ABOUT MILK, CHEESE AND EGGS

P. E. NORRIS

Nature's Body Builders

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CHAPTER ONE

MILK WAS MADE FOR MAN

MILK IS NOT Man's natural food. Among some tribes it is not consumed after the weaning period and among some races is not a major article of diet.

The Chinese and Japanese use very little milk and in vast areas of China, where little meat is also eaten, the peasants are strong, tough and endowed with great endurance. Soya bean supplies the necessary protein and leafy vegetables, calcium. Even in parts of India where the milk yield is poor the labouring classes are sturdy and possess strong teeth.

Somewhere during his development, Man discovered that milk was food fit for humans. First he used the cow as a transport animal then it became his friend; finally, he domesticated it as he did the horse, the dog and the cat.

The cow was probably first killed for its flesh and only later did Man discover how to milk it. Ancient wall paintings depict one man grasping the foreleg of a cow while another milks. Some show the forelegs tied togther; others, both forelegs and hindlegs tied while milking is done, which proves that milking was an ordeal both for Man and the cow. Many a pail was upset and many a milker kicked before the art of milking was mastered.

Because of the bother involved one concludes that milk was used originally for sacrificial purposes as in Ancient Egypt; in religious ritual, as in India; or medicinally.

It certainly wasn't consumed because men liked it and there are still many who cannot stomach milk. John Donne, the sixteenth century metaphysical poet, was one.

As he lay dying his physician Simon Faxe, suggested that he might be cured " by cordials and drinking milk 20 days together," but Donne loathed milk and passionately refused to drink it .When Faxe insisted, he tried it for 10 days, then said he would rather die than continue, since he didn't fear death.

So don't get it into your head that milk is a food essential for health and strength. There exist entire communities, particularly in India, who never touch milk or milk products and appear to be none the worse for it. But in civilised communities it is either difficult to obtain the food elements that milk furnishes in alternative foods, or more costly, and milk products have much to recommend them.

Over the greater part of India, where the cow and the Hindu religion are closely linked, this animal is an object of veneration and in his fascinating book, " Romance of the Cow," Dahyabhai H. Jani explains that in Vedic times cows were higher in the social scale than kings, and one way to honour a man was to call him a *Gotama* or cow-prince.

How different today, when to call your lady friend an " old cow " would earn a poke in the eye with a very sharp stick.

According to the Greek writer Diodorus, there was a holy island in the Nile dedicated to the God Osiris, on which was stabled a number of holy cows from which every day 360 pitchers of milk were drawn and sacrificed.

The Bible tells us also that milk was used for sacrificial purposes. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, " Abel brought milk and the first fruits of his flocks as offerings to the Creator."

Slowly, milk became recognised as a food; not only the milk of the cow, but that of the goat, sheep, buffalo, donkey,

camel, mare and reindeer; and men have even sampled the milk of the whale when that great mammal has been killed.

For centuries on the steppes, the prairies and other vast plains, milk has been the staple food of nomadic tribes, and we know of three immense areas where the people lived almost exclusively on milk and milk products: the Kazak Kirghiz of Central Asia; the Bedouins of Arabia; and the Bantus of Africa.

The Kirghiz are short, stocky and tough. They drink the fresh milk of mares, or when it is sour, as koumiss; when it curdles, as yogurt; and some of it is made into cheese. They also consume the milk of goats, sheep and cows and on high days feast on horses' flesh, cooked with herbs.

It was on this simple sustaining fare that the Tartar hordes poured through Russia, Poland, Austria and Germany, and had they not been recalled owing to the death of their emperor, Attila, they would have hammered at the gates of Rome and Paris.

The Bedouins prized their fleet mares far too much to rob their milk, which they took from camels and goats—chiefly camels. The camel gave them milk and occasionally, meat, wool and hides, and its dung supplied them with fuel.

There also exist in the desert tribes that breed asses and drink their milk, supplementing their diet, as do the Bedouins, mainly with dates, seeds, wild bread and fruit.

The Bantus lived almost exclusively on curdled milk and some cereal, such as millet or mealies. They ate only one huge meal daily and kept very fit and strong on that. Contact with civilization has changed many of their habits.

In old Lapland, too, the people subsisted mainly on the milk and milk-products of the reindeer. The flesh of the

deer was eaten only on feast days, for the animals were their chief source of wealth.

