

**FOOD
ADULTERATION**
- AND HOW TO
BEAT IT. SPECIAL
8 PAGE
SUPPLEMENT.

OFF THE SHELF
- WE
INVESTIGATE
ICE-CREAM

**LYNN FAULDS
WOOD'S DIARY**

**RECIPES FOR
SUMMER SALADS**

ON THE JOB -
WE TALK TO
PUBLIC
ANALYST, CAROL
VALLIS

SPECIAL REPORT
- **HOMELESS**
AND HUNGRY

**ARE WE BEING
SERVED? OUR**
LOOK AT
SUPERMARKETS.

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

Incorporating London Food News ♦ Issue 2 Volume 1 Summer 1988/£2.50

**FOOD QUALITY
SUPPLEMENT**

**YOUR
PROBLEMS
ANSWERED**

**CHERNOBYL -
WORLD TRADE
IN
CONTAMINATED
FOOD**

**A FATE WORSE
THAN DEBT - WE**
INTERVIEW
SUSAN GEORGE
ABOUT HER NEW
BOOK

**EUROPEAN AND
WORLD NEWS**

**FOOD
HANDOUTS TO
THE POOR -**
WILL THE UK
FOLLOW THE
USA?

BOOK REVIEWS

LETTERS



THE HIDDEN HAZARDS OF HEALTHY FOOD

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

ISSN 0953-5047

Editorial Team:

Sue Dibb
Tim Lang
Tim Lobstein
Julie Sheppard

London Food Commission Staff

Eric Brunner
Issy Cole-Hamilton
Bridget Cumiskey
Sue Dibb
Lynda Gill
Anita Green
Sara E Hill
Gabrielle Jones
Tim Lang
Tim Lobstein
Adriana Luba
Melanie Miller
Peter Snell

Cover photograph by Gina Glover and
Crispin Hughes/Photo Co-op

Designed and typeset by Artworkers,
402a St John Street, London EC1.
Printed and despatched by Spiderweb,
14-20 Sussex Way, London N7.

Subscription rates:

UK

£12.50 individuals/small groups
£25.00 organisations

Overseas

£20.00 individuals
£30.00 organisations
Bulk orders: prices available on
request

The London Food Commission is a
voluntary organisation providing an
independent source of research,
information, education and advice on food.
Its membership represents London's
community and voluntary groups, food
sector trade unions, statutory bodies and
interested individuals and professionals

MEMBERS

Voluntary organisations:

Action and Information on Sugar*
Action Research on Multiple Sclerosis*
Age Concern Hammersmith and Fulham
Asian Women's Network
British Diabetic Association
British-Turkish Committee
Catholic Aid for Overseas Development
Cooperative Retail Services
Cooperative Retail Society London Political
Committee*
Cooperative Women's Guild*
Coronary Prevention Group*
Croydon Friends of the Earth
Disability Resources Team

The Food Magazine is produced quarterly by The London Food Commission,
88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR. ☎ 01-253 9513

CONTENTS

Editorial 1

NEWS

- Sugar critic bites back 2
- Weaning food labels misleading 2
- Additives – two steps back, half a step forward? 2
- A woman's worth 3
- Food watchdogs under threat 3
- Chernobyl food contamination – Felicity Arbuthnot investigates the
world trade scandal 4
- Big Mac goes to court 6
- Missing BST data 6

SPECIAL 8-PAGE FOOD QUALITY SUPPLEMENT

Your guide to food adulteration and how to beat it. Find out how to
join our campaign to put food quality first 11-18

FEATURES

Off the Shelf. It's called ice-cream and we will eat about twenty million
pints this summer. But what is soft ice-cream? – we investigate 8
Inside Story takes a closer look at the cocktail of additives that make
an ice-cream 10

Supermarkets – are we really being served? 19

Will the UK follow the US in setting up food banks for those too poor to
buy food? We investigate from both sides of the Atlantic 20-21

Homeless and Hungry. A new report asks what impact 'bed and
breakfast' accommodation has on diets and health 22-23

