

Gang accused of killing to sell human fat

LIMA (Reuters) — Peruvian police said on Thursday they had broken up a gang that allegedly killed dozens of people and sold their fat to buyers who used it to make cosmetics.

Four Peruvians were arrested on suspicion of kidnapping, murder and trafficking in human fat.

The group stored the fat it collected in used soda and water bottles, which police showed reporters.

"We have people detained who have declared and stated how they murdered people with the aim being to extract their fat in rudimentary labs and sell it," said Police Commander Angel Toldeo.

In addition to those taken into custody, police said they were searching for others who bought fat from the gang or might have worked with it.

Remains from some of the victims were found at a rural house in the region of Huanuco where the group worked, according to police video.

Police said they were investigating 60 disappearances in the area that might be linked to the gang.

The investigation started this month after police heard about a shipment of fat that arrived in Lima by bus from Peru's mountains.

Ageing Santa gets \$100,000 facelift for Christmas

WELLINGTON (Reuters) — A Santa in New Zealand with a droopy eye has received a NZ\$100,000 (\$74,000) facelift in the run-up to Christmas so that his aging face does not scare children.

The 20-meter (66 feet) tall fiberglass Santa has been among the festive decorations in Auckland since 1960 but in recent years began to struggle with one of his eyes that was made to wink and a mechanical figure that moved in a welcoming gesture.

"There was a concern the guy did look a little creepy. It was the finger and the Sad Sack, winking, droopy eye," Heart of the City chief executive Alex Swney told local media.

The Santa, that stands on a street corner in the city center, has undergone extensive facial work over the past four months at a cost of over NZ\$100,000.

His face remains bandaged ahead of a public unveiling on Sunday but his mechanical figure has been replaced with a static digit.

Man tied 15 lizards to chest at airport

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Federal officials say they arrested a man who strapped 15 live lizards to his chest to get through customs at Los Angeles International Airport.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said that 40-year-old Michael Plank of Lomita, Calif., was returning from Australia when U.S. Customs agents found 11 skinks, two geckos and two monitor lizards fastened to his body Tuesday.

Plank has been released on \$10,000 bond and will be arraigned in federal court on Dec. 21.

Authorities say the lizards' value totals more than \$8,500. All Australian reptiles are strictly regulated and Plank did not have a permit for them.

8 perfect stay-young foods

By David Zinczenko, with Matt Goulding

Eating right isn't just about weight loss—the nutrients you take in can have a serious effect on how you think, feel, and look! Our bodies and our feelings are nothing more than reflections of the various chemicals flowing through our system on a daily basis. Make sure those chemicals are the healthy kind you get from the right mix of fruits and vegetables, proteins and fats, and you'll feel healthier, more energetic, and happier than you have in years.

In Eat This, Not That! 2010, we compiled a list of eight foods that can help keep you young. You're only as young as you feel—so add these eight nutritious powerhouses to your daily diet, and start feeling (and acting and looking) years younger!

Eggs

Benefit: Weight loss

Substitute: Egg Beaters egg substitute

When it comes to breakfast, you can't beat eggs. (That was too easy, wasn't it?) Seriously, at a cost of only 72 calories, each large egg holds 6.3 grams of high-quality protein and a powerhouse load of vital nutrients. A study published in the International Journal of Obesity found that people who replace carbs with eggs for breakfast lose weight 65 percent quicker.

Researchers in Michigan were able to determine that regular egg eaters enjoyed more vitamins and minerals in their diets than those who ate few or no eggs. By examining surveys from more than 25,000 people, the researchers found that egg eaters are about half as likely to be deficient in vitamin B12, 24 percent less likely to be deficient in vitamin A, and 36 percent less likely to be deficient in vitamin E. And here's something more shocking: Those who ate at least four eggs a week had significantly lower cholesterol levels than those who ate fewer than one. Turns out, the dietary cholesterol in the yolk has little impact on your serum cholesterol.

Bonus tip: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

Green tea

Benefit: Longer lifespan

Substitutes: Yerba mate, white tea, oolong tea, red tea

Literally hundreds of studies have been carried out documenting the health benefits of catechins, the group of antioxidants concentrated in the leaves of tea plants. Among the most startling studies was one published by the American Medical Association in 2006. The study followed more than 40,000 Japanese adults for a decade, and at the 7-year follow-up, those who had been drinking five or more cups of tea per day were 26 percent less likely to die of any cause compared with those who averaged less than a cup.

Looking for more-immediate results? Another Japanese study broke participants into two



groups, only one of which was put on a catechin-rich green-tea diet. At the end of 12 weeks, the green-tea group had achieved significantly smaller body weights and waistlines than those in the control group. Why? Because researchers believe that catechins are effective at boosting metabolism.

Bonus tip: The average American consumes 400 liquid calories a day.

