We Cook, Therefore We Are Human

Human beings are the only species on earth that cooks food. You could argue that it’s the one true trait that sets us apart from other animals. But it’s recently come to light that cooking is not just a mere human quirk; it may have actually been a crucial step in our evolution as a species. It’s not known exactly when humans started cooking food. Some research suggests the practice is only about half a million years old, correlating roughly with humankind’s control of fire. However, many other schools of thought suggest that we were handling fire and cooking closer to two million years ago, and this makes things very interesting: It was around this time that there was a significant increase in the size of the human brain.

Fossil evidence shows that both the teeth and digestive tract of our ancestor Homo Erectus became smaller around about the same time the brain became bigger. This suggests that they might have started eating softer, more digestible, and possibly cooked foods. Cooking also allows us to get more energy from foods, and the brain is by far the most energy-demanding organ in our body. It makes sense therefore, that the relationship between cooking and brain growth is a strong one.

If we accept this cooking theory to be true, it does open up a string of other fascinating questions: Did cooking, which is a communal behaviour, change how we socialized? Are there more ways that we can physically grow our brains?

Q1 What is the main idea of the text?
A Discovering fire was crucial to cooking.
B The history of cooking is unclear.
C Cooking may have helped humans to evolve.
D Cooking is good for your brain.

Q2 When did humans start cooking food?
A Half a million years ago.
B Two million years ago.
C When fire was discovered.
D We cannot be exactly sure.

Q3 What does the text say about the human brain?
A The brain requires a lot of energy.
B Eating softer foods supports brain growth.
C There is a connection between brain growth and socializing.
D All of the above.
ANSWERS: We Cook, Therefore We Are Human

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