While most of us live our lives according to time schedules of the working week, we did not evolve to be bound by industrial schedules, nor did the food we eat. Despite this, we eat the products of industrialization, and often suffer as a consequence. This book considers different aspects of changing human nutrition from both evolutionary and social perspectives. It considers what a ‘natural’ human diet might be, how it may have been shaped across evolutionary time, and how we have adapted to respond to changing food availability.

The transition from hunting and gathering and the rise of agriculture through to the industrialization and globalization of diet are explored. Far from being adapted to a ‘Stone Age’ diet, humans can consume a vast range of foodstuffs. However, being able to eat anything doesn’t mean that we should eat everything, and engagement with the evolutionary underpinnings of diet and factors influencing it is key to better public health practice.

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Evolving Human Nutrition

Implications for Public Health

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Stanley Ulijaszek is Professor of Human Ecology at the University of Oxford and Director of the Unit for Biocultural Variation and Obesity. His work on nutritional ecology and anthropology has involved fieldwork and research in Papua New Guinea, the Cook Islands and South Asia, while his interests in dietary transitions have led him to examine the evolutionary basis and cultural drivers of obesity.

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