



How good for you is 'clean eating'?

Last night (Thursday 19 January 2017) BBC Horizon's Dr Giles Yeo went on a mission to challenge the scientific basis of the new trend of clean eating. While most of the principles - eating whole, unadulterated foods, lots of organic vegetables and fruits - is something I've promoted for decades, I've been suspicious about some of the overarching recommendations to, for example, avoid all grains and certainly all gluten, animal and acid-forming food.

Yeo first spoke to Dr Bill Davies, author of *Wheat Belly*, who ignored the evidence presented to him regarding ancient Kamut khorosan wheat, which has shown remarkable and consistent anti-inflammatory effects in clinical trials on people with diabetes, heart disease and IBS. Most convincing was the improvement recorded in every one of twenty volunteers given Kamut wheat versus modern wheat in symptoms of IBS, as well as blood markers of inflammation, such as IL-6, which dropped by 36.2%. Not what you'd expect if all forms of 'gluten', found in all wheats, was inherently bad for you.

Dr Fasano identified that the type of gluten, gliadin, can trigger a release of zonulin, which increases gut permeability. However, there are many kinds of gliadin, and different kinds in modern versus ancient wheat, as well as many other differences to non-gluten components.

In truth, we do not yet know why many people, according to clinical trials, react differently to modern wheat than ancient wheat, and it is far too early to say that ALL gluten grains are bad for you and best avoided. I wrote about this in my report *Don't Blame the Grain*. Yeo then interviewed Robert Young, author of the *PH Miracle*, advocating an alkaline-forming diet, who is currently in court relating to treating cancer patients with intravenous sodium bicarbonate. What makes a food more alkaline-forming is that it contains more calcium, magnesium, sodium or potassium, while a more acid-forming food contains more amino acids ie protein.

So, an alkaline-forming diet means more vegetarian and less animal protein. While, generally, that might be a good idea because most people don't eat enough vegetables, I don't think all animal protein is bad for you, or should be avoided. For example, studies consistently show reduced risk of a wide variety of diseases from those who eat more fish.

Of course, nuts, beans, soya and quinoa are all high protein. Soya is often shunned in 'clean eating' for no good reason while quinoa is embraced. I googled 'clean eating + soya' and was told 'soya is very acid forming' and 'phytoestrogens have been shown in laboratory studies to increase breast cancer cell growth' despite a wealth of evidence that the higher one's phytoestrogen intake the lower the risk of breast cancer. Other phytoestrogen rich foods, such as chickpeas, are embraced in 'clean eating'. It's all a bit inconsistent and faddy.

Dr Yeo then went to meet Colin Campbell, author of the *China Study*, who has claimed that the more animal protein the more disease. This creates what I think is a false message, that eating any animal protein at all is bad for you.

Contrary to Campbell's position, is the low carb high fat diet movement, kicked off by Atkins, which advocates lots of fatty meat and virtually no carbs, and is showing great results in the reversal of diabetes and obesity. There's also a vast difference between eating fish or an organic free-range chicken and highly processed meat. Of course, many people choose to be vegetarian, or vegan, for ethical more than nutritional reasons.

I spent many years close to vegan back in the 80's, but I didn't advocate it to all because the evidence wasn't there that a vegan diet was necessarily the best way to achieve 'optimum nutrition'. I didn't avoid eggs because I had seen no evidence that they increased cholesterol or heart disease or were bad for you. Also, the chickens we raised didn't seem to suffer from donating their eggs.

When the evidence for eating fish, high in omega-3, became overwhelming I added fish into my diet. I rarely eat meat and, if I do, I choose to eat naturally, not intensively, reared animals, which also tend to be leaner. But that's my choice.

'Optimum nutrition' may not be the same for us all because we are genetically unique. While there are good general principles for all which I've explored in the *Optimum Nutrition Bible*, different kinds of diets may suit different kinds of people.

The good thing about the clean eating movement is that it is making people aware of how adulterated our food is and the value of eating whole, organic, unadulterated food. But the proponents of it could do with getting their nutritional facts straight.