

Longevity

By Steve Meyerowitz, "Sproutman"

Wild-growing Edible Grasses in the Nourishment of Long Living Inhabitants of the Dagestan Republic. By Kh.I Mustafaev. Published in the Russian language periodical Voprosy Pitaniieia. Moskva: Biomedgiz. Vol. 2, no. 5. pp. 27-31. Sept/Oct. 1993.

This study examined the diets of the inhabitants of the Dagestan republic who are known for life spans of 120-130 years. The oldest recorded Dagestani lived to 146. The 2 million residents of this province live in the Caucasus Mountains of southern Russia and east of Georgia on the coast of the Caspian Sea. Wheat is this country's chief crop and their diet consists of many wild grasses and weeds such as chickweed, shepherd's purse, rose hips, chamomile, lambs quarters, thistle, thyme, sorrel, yellow dock, vetch, daisy, clover, wild marjoram, oregano, amaranth, mustard, garlic, and the grasses of wheat, barley, and oats. They use young leaves to make a raw salad and boil the older fibrous ones for soups and stews. Seeds are crushed and brewed into tea or ground into meal and used in breads and pancakes. They also make pickles and sauerkraut and, yes, yoghurt.

Researchers from the Caspian medical college examined 154 alpine residents living at altitudes of 6,400ft above sea level and 24 living on the flat lands. Their families were also observed. The age of the test group was between 85 and 116 years old. Researchers lived with their subjects for 10-12 days, questioning them, weighing them and examining their diets and eating habits.

The "long livers" wake between 5-6am and drink nothing but tea made from weeds and grasses until they take breakfast at 9-10am, never before. They drink tea both before and after the meals for increasing appetite and improving digestion. The 90 year olds had the most raw greens in their diet of any age group but even the children ate greens. Researchers found the wild growing edible plants to be rich in B vitamins, citric acid rose hips, vitamin C and A and Pectin's. The plants contained other nutritional substances that were excellent natural stimulators of metabolism and digestion.

The "flat-landers" were not as healthy as the alpiners but neither group had any signs of heart disease or hypertension. Researchers concluded that "many factors influence health including lifestyle, genes, heritage and work...(but) the location and altitude along with their unusual diet rich in young wild grasses, produced their longevity."

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