed turnips, baked sweet potatoes, celery; plum pudding with sauce, fruit cake, oranges. *Supper*—Light biscuit, cold meat, whipped cream with preserves, sliced beef.

TUESDAY. *Breakfast*—Waffles, broiled fish, fried raw potatoes. *Dinner*—Tomato soup, salmi of duck, roasted potatoes, cabbage salad, canned pease, celery sauce; pumpkin pie. *Supper*—Toasted muffins, cold tongue, tea rusk, baked apples.

WEDNESDAY. *Breakfast*—Griddle cakes, pig's feet souse, baked potatoes. *Dinner*—Boiled bacon with cabbage, potatoes, turnips, carrots, onion sauce, chicken pie; bread pudding with sauce. *Supper*—Biscuit, cold bacon shaved, bread and milk, sponge cake and jelly.

THURSDAY. *Breakfast*—Hot rolls, corned beef hash, potato cakes. *Dinner*—Escaloped turkey, baked potatoes, pickled beets; cottage pudding, cake. *Supper*—Cold rolls, frizzled, dried beef hot buns, fried apples.

FRIDAY. *Breakfast*—Graham gems, broiled mutton, fried potatoes. *Dinner*—Turkey soup, roast beef with potatoes, stewed tomatoes, celery; rice pudding, mince pie. *Supper*—Cold buns, sliced beef, Indian pudding (corn mush) and milk, sponge cake, sauce.

SATURDAY. *Breakfast*—Steamed toast, fried mush and maple syrup, fried liver and bacon. *Dinner*—Meat pie with chili sauce, mashed turnips, stewed corn; apple dumplings with sauce. *Supper*—Tea rolls, sardines with sliced lemon, rusk, jelly.

SUNDAY. *Breakfast*—Buckwheat cakes, croquettes of sausage

Summary of What Was and What Was Not in the Cookbooks

What was NOT part of their diets

Vegetable oils

Dairy-free cheeses

Tofu

Oat milk and nut milks

High-fructose corn syrup

A lot of raw vegetables

GMOs and heavy pesticide exposure in food	Artificial sweeteners
Nuts and seeds in excess (instead, part of condiments or in sweets on occasion)	Flour fortified with iron (literal metal shavings, which was implemented in the 1940s)
Processed food	Heavy chicken consumption (which can be a high source of PUFA since chickens are now fed a bunch of soy and vegetable oils, which translate to higher PUFAs in their tissues since they are monogastric animals)

What WAS part of their diets

A wide variety of protein sources	Eating "nose to tail" (using all parts of the animal)
Fruit	Properly prepared starches and vegetables
Sugar	Un-fortified, non-GMO, low pesticide laden flour
Daily desserts	Saturated fat (from dairy fats and other animal fats)

Check out this "market list" from "Warne's Model housekeeper" 1882, where the author mentions this weekly grocery list in addition to produce available at the market.

The following quantities for each person in a large household are thought sufficient for one week :

BREAD.—8 lbs. or two quartern loaves for a woman servant ; 16 lbs. or four quarterns for a man ; but this quantity will vary as more or less meat is eaten.

MEAT.— $3\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. for a woman ; $5\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. for a man, averaging all eaters.

MILK.—1 quart, or more if it is for a child.

BUTTER.— $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

CHEESE.— $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

POTATOES.— $3\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.

BEER.—1 gallon for a woman ; 7 quarts for a man.

TEA.—Two ounces.

COFFEE.— $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. (for breakfast only).

COCOA (PASTE).—Ditto, $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.

SUGAR.— $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

N.B.—In giving out stores for the week the housekeeper must multiply each article by the number of persons, and that will give the quantity required. Articles of doubtful use, such as rice or tapioca, may be given or not ; an account should be required of the last given out before replenishing the kitchen jar. The kitchen spice-box should be filled, and the date of filling it entered in the store-room book.

One could argue that our great-grandparents, and great-great-grandparents, were healthier than us. And we can learn a lot from them. A common counter argument to this statement is "but our great-grandparents didn't live that long!"

While medical advancements have certainly improved some aspects of healthcare, the assumption that human life span has increased **dramatically** is misleading. Overall lifespan has increased since then, but there is some evidence that this is not because we are living far longer. Instead, it's increased since more of us are **making** it that far. A lot of life expectancy data from the past is skewed by high rates of infant mortality.

