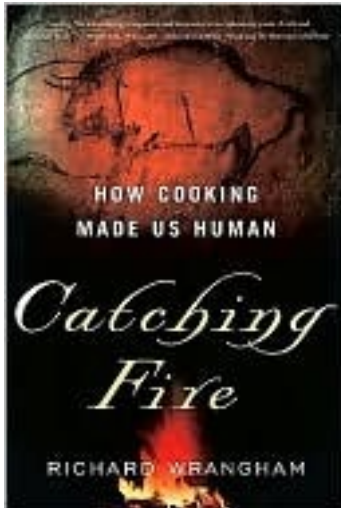

Richard W. Wrangham

Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human



Title: Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human

Author: Richard W. Wrangham

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Description

Until two million years ago, our ancestors were apelike beings the size of chimpanzees. Then "Homo erectus" was born and we became human. What caused this extraordinary transformation? In this stunningly original book, renowned primatologist Richard Wrangham

Insightful reviews

Nora: I learned many facts about animals and bugs and early humans!

Summer Bock, *Holistic Nutrition & Herbs*: From the first page I liked the writing style. I found it easy to follow and understand, although a good knowledge of either nutrition or anthropology will make it a faster and more comprehensible read.

According to Wrangham, there are no raw food cultures ever recorded in human history. Yes, people eat foods raw but no culture has ever done this exclusively. Using this and other points, he provides an interesting critique to the raw movement.

Throughout the book Wrangham impressed me with the quality of the studies he selected to back up his theorizing. His theories were well supported and well argued. He first shows that the evolution of humans was directly linked first to the use of fire and second to using fire to cook food. Perhaps because he is a primatologist, he draws frequent parallels between humans and animals throughout the book. He uses the comparisons as a way to understanding how we as humans ended up in the unique position of being the only animal that cooks and how this has affected and changed us. In particular, he argues that the process of cooking created a fascinating shift in our anatomy that led to bigger brains and smaller digestive systems.

Wrangham also offers an interesting critique of our current method of caloric analysis of foods. In his writing he discusses the actual differences in nutritional values in cooked versus raw food. He also takes into account the amount of work our bodies have to do in order to digest various macromolecules such as protein, fat, and carbohydrates. Fat is the easiest to digest. Protein takes more work to digest if eaten with high fiber foods. Softer food makes you gain weight easier. Harder food takes more work and you will not gain weight as easily. He cites an interesting study in which rats were given the same amount of calories per day. One group of rats had their food pellets 'puffed' to soften them, while the other group just ate regular pellets. At the end of the study, the rats that ate the softer pellets weighed more than the rats that ate the harder pellets. The rats that ate hard pellets literally had to burn more calories in order to digest the harder food. Because the puffed pellets were softer, the nutrition and energy from them was incorporated and digested with ease.

He had a few random judgments that stood out to me as unnecessary and unprofessional. His comment "Life can be unfair" in regards to how two people can eat the same amount of calories and if your digestive tract works harder (as is the case with most lean people) then you will gain less weight. And vice versa. This flippant and unpleasant side note should have been left out.

He also made the statement that you rarely find amenorrhea in women who eat primarily cooked food. Amenorrhea is a pathology where a women stops having her period, which is linked to osteoporosis. He says that it is common among women on a predominantly raw-food diet. I believe these statements to be completely unfounded. I have worked with a number of women with amenorrhea and they are not raw-foodists. I have a hard time believing I have found the very rare ones. From everything I have read, it is not a rare condition in women.

All in all, I really thought this was a great read. It got me thinking and his anthropological prospective was a welcome shift from the nutrition centric books I'm usually pouring over. I enjoyed the historical and evolutionary approach to understanding our relationship to food. I also enjoyed learning about the evolution of human anatomy in direct correlation with the foods we eat.

I'd like to take a moment to expound upon my own theories on the subject of cooking and raw food inspired by the topics of this book. Keep reading if you are interested in hearing how some of my thoughts shifted from Wrangham's work....

I think all health counselors should read this book to gain a more well-rounded perspective on the history of cooked food and how cooking effects the nutritional value of food. I appreciate the shift in my viewpoint. It filled in a lot of blanks for me with regard to the raw food movement. I love eating raw, but have never quite gotten into it as a full-time dietary change other than a few month-long cleanses. Currently, I eat at least 75% of my food raw and this is fabulous for me. And I also notice that I enjoy the option of eating warm foods regularly. I like how grounded I feel after soup or grains.

