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Superfoods: The Diet of Tomorrow

Part of living in today's Western Civilization involves being health conscious. With advertisements prodding people to buy low fat, low sugar, and low carb versions of their favorite foods, it is no wonder many people are scrambling for the secret to a healthier diet without the stress from the advertisements. To meet the demand, many different research groups are investing time in finding super foods. Foods that help burn fat quickly and effectively, or foods that are high in antioxidants that will rid the body of Western toxins just to name a few. Basically anything that will allow a consumer to continue eating their regular processed junk while staying healthy. A healthy diet is no secret; it has just been masked by decades and decades of food processing.

In the excerpt, "Escape from the Western Diet," Michael Pollan describes how to return to the healthier ways before processed foods began to dominate the food industry. Pollan explains that a nutritional break through will not stop or revert Western diseases consequential of an unhealthy diet. Furthermore, Pollan states, "To escape the Western diet and the ideology of nutritionism, we have only to stop eating and thinking that way (437)." He believes that a diet that consists mostly of processed food will have negative health affects on a person whether or not that person loads up on Omega-3, antioxidants, or any other kind of magic ingredient.

Michael Pollan's concept is something so fundamental that I cannot imagine it failing. Pollan declares, "People eating a Western diet are prone to a complex of chronic disease that

seldom strike people eating more traditional diets (435).” His idea of going back to the beginning before the processed food takeover is so powerful and yet so obvious. In order to stop Western people from contracting Western diseases, we must change the behavior that causes those diseases. Cutting fast food and overly processed cheap food out of our every day diet would be one place to start. Instead of eating all that junk, make homemade meals. The main point is: Spend more time on the most important aspect of life!

People who ate food at its most natural state did not depend on low calorie forms of their favorite foods to stay healthy. Traditionally, those people could not even dream of the junk that litters modern supermarkets. Not only did processed food not exist, but also those who weren't exposed to it did not contract the same illnesses that the modern Western Civilization contracts in epidemic proportions. The people of traditional diets simply ate what they grew or what they raised and never had to worry about diabetes, high blood pressure, or any other disease related to an unhealthy diet. Those ailments simply did not exist or were not a consequence of an improper diet. It wasn't until the massive spike in processed and fast food over the past few decades that diet related diseases became a serious issue for the Western Civilization.

While knowing that a traditional diet would be our escape from modern disease, how is that achieved exactly? Seems almost impossible since most of the food around us is processed, cheap, and quick. Pollan describes that a traditional diet is easier than most people would immediately think. He gives three “food algorithms” which he explains as “...three rules- ‘Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants (440).’” Simple. He encourages eating real food that has not been processed and would be found in a traditional diet. Not too much which he describes as eating within a person's means and not consuming massive amounts of one particular food believed that it will be the key to a healthy diet. Finally, he urges people to focus on fresh

produce about all else. Revisiting traditional diets can be quite simple as long as those three rules are followed.

In contrast to Michael Pollan's idea of dismissing all of Western research on finding super foods, I can see some value in those investments. Research showing green tea as an organ detoxifier and turmeric spice as a way to help prevent Alzheimer's disease grabs my attention. But I do not see that information as beneficial to a person who regularly lives the Western diet. Applying super nutrition to a traditional diet exceeds what a plain traditional diet would accomplish. This information could be especially helpful to individuals with certain diseases common to their bloodline. If there is credible research about how to lower cholesterol available to a person whose parents both have high cholesterol, I say take that scientific advise! That is, if that person has already strayed away from the Western diet. There is no harm in enhancing a person's escape from an unhealthy diet.

There are a few arguments against the glorification of super foods. The main argument being, "Why not just take vitamins that aim to accomplish the same goal?" While taking an Omega-3 vitamin is easier than buying, cooking, and eating a fish rich in Omega-3, it is not as good as the real thing. Eating real food that contains the vitamins found in nutritional supplements is more reliable. The vitamin pills have the extractions of the vitamins while the superfood that was used to make that pill has the nutrients in their natural state (Laurance). Taking a vitamin supplement that was processed from the actual food that vitamin is found in is apart of the Western diet.

Returning to a traditional diet is difficult in the modern world. But with determination and motivation for one's health, it can be done. Motivation for a healthier lifestyle is also found in science's quest to find amazing superfoods. In order to support and to benefit from the

nutritional break throughs that these scientists will find, Western Civilization needs to free themselves of the processed foods that are now considered to be normal. Otherwise, their investment is in vain.

Works Cited

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