"Infant mortality rates were unquestionably high, and around 50% of all infant deaths at all levels of society was due to infectious diseases."¹⁷

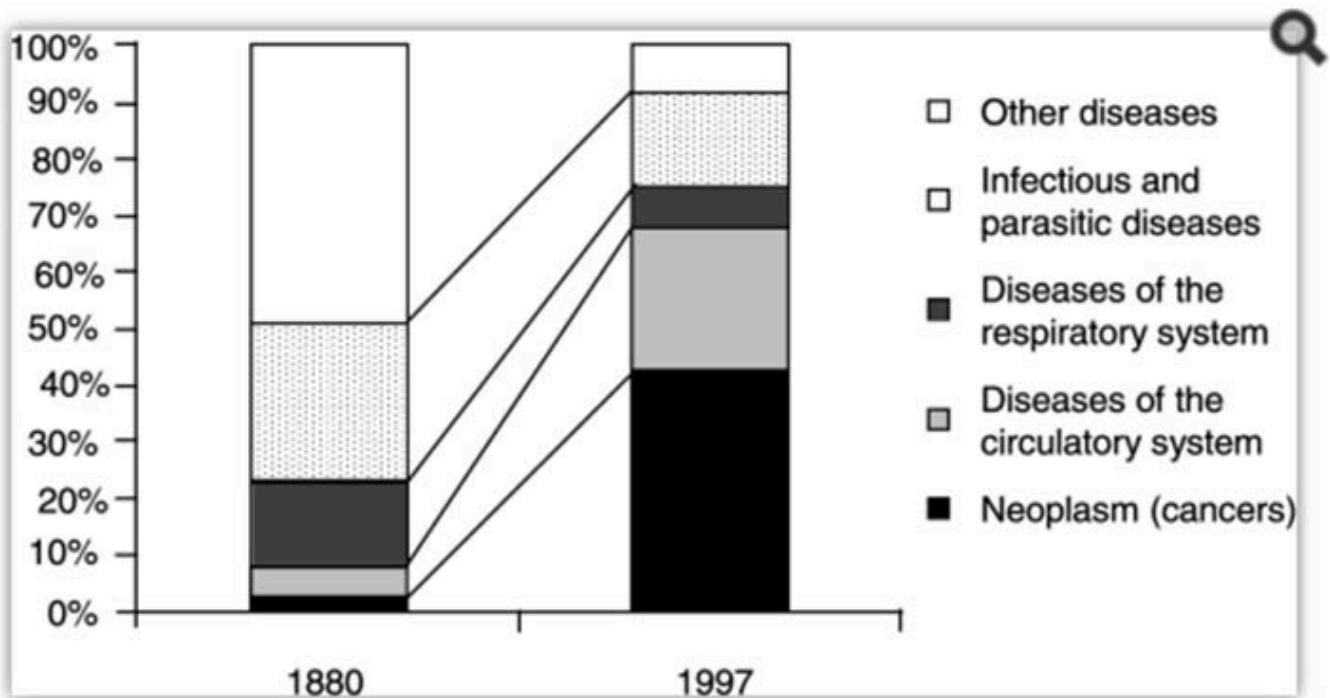
If you have two children, and one dies before their first birthday but the other lives to the age of 70, their average life expectancy is 35.

"Once the dangerous childhood years were passed ... life expectancy in the mid-Victorian period (1850-1870) was not markedly different from what it is today"

