

# What to Eat

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Illustrated by F. G. Cooper

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*Revolutions aren't only in politics and finance these interesting days. The old order in Diet has its back to the table. Brave young medical progressives are working hard to give you a New Dish Deal. Doctor Kraetzer is one of their brilliant leaders. He is on the staffs of several great hospitals. We present his message for your consideration, with the approval of the New York Academy of Medicine.*

—Collier's

THE NATIONAL WEEKLY

**H**ERE is a true story that begins, like the one in the old joke books, "It seems there was an Irishman named Pat." But this one is no joke. Pat was Irish, and a fine broth of a man—or, more accurately, the monumental remains of what once had been a fine broth of a man. Now his face was a mask of despair and there was a pathetic whimper in his voice as he told me that he knew his illness was incurable.

When a man in his forties develops stomach symptoms and shows a grave loss of weight and strength, cancer usually is the first thought to enter a doctor's mind. There was no time for delay, for quibbling. So I immediately put him to the expense of seventy-five dollars' worth of X-ray pictures at the hands of an expert. The pictures eventually showed everything to be normal, which was fine—but while we awaited the results of the X-ray study the cat came out of the bag. "I've been so careful of my diet for the past year, too!" my ailing Irishman moaned.

Now, that was bad! As soon as your average American begins to be careful of his diet there are gas pains ahead.

Pat told me that about a year before he had begun to feel out of sorts. "Meat!" cried his friends. "Cut out meat. Take raw foods, fruit and nuts, and lots of vegetables."

So he began to eat nothing but rabbit food. And he a carnivorous animal, a flesh-eating mammal whose impoverished blood and wasting sinews cried for great juicy steaks, prime fish, and other vehicles of honorable proteins!

"Get out of here," I ordered, "to the nearest restaurant as quickly as you can, and buy yourself a thick beef-steak, with bacon on the side, and some peas and string beans or other tender *cooked* vegetables. No desserts, but take a couple of mugs of coffee, with cream, but no sugar. Meat three times a day for you from now on, with all the fish and eggs you want by way of diversion and variety. Remember, it is written in Scriptures that 'strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age.'" And just before he turned to go, I quoted Lord Byron's Don Juan to him:

*Man is a carnivorous production. . .  
He cannot live, like woodcocks, upon suction,  
But, like the shark and tiger, must have prey;  
Although his anatomical construction  
Bears vegetables, in a grumbling way,  
Your laboring people think beyond all question,  
Beef, veal and mutton better for digestion.*

Being an Irishman he did not like fish, so he took my instructions as an alibi to eat meat on Fridays. What penalty he may have to pay for that in the hereafter I do not know; but he received a rather immediate worldly reward in the form of ten pounds of increased weight within two weeks.

Unfortunate adventures in ignorance, such as Pat's, are not rare. No doctor of medicine will ever waste his time on a conjectural argument as to which current economic or social or political topic most interests the average American. He knows, despite what editors and other trained feelers of the public pulse may think, that your chief interest is





not whether Russia will make a go of Communism or the saloon will come back. We know that your major interest in life is your bowels; and that your second concern is your stomach. Americans are the most bowel-conscious, the most constipated, the most dieting folk in all the world. We know more about constipation and about food, talk more about both, have more advanced ideas about them, and succeed less with either, than any other race.

Eating should be one of the greatest pleasures in life; but we Americans take less joy from food than any sophisticated people. Out of a grotesque variety of false information, molded by diet racketeers, we have founded a national superstition that pleasure while eating means penalties after eating. Here is one of the marked differences between us and our ancestral stocks in Europe. "He who lives well lives long," said the old English. When our globe-trotters, in their haughty way, tell us poor envious stay-at-homes that the "Europeans know better than we do how to live," they really mean that the average European enjoys his food for its own sake, and shuns

the unpalatable; while we tolerate food for our health's sake, and make a virtue of unpalatableness. A civilized European does not eat spinach because a man in his office has a cousin Emil who knows a girl who was cured of moles on her left heel by eating spinach. He eats spinach only if he likes it and wants to eat it.

Eating—one of the simplest of all human needs, and one of the easiest to satisfy—has become to us a weird rigmarole of rules and regulations. We have more taboos against food, including the one against meat, than the South Sea Islanders have against the spirits of their departed in-laws; we have more superstitions about our diet, including the one that it “must be balanced,” than the Aleutian Eskimos have about totem poles; each of us has more food fetishes, including the worship of spinach, than Billy the Kid had notches on his six-shooter.

Our nation's bill for crime prevention runs into a figure so large that it is almost incomprehensible to the law-abiding. Yet almost every time we sit down to eat, within the innocent walls of our own home or outside them, and discuss the latest racket of the underworld in its warfare upon our social body, we are ironically the victims of rackets far more evil, far more insidious, in their effects upon our health. Far more costly in the aggregate, too; yet allowed to go unchallenged despite the persistent but lone fight of the medical profession.

