

What Do Terminators Eat?

I'm a trained engineer and a writer, so I actually spend otherwise valuable brainpower wondering about the digestion system of Terminators. It bothers me. I mean, it doesn't bother me that I do this. It bothers me that I don't know what Terminators eat.

According to the Terminator movies, Arnold Schwarzenegger's cyborg, the Cyberdyne model 101, is living tissue over a metal endoskeleton, which is absolutely cool. The only reason it can be sent back in time is because of the living tissue. Nothing dead will go through. But what does it live on? I have to eat a protein bar before a workout or I feel like I'm going to pass out after about an hour. But in all the movies, the Terminator never eats, drinks, or consumes anything. If it were green, like the Hulk, I'd guess it was regenerating by photosynthesis, which would also be cool. A hydroponic Terminator.

But it's flesh-colored so that it can pass as human. Maybe the director, James Cameron, didn't want to spend time showing something as mundane as a Terminator sitting down to dinner. I'll buy that, but when I was watching the Terminator get shot up or poke its own eye out, all I could think about was, how does the damn thing work? When it gets wounded, it's not bleeding all over the place, which means there's little blood in its system. The original movie does have a character ask him if a dead cat is in his room because of the smell, but I'd give the Terminator three days at best before he has to find some kind of sustenance, or it would stink like that all the time.

So what do Terminators eat? My question was answered in the TV series, *The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, when the Terminator played by Summer Glau ate pancakes and pizza. They're omnivores, just like we are. Question answered.

But the answer brought to mind the question of waste products. If the Terminator is eating, the waste has to go somewhere. All living creatures consume a resource, the resource goes through a chemical process, and then the byproducts are excreted. In other words, we eat, digest, and poop.

So, do Terminators poop? I would have to say that, as undignified an image that is for a Terminator, they do.

I think I'm beginning to see why this topic wasn't broached in the movies.

There's another problem that the Terminator movies blatantly overlook. Only living

tissue can come through the time portal, right? Kyle Reese says that clearly in the first movie. But the T-1000 in the second movie, as well as the female Terminator in the third movie have no living tissue. They are liquid metal. You can't have it both ways. Merely looking like living tissue shouldn't count. So how does that work?

The easy answer is, it doesn't work, you nerd! It's a movie! It works because the shape-shifting robot is cool!

And it is cool. But as I said before, I'm an engineer, so that answer doesn't do it for me. I like my stories to be internally consistent. It's why I think that a key position every movie should have is a logic consultant.

In this case, the logic consultant would have stepped in and said, wait a minute! The last movie said only living tissue would go through the time machine. So the writer would add a line saying that the T-1000 came through the time portal inside a live moose, and I would never question the logic of it.

These are the kind of important engineering questions I don't see pondered about nearly enough in our popular culture.