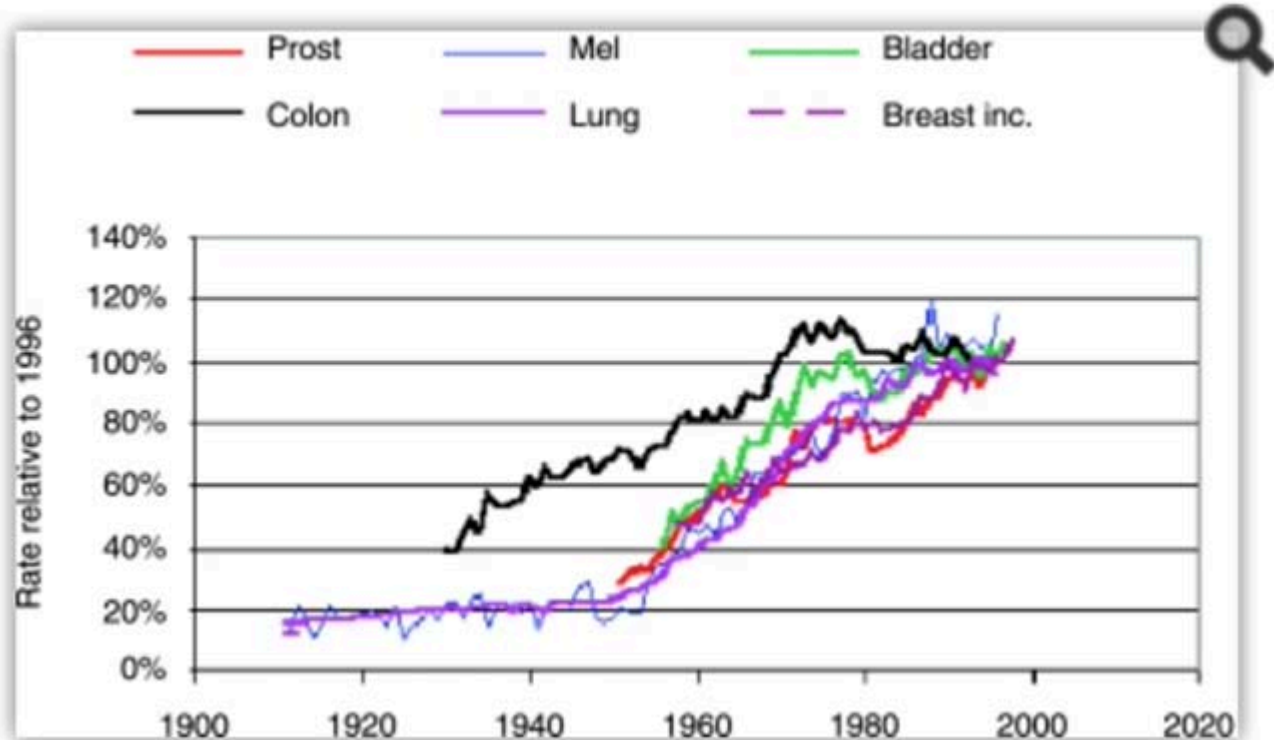
– Judith Rowbotham and Paul Clayton.

A five-year-old girl would live to 73, and a boy to 75. Modern medicine and science is very good at keeping babies alive, which will thus increase our life expectancy. Plus, they didn't suffer from the chronic diseases and autoimmune conditions plaguing us today. Many enjoyed relatively good health in old age! There is evidence that rates of chronic diseases were significantly lower, indicating the healthy life span was higher.

Here is an image from the 2008 paper, "An Unsuitable and Degraded Diet? Part Three: Victorian Consumption Patterns and Their Health Benefits,"¹⁸ which compares the causes of death between two time periods.



Another image from the same paper¹⁹ showing trends in cancer.



There has of course been political factors and influences from large businesses that have changed the dietary recommendations over the last 100 years. For example, the demonization of animal food that we've consumed for generation can be traced back to profits. As a society, we've taken the most bioavailable and nutrient-dense animal protein sources and have labeled them as "unhealthy."

But it's no coincidence that large food corporations cannot make big profit margins with small scale farming, but they can easily profit by making fake, plant-based versions of these foods utilizing corn and soybean byproducts from mono-cropped fields and other highly processed ingredients.

In Conclusion

If we return to the question of "what should we be eating" after learning about food history, the answer is clear. Meat, butter and dairy, sweets and sugar, fruit, properly prepared starches (like potatoes, rice and bread without added ingredients and sourced well) and well-cooked vegetables.

PUFA-rich foods were not a big part of their diets – and a large increase in dietary PUFAs has negatively impacted metabolic health. Of course, food sourcing matters, and paying attention to where your food comes from, what chemicals are used, what the livestock are fed and how they were raised are all important factors. And this was a benefit they had: The food readily available to them was better quality and lower in PUFAs.

But our great-grandparents did not obsess over what they should/should not be eating like some diet circles do these days (carnivores, vegans, etc.), and it is very freeing to know they ate a wide variety of food (including, yes, sugar!).

