Cooking began 600,000 years earlier than we thought

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New research suggests that using fire to cook food started 600,000 years before previously thought. Archeologists from the Tel Aviv University's Steinhardt Museum of Natural History in Israel assert that our early ancestors cooked fish with fire 770,000 years ago. The archaeologists claim that these prehistoric humans, who lived alongside the banks of the Jordan River in what is present-day northern Israel, used fire to cook the "huge fish" they caught in a nearby lake. They say their finding is the earliest recorded evidence of food being cooked. Until this new discovery, scientists believed the first "definitive evidence" of cooking was by Neanderthals and early Homo sapiens, around 170,000 years ago.

Lead researcher Irit Zohar spent 16 years analyzing ancient fish bones and the enamel found on fish teeth. Her analysis showed that the grilled or baked fish had been eaten 770 millennia ago. She told the AFP news agency that: "It was like facing a puzzle, with more and more information until we could make a story about human evolution." She added that her biggest conundrum was to ascertain whether or not the fish had been eaten raw and then their bones thrown into the fire, or whether it had been cooked first. She said: "The whole question about exposure to fire is whether it is about getting rid of remains or a desire to cook." She said the fish were two-metre-long carp, that would have been particularly succulent when cooked.

Sources: nature.com / *timesofisrael.com* / *cnn.com*

Writing

We should all learn to cook healthy meals only. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

research / fire / cook / archaeologist / ancestors / prehistoric / humans / discovery / bones / enamel / millennia / puzzle / conundrum / exposure / desire / succulent

True / False

1) A team of nutritionists from Tel Aviv university conducted the research. T / F

2) Researchers believe we first used fire to cook 970,000 years ago. T / F

3) Prehistoric humans cooked fish they caught in the Jordan RIver. T / F

4) Scientists originally believed we first cooked 170,000 years ago. T / F

5) Researchers analyzed the enamel of fish teeth in their research. T / F

6) A researcher said her ancient humans boiled their fish. T / F

7) A researcher tried to figure out if fish was eaten raw or cooked. T / F

8) The fish ancient humans ate were up to two metres long. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

1.	**previously**	a.	maintain
2.	**predecessors**	b.	juicy
3.	**assert**	c.	primitive
4.	**evidence**	d.	earlier
5.	**definitive**	e.	find out
6.	**ancient**	f.	proof
7.	**conundrum**	g.	contact with
8.	**ascertain**	h.	ancestors
9.	**exposure**	i.	problem
10.	**succulent**	j.	conclusive

Discussion – Student A

a) What do you think about what you read?

b) How good are you at cooking?

c) How bad is cooking for the environment?

d) Should we eat more raw food to help the environment?

e) What do you know about the enamel on our teeth?

f) What's the biggest conundrum you've ever faced?

g) What's the most succulent food you know of?

h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Phrase Match

1. 600,000 years before previously
2. alongside the banks
3. present-
4. the earliest recorded evidence
5. Neanderthals and early
6. the enamel found
7. her biggest
8. eaten
9. getting
10. particularly succulent

a. rid of remains
b. on fish teeth
c. of food being cooked
d. thought
e. raw
f. of the Jordan River
g. when cooked
h. conundrum
i. Homo sapiens
j. day northern Israel

Discussion – Student B

a) What do you think of cooking?
b) What do you think the first hot food tasted like?
c) What was food like 770,000 years ago?
d) What are you best at cooking?
e) Would you like to be a chef?
f) Do you like cooking using a fire?
g) What do you know about Neanderthals and Homo sapiens?
h) What advice do you have for people learning to cook?

Spelling

1. 600,000 years before yplvuerosi thought
2. our early otsrnceas
3. The ooacsalrthigse claim that
4. iorpterhics humans
5. the first ivtineifed evidence
6. early Homo apssnie
7. analyzing ncneait fish bones
8. the enaeml found on fish teeth
9. eaten 770 mnilnaiel ago
10. csneraait whether or not the fish had been eaten
11. xeuorspe to fire
12. particularly lcutucsen when cooked

Role Play

Role A – Fish
You think fish is the best thing to cook. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as good to cook. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): meat, vegetables or rice.

Role B – Meat
You think meat is the best thing to cook. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as good to cook. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why):: fish, vegetables or rice.

Role C – Vegetables
You think vegetables is the best thing to cook. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as good to cook. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why):: meat, fish or rice.

Role D – Rice
You think rice is the best thing to cook. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as good to cook. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why):: meat, vegetables or fish.

Speaking – Cooked Food

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Grilled fish
- Roast chicken
- Scrambled eggs
- Baked potatoes
- Steamed rice
- Toasted sandwiches
- Barbecued prawns
- Fried noodles

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	F	4	T	5	T	6	F	7	T	8	T

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.

Answers – Synonym Match

1.	d	2.	h	3.	a	4.	f	5.	j
6.	c	7.	i	8.	e	9.	g	10.	b