From all this it will be seen that whereas it is possible to live without milk or milk products, these foods form the staple diet of millions; and if skill be used in the preparation of milk and its products, they will lend an infinite variety to it, for, in combination with other comestibles, milk can be transformed into some of the most succulent dishes imaginable.

Not for nothing, in Biblical times, was the phrase, "a land flowing with milk and honey," used to describe a rich and fertile country.

Centuries ago milk was esteemed more in tropical and semi-tropical countries than in Europe because it was edible even when sour, and could be turned into yogurt and cheese. No part of it was discarded, and even the whey, which few in Britain regard as edible, makes a refreshing drink in a hot country.

Milk was also more highly regarded among nomadic than agricultural communities, which had other sources of food, many of which could be stored without spoiling. In her "Economic History of England," Charlotte Waters describes conditions in the Middle Ages: "At the end of June, when the hay had been cut, aged cows, worn-out oxen and toothless sheep were turned into the hay meadows and later on to the stubble, and in the autumn killed and salted for winter food. Cattle were rarely fatted, and fresh meat was a luxury for lords and rich men. From the cows they got milk, butter and cheese, the last usually made with skim milk. Butter was sold or salted, the butter-milk drunk. Ewes were milked as well as cows. Milk in winter was expensive and it paid to kill the calf.

"Sheep have been called the sheet-anchor of farming—in the Middle Ages they were indispensable for manure and the basis of our chief export."

Later, in the eighteenth century, that extraordinary man, Arthur Young, travelled throughout England and Wales and left records for which posterity must be everlastingly grateful. Milk, he rarely mentions.

Nor does Pepys, in the seventeenth century, though he gives details of numerous dinners and describes a group of milkmaids (he would!), their pails garlanded with flowers, which hardly betokens a flourishing milk industry.

Apparently only farm people and those who owned cows drank milk in any appreciable quantity.

According to Craik and MacFarlane's "Pictorial History of England" the menu in the poorhouse was: *breakfast,* bread and cheese four times a week; broth three times a week; *dinner,* boiled beef and suet pudding three times a week; cold meat three times a week; hasty pudding or milk porridge once a week; *supper,* bread and cheese or sometimes broth. The labouring man was often worse off for food than the pauper, for in 1776 Young tells us that the food of the poor was bread and cheese and some milk—"no meat except Sunday."

According to him barley-bread, cheese and butter, was the usual fare of the poor; not one in ten possessed a cow and they rarely touched meat.

Those who know their economic history realise that the "good old days" existed only for the upper classes—and now in the imagination of escapist writers—the working man has never had it better than today.

Beer was the Englishman's drink, not milk, and beer was consumed, even in boarding schools, for breakfast, right up to the nineteenth century.

In his fascinating diaries, William Ellis, who farmed Church Farm in Little Gaddesden, Herts, in the eighteenth century, leaves us a very full account of life in his village. He tells us that " they sell a Winchester quart of milk, all the year round, for a penny. And a guest of his, Peter Kalm, who came from Finland to study English life, wrote, " Most people (in the village) pour a little cream or sweet milk into the tea cup when they are about to drink the tea." There is no mention of drinking milk.

When towns were much smaller and London the only city with a population of a million (it doubled from 674,000 to 1,274,000 between 1700-1820) dairy farming was carried on not only in the country, but on the outskirts of cities and sometimes inside them.

Just over a century ago cows were milked in the streets of London and milkmaids, who were also the sellers of milk, carried it in wooden pails attached to a yoke fitting over the shoulders.

As recently as 70 years ago cows grazed in St. James's Park and were milked at the end of the Mall, where vendors also dispensed ginger beer, lemonade, fruit, cakes and sweets. There was a thriving farm in Earl's Court owned by the Barrow family; nurseries ran from the King's Road, Chelsea, down to the river; and all the way from Fulham Cross to Putney one walked through open fields.

There was no organised milk industry. Farmers were ignorant of the most elementary hygiene and milk sold in the streets was germ-ridden. It was not surprising, then, that in 1855-56 a plague struck the cattle and wiped out most of the city herds.

This is hardly surprising when one realizes that if exposed and not kept cold it is possible for *a single drop of*

milk to harbour as many as 40,000,000 *bacteria twenty-four hours after milking*! It sounds an awful lot.