They knew this intuitively since it was passed down from generation to generation, and this innate nutritional wisdom is portrayed and preserved in these vintage cookbooks. Food was viewed as nourishment and love, not as an inconvenience and something that was prepared quickly from a package.

Health is simplified when you understand that everything goes back to energy production. Learning about your physiology and metabolism empowers you and can break you out of living in a state of fear.

When you understand metabolic health and that the metabolic state of your body impacts the function of various "compartments," you can better understand why some foods or activities may be metabolically supportive (increase energy production), and why others may hinder energy production. Instead of arbitrarily labeling something as good or bad because an influencer said so.

For example, a meal should INCREASE our body temperature, meaning our body is using that food for fuel. You will not heal by fearing food.

When you have food and metabolic awareness, you can ditch the fear-based mindset, and realize that restrictive approaches may come with short-term benefits (and it is fine to utilize them in the short-term), but are almost always paired with long-term consequences (loss of some bodily function). You instead enter an empowered state

where you can make more educated decisions as to what is moving your health forward, and what's holding it back.

Food should be nourishing, and food should be enjoyed. A healthy diet does not have to be restrictive. If it is, it's not sustainable. If you are frequently bingeing, then your current approach is not working and your body is asking for nutrients and energy.

To Learn More, Join Rooted in Resilience

If you need some nutritional support and guidance, and are interested in learning more about improving your metabolism so that you can eat more calories, eat food you enjoy, lose weight, and feel great, check out our course, [Rooted in Resilience](#).

We help you leave behind all the restrictive diets, fear, and confusion around food. We empower you to become your best resource and start living your best life with the energy and confidence to follow your dreams, lose weight, and be confident in your health again.

Learning about energy metabolism was one of the reasons we wanted to start a farm and be involved in food production. The types of fat you eat can hinder how you utilize carbs, as PUFAs (polyunsaturated fatty acids) hinder your ability to properly utilize carbs.²⁰ For example, PUFAs negatively inhibit cytochrome C oxidase activity,²¹ a vital enzyme required for proper carb metabolism.

And when it comes to animal fats, what your food eats, matters, as the types of fat in poultry and pork products are impacted by the types of fat in their diet. So, if fed a diet rich in PUFAs, the amount of PUFAs in the eggs, chicken, and pork fat increases.

A Final Note From Dr. Mercola – The Best Nutrition Course Is NOW Available for You!

I have very good news to announce. Very shortly I will be sending out invites to train individuals interested in becoming one of my health coaches. My health coaches will be

some of the best trained coaches on the planet because they will understand how biology works and how to correct it to optimize health.

Many will apply but only a few will be accepted. Once they are accepted, they will be allowed to enroll in my nutritional biochemistry course at no charge. This course is based on the concepts of the late Dr. Ray Peat who popularized bioenergetic medicine. That's a fancy word for optimizing diet choices to maximize cellular energy production.

Poorly functioning mitochondria is pervasive and probably exists in 98% of the population. Diligent application of the principles outlined by Doctor Peat will help your mitochondria recover so they can produce the amount of energy they were designed to. This is important because your body needs energy to activate its intrinsic healing capacity.

The foundation for the nutritional biochemistry course that will be taught to our health coaches is from a course that Ashley (writer of today's article) and her sister Sarah put together. It took them more than one year to write this course, and in my view, it is the best health course I've ever seen in my life.

I only wish I had this course when I first started practicing medicine. It would have been a game changer. It's hard to imagine how many additional hundreds of millions of people I could have helped with this knowledge. Not to worry though as the knowledge is now available for you.

If you are seriously interested in understanding how your body works, and more importantly, what specific actions you can take to guide it to working the way it was designed to, then [this is the course you need to take](#).

You can enroll for the course on their website. Please understand that I take no commissions from recommending this course. All the funds go directly to Sarah and Ashley. Ashley is probably the most knowledgeable farmer on the planet when it comes to health.

This is why she can produce some of the healthiest food possible. But you may realize that farmers don't earn very much, so you can support Ashley and Sarah's mission to provide the world with healthy food by [purchasing her course](#).

I would encourage you to seriously consider taking advantage of the wealth of knowledge that has taken Ashley and Sarah many years to compile and make available to you in an easy to learn format.

Sources and References

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