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Human mentality: Psychedelics in Perspective (4). **Wise Words:** Hippocrates. **Q of Month:** Alcohol – good or bad. **Sweetener Backtrack.** Xylitol linked to CVD. **Recipe:** Venison Burgers. **Q & A:** Quinoa Revisited; Oat ‘Milk’ or Soy ‘Milk’. **News Shorts:** Multivitamins daily do not lower risk of early Death; Listerine Mouthwash boosts bacteria linked to Cancer; Eczema – Salt Link.

Human Mentality

Psychedelics in Perspective (4)

[Last month](#) we continued looking at psychedelics in the ancient world and how American historian Brian Muraresku [1] suggests that psychedelic spiked wine might explain the power of the Eucharist in recruiting converts to Christianity:

Beer – the farming revolution trigger?



<https://bit.ly/3y7mMQO>

On a completely different angle, Muraresku notes that the latest “archaeo-chemical” studies of the residues found on old stone mortars (image above), find that beer was being brewed at the very start of the farming revolution some 13,000 years ago in the Middle East [2].

Could it be, opines Muraresku, that people took up farming of wheat to produce not unleavened nan bread, but a mind-altering, alcoholic drink? It is certainly more exciting!

But seriously, we should not underestimate the power of mind-altering substances to drive innovation and the obsessive pursuit of their acquisition. >p3

Wise Words

“The greatest medicine of all is teaching people how not to need it.”
Hippocrates

Question of the Month

Alcohol – Good or Bad?

Q. *What is the Paleo position on alcohol? I have seen this newspaper article [3] which suggests that one drink a day can reduce lifespan by 2½ months.*

A. Actually, it sounds like a reasonable trade: in a lifetime of, say, 1,000 months (83.3 years) losing 2½ months (0.2 years) seems a small price to pay for the pleasure of an alcoholic drink a day. And, as we will see later, even this modest claim is moot.

The journalist did not cite the scientific article from which she sourced the story so it took me a while to track it down here [4].

Indeed, I entered into an email exchange with one of the study authors, Professor Tim Stockwell of the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, British Columbia.

The conclusion states that in this ‘meta-study’ of 107 studies involving 4.8 million participants: “... daily low or moderate alcohol intake **WAS NOT** significantly associated with all-cause mortality risk.”

All-cause mortality risk only increased for those drinkers who drank more than 25 g of ethanol [alcohol] per day.

That equates to about a large glass (225 ml) of wine, 1½ imperial pints (85 cl) of beer, or two 30ml (1oz) small ‘shots’ of spirits.

More than that, for sure, all the unhealthy effects of alcohol over-consumption kick in.

In this regard, Prof. Stockwell >3

Sweetener Backtrack

Xylitol linked to CVD

In the search for ‘safe’ sweeteners, the so-called ‘sugar alcohols’ (or ‘polyols’) like xylitol, erythritol, maltitol and so forth have been thought of as being ‘healthy’: they are low calorie, and low glycemic. In addition, they were thought, as dietary fibers, to be mainly digested by bacteria in the colon.

We, along with so many others in the low carb, low sugar movement, have willingly promoted their use.

Now, in a major upset, a well conducted study finds that consumption of xylitol is linked to a 50% increase in “major adverse cardiovascular events” (MACE) [5] such as heart attack and stroke.

Xylitol is found in fruits and vegetables, but at about 1,000 times lower levels than those added to commercial products.

This latest study finds that, within minutes of consumption of a diet-drink containing 30 grams (8 teaspoons) of xylitol, xylitol is found in the blood, at 1,000 times normal levels, creating mischief.

In particular they found xylitol promotes abnormal blood clotting leading to heart attacks and stroke. It also interferes with the functioning of a variety of enzymes and biochemical processes [6].

This is the same team that found that erythritol has similar drawbacks. See: **Excess Erythritol & Blood clots, March 2023** [7]

My View? All the evidence up till now has found nothing but good >4

Recipe

Venison Burgers



<https://bit.ly/3WfKCB6>

Serves: 4

Reader Joanne Georgiades says that this delicious, Paleo-conforming recipe is a great favorite with her family.

500g (18 oz) venison mince

1 onion, small

3 cloves of garlic

1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

1 tablespoon herbes de Provence (or spice of choice)

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 egg yolk

Preheat fan oven to 190 C

Finely chop - or blitz in a food processor - the onion and garlic.

Add the onion and garlic to a bowl with the venison mince.

Add the Worcestershire sauce, herbs de Provence, ground pepper and egg yolk.

Mix well with a spoon, then with your hands shape into balls and then flatten to make burgers (as thick or thin as you like).

Chill in the fridge for at least one hour before cooking.

Bake in the oven for 20 mins or more depending on thickness. Keep an eye on them so they don't burn.

Check they are cooked thoroughly before serving (I cook until no longer pink).