What if the raw food movement is another dietary fad that is the answer to the high consumption of refined, chemicalized, pesticide-ridden, homogenized, and heavily processed foods. The Standard American Diet laden with meat and animal products left the United States feeling clogged and sluggish. Our country is host to millions of people who have a lot of gunk to cleanse from their intestines and the raw food diet offers this in a great way that doesn't require you totally fast from food. You are cleansing and eating at the same time, which allows you to cleanse while working or doing your other day to day tasks. I think it is important to eat raw foods, but I also think it is important to stay balanced and build digestive fire. Sometimes a continual diet of raw foods can dampen digestive fire. If you already experience compromised digestive function eating 100% raw foods may be very difficult because it can further impair digestion. When I read raw food books, I seldom see this important issue being addressed.

I also get concerned for my clients who experience alienation from their families from eating a healing diet while overcoming health concerns. People connect and come together around food. This builds community and defines culture. For this reason it is important to find common ground within your family and eat food together. This strengthens family and community and creates a place to connect. This has been happening for thousands upon thousands of years. The nurturing of family and community is very important in holistic health. It strengthens our relationships, which are one of the main facets of primary food.

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Judyta Szaci??o: "Cathing fire" is an engaging book. It offers a few principles which are unique and thought-provoking concerning the phenomena that made us human. a few of them are possibly too far-stretched and the writer is just too busy targeting his major topic - processing the nutrients - to note the conglomerate of many different influences, now not rooted within the meals (pre)history. In short, the publication bargains fascinating contents, however it is simply too biased.It is additionally too repetitive - a similar arguments look dozens of instances on its pages. there has been some extent while I felt nearly bored and desired to positioned the booklet apart - yet then fascinating issues appeared, and infrequently it grew to become interesting again, whilst it ended all at once (I was once interpreting it on Kindle, in order that I didn't become aware of in the beginning that at 60% the ebook is completed and the remainder is simply endnotes - which, by way of the way, don't offer any specific extra leisure or in-depth knowledge).Overall - no longer a foul read, rather interesting, yet certainly does not meet expectations.

Aaron Redman: The thesis of this booklet is simple: cooking meals used to be the most important innovation that separated us and positioned us down the evolutionary route to latest humans. what's so much admirable was once how tight and concentrated Wrangham was once in concentrating on elaborating and protecting his argument with no digressions, utilizing available language, and heading off an excessive amount of repetition. My event is that teachers penning this kind of books commonly advert a minimum of a hundred additional pages which you may no longer locate here.The key perception for nutrients process Sustainability is that people are evolutionaryily tailored to consuming a variety of diets, so long as the nutrients is basically cooked (I a great deal loved the thorough debunking of uncooked foods). this is often nice information for Sustainability because it signifies that functionally we will decide to constitution our diets round the so much ecologically sound plants with no sacrificing our personal food and health. the simplest instance is meat, that is well known because the a part of our vitamin with the best detrimental impression on our planet. If meat used to be as critical to

our evolution as many had formerly believed phasing intake down would appear in insurmountable challenge. If nonetheless cooking is the main to our evolution than I see the customers for decreasing meat intake to be a lot better. In indisputable fact that has been my adventure in going vegetarian. It's studying the right way to prepare dinner this new vitamin that was once the challenge, when you can do this meat simply turns out superfluous. Try out my experiences of Sustainability books

Marta Zaraska: A suggestion provoking, good written book. Richard Wrangham, Harvard college primatologist, believes that, in a way, cooked meals made us human. He argues that cooked foodstuff is way more straightforward to digest than uncooked food, and in consequence makes us achieve weight faster. Due to the fact that digestion is an power high priced procedure - you burn energy to get energy out of nutrients - the fewer you need to do of it, the extra power may be left to stick on your body. In Wrangham's experiments mice fed cooked meat won extra weight than their fellow cage-mates that dined on uncooked nutrition only. There is one challenge with the cooking hypothesis, though: Fire, or relatively - the prospective loss of it. Wrangham's critics frequently indicate that the earliest credible facts of fire-use through our ancestors dates again basically to approximately 790,000 years ago, a lot after our brains have extended significantly. Wrangham replies that the absence of facts isn't the proof of absence, and sticks to his thought - because, he says, there's no different reason behind how people bought small guts, small enamel and vulnerable jaws at that time. Both method - for a person drawn to anthropology and human evolution this ebook is a must.

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