Garlic

Benefit: Cardiovascular strengthening

Substitutes: Onions, chives, leeks

Allicin, an antibacterial and antifungal compound, is the steam engine pushing forward garlic's myriad health benefits. The chemical is produced by the garlic plant as a defense against pests, but inside your body, it fights cancer, strengthens your cardiovascular system, decreases fat storage, and fights acne inflammation.

To activate the most allicin possible, you have to crush the garlic as finely as you can: Peel the cloves, and then use the side of a heavy chef's knife to crush the garlic before carefully mincing it. Be sure not to overcook it, as too much heat will render the compound completely useless (and your food totally bitter).

Bonus tip: Some foods keep you looking young. Others can quite literally cure what ails you.

Grapefruit

Benefit: Weight loss

Substitutes: Oranges, watermelon, tomatoes

Just call it the better-body fruit. In a study of 100 obese people at the Scripps Clinic in California, those who ate half a grapefruit with each meal lost an average of 3.6 pounds over the course of 12 weeks, and some lost as many as 10 pounds.

The study's control group, in contrast, lost a paltry 1/2 pound. But here's something even bet-

ter: Those who ate the grapefruit also exhibited a decrease in insulin levels, indicating that their bodies had improved their ability to metabolize sugar. If you can't stomach a grapefruit-a-day regime, try to find as many ways possible to sneak grapefruit into your diet. Even a moderate increase in grapefruit intake should yield results, not to mention earn you a massive dose of lycopene—the cancer-preventing antioxidant found most commonly in tomatoes.

Bonus tip: Eat well and you'll feel younger and more vibrant. Add exercise to the mix and you'll practically erase markers of age.

Greek yogurt

Benefit: Feeling fuller for longer

Substitutes: Kefir and yogurt with "live and active cultures" printed on the product label

If it's dessert you want, go with regular yogurt; but if it's protein, go Greek. What sets the two apart? Greek yogurt is separated from the watery whey that sits on top of regular yogurt, and the process removes excessive sugars, such as lactose, and increases the concentration of protein by as much as three times. That means it fills your belly more like a meal than a snack. Plus a single cup has about a quarter of your day's calcium, and studies show that dieters on calcium-rich diets have an easier time losing body fat. In one study, participants on a high-calcium dairy diet lost 70 percent more body weight than those on a calorie-restricted diet alone. If only a similar claim could be made of everything you eat.

Bonus tip: Fruit-on-the-bottom yogurt is a classic example of a food that doesn't deserve its healthy reputation.

Avocado

Benefit: Reduced risk of heart disease

Tell me about it: Introducing a child to graves and grieving

By Carolyn Hax

Question: My husband and I had a discussion on mourning practices, in particular my mourning my sister, who has been dead for 12 years. He said that when we have children, he wouldn't want me taking them to her grave because he does not believe children should be exposed to mourning or a depressing situation. I think it's important for children to understand death at an early age. And I think it's OK for them to accompany me to the cemetery.

How do we come to a compromise on something I think is so important? My husband says it's hard to discuss it with me since the topic is so close to my heart. The conversation came up because the anniversary of her death falls on a holiday, which makes the usually joyous holiday a very depressing time for me.

Answer: Small children are soft, their clothes and toys are soft, their food is soft, our voices around them are soft - I get the impulse to keep their worlds completely soft.

But since every living thing is going to die, death - of a grandparent, pet, neighbor, even parent or sibling - eventually crashes the padded party.

Sometimes well-meaning adults try to keep the padding in place anyway, only to make things harder for the child. "Grandpa is sleeping," that classic dodge, can leave a kid terrified of going

to bed and never waking up. Going vague - "He went away," "He's with God/the angels" - can set active imaginations running without a map. Anchor faith with facts. Information can scare children, but so can the absence of it.

And as soon as kids can form them, they'll start asking questions: why, how, where, will it happen to me/to you/to Fluffy/to my toys?

Answering questions with simple truths allows children to learn big concepts in small bits, which they can process at their own pace: "All living things stop working after a while," "it's sad, but it's also part of nature," "most people live a very long time."

You and your husband can try working toward compromise with a practical exercise in applying your beliefs: Someday, your child will hear your sister's name and ask who that is; someday, your child will see you cry about your sister and ask why you're crying; someday, your child will want to go with Mom to the cemetery. What will you and he say in these instances?

When children see a parent cry at a grave site, they don't just witness grief. They also witness a parent managing grief, by remembering someone, expressing emotion, going home and carrying on with life. I doubt your husband means to protect them from profound lessons like that.

(Source: philly.com)

Afghanistan is world's worst place to be born: UN

GENEVA (Reuters) — Eight years after a U.S.-led invasion ousted the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, the war-ravaged state is the most dangerous place in the world for a child to be born, the United Nations said on Thursday.

It is especially dangerous for girls, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in launching its annual flagship report, The State of the World's Children.

Afghanistan has the highest infant mortality rate in the world — 257 deaths per 1,000 live births, and 70 percent of the population lacks access to clean water, the agency said.

As Taliban insurgents increase their presence across the country, growing insecurity is also making it hard to carry out vital vaccination campaigns against polio, a crippling disease still endemic in the country, and measles that can kill children.