Serve with a big salad or roasted vegetables.

Questions

Quinoa revisited

Q. *What are your pros and cons of Quinoa. Should we be consuming it in keeping with your program? There seem to be some attractive features - for example use as a baking flour. But there also seem to be some antinutrients.*

A. I have written quite often about quinoa, notably in **Heirloom Grains: Quinoa and Amaranth, Deadly Harvest, Ch 5** [8] page 124 and, **Quinoa: Unfairly Belittled? April 2009** [9].

Quinoa is what we call a 'pseudo-grain'. In other words, quinoa although not, botanically, a cereal (grass seed) it has all the attributes of a cereal.

It is a glycemic starch (provoking blood-sugar spikes), poor in micro-nutrients (empty calories), not alkalizing, and contains poisonous antinutrients, notably saponins, phytic acid, tannins, and trypsin inhibitors.

My View? Quinoa is not as glycemic as wheat so is modestly 'less bad'. But in the other ways its drawbacks are just the same. We avoid quinoa.

Oat 'Milk' or Soy 'Milk'?

Q. *My local café's only non-dairy 'milk' options for my coffee are oat or soy. Which is the best one to choose?*

A. Prefer one that is unsweetened; after that it is more a question of taste. It hardly matters which one you choose provided you are not allergic to soy.

Ideally you would go for unsweetened almond or coconut milk when available.

News Shorts

Multivitamins daily do not lower risk of early death

A large analysis of data from nearly 400,000 healthy U.S. adults followed for more than 20 years has found **NO** association between regular multivitamin use and lower risk of death. The study was published in the prestigious journal JAMA [10].

My View? Nothing new to see here. We have reported on many such studies down the years of which this is typical: **The Supplement Paradox: Negligible benefits, Robust Consumption, Jan 2017** [11]

As I frequently remark, our nutrients should be got from **FOOD**. Food consists of a myriad of ingredients all working together like a symphony orchestra – we can't cherry-pick ingredients. Dr Mozaffarian makes a similar point in **Doc rethinks Food-Disease Link, Aug 2010** [12].

Moral? Eat like we say and forswear the blandishments of supplement promotions.

Listerine Mouthwash boosts bacteria linked to cancer

Use of Listerine Cool Mint mouthwash increased abundance of the malicious mouth bacteria *Fusobacterium nucleatum* and *Streptococcus anginosus*. So finds a study from the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp, Belgium [13].

"These bacteria are factors in periodontal diseases, esophageal cancer, colorectal cancer, and severe invasive infections."

"Most people should not be using it and if they do use it, they should limit the use to a couple of days."

My View? The researchers opine that the harm is due to the alcohol content (20%) of Listerine. But it is not the active ingredient – (alcohol is ineffective in killing bacteria at that concentration [14]).

Listerine's active, antimicrobial, ingredients are the oils of eucalyptus, mint, thyme, and wintergreen.

Of course, in a state of nature our Hadza foragers living on tough "bush tucker" have healthy mouth microbiomes [15].

That is a lesson for us, too. Eat like nature intended (like we say) and our mouth microbiomes will work out just fine.

The right microbiome is a vital part of good health. So we are against mouth-washes in general: they kill off everything, good and bad. This is true too of mouthwashes using antiseptics like chlorhexidine and triclosan. See: **Mouthwash Drawbacks**, [Oct 2019](#) [16]; **Mouth Flora not all bad**, [Sept 2008](#) [17]; **Mouthwash Drawbacks**, [April 2011](#) [18]; **Mouth Flora in Evolutionary Perspective**, [Oct 2008](#) [19]; **Tooth & Gum Health Revisited**, [Nov 2021](#) [20].

Eczema - Salt link

Eating too much salt has been linked to eczema after researchers found people with the skin condition have elevated levels of sodium in their urine [21].

The recommended maximum sodium intake for adults is typically around 2.5 grams per day, which corresponds to 6 grams (one teaspoon) of salt.

The study participants excreted an estimated 3.01 grams of sodium over 24 hours, on average.

For every additional gram of sodium that the participants excreted, their odds of having been diagnosed with eczema rose by 11%. Their risk of having eczema at that time also increased by 16%.

Conclude the researchers: "These findings suggest that restriction of dietary sodium intake may be a cost-effective and low-risk intervention for atopic dermatitis [eczema]."

My View? Sodium is stored in the skin where it messes with the immune system's inflammatory response.

But whatever the mechanism these findings reinforce all the arguments for drastically reducing intake of salt.

There was very little sodium in the forager diet and our bodies are simply not built to deal with it in

excess. See: **Salt**, [Deadly Harvest, Chapter 3](#), page 74.

See also: **High Salt Diet Injures Arteries**, [June 1998](#) [22]; **Salt: Yet more Mischiefs**, [May 2015](#) [23].