'City institutions cause hunger' – Susan George talks to
Geoff Tansey 24

Book reviews 25

Problem Page – your queries answered 26

Feedback – letters 27

Guest Column with TV's Lynn Faulds Wood 27

On The Job – Public Analyst Carol Vallis talks about her role in
protecting the public 28

Summer Salads – Amanda Goodfellow gives us three simple recipes 29

What The Journals Say 30

Friends of the Earth
Glydon Health Project
Hackney Council for Racial Equality*
Health Rights
Kings Cross Women's Centre
League of Chinese*
Indian Cultural Association
Islington Friends of the Earth

National Council for Voluntary
Organisations*
National Eczema Society
National Housewives Association
Pensioners Link
South London Jewish Family Heritage
Transnationals Information Centre London
United Response

Vegan Society*
Vegetarian Society*
Women's Health Information Centre*
Women in Medical Practice

Trades union/workers representative:

Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union*
Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union
Council*
General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied
Trades Union*
Health Visitors Association*
Institution of Professional Civil Servants*
Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union*
National Union of Public Employees*
Royal College of Nursing
South East Region Trades Union Congress*
Transport and General Workers Union*
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied
Workers*

Statutory/local authority bodies:

Ealing College of Higher Education
Ealing Community Health Council
Enfield Community Health Council
Greater London Enterprise*
Healthshare
Heart Disease & Stroke Programme
Institute of Trading Standards
Administration, Greater London
Branch*
Islington Health Education Department
Kentish Town Health Centre
Hackney Food Policy Group
Inner London Education Authority*
Kingston and Esher Health Authority
Lambeth Consumer Services
London Borough of Ealing
London Borough of Haringey*
London Borough of Islington
London Borough of Greenwich
London Borough of Southwark*
Metropolitan Chief Officers for Trade and
Consumer Services*
Middlesex Polytechnic*
Popular Planning Project
Riverside Health Authority
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Reference Library
Southwark College
Tower Hamlets Health Campaign
Toxic Chemicals Information Centre
Wandsworth Health Authority

Associate Members represented on

Council of Management:

Dr Michael Joffe*
Susie Orbach*
Usha Prashar*
Kiran Shukla*
Glenys Thornton*
Caroline Walker*
Kathryn Webster*
Jack Winkler*
Mary Whiting*
Malcolm Williams*
Simon Wright*

* indicates elected member of Council of
Management

Good quality food for all

Consumers cannot miraculously turn poor ingredients into a safe, sound diet. Researchers have shown that decisions about the kind of food available are too often taken without public consultation. And most decisions favour producers over consumers. To challenge these priorities, a new national food policy is needed.

'But what is a food policy?' the London Food Commission often gets asked. A food policy is an overall approach to production and consumption to determine who gets which food where, how and on what terms. But as with foreign affairs, policies can be overt or covert. In the LFC's view, too many UK food policies are covert and would be improved by a good dose of public and democratic scrutiny. We have nothing to lose but national ill-health and nothing to gain but well-being.

The present government's food policy is mainly focused on two goals – health education advertising and commerce. We all want more information about food and an expansion of employment in the industry. But experience shows that government action limited to those two spheres is not enough. This issue of Food Magazine highlights two other vital aspects of food policy – the need for food quality standards and a nutritionally sound welfare safety net. We launch the new LFC book *Food Adulteration – and how to beat it* together with the Food Quality Charter. The book investigates many of the public's concerns about food. In some cases – for instance, pesticides and some additives – the public is being inadequately served by its food producers and government. And in other instances – excess water in food, for example – we are being defrauded, often legally.

Our special supplement and the new book give you the unpalatable facts about food today. But we also share with you our optimism that public pressure can begin to change things. At the least, consumers and campaigners together can contain food industry excesses, and encourage those civil servants and elected representatives who are prepared to stand up and fight for the public interest.

A new public push for better, safer standards is long overdue. We believe the Food Quality Charter summarises many public hopes and aspirations about the future of our food: in particular good quality, unadulterated, accessible food which is affordable to all. And on that last count, alas, current UK food policy is failing most miserably

The government has made it clear that a central thrust of its new social security system is to cut state expenditure. In our submission to the Social Security Review back in 1986 we begged government not to cut food welfare. It did. And now the number of school meals is falling. Once more it's the poor who are being forced to tighten their belts another notch. In this issue we contribute to the debate on the restructuring of welfare and the relationship between poverty and diets.

