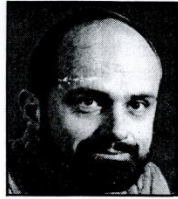


OUTDOOR HEALTH AND NUTRITION



BY DAVID ROWLAND, PhD

Eating wild game is no trivial pursuit

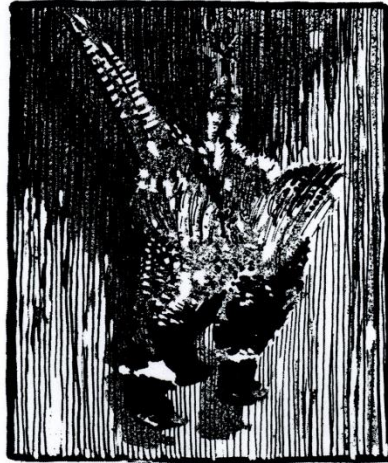
MOST CANADIANS HAVE NEVER tasted wild game. For many others, it is only an occasional novelty or rarity. Yet our primitive ancestors ate wild meat all the time. Evidence suggests that we would do well to imitate some of their dietary habits.

For most of the last 50,000 years or so, man's diet was about 35 per cent meat and 65 per cent plants (e.g. greens, nuts, seeds, roots, fruits, etc.). Man was hunter and forager. Agriculture is a much more recent development, and cultivated grains were not introduced to the diet until about 10,000 years ago, dairy products only in the last 6,000 years.

In other words, Paleolithic man thrived on a diet based on only two of the basic four food groups considered essential to good health today. In fact, without consuming any dairy products at all, early man managed to get an average daily intake of about 1,500 mg. of calcium — at least 50 per cent more than is usually recommended for us today. The quality of his food, however, differed significantly from ours: It was better. Wild game is nutritionally superior to meat from domesticated animals.

It only makes sense. Wild animals choose their own food from nature's finest selections. They also get plenty of exercise in both hunting for their own food and trying to escape predators who would devour them. Farm animals, on the other hand, are force-fed synthetic feed mixtures designed to put on weight. They are also confined to small areas where they can't get enough exercise. For these reasons, primitive man ate meat which was only about four per cent fat, compared to our traditional beef, which is up to 30 per cent fat. A high fat intake has been linked to increased risks of both heart disease and cancer (incidentally, primitive man himself was only about four per cent body fat. He ate little fat, absolutely no junk food and got plenty of exercise trying to catch his dinner).

Another significant difference is that wild game contains E.P.A. whereas domestic animals do not. E.P.A. (eicosapentaenoic acid) is a protective fatty acid which improves the flow characteristics of blood. It acts as a natural antifreeze to keep the fluids and organs of wild animals from becoming stiff in even the most frigid



GORDON WILSON ILLUSTRATION

weather. Naturally, the colder the climate, the more E.P.A. wild game contains. It is even found in higher concentrations in their legs and hooves (which make contact with the snow) than it is in their torsos. Scientists are just now discovering that E.P.A. in the diet can be a protective factor against heart attacks, atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) and certain forms of arthritis.

Chart A summarizes the relative percentages of protein and fat found in 11 types of wild game, compared to six traditional meats. Note that the fat content of the domestic animals is, on average, nearly four times as much as for the wild ones.

Notice also from Chart A that domestic duck has only about 70 per cent of the protein but 350 per cent of the fat of wild duck. Diet and exercise are the obvious factors responsible for these differences.

Chart B summarizes the content of two minerals (calcium and iron) and two vitamins (B-1 and B-2) in the same two groups of animals. (These are not the only minerals and vitamins present, just a few representative ones chosen for purposes of illustration.) Note that wild game provides, on average, 200 per cent of the calcium, 240 per cent of the iron and over 300 per cent of the vitamin B-2 found in domestic meats. Wild duck has over 200 per cent of the calcium, over 350 per cent of the iron, 170 per cent of the vitamin B-1 and over 350 per cent of the vitamin B-2 found in domestic duck.

For your health, it makes sense to eat on the wild side, whenever possible. □

Chart A
Protein and Fat Content

		Protein (%)	Fat (%)
Wild Game	Bear, polar	25	3.3
	Beaver	29	13
	Caribou	26	6.1
	Deer	21	4.4
	Duck, wild	29	2.2
	Moose	25	1.1
	Rabbit	29	10
	Porcupine	24	1.1
	Seal	28	3.9
	Snow Goose	29	2.2
	Walrus	27	2.2
Domestic Animals	Beef	26	26
	Chicken	28	8.2
	Duck, domestic	21	7.8
	Lamb	25	27
	Pork	20	27
Turkey	31	5.6	

Chart B
Minerals and Vitamins per 100 gm (3 1/2 oz.) Serving

		Calcium mg.	Iron mg.	Vitamin B-1 mg.	Vitamin B-2 mg.
Wild Game	Bear, polar	17	—	0.02	0.58
	Beaver	26	5.8	0.08	0.38
	Caribou	9	5.8	0.67	1.69
	Deer	10	—	0.23	0.48
	Duck, wild	26	4.8	0.17	0.44
	Moose	16	—	0.02	0.37
	Porcupine	23	5.2	0.14	0.8
	Rabbit	21	1.6	0.06	0.07
	Seal	23	5.4	0.17	0.54
	Snow Goose	26	4.8	0.23	0.48
	Walrus	49	4.6	0.12	0.98
Domestic Animals	Beef	11	3.1	0.07	0.19
	Chicken	15	1.6	0.06	0.16
	Duck, domestic	12	1.3	0.1	0.12
	Lamb	11	1.4	0.13	0.24
	Pork	10	2.9	0.5	0.22
Turkey	7.8	1.8	0.04	0.18	

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If you have questions or concerns about any aspect of nutrition, direct your inquiry to Dr. David Rowland, c/o Outdoor Canada Publishing Limited, 801 York Mills Road, Suite #301, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 1X7. We'll publish as many questions and answers as space permits in this column.