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Psychedelics in Perspective (4)



<https://bit.ly/4focixe>

Psychedelics and the Brain

The brain has been called a "prediction machine". It is continuously trying to make sense from limited information.

In optical illusions like in the image above, the brain's prediction mechanism is confused and flips between showing a young woman with her face turned away and an old crone with a hook nose. (Hint: the girl's necklace is the crone's mouth.) All this goes on in the subconscious.

Nature in the raw is chaotic and the brain is receiving a flood of information upon which it has to impose some order.

The human body sends some 11 **MILLION** bits per second of data to the brain for processing, yet the conscious mind is only able to process 50 bits per second! [24].

The brain, therefore, has a subconscious mechanism for disciplining this flood of data into something useful, understandable, and which optimizes survival in Nature.

Neuroscientists call this mechanism The Default Mode Network (DMN) [25]; psychologists call this the "ego".

It imposes a top-down order on the chaotic mass of signals buzzing below. Psychedelics "decrease the top-down inhibition from the ego (DMN) liberating sensory and

cognitive bottom-up information flow" [26].

In other words, psychedelics partially dissolve the ego which then allows more chaos to filter upwards into the consciousness.

Many creative people are already on the way there: I am in awe of geniuses like the youthful, but tubercular, poet John Keats who worried that: "If I should die before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain"; or of Elon Musk who says: "I wouldn't wish the "storm in my brain" on anyone."

This dissolving of the ego's top-down discipline explains how a psychedelic "trip" gives the subject the feeling of a loss of identity and a merging with the spirit of the universe.

It also explains the excitement of how the upwelling of new, unexpected, and original connections gives new and off-the-wall insights.

[Next month](#): Psychedelics in social cohesion and in medication

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Alcohol - Good or Bad?

... pointed me to another one of his studies [27] which found that at all doses, alcohol increased risk of: tuberculosis; lung infections; cancers (notably of the digestive tract); epilepsy; blood pressure; liver cirrhosis, and pancreatitis (among men).

On the other hand, at low doses, alcohol was protective for cardiovascular disease and, for women it was protective also for diabetes and pancreatitis (approximately 50g/day and 30g/day, respectively).

In this regard, observed Prof Stockwell, at low doses, alcohol's benefits and harms tend to cancel each other out in terms of death-risk.

Summing up: "There was a significantly increased risk of all-cause death among female drinkers who drank 25 or more grams per day and among male drinkers who drank 45 or more grams per day".

Is Alcohol Paleo?

Alcohol does occur in a state of nature (stories abound of drunken savanna animals staggering around after feeding on fermenting ripe fruit). So our bodies know how to deal with it.

However, our forager ancestors never knew how to brew large quantities of alcohol. (For that it took the farming revolution to take place – see: **Beer – the farming revolution trigger?** page 1).

So, yes, one could say that alcohol is Paleo, but only in moderate intake. Dr Stockwell's findings fit in very well with our evolutionary approach.

My View? As Dr Stockwell notes, we are talking about **AVERAGES**. If a subject's lifestyle is exemplary and paleo-conforming (like the one we say), can he modestly exceed, without consequences, the 25 gram limit? (for example, traditional Japanese, with their healthy

lifestyles, used to have the longest lifespans in the world in spite of very high smoking rates, see: **Japanese Longevity and Health, Deadly Harvest, Chapter 4** [28], Page 92).

Possibly – we just don't know – but in so doing that is venturing into non-Paleo territory and putting your health at risk.

See also: **Is Alcohol Paleo? June 2023** [29]

Alcoholic Beverages, Deadly Harvest, Ch 3, page 75

The Problem with Alcohol, Deadly Harvest, Chapter 3, page 81.

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Xylitol linked to CVD

things to say about xylitol: it is low glycemic; it is good for mouth health; it helps bone building; it builds good gut health; and it is anti-microbial, particularly for ear,

nose and throat health. See: **More on Xylitol, Aug 2023** [30]

How worried should we be? The study used a drink which used 8 teaspoons of xylitol in a serving. This is massive compared to the small amounts we use in our baked recipes – or what you are likely to get in toothpaste and chewing gum.

Secondly, this is just one study and we need more studies over a longer period of time to confirm this disturbing result: "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence".

Even so, it seems wise to limit consumption of both xylitol and erythritol to the bare minimum until we know any better.

Meanwhile, a cloud must also hang over other sugar alcohols such as sorbitol, maltitol, and allulose (see: **Is Allulose a Healthy Sweetener? April 2020** [31]).

Paleo in a Nutshell: Geoff's latest work encapsulates, concisely and easily, current thinking on living the way nature intended. www.paleo-nutshell.com

email: admin@NaturalEater.com



Paleo Harvest Cookbook: Over 170 delicious, Bond Precept conforming recipes www.paleo-harvest.com



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