Our latest study was conducted with three other charities. In it we looked at the living circumstances and intake of homeless women and children. It makes sobering reading for all responsible: housing agencies, inspectors and central and local authorities.

Susan George's work on world hunger is world renowned. Symbolically the interview with her is a reminder that the Third World (that euphemism for induced poverty and underdevelopment) is alive and not-so-well on these shores. We have much to learn in Britain from analysis of the Third World.

In two other features we look at state policies towards hunger. We review the food bank and food stamp schemes pioneered in the USA, which mark the disturbing fusion of agricultural and social policies. Overproduction in agriculture is being used to deal with hunger and to substitute for government action on poverty.

Will Food Banks, food stamps or vouchers, and most dubious of all, Second Harvest schemes come to Britain? Second Harvest schemes take cooked food from canteens and restaurants and deliver it to the poor. Leaving questions of hygiene aside, we ask whether it can be made to work in the UK? It's a question we put to the representative from the US General Accounts Office when he visited the LFC recently. We would argue that such schemes do nothing to resolve hunger problems at source and are a form of social control using food as a weapon. Such solutions sit squarely within one time-honoured, 'charitable' strand of UK food policy. But there is a more honourable tradition too, one which sees a mature culture as one that feeds all its citizens, not just to an adequate level of 'subsistence' – as Seeborn Rowntree and William Beveridge argued – but to health and well-being.

On a happier note, our thanks to the many people who wrote and phoned good wishes to the Food Magazine. With your support, we hope it will grow and prosper. **Tim Lang**

Sugar critic bites back

John Yudkin, London University's Emeritus Professor of Nutrition, takes a further bite out of the sugar industry in an extra chapter added to his book, *Pure White and Deadly*, which is relaunched this spring. Believing attack to be the best defence, Yudkin writes in graphic detail of his struggles against the multi-billion pound sugar industry's attempts to muzzle him.

For example, when it was suggested that Yudkin be invited to join a British Nutrition Foundation committee, a member of the BNF Board from Tate & Lyle, which was a major sponsor of the Foundation, said that if Yudkin were appointed he would resign and see that his firm and others withdrew their sponsorship. Yudkin was not invited to become a committee member.

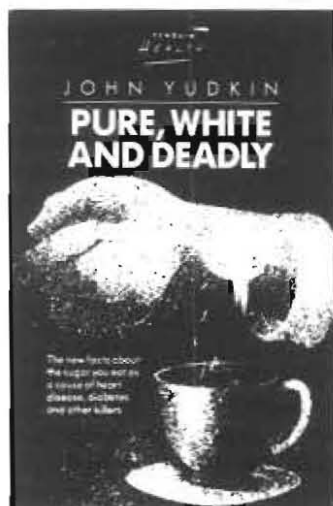
He cites examples of conferences being cancelled under pressure from vested interests, such as one he was organising in the early 1980s for G D Searle, who were then seeking approval for their new sweetener Aspartame. At the last minute Searle abruptly cancelled the conference.

According to Yudkin, he was told that Coca-Cola were negotiating with Searle over the use of Aspartame in Diet-Cola instead of saccharin – an enormous potential market for Searle's new sweetener. As the world's largest user of sugar, Coca-Cola were apparently unhappy about Yudkin's conference and the publicity that it might have given to the ill-effects of sugar consumption. And Searle knuckled under.

Professor Yudkin also cites a dramatic change of opinion by Professor Vincent Marks, a biochemist at Surrey University. In 1977 Marks reported in the *Lancet* that gin and tonic could provoke hypoglycaemia if the tonic water

contained sugar, but not if it contained saccharin.

This was vigorously criticised by the then Director-General of the International Sugar Research Foundation, but Professor Marks defended himself, saying, 'May I suggest that a clue to the reason for Mr Hugil's vitriolic comments on our work is to be found in his address? The International Sugar Research Foundation must feel threatened by the accumulating evidence that John Yudkin's description of their major product



as pure, white and deadly is not too far wide of the mark.'

