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NUTRITION IN RUSSIAN ECO-VILLAGES

This paper explores the nutritional behavior of people in three eco-villages in Russia: Nevo-Ecoville in Karelia; Kitezhh in Central Russia and Tiberkul in South Siberia. Participant observation, biographical, and semi-structured interviews (total number 81) were used for this research.

All three communities were created after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The founders of the eco-communities, Nevo-Ecoville and Kitezhh, were influenced by the ideas of Rerikh and Tolstoi ideas. They were moderate vegetarians, that is, in addition to vegetarian food they permitted milk products and eggs, Over the course of time, they departed from these food habits, and permitted meat, alcohol and smoking. The concepts of the eco-community, however, remain close to the world-view of Rerikh and Tolstoi. Therefore moderate vegetarians who are attracted to these ideas come to Nevo-Ecoville and Kitezhh. Since there is a common dining room in Kitezhh, the "meat-eaters" food rule exists, and the moderate vegetarians are compelled either to transfer to the common diet, or experience psychological and nutritional discomfort, rejecting dishes that contain meat and receiving less food. As a result, two families moved to Nevo-Ecoville. One of the main reasons for the move was the conflict about food, which was expressed as a conflict of ideas. In Nevo-Ecoville each family settles issues of their food themselves, and moderate vegetarians and meat-eaters coexist together peacefully.

In the Tiberkul community, a vegan diet has been accepted, prohibiting meat, fish, eggs, and milk. The main food consists of potatoes, kasha, vegetables in season, sauerkraut, and mushrooms.

All three eco-communities consist of former city residents who make considerable efforts to reconnect with the land and to learn how to grow their own organic food.