



nutrition

by Jamie Richards

Diabetes: the modern day health debate!

Everywhere I go, in the UK and throughout Europe, I see that obesity is on the increase and so too is diabetes. This epidemic is quite literally sweeping across the globe, or the developed parts of it at least. According to the latest figures we now have more than two million registered diabetics in the UK with over a million 'undiagnosed'. Medical complications from diabetes alone account for at least 8% of total health care costs in Europe and it is rising at an alarming rate. We now have a word for it and it's called Diabetes! Diabetes and obesity stuck together like a giant sugary snack.

I read how scientists have discovered a 'fat gene'. The assumption is that the gene is newly developed by us humans. It's one that we hadn't had before; acquired in the mid-80s along with a mullet and a bleached blonde fringe (I can't have been the only one surely). Human evolution doesn't work like that; new trouble making genes don't just come along. What we are seeing is a reaction, by our bodies, to our environment. By that, I mean the food that we eat, the way that we live and the air that we breathe.

Chemical messengers tell our genes that either everything is ok in our world or we are under attack. Recent research has begun to identify elements of our diet that tell our genes things aren't good. Our genes respond accordingly and boy do they have to respond to a lot! In the past 50 years, our diet has changed beyond all recognition. You only have to compare the ingredients in a sliced white loaf from your local supermarket to that of artisan bread from an independent baker to see this. Food is simply no longer just food. With so many ingredients added and taken away from our food, is it any wonder our bodies struggle to respond to it, process it and get whatever goodness is left from it.

For wholesale manufacturers, the nutritional value of food seems to be way down the list of priorities behind shelf life, packaging, marketing and profit. I'd even go one step further and add addictability to that list. These foods are designed to be eaten again and again in ever-larger quantities. In fact, calling some of these products 'food' is an insult and quite frankly dangerous to health.

There is even a European Union framework committee called DIABESITY. Their express aim is to 'identify several new drug targets for the treatment and prevention of diabetes.' They say, "Obviously the perfect scenario to end obesity would be that elusive magic pill." They blame diabetes on the trend to eat convenience or calorie packed meals, with absolutely no mention of the bigger trend for manufacturing the stuff in the first place! Obviously, a magic pill would be the easiest option and, dare I say, the most profitable one, but consider for a moment where taking the easy route has got us so far.

So, what can you do about it? Well as you're reading the first ever issue of Inspired Times, you're probably already pretty clued up. Either that or their distribution has exceeded all expectations? This is more of a call to arms, or a call to our cooks, allotments and to our children's classrooms. It's time to start baking our own bread again; growing our own fruit and vegetables and making proper stock from the bones of animals we eat. Let's get making good hearty wholesome food from relatively few ingredients that haven't been processed in a faceless factory. For those of you that are already doing this, it's time to share these skills with those around you in your local communities. Maybe we need to go the other way in this country and heavily tax processed foods according to their lack of nutritional value while making organic whole foods free from tax. This might better reflect the burden placed on our health service by processed food diets. I'm not sure I have all the answers but I'm certain many do lie in our past. We've always known how to look after ourselves; we've just lost our way a little in the past 50 years.

The alternative for us is to rely entirely on a European Union framework committee to invent the magic pill. How scary is that?

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