According to the book however, by 1985, Professor Marks commented on the suggestion that sugar might be a cause of coronary disease: 'One of the most groundless theories puts sugar as the villain of the piece and is nothing more than scientific fraud'.

This appeared in a *Grocer* supplement produced by the public relations firm working for the Sugar Bureau. Later, speaking at a Sugar Bureau-sponsored meeting on Diet and Health, Marks is quoted as asking whether critics of sugar may be part of '... a sensationalist bandwagon based upon nothing more than anecdotal, incorrectly interpreted data?'

Pure, White and Deadly is far from that. Further research and evidence over the past fifteen years continues to support the book's original message of the drastic effects sugar consumption can have on our health – diabetes, dental caries and heart disease, for example. It may also be implicated in other diseases including some cancers, liver

disease, gout and damage to eyes and skin.

'If only a small fraction of what is known about sugar was revealed in connection with any other material used as a food additive', he suggests, 'that material would be banned'.

□ *Pure, White and Deadly*, Second Edition, Penguin Books, 1988, £3.95.

Weaning Food Labels Misleading

Baby food labels which declare themselves 'low sugar' or 'sugar free' can be seriously misleading, according to a new report* from the Maternity Alliance. Such phrases encourage parents to think the food contains little or no sugar, when in fact it could be nearly one quarter pure sugar.

Despite government recommendations to cut the sugar in baby food products, manufacturers are continuing to add sweetening agents in one form or another. They use glucose, fructose and maltose, as well as sweet foods like concentrated fruit juice and dried fruit. All these sweetening agents can be harmful to teeth and may offer a lot of calories with little nutritional value.

Reviewing baby food products and their labels, and reporting on a survey of infant diets, author Lyn Durward recommends:

- both total and added sugars should be specified on the label
- words like 'reduced' and 'low' sugar should be defined
- sugar levels should be indicated with language-free symbols
- dietary advice for mothers and health professionals should be available, including suggestions for snacks and drinks, plus other advice relevant to minority needs
- manufacturers should develop a joint policy on sugar in weaning food, and should review their present ranges and their promotional material.

**Sugar in Baby Foods*, Maternity Alliance, 1988, £6.00

Two steps back, half a step forward?

In the EEC there is feverish activity to try to standardise laws on additives before 1992. The European Commission is proposing to add five colours to the permitted list. Four of these colours are currently permitted in the UK but banned in France, West Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Austria, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland. The fifth colour, a red coal tar dye, is not permitted at all in Europe.

The European Commission has offered no evidence of 'need', although this would be required by the new Framework Directive on Additives. The fact that ten countries have managed to survive commercially without these colours, suggests that extending the list is unjustified. It looks probable that desperation to harmonise laws has made the EEC succumb to pressure from the UK food industry and MAFF, to adopt

the lowest common denominator.

On a more positive note, new EEC proposals on emulsifiers and stabilisers (additives which control the texture of foods) aim to ban four emulsifiers. These additives have long been permitted and used in the UK, although not approved by the EEC.

Twelve years after the FACC recommended that controls should be introduced for flavourings, a Directive is about to be adopted by the EEC. It sets maximum limits on a short list of potentially toxic flavouring substances and sets out rules for establishing a permitted list.

The EEC is also trying to tidy up the law on acids, buffers, glazing agents and sweeteners. The Commission has compiled a preliminary list of 177 – some additives listed have not been studied by up-to-date methods or have no safety information at all. Again, no justification of 'need' for each additive on the list has been offered.

Meanwhile in the UK the Minister of Agriculture has chosen to restrict a couple of colour additives, following recommendations of the Food Advisory Committee in 1987. New

regulations in force on 2 January banned Yellow 2G (code number 107) and methyl violet (used to mark skins of citrus fruit). The voluntary agreement banning colourings from baby food was given the force of law.

However consumer organisations say these changes are cosmetic because the use of colours like yellow 2G and methyl violet had already ceased. They are waiting to see whether the Minister will dare upset certain industrial interests by implementing other recommendations, such as limiting the amount of caramel colouring (E150) permitted in cola drinks.