Get as mad as you please about the hundreds of Capones, but why not get equally mad about the thousands of half-educated



dietitians who flood the country, brandishing their diplomas from high-pressure correspondence schools, with as much scientific right to cater to your stomach as a six-year-old boy just learning the multiplication table would have to teach Einstein's relativity theory at Massachusetts Tech. Get mad, if you will, about the building trades racket and all the rest, but why not get equally mad about their cousins, which hurt you more directly—the Health Food Racket, the Reducing Food Racket and the like?

Some very good cooking is carried on in American homes, particularly down South and up in New England. But the real test of a nation's culinary strength is in the number of its restaurants where moderate prices, substantial food and prime cooking may be found in happy combination. Such places abound in Europe, but are notoriously lacking here. Instead, we have Ye Olde Granny O'Gradye's Real Olde-Fashioned Dinners; and Mammy Mephistopheles' Waffle Wagon and all the other euphonious manifestations of the Tea Room Racket with its spurious home cooking.

Naturally, there are exceptions, town and country tea rooms run by delightful women, whose cookery is as wise as it is honest. In general, however, tea rooms are the strongholds of the carbohydrates; the haunts of the napoleon, that invention of the Evil One, which bears modern witness to the old saw that God sends us food but the Devil sends us cooks; the lairs of the bullet-proof pie, and the fetid caves of the many-headed sundae. Here you get more than your fill of sweet and starchy foods, because these are cheaper and can be featured in a low-priced yet profitable meal; and here you get not half enough of meat, because that will not allow of so great a profit.

As to the Vitamin Racket, there is no bunk in the world so dangerous as that which has some truth behind it. The Devil can quote Scripture for his own purpose, and he can also quote physiology. There is no question of the importance of vitamins—the discovery of these remarkable elements is one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of medicine—but their existence has furnished ballyhoo for the diet racketeers. Vitamin deficiency in children is not infrequent and must be guarded against; in a normal adult of any but the poorest means and environment it is rare. Forget your vitamins; they have always been, and will always be, with us.

Dietetics, in proper hands, is a useful and progressive branch of medicine. But in spots it has become highly pedantic; many of the so-called balanced diets are figured out on purely academic grounds. Sometimes—par-





ticularly after another victim of a balanced diet, such as Pat, my Irish patient, has sat in front of me—I lean back and picture with my inner eye a grand revival of the Spanish inquisition. I see a long procession of dietitians wending their way in penitential garb, bowed down with shame, scourging themselves with pastry chains, each with a textbook of dietetics hanging in chains from her neck. With great delight I see them handed over to a committee of executioners consisting of a Southern mammy, a New England housewife, a Chinese cook and a French chef!

The majority of cases of constipation are due, not to weakness, but to too much strength of the intestinal wall; that is, strength wrongfully applied. The lower bowel becomes tense and cramped because of irritation inside the intestine, as your fist might close in a natural reflexive action around a hornet that stung your palm, seeking thus both to appease the hurt and to vent your wrath. The irritation in your bowels is twofold: chemical, from the process of fermentation of the food that has passed into them; and mechanical, from the coarse

residue of roughage, which is to the delicate mucous lining of the intestines what a hot cinder is to a sensitive eyeball. In the instinctive reflex actions of assaulted tissues, the intestines close down spasmodically on the provoking substance, both to ease the irritation and to try to get rid of it. It succeeds in the latter desire only in a harsh and unnatural way—as you would violently shake the hornet from your hand.

Bowel movements of this kind are what the diet racketeers and the food faddists give you as a “cure” for constipation; they are, moreover, what the people who eat excessive amounts of food suppose to be signs of good health. The scientific medical man knows that such movements really indicate another form of constipation—a low-grade diarrhea, which in time will have unfortunate results. Don’t shop around for a constipation cure—see a doctor.

Consideration of these facts finds us swiftly overtaking the meat superstition. In the chase we encounter, first, the three main components of the solid diet: proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. Proteins build up the active parts of the body, the structural steel and the running gears. They occur in some vegetables, mostly peas and beans, to a limited extent; but their real sources are meat, fish, and eggs. Fats and carbohydrates furnish heat and energy. Fats come both from animals and from plants. Carbohydrates come almost entirely from plants.

There are three main carbohydrates: sugar, starch, and cellulose. There are several varieties of sugar, each simple, soluble,



and easily absorbed. Starch is more complex, and requires considerable digestion before it is rendered soluble and assimilable. Cellulose is the fiber of vegetables and fruit, and is not at all digestible by man.

## Your Personal Brewery

All these carbohydrates may be attacked by bacteria in the intestines and fermented before they can be absorbed. These carbohydrates — sugar, starch, and vegetable roughage—are the materials out of which, so it is said, sinful people manufacture a substance known as home-brew. This concoction, as most of us know, is the triple concentrate and inner spirit of headache. And a diet in which carbohydrates predominate frequently results in the setting up of a private and personal home-brew in your “insides.”

Indications that you have set up a miniature brewery in your bowels are many and varied; they include headache, stomach-ache, muscular rheumatism, coated tongue, offensive breath, unpleasant odor of the perspiration, fatigue, nervousness, depres-

sion, a condition of being out of sorts with nothing to show for it in the physical examination, and, lastly, overweight and bad, pimply, blotchy complexion. It is practically impossible to cure a bad case of acne without a stringent cutting down of the carbohydrate consumption. All or any one of these things indicate what is known in medical science as "intestinal toxemia," or auto-intoxication, which is the penalty for ignorant adherence to food cults or fads; for a high-carbohydrate and low-protein diet, or in other words, for abstinence from meat in favor of what is known to the medical profession as "hay."

