

# Back to our Nutritional Future

Or...

## *Polar Bears in the Sahara*

In reflecting on the past  
Reviewing knowledge we've amassed  
One would rightly be aghast

If the only salient gist  
Were the lessons we had missed  
Or implications we resist.

For it's clear that we've progressed  
And in the process have addressed  
At least for nations of the West

Every nutrient we need  
To optimize our feed  
For the welfare of the breed.

But come to "have" when once "had  
not"  
I think it's clear we've overshot,  
In fact, by quite a lot!

So the challenge that emerges  
As our culture clearly verges  
On the brink of several scourges

(Diabetes, obesity, heart disease, stroke  
Disease and demise about which we  
spoke.)

Is related to excess:  
Can we manage to suppress  
The menace mingled with success?

Having looked where we've been  
now where will we go?

In what way sort out  
what we do and don't know...

In what way apply all the lessons we've  
learned  
Insofar as nutritional health is  
concerned?

Consider that traits with which we've  
been endowed  
Are what cycles of feast and famine  
allowed

That it's from our struggle to survive  
Our dietary preferences derive.

Both what we ate, and how acquired  
Our roles defined, our tastes inspired.

Now as for taste, we learned to favor  
Food not only full of flavor

But rich, familiar and imbued  
With nutrients so that when chewed

Through deprivation and subsistence  
It nourished our resolved persistence

Both forefathers and foremothers  
When they could indulge their druthers

Sought out what they could to eat  
That rich and fatty, salty, sweet...

Brought strength and health, improved  
condition  
While preventing malnutrition.

**{THIS SECTION IS GENERALLY  
OMMITTED FOR THE SAKE OF  
TIME:**

Now as for food defining roles...  
Ah, there's a rub this tale extols!

Here's where differences of sex  
May vex and bother or perplex.

For men look back upon the hunt  
With reverence and regret

And long for all the manly things  
Like meat, and beer and sweat...

And since no man has hunted cheese  
Nor beat an egg in battle

A quiche lacks certain attributes  
more evident in cattle.

So it's been said that quiche for men  
Is not the way to go

If it doesn't come with antlers,  
Real men should just say no!

But men no less than women  
Are ruled by appetite

So after they have just said "no"  
Most men say, "well, I might..."

Then men have gone and eaten quiche  
Where they found space to hide

Then wiped the crumbs, composed  
themselves  
And emphatically denied.

So who eats quiche? Well, anyone  
By gender undissuaded

It's needing to confess to it that gets men  
agitated.

For we think quiche quite a dainty dish  
For ladies on a diet

So to save their reputations,  
Of course "real" men deny it!

But in fact, a standard slice of quiche  
Not especially thin nor thick

Is a load of fat and calories  
About as dainty as a brick!

All our efforts to restrain ourselves  
And be a bit ascetic

Are often at best marginal  
And at their worst, pathetic

For our cravings from the early days  
Are not readily refuted

So when we change our diets  
With new dishes substituted

We tend to reapproximate our previous  
condition

With abundant sugar, salt and fat our  
diet's composition

For it is to traits and tendencies through  
time assimilated

That the things we like to chew on now  
are apt to be related.

So if tonight at dinner  
You're not certain what to do

Be certain that the rest of us  
Are in a muddle, too!

For choosing food is influenced  
By taste, and health, and bias

And what the one would have us choose  
The others would deny us.

**END OF OMITTED SECTION}**

Now, it may seem the winter  
of our discontent  
Insofar as our acts of ingestion are spent

But this notion of seasons  
May shed some light

If not heat, on our current  
Nutritional plight

As we ponder the ways  
We all struggle with food

We may dare to be hopeful  
Optimism renewed

If our thoughts turn to bears  
Who live well to the North

With far too much sense  
To dare venture forth

For to turn to the South  
Would be foolish and bold

For such creatures adapted  
To living in cold

The South and its heat  
Is no place for such bears

With their layers of fat  
And hide covered with hairs

And especially deserts  
With blistering heat

Where the wind scorches skin  
And the sand burns your feet

Is to creatures evolved  
To climes that are polar

As appealing as a dentist  
Extracting your molar!

These bears- so efficient  
At heat conservation

Remain where they should  
For their own preservation

And thus, unintended  
Teach us a lesson

As we sip Coca-Cola  
Munch chips fried in Wesson

Recline on a couch  
Stay fixed to our seat

A lesson having nothing  
To do with the heat

If bears have a home  
Then so, too, do we

It's just that the bears' home  
Is simpler to see

For the bounds of our home  
Have been stretched 'til they snapped

'Til this concept of home  
Can't be charted or mapped

We have claimed all the space  
on the face of the globe

Yet borders beyond which  
It hurts us to probe

Continue to bind us  
Against all predilection

To the constraints of our history,  
And natural selection.

Our home is the place  
We're adapted to be

From the time our ancestors  
climbed down from their tree.

In that place we're at home  
we were always kinetic

due to struggles persistent  
and even frenetic

looking always for food  
finding barely enough

made us tough and get going  
for the going was tough.

the work of our muscles  
that kept us alive

drove up needs for fuel  
to subsist and survive

so such food as we found  
as we gathered and wandered

was cherished with nothing  
wasted or squandered

perhaps that's the reason why  
mothers berate

us for leaving residual food  
on our plate

the food of our ancestors  
caloric dilution

provided for micronutrient  
needs a solution

for plants contain limited  
combustible fuel

but are vitamin and mineral rich  
as a rule.

We found very little of sugar and salt  
so these are flavors we tend to exalt

the food we procured was largely fat-  
free

although richer than ours in omega-3

We are told now to cut back  
On sugar and fat

Restrict salt, as for fiber,  
To eat more of that-

Eat more micronutrients  
Less calories

Less food that walks  
And more grown on trees

Avoid fatty acids  
Saturated and trans

Include fish or  
Flaxseed in all menu plans

More folate, potassium  
And vitamin E

Selenium, zinc,  
Flavonoids found in tea...

The insights it seems  
Of our research and science

All converge to support  
Systematic compliance

With a diet spelled out  
Not in journals or tomes

But recorded quite nicely  
By our chromosomes.

Like Hawthorne's hapless heroine  
We too are marked from birth

By all the ways our bodies  
Are adapted to this earth.

A constant rain of calories  
Is not by birth our right...

So now against these wrongs  
We've wrought, we're all compelled to  
fight.

But there are ways, when there is will, to  
get from this to that.

And shield our health within a shell of  
native habitat.

We need that shell to shield us not just  
from sun and rain; but from the flood of  
calories that feeds the weight we gain!

Like polar bears burning beneath  
Desert heat

We're out of our bounds  
With the things that we eat

Our adaptations are challenged  
Our shrewdness on trial

Will we find our way home  
Or stay lost in denial?

As we look forward, think what to do  
next  
The past holds the answers in native  
context:

polar bears, zebras, giraffes and baboons  
don't ever sip tea, and never use spoons

yet while saying nothing  
they tell us far more

about how to eat well  
than fad diets galore

the brazen claims of Atkins,  
Agatston & Sears  
Lie not along the way to eat  
That's stood the test of years

to promote healthful diets  
be not beguiled-

put your ear to the past;  
heed the call of the wild!

Ladies & gentlemen-  
For our sea of dietary troubles  
This displaced creature is an emblem.  
But we are much smarter than the  
average bear-  
& unified against these rising tides of  
tribulation, we may, by opposing, end  
them!

So it is that I conclude this half-baked  
talk on health and food; and do so  
hoping to have taught. Or served, at  
least, some food for thought!

*-fin*

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