

FOODNSPORT



Everything About Nothing

How did raw fooders get mired in minutiae?

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Interested in nutrition? Sure, that's a huge part of why we made dietary changes. Concerned about nutrition? Yes, that's why we are committed to improving our regimen. Would the words, "worried about nutrition" (in a healthy way, of course) describe us? Definitely, we are worried about nutrition, or so I am told, and that is where we become vulnerable.

In reality, it is our neighbors, eating their devitalized, nutrient-free foods that need to be concerned, and yes, even worried, about their nutrition and health. Their unsustainable processed, refined cooked-food diet is greatly responsible, both directly and indirectly, for not only their damaged health but for the destruction of the entire ecosystem.

Raw fooders, on the other hand, should, theoretically be able to relax in the land of simple, healthful eating. But alas, simplicity doesn't sell. For the most part, those most publicly spreading the raw message have led us into a nutritional maze where ever-increasing doses of ever-smaller micronutrients are necessary to shore up our diets. Isn't it time to step back from the minutiae and take in the big picture once again?

Into the Raw Rabbit Hole

Most of us have gone through worlds of dietary transitions. From junk food and java to vegetarian (with maybe a sojourn into the macrobiotic world), vegan, and a wide variety of raw diets we have tried them all. In its time, the current diet was "it"—the be-all, end-all "best" diet. Each time, we learned a little something. Each time, we grew a little wiser. Each time, we accommodated to the new program, calling it a transition, and each time, we found that there was more—a better way.

We learned that vegetarianism wasn't as animal friendly as we had originally thought, not really much more so than the Suicide American Diet. We learned that the common vegan diet was as nutritionally devitalized as practically any other cooked-food approach. We learned more and more about nutrition, focusing on ever-smaller aspects of the dietary picture. As we did so, the gap between food and nutrition grew wider. We started eating bananas for their potassium, vegetables for their chlorophyll, and spices for their minerals. We started consuming oils for their component parts. Food was no longer food, but a list of nutrients.

No longer was the caloronutrient (protein-fat-carb) ratio enough to evaluate our diet. No longer did the macronutrient index provide an accurate picture of our nutrition. Not even micronutrients were all that

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important anymore. We left this all behind for a more intriguing world, a world we do not even understand: the world of micromolecular nutrition. In this world, chemistry supposedly happens that we do not comprehend. Nutritional miracles occur that are beyond science's ability to explain. Biologic transmutation—the alchemy of biochemistry—is given credit for magical and mystical nutritional goings-on.

Logic has apparently lost all meaning in the raw food world. Basic minerals, we are told, are formed out of thin air. If the body doesn't have what it needs, it will create it, we are informed. This, by the very people who would sell us supplements of every description. Why take supplements if the body will simply create what it needs? Why, in fact, follow any dietary program at all?

Med School Minutiae

In medical school, the progression of study is extremely organized, and it gets very deep. From basic sciences, students progress into an increasingly microscopic world. They start with gross anatomy of the body (structures that can be seen with the naked eye): its systems, organs, tissues and finally, its cells. They then learn about organelles (the tiny structures that keep the cells functioning) and the organic chemistry that keeps the organelles functioning before finally journeying off into biochemistry. At this level, the student's perspective is on the atomic and eventually the subatomic level.

In school, we studied subatomic particles wondering how this would actually relate to treating a real, live patient. The expression in school went "We're learning more and more about less and less until we'll finally know everything about nothing." Although our actual course of study was pyramidal, it felt more like the inverse.

The sad but funny truth of the matter is that this expression "knowing everything about nothing," almost exactly describes what happens to most med students during their five or more years of medical brainwashing. They begin med school with the finest of intentions, planning to help people when they graduate. But after years of studying things much too small to see without a microscope (and even smaller), with names much too long to pronounce without resorting to Latin, they find they have lost their ability to communicate with normal human beings on any useful level. Many students lose sight of their original reasons for going to med school, having become excellent chemists but poor doctors. Their language, medicalese, is not only indecipherable, but it includes continual references to substances and techniques unknown to the common man.

Still, it gives doctors power. Some wield their power well, others abuse it. They earn money by dispensing controlled substances. Over time, the Hippocratic Oath, "First, do no harm." has been replaced by the Hypocrite's Oath "Above all, make a buck." and the medical mantra, "The benefits outweigh the risks." People either love their doctors or hate them for who they have become.

Raw Fooders Follow Suit

In today's raw food movement, we are seeing a similar phenomenon. Untrained laypeople, dedicated to helping others by sharing their miraculous health recovery stories, take to the stages. They are so enthusiastic, they write books. The number of questions they are asked encourages them to start parroting scientific-sounding information to back their stories.

In an effort to make a living, they begin creating terminology to set them apart (high raw, green diet, superfood, and detox, for example) and selling a line of product. Vitamins begot supplements, which begot superfoods, which begot whatever new moniker could be devised for the next hot product.