Herein lies a curious demonstration of the fact that so much of medical science as is imparted to the general lay public in one way or another until it becomes a matter of common knowledge or belief, always lags behind the progress of medicine. Your health superstition of today, quite often, was the medical theory of yesterday, discarded in the advance of knowledge. A generation ago most doctors believed that intestinal toxemia was based on the putrefaction of protein, due to excessive meat eating. That theory has been revised on the clinic tables and under the laboratory microscopes; but it lingers on in the lay mind in all its original strength, and the hangers-on of medical science, the self-anointed experts and the quacks, after their peculiar fashion, have adopted it as their new discovery; and, after their even more peculiar habit, they have gone the old doctors one better by preaching that all meat is harmful. Hence, as soon as you get out of





sorts these days, the diet racketeers tell you to cut out meat.

## The Value of Meat

Some people believe that meat causes, or aggravates, high blood pressure. An interesting study was carried out a few years ago on the blood pressure of Eskimos. The northern Eskimo eats nothing but meat, plus a little lichen scraped from the rocks. The southern Eskimo eats large amounts of sugar, flour, and dried fruits. The investigator found no high blood pressure among the northern Eskimos, the meat eaters. Among the southern tribes, the carbohydrate eaters, he found high blood pressure as frequent and as high as it is in civilized communities.

Meat as food is clean, wholesome, completely digestible. It forms no gas, and leaves no coarse residue to ferment in the intestines and scald their delicate linings. If you want something really heavy, take a stack of pancakes or a "dainty" chocolate eclair, or a vegetable plate and a peck of salad. The food that melts in your mouth often congeals in your stomach—and those

rabbit foods are the heavy foods, oppressive as evil consciences.

Because great feasts of raw lettuce and cabbage leaves are good for rabbits, because cows eat acres of grass, and horses guzzle bales of hay, and birds swallow bushels of seeds, and because rabbits and cows and horses and birds seemingly enjoy abounding health, it does not necessarily follow that those things are good for you; although this is the line of reasoning followed by fanatical vegetarians. The cultists even go to human examples for proof; they point out that certain Oriental races subsist chiefly on rice, and that certain European races drink wine to the exclusion of water, and that certain Tibetan tribes live almost wholly on curds and whey. But you are not a rabbit, a cow, a horse, a nightingale, a Jap, a Bulgarian, or a Tibetan; and their arguments merely prove the power of the human or animal body to accommodate itself to its environment and opportunities.

I suppose that if we Americans were to go on a diet in which napoleons and frozen frappe delights predominated for the next ten centuries, we should build up a suitable gastric accommodation. But we should have a lot of pimples and paunches and pains meantime, and in the end we would not be exactly the earth's manliest race.

## A Common-Sense Diet

I do not mean to say that you should never eat desserts, if you like them; nor am I suggesting that you should never eat fruits and

vegetables. These, in reasonable quantities, belong in your diet. I am merely taking a stand against an undue and unbalanced proportion of carbohydrates, for these will surely cause you grief in the long run. I am a physician, and, naturally, the people I see are a special group, the majority of whom have come to bitter days through an overconsumption of carbohydrates. This is, in a general way, the sort of diet I prescribe for them:

Breakfast: Eggs and bacon, one or two slices of buttered toast, or an equal allowance of some other form of bread; a good cup of coffee, but if you want to enjoy its true flavor, no sugar. On, say, three mornings a week substitute for the eggs, for the sake of variety, liver and bacon, broiled mackerel, kippered herring, chops or a steak. No hot cakes or coffee rings! Then you will be awake all morning, and hungry for lunch.

Luncheon: Stew, fish, or cold meat; one or two slices of bread and butter; soup, if it is a cold day; one portion of the tender cooked vegetables, such as peas, fresh or canned, string beans, asparagus, stewed tomatoes, eggplants, oyster-plant, or the like; no dessert. Then you will be awake all afternoon, and hungry for dinner.

Dinner: The same as lunch, and as much of the protein element as you want. If you take potatoes, take a small amount, and cut down correspondingly on the bread; for dessert, a small piece of cheese. Then you will stay awake until bedtime, and when you do go to bed, you will sleep well. With each meal, take a glass of water. The gastric juice

works more efficiently when it is partially diluted. Your water consumption should average about eight glasses a day.

Meals such as these will give you energy and muscle. They will leave you with no sense of stodginess, but with that slight degree of hunger which we still should feel on rising from the table. They will protect your insides from toxemia and your outsides from pimples. They will prevent you from getting fat, and will enable you to lose weight without losing strength.

Above all, they will give you a mental and physical sense of well-being which will make you indifferent to the recurrent waves of diet fads; they will enable you to resist eating by slogans. An apple a day may keep the doctor away—but too many apples may fetch the undertaker.

Lastly, if these suggestions do not work, consult your doctor.