

(iv) A healthy balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids

I explained that a principal cause of ‘Western’ diseases is eating too many omega-6 fatty acids from seed oils in relation to omega-3 fatty acids from fish, meat and eggs, etc. Remember the red and grey squirrels? This is one matter, at least, on which all the scientists and nutritionists seem to be united. But how can you get the balance right? There are two steps you need to take:

- Follow the government’s advice to eat two 140gm portions of fish or other seafood a week (two 60gm portions a week for children), one of which should be oily fish. For ecological reasons I think it is best not to eat any more.
- Reduce your omega-6 consumption to around 60gm a week. This means cutting out most of the high omega-6 foods listed near the end of Chapter 7.

Is that really practical? What would a diet with a healthy balance of omega-6 and omega-3 actually look like? It shouldn’t surprise you to learn that it looks like the menu for a 25:45:30 protein:fat:carbohydrate calorie distribution that I referred to in Annexe 1. The 3 days of food and drink shown in Annexe 1 have an overall O-6-3 ratio of just under 4 to 1, which is probably the upper limit for a healthy diet. So even with such ‘luxuries’ as fruit pie and jam sandwich fritters, it is possible to enjoy a healthy balance of omega fatty acids, provided that you prepare such food yourself to ensure that it hasn’t been made with commercial seed oils like sunflower and corn oil.

The fact that the Annexe 1 diet meets both of the requirements for a healthy diet – an overall calorie ratio of 25:45:30 and an overall O-6-3 ratio of under 4:1 – confirms to me that such a diet really is good for us, whereas a diet high in sugar, carbohydrates and omega-6 fats is the true cause of the nation’s current diet-related health crisis.

In order to obtain this healthy balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids I had to include 42.5gm of crab meat and 120gm of cod per person over a 3-day period. This is equivalent to 380gm of seafood a week, which is 35% more than the minimum weekly amount of 280gm that the government recommends. As we have seen, if everybody in the country ate even the recommended amounts there would be severe problems in maintaining fish stocks without a huge increase in fish farming. I also included a little powdered flaxseed because it has a lot of omega-3 in it, although it is the ALA kind, which is not so fully utilized by our bodies.

The main ‘problem’ ingredients in the sample diet, the ones that produce the greatest difference in omega-6 and omega-3 fats, are the sausages, bacon, liver and salad dressing. Without these four ingredients the overall O-6-3 ratio would be a super-healthy 2.8:1, and in that case it wouldn’t be necessary to eat so much fish. Omitting the salad dressing would improve everything except the taste, but if the sausages, bacon, liver were omitted then the protein level would fall too low. However it is quite likely that in the U.K. at least the three meat items have much better O-6-3 ratios than the ones I used. This is because I had to obtain the omega-3 and omega-6 contents from the American USDA database,⁴⁹² and the diet of most U.S. animals is significantly higher in omega-6 fatty acids than it should be as a result of adding maize and soya beans and other cereal products to their feedstuffs. For example, the O-6-3 ratio for eggs given by the USDA database, which I used in calculating the overall ratio for the diet, was 17:1, but as I mentioned earlier, measurements made on the eggs of

⁴⁹² USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference. ndb.nal.usda.gov/. (The values were obtained via the KIM-2 software - efaeducation.nih.gov/sig/kim.html.)

naturally reared free-range hens can give a ratio as low as 1:1. So in reality, a diet like the one I have described would probably provide in the U.K. an overall O-6-3 ratio well within the healthy range even with only one portion of fish a week provided it is of the oily kind. It's a pity we have to use American data on omega contents, but that's all that seems to be available.

The 'best' ingredients in the menu, the ones that actually contain more omega-3 than omega-6, are of course the cod fillets, the crab meat and the powdered flax seed. However there are some other ingredients in this 3-day menu that provide a surplus of omega-3, albeit of the vegetable kind. These are runner beans (green beans), cabbage, red kidney beans and lettuce. All of these help in a small way to maintain a healthy balance between the red and grey squirrel populations. But although squirrels like acorns, never include acorns in your diet. Acorns have 46mg of omega-6 per gram and no omega-3 at all, so their O-6-3 ratio is infinity!