Cleanses, flushes, enzymes, refined oils, angstrom minerals, sea "vegetables," algae, and rare exotic herbs, fruits and vegetables—everything salable is being sold. Elixirs, potions, pills, powders, frozen and dehydrated substances, and a wide array of bottled caplets abound in the movement now. This, from a group supposedly educated about the benefits of eating fresh raw foods, demonstrates the degree to

which the salesmen have taken over. Misinformation has become the rule rather than the exception.

Raw Food Show and Tell

Just as medical science and practice keeps progressing, leaving older methods in the dust of antiquity, in its small way so does the raw food movement. Very few leaders/speakers/teachers in the raw movement have actually been following a raw diet for more than a decade. None, to my knowledge, still follow the program they were on a decade ago. Most do not follow the program they were on even one year ago. Their lectures are no longer teaching, not science, but simply show and tell. It has become nothing more than a sharing of experience, the semisighted leading the semisighted. It seems that congruity in teaching has become all but unnecessary.

It is common for self-proclaimed leaders to proudly state, "You don't need to understand me," while they implore their disciples to "try everything and find out what works for yourself."

"What kind of leadership is this," I wonder. Could it be that the power of the podium has gone to their heads? Where is the guidance in telling folks to experiment with everything and find out for themselves what works best? How does it help the initiate to encourage him or her to make all of the same mistakes we made? Sure, it works well for the salesmen, who get to sell at least one of everything on their shelves, but does it work for the initiate? Apparently not, because although more people are entering the raw arena than ever before, at the same time more are leaving than ever before.

Almost everyone in the raw movement has made some effort to get other people to join them. It is so easy to tell others to eat more fruits and vegetables, to see the raw light. Why do we find it so difficult, personally, to achieve and maintain an all-raw state? Could it be that perhaps we are not actually applying the diet in a healthful manner, and hence we find it very challenging to sustain?

Where Did We Take the Detour?

Have we lost sight of the reason we went raw? Cooked didn't work, and raw was the healthier, more nutritious choice. If our "healthy" raw diet was working for us, would we have been tempted to allow it to deteriorate until it included almost every supplement under the sun?

Was our perspective altered by some deep letdown? Did we not lose excess weight, gain newfound energy, and experience positive health results in just about every conceivable aspect of our lifestyles, just as we had hoped? Sure, everyone wants "more," and the way to achieve it is to refine and redefine the parameters of healthy diet and lifestyle, not to revert to the lifestyle that never worked in the first place. Is our memory so poor that we have forgotten how many times cooked foods and supplements have failed us in the past? If you are not sure of the answer, it was, "every time."

We pride ourselves on seeing and doing things differently as raw fooders. We call ourselves vegan, and we are proud to be health enthusiasts. We talk about eliminating the contradictions between what we say and how we live our lives. We say we are raw fooders and that cooked food might as well be a drug. Yet we continue to consume pharmaceutical-quality drugs (enzymes, MSM, and many other refined mineral supplements). We embrace many nonvegan products (seaweeds and algae are classed as animals, and no bee products get the vegan seal of approval). We even turn a blind eye to the many nonraw products we consume (Bragg aminos, Nama Shoyu, miso, vinegar, maple syrup, agave, cacao, most "raw" cashews, many dehydrated herbs and spices etc.) All the while, we eat a larger percentage of our total calories as fat than those on any other diet, including even Atkin's abomination. Then we wonder why (are disappointed when?) our health does not meet our expectations.

The minutiae somehow seem more important to us than the big picture. We wonder about getting enough B-12 but not about getting enough sleep. We make sure we have friendly bacteria in our diet, but we don't pay enough attention to our friends. We worry about world war when our food

combinations result in an ongoing internal war. There can be no peace of mind when the body is at war.

Is it the glamour and excitement of potions that gives them such an appeal? Could it really be the packaging? Is it that we get to "play doctor" with ourselves? Would we still use them if we simply called them "drugs," a reform that the medical profession is calling for? Is all the fuss about supplements simply another aspect of the "everything about nothing" mindset?

Getting Back on Track

Health is a linear, cumulative experience. If you pay the price of health—correct living—health is the reward. If you do not, you'll experience symptoms. It is up to you whether you wish to supplement your diet or correct it—but only the latter produces true health.

Making the raw diet work for you as nature intended is so simple that it just won't sell—at least not anything other than cases of produce. It's so simple, in fact, that people just don't believe those of us for whom Natural Hygiene has worked like a charm for decades. Although lectures and workshops and books can be devoted to the subject, I'll lay it out here in nine short words:

"Fruits and vegetables are food. The rest are condiments."

When we live according to this mantra, all the complication falls away—and no pill, powder, or supplement of any kind is necessary.

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