"Afghanistan today is without a doubt the most dangerous place to be born," Daniel Toole, UNICEF regional director for South Asia, told a news briefing in Geneva.

A Taliban-led insurgency and militant attack on an international guest-house in Kabul that killed five UN foreign staff last month prompted the world body to evacuate hundreds of international staff from Afghanistan for several weeks.

Some 43 percent of the country is now virtually off-limits to aid agencies due to insecurity, according to Toole.

The Taliban have been building their forces in their traditional southern and eastern Afghanistan stronghold and are increasing attacks in the north and west. Teaching girls is one of the practices they forbid.

Some 317 schools in Afghanistan were attacked in the past year, killing 124 and wounding another 290, Toole said.

"We have seen a drop in the number of children who are attending schools and particularly young girls," he added.

School enrollment in Afghanistan had risen to 5 million, including 2 million girls, against 1 million with virtually no girls in 2001 when the Taliban were ousted from power, he said.

Substitutes: Olive, canola, and peanut oils; peanut butter

Here's what often gets lost in America's fat phobia: Some fats are actually good for you. More than half the calories in each creamy green fruit comes from one of the world's healthiest fats, a kind called monounsaturates. These fats differ from saturated fats in that they have one double-bonded carbon atom, but that small difference at the molecular level amounts to a dramatic improvement in your health.

Numerous studies have shown that monounsaturated fats both improve your cholesterol profile and decrease the amount of triglycerides (more fats) floating around in your blood. This can lower your risk of stroke and heart disease. Worried about weight gain? Don't be. There's no causal link between monounsaturated fats and body fat.

Bell peppers

Benefit: Improved immune function

Substitutes: Carrots, sweet potatoes, watermelon

All peppers are loaded with antioxidants, but none so much as the brightly colored reds, yellows, and oranges. These colors result from carotenoids concentrated in the flesh of the peppers, and it's these same carotenoids that give tomatoes, carrots, and grapefruits their healthy hues. The range of benefits provided by these colorful pigments include improved immune function, better communication between cells, protection against sun damage, and a diminished risk of several types of cancer.

And if you can take the heat, try cooking with chili peppers. The bell pepper cousins are still loaded with carotenoids and vitamin C, but have the added benefit of capsaicins, temperature-raising phytochemicals that have been shown to fight headache and arthritis pain as well as boost metabolism.

Almonds

Benefit: Improved memory

Substitutes: Walnuts, pecans, peanuts, sesame seeds, flaxseeds

An ounce of almonds—or about 23 nuts—a day provides nearly 9 grams of heart-healthy oleic acid; that's more than the amounts found in peanuts, walnuts, or cashews. This monounsaturated fat is known to be responsible for a flurry of health benefits, the most recently discovered of which is improved memory. Rats in California were better able to navigate a maze the second time around if they'd been fed oleic acid, and there's no reason to assume that the same treatment won't help you navigate your day-to-day life.

If nothing else, snacking on the brittle nuts will take your mind off your hunger. Nearly a quarter of an almond's calories come from belly-filling fiber and protein. That's why, when researchers at Purdue fed study participants nuts or rice cakes, those who ate the nuts felt full for an hour and a half longer than the rice cake group did.

Bonus Tip: Before you go out to eat, grab a handful of almonds; it could help keep your hunger at bay.

(Source: health.yahoo.com)



Child abuse may shorten cell lifeline: study

PARIS (AFP) — Beaten or sexually abused children are more likely to show accelerated ageing of cells later in life, a condition linked to higher rates of cancer and heart disease, according to a study released Friday.

Investigators found that the natural process by which protective "caps" on the end of chromosomes, called telomeres, are worn away as humans age was accelerated among adults who had suffered such trauma in childhood.

Earlier studies had shown that psychological stress elevates risk for a wide range of diseases and mental conditions.

And separate research had shown that telomeres shorten at a higher rate when exposed to toxins such as radiation or cigarette smoke.

But whether childhood emotional trauma could affect the enzymes in adulthood remained unknown.

To find out, researchers Audrey Tyrka of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island measured DNA extracted from blood samples of 31 18-to-64 year old adults, including 22 women and nine men.

They found more rapid shortening of telomeres only in those who said they had suffered severe mistreatment as children.

The findings were not affected by the effects of age, smoking, body fat or other demographic factors, the paper said. "Both physical neglect and emotional neglect were significantly linked to telomere length," it concluded.

"This gives us a hint that early developmental experiences may have profound effects on biology that can influence cellular mechanisms at a very basic level," Tyrka said.

More research is needed to confirm the link, and to understand the causal pathways, she said in a press release.

Telomeres and telomerase, the enzyme that control them, are a key ingredient in ageing and longevity.

Every time a cell divides, the telomeres get worn down. The enzyme's job is to partially rebuild them. Eventually, when the telomeres are worn beyond a certain point, cell death is triggered.