



Meat

The Anti-Longevity Food

by Mark Mathew Braunstein

Imagine a clan of identical triplets, grown up and newly inducted into the glorious ranks of senior citizenry. Triplet A all lifelong has eaten many burgers and fries, and all day long has worked with his hands and on his feet. Triplet B has prepared meals mostly from scratch, and has packed sandwiches to work, where he has sat on his duff under fluorescent lighting talking into cellphones and staring into computers. Triplet C has eaten mostly raw and mostly vegan, and has taught yoga at a health and fitness spa. Who might you wager will live longer?



Mary Had a Little Lamb and a Lot of Beef and a Lot of Ham

According to the USDA's *Agricultural Statistics 2013*, Table 13-7, in 2011 the average American ate 55 pounds of cattle, 1 pound of sheep, 42 pounds of pigs, 58 pounds of chickens, 13 pounds of turkeys, and 15 pounds of fish. This does not include all the cows milked dry nor the hens who only count their eggs but never hatch them. Thus the average per capita annual consumption of mammal, bird, and fish totaled 184 pounds. On average, every year an American eats his own body weight in meat.

Meat is eaten one mouthful at a time, while animals are killed one life at a time. More disheartening, once drained of blood and trimmed of gore only a third of most animals' bodies are actually eaten. Because two-thirds never makes it onto dinner plates, in reality every year an American orders from the waiter or the butcher three times his own body weight in meat. Three times his own body weight in animals are killed. In the case of beef cattle, a castrated male which cattlemen call a steer, its average gross weight upon slaughter is 1338 pounds. But after *undressing*, that becomes 859 pounds, and once trimmed of bone and fat that gets further reduced to 490 pounds. So on average, a 1338 pound noble steer is reduced by two-thirds to 490 pounds of ignominious hamburger. ➔ *continues*

If you placed your bet on Triplet C, you have just been conned. Some pieces to this make-believe puzzle were missing. C lives in the middle of Manhattan, eating some of the best food in the world but breathing some the worst air in the world. C does not teach at a true health spa, C teaches only at a health *information* spa. Similarly, Triplet B works in an office cubicle in smoggy Los Angeles. In contrast to B and C, Triplet A lives far removed from the stress and noise and fumes of city streets. Triplet A toils sunrise to sunset on an organic farm in the backwoods of Maine. In the uncertain lottery of life, now who do you expect will clinch the winning ticket to vitality and longevity?

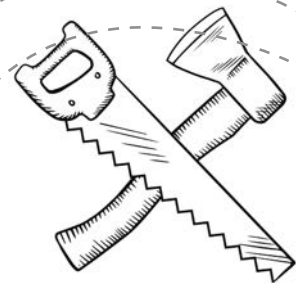
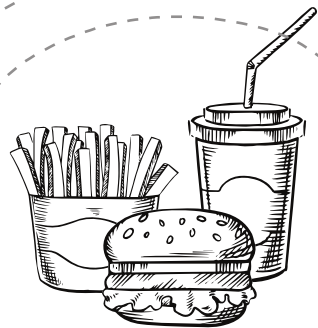
Someone who lives for fifty years in vibrant health with the least possible sleep has already lived more active and wakeful hours than a constant convalescent in ill health for seventy-five years, much of it in bed and most of it in pain. Too soon along their inescapable ride at the head of a funeral procession, most people have left by the wayside fitness and health. Ample quantity, but dismal quality.

Individuals of indigenous cultures located as diversely as the Himalayan Mountain valley of Hunza and the Pacific Ocean island of Okinawa are heralded for their long life. While they do eat some meat or fish, they do not eat much. And the meat or fish they eat they either have raised or have caught themselves, so the animals are not victims of any unseen factory farm and hidden slaughterhouse. Also, these peoples breathe clean air, drink pure water, and lead active non-sedentary lives within an intimate social network. Not Facebook or FaceTime, but real face-to-face time.

Yet if such a thing as a longevity food at all exists, it cannot be meat, because even if eating meat does not shorten meat eater's lives it surely shortens the lives of the animals eaten. Thus we can choose Life: surely the animals' and maybe also ours. Or we can choose Death: surely the animals' and maybe also ours.

Man Does Not Live Long by Bread Alone

A man does not live long by bread alone, nor by food alone. All genes being equal in those who eat them, foods alone cannot enhance longevity and vitality to the exclusion of other factors such as air and water, stress and sleep, climate and housemate, occupation and disposition, recreation and aspiration, attitude and gratitude. Because the person who eats beer and franks with cheer and thanks just might live longer and healthier than someone who eats pears and sprouts with fears and doubts.



At 184 pounds of meat consumed by an average American per year, and at 490 pounds of beef per steer, an American actually is responsible for the cumulative death of more than one-third of a huge steer a year, which is to say one entire cattle steer every three years. So every three years, Mr. Chuck Steak and Ms. Virginia Ham each kills one entire Elsie the Cow. In all overdeveloped countries, numbers are about the same.

Farm animals are fattened to be killed once they attain full biological growth, the human equivalent of the hungry witch of the Black Forest roasting in her oven Hansel and Gretel not as adults but as young teenagers. Thus the steer is rare that is allowed to live longer than two of its potential 22 years of life, and a karmic deficit of those 20 un-lived steer years is accumulated. Accumulated by whom? By the factory farmer or slaughterhouse worker? By the butcher or hotdog street vendor? By Old MacDonald who had a farm or by Ronald McDonald who has a playground? More than by any

other, that debt is accrued by Mr. Chuck Steak and by Ms. Virginia Ham.

At 20 un-lived years per steer, and an average American omnivore being held responsible for killing an entire steer every 3 years, every year that an American eats meat creates a karmic debt of 20 divided by 3, which equals 7 steer years.

Those who Live by the Swordfish Die by the Swordfish

No scale exists in eternity's ledger to compare the worth of each species of animal compared to other species each year of a species' life compared to a year of another species' life. Nevertheless, 7 steer years seems a heavy debt load to carry annually, and over a lifetime an overwhelming debt to pay. Paid how? By increased rates of heart disease and cancer, and thereby decreased human longevity. While those who eat meat only sparingly can get off nearly scot-free, the interest on the karmic debt for heavy meat eaters compounds daily. This results in shorter

human life or in diminished quality of living, so either in no change or in being shortchanged. At the exchange rate of 7 steer years for every 1 human year, every 7 years of eating meat results is one less year of life for the eater.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2013, the average life expectancy for an American omnivore was 79 years. (For a Japanese, of whose population Okinawans comprise a very small segment, it was 84.) But what of an American vegan? Neither the WHO nor the USDA takes into account vegans when tabulating their averages, so we must extrapolate that ourselves.

An average American omnivore's 79 years already takes into account the subtracted 1 less human year per 7 years while eating meat, and 79 divided by 7 equals 11 years. By applying the above karmic calculus, an American vegan's average life span would get those 11 years added back in. And 79 plus 11 equals 90 human years. Thus we count on a vegan's average life expectancy to be 90 years. But who's counting?

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