Milk is fertile soil for diptheria and typhoid germs, as well as the virulent tubercule bacilli. Alfred McCann Chief of the U.S. Government Bureau of Chemistry, wrote in 1919: "It is common for milk to reach our large cities containing 150,000,000 bacteria per cubic centimetre."

In 1939 there existed a manger with cattle a stone's throw of Church Street, off the Edgware Road, and another in the East End, and there is still a farm in Wandsworth with cows, fields and haystacks. But no longer is milk hawked on the streets in open churns, for vendors must be licensed and satisfy the authorities that their premises are clean, that cattle live under hygienic conditions, the udder of cows are washed before milking, and apparatus and containers into which milk passes have been sterilized.

The art of milking has progressed a long way from the days when cows' legs had to be tied and the milker risked life and limb as he tugged at a teat.

Hand milking is not as easy as it appears, for teats must not be pulled, but squeezed gently, and the milk persuaded into the pail. Cows know when a milker is a novice and grow restive.

Today a great deal of milking is done by machine. Four teat cups connected with rubber tubes are placed on the teats and milk is drawn from the udder by suction caused by a vacuum pump. This, apparently, is every bit as efficient as the hand method, quicker and infinitely more hygienic.

The ideal way to drink milk is raw and freshly drawn.

Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, a great surgeon and pioneer in the field of dietetics, wrote in his book "Autointoxication":

" Milk is a sort of fluid tissue and, like other tissues, is prepared from blood . . . it possesses some properties of the living blood from which it is produced. While still warm with animal heat, freshly-drawn milk, like blood, possesses the power to combat and destroy germs. It contains the various antibodies which are found in blood . . . ."

Others, too, who have studied milk stress the value of pure, fresh, warm milk straight from the cow. Professor John Thomson says in " The Clinical Study and Treatment of Sick Children ," " If milk is heated more than once, its antiscorbutic activity is probably always diminished," and Professor Plimmer, renowned for his work on food, endorses this. Twice-heating, he tells us, totally destroys vitamin C in milk; that is, the boiling of pasteurized or sterilized milk.

This fact need not disturb us unduly for milk is not a rich source of vitamin C, which can be obtained in far greater quantities from acid fruits and fresh vegetables. Moreover, exposure to sunlight greatly reduces and ultimately destroys vitamin C in milk, and this vitamin can be preserved only by the use of dark-coloured bottles or opaque containers. The public would, however, resist such an innovation and suspect that the bottles were not properly washed. The best containers are cartons made of thick wax-paper.

The most nourishing milk, which, of course, can never reach the general public, is, according to Dr. L. J. Picton, colostrum or the first breast milk on which the calf is suckled. This is four times stronger than later milk; that is, it has 5·7 per cent. protein, whereas after a week or ten days this protein content diminishes rapidly, till in a month is only 1·6 per cent.

Colostrum is almost a solid food and very little heat turns

it into a firm custard, which, with lemon and a scrape of nutmeg, forms "one of the choice pieces of rural hospitality." Because colostrum is composed mainly of lactalbumin and lactoglobin it does not clot in the stomach.

But unless he is a favoured friend of the farmer no townsman is ever likely to sample colostrum and the most he can hope for is Channel Island milk from Jersey cows, though Sussex and Welsh breeds run them close for fat content.

Now let us examine milk, find out what it is and how it benefits those who drink or eat it, for milk can be eaten as curds and cheese or in combination with other foods.

One sometimes sees advertisements extolling milk as Nature's Perfect Food.

The word "perfect" means "Reaching the highest level of excellence; faultless, complete, finished, satisfactory in all details."

To term milk a "perfect" food, then, is misleading. No one can honestly make such a claim. But—it is as near a perfect food as one can obtain in Europe or America, and with the addition of a few other foods will provide the body with sufficient nourishment to maintain it is perfect health.

Perhaps you think I'm being unnecessarily finicky, but words should mean what they say, and if millions are informed that some food is "perfect," they are apt to believe it. If such people decide to live exclusively on milk and fail to supplement it with other foods, they are asking for trouble.

So let us see what milk contains and whether it is perfect.

According to "Chemical Analysis of Foods" by H. E. Cox (1950), milk, in addition to 87·3 per cent. water, contains