

Feb 4/13

### 3. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS IN NUTRITION

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. To recognize the relevance of cultural factors and traditions in nutrition today
2. To understand the historical basis for modern dietary habits
3. To identify the advantages and disadvantages of traditional diets
4. To examine how sudden changes in diet can impact on the human health: case study of the Pima

Child Deaths: Unicef says global mortality rates fell  
∴ of antiretroviral drugs (distributed free)

#### Why is it important to understand cultural dietary habits?

so that the food aid does not go in waste. eg in 2001 US spent \$27 million in aid to Afghanistan but they did not eat it as it wasn't 'halal' (meeting their cultural habits) and all that money literally went down the drain.

#### A. HISTORY OF DIET

How do we know what our ancestors ate?

##### a) Paleontological data

- Coprolites - fossilized feces (1000 y of old) (bones, remains etc)

##### b) Habits of modern hunter-gatherer tribes

- Changes from foraging to agriculture began about 10,000 years ago.
- Omnivores (ate all species of plants & animals)

#### 1. Agricultural Revolution

- plants were domesticated (wheats were the 1st to be domesticated)
- began ~10,000 years ago
- wouldn't have to move to different places
- maize in Latin America, Rice in Asia

- domestication of cereal grains

- switch from wide variety of foods to a small number of domestic crops

hunter gather

- pastoralism - herders of domesticated animals eg cows, goats, camels, sheep  
eg Dinka of the South Sudan, Masai

consumed  
less diverse  
diet

- large amounts of grain, milk and domesticated meat consumed

- humans became more sedentary ∴ lifestyle was very active

settle down  
to grains, etc

- a nomadic foraging lifestyle required vigorous physical exertion and skeletal remains indicate that our ancestors were more muscular

- growing rice is very labour intensive

## 2. Industrial Revolution - world food supply changed

- whole grains refined removing most of the fiber & vitamins  
- 18<sup>th</sup> century - the human diet changed even more dramatically

- removing harmful bacteria

- technological advances occurred in transportation, refrigeration and food

← processing → longer shelf life (more stable

↳ prevented food from spoiling

- adding vitamins/minerals; adding iodine to salt food supply

- beginning around 1900, whole grains were routinely refined and refined sugar became commonplace

- iodine in food is a consequence of iodine in soil

"The machine age has had the effect of forcing upon the peoples of the industrial nations (especially the United States) the most gigantic human feeding experiment ever attempted."

won't test #s

Benefits: eg pasteurization & refrigeration - Jean Bogert, nutritionist (1939)

History of human diet: -100,000 generations of people were hunter-gatherers since start of industrial age; -500 generations have developed on agriculture; 10 generations have lived since start of industrial age; 2-3 generations have grown up with highly processed fast foods.

## B. FOOD HABITS AND THEIR ORIGIN

Food habits or food culture are not biologically determined but learned through **socialization**.

- Food culture includes: *what we view as food.*
  - *ways to prepare food*
  - *the effect of food on health*
- *when skinned alive it is believed that consuming snake will increase virility*
- Food culture involves change
  - acculturation *process of one cultural group adopting the beliefs and behaviours of another*
    - ↳ add variety*
    - ↳ learn about different cultures*
  - ethnocentrism *the belief that one's own value system and lifestyle is most appropriate.*

## The development of food habits:

### 1. Religious/spiritual perspective (internal)

- e.g. in Judaism and Islam there are a wide variety of dietary laws, many are similar
  - Jewish dietary law is based on scholarly interpretations of the Torah and is followed by orthodox Jews
  - 'kosher' - *what is acceptable to eat*
- e.g. Islamic dietary laws are based on interpretation of the Quran which details what foods are 'halal' - *that which is permitted to eat*