

## Body&Soul

### The warrior diet

BY VIVIENNE PARRY

Feast or famine: do our ancestors hold the key to a healthy life?

ALL YOU can eat, but only once every day, was presented this week as the latest miracle diet.

The idea is that you can eat three square meals a day, provided that you eat them all between 4pm and 7pm. No foods are excluded and there is no calorie counting.

It's called the warrior diet. Just one other thing: exercises that mimic warfare and hunting are required during your fasting period.

This is one of a popular genre of diets filed under A for Ancestor. They are based on the assumption that how or what our ancestors ate is the way that human beings were meant to eat. If only we adopted their ways, we, too, could be slim and free from lifestyle diseases such as

Type 2 diabetes, just like the few remaining hunter-gatherers that exist in the modern world.

The warrior diet is the confection of Ori Hofmekler, a former member of the Israeli Special Forces, who is neither a doctor nor a nutritionist. Its claimed success is said to be because our bodies are designed not for grazing but for feasting and famine.

In truth, we don't know much about how ancient peoples ate. We simply don't know whether warriors came home for tea famished, with something for the pot, having eaten nothing all day.

It seems more likely that had they seen anything that could be eaten on the run — nuts, berries or fruits, for instance — they would have done so. Human beings are opportunistic omnivorous feeders. Eat what you can, while you can.

Another feature of many of these ancestor diets is the exclusion of cereals or milk, which were not part

of the diet until after Paleolithic times. It is said that we have not evolved to eat them. Surely the truth is that we have evolved to survive, which means eating whatever happens to be available.

But there's one way our ancestors could be said to be to blame for our weight problems. For the population today represents the progeny of those who were greedy, who got to the front of the queue for mammoth, ate lots and then stored fat efficiently. They survived during periods of famine. Thin people did not. Natural selection has thus favoured greed over abstinence.

Ancient peoples were forced to take lots of exercise. They walked miles and this gave them a health advantage. And we suffer from a big health disadvantage compared with our ancestors. We live to old age, making us prey to the diseases of advancing years like cancer and cardiovascular problems. They did not have that luxury but died at birth or in childhood or from injury, infection or starvation. In fact, we're lucky not to be warriors.

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