Propionic acid (E280-E283) has caused changes in the forestomach of rats, hyperplasia and tumours, when tested at high doses. Following this new evidence. The Committee on Toxicity (COT) has demoted it from group A (full safety clearance), to group B (temporary clearance), pending a review within one year. MAFF does not intend to reduce the amounts permitted in foods like bread, cakes and Christmas pudding in the meantime.

that better information is not the retailers' main aim. Market researchers have shown that many shoppers won't buy products with E numbers any longer – so canny producers have thought up a way to get round this.

Melanie Miller, from the London Food Commission, comments: 'It's mainly a ploy to clean up the labels instead of the food. If retailers were really interested in giving more information they would give both names and E numbers. We look forward to the day when they really listen to what shoppers want and do not tell us that what is in their interest is really in ours.'

A woman's worth

Women workers throughout the catering trades could benefit from an historic legal ruling. After four long years of tribunals and appeals, shipyard cook Julie Hayward had her claim for 'equal pay for work of equal value' upheld by the Law Lords in May.

Julie Hayward, a cook at Cammell Laird's Birkenhead shipyard, first submitted her claim for equal pay in 1984. She claimed her job was of equal value to those of three male craftsmen, a painter, a joiner and an insulation engineer.

The company argued that Julie's non wage benefits meant she was better off than her male

colleagues, despite being paid £24 less a week. The Lords, however, judged differently.

Their ruling is important for catering workers, whose industry is beset by low pay and poor conditions.

Julie's victory establishes that catering skills are just as valuable as those involved in traditional male craft jobs and should be rewarded accordingly. As Julie herself said: 'We go to college just the same for four years. I had to study all sorts of things. Skill and knowledge are needed for the job'.

Her union, the GMB, hopes the legal victory will enable many women to press for equal pay in other industries.

Food Watchdogs Under Threat

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), Trading Standards Officers (TSOs) and Public Analysts are our food watchdogs. Employed by local authorities, they inspect food premises, follow up complaints, check quality, safety, weights and labels of products.

But reduced funding from central government and a lack of political and public support has left many enforcement officers without adequate funds. For example

► Public Analysts are able to analyse only 4 out of every million items purchased.

► For every £10,000 the public spends on groceries, only £1 is available for analysis.

► Total spending on food analysis is equivalent to 5p per person per year.

A survey of nine London boroughs conducted by the LFC in 1987 found that there was only one EHO and TSO to approximately 34,000 residents. Departments were understaffed by an average of

11 per cent. Understaffing was almost as high as ½ in some cases. Since then the situation has become much worse. At one London Borough the number of TSOs doing enforcement work has been cut from 3.6 to 1, and it is likely that they are unable to fulfil their statutory duties. In another borough, environmental health staff have been reduced from 67 to 51 – a drop of 24 per cent due to rate capping.

CORRECTION

Our article 'Natural' is misleading' in the last issue of the Food Magazine was itself misleading in one respect. The recent study on 'natural' claims on food labels was the result of excellent work not only of Trading Standards Officers but also of Environmental Health Officers and Public Analysts. All three groups sit on the LACOTS panel which prepared the report.

To E or not to E

Just when shoppers are getting used to using E numbers, some manufacturers and supermarkets are moving over to using chemical names instead. Sainsbury's, who have adopted this policy for their own brand products, claim that giving the names 'would contribute to people being better informed'.

John Wood of the Food and Drink Federation also believes that E numbers cause consumers 'unwarranted concern' and the trend towards using names instead of E numbers is 'so customers can be more fully informed about additives'.

But there have been complaints about the changes and some experts are concerned

Felicity Arbuthnot examines the aftermath of food contaminated by the Chernobyl disaster and finds disturbing evidence of contaminated EEC exports and food aid being sent to Third World countries.

After Chernobyl, an internationally devised plan, polished and streamlined over the 43 years of the nuclear age, should have swung smoothly into action. Protection of the most vulnerable: pregnant women, the young and the sick and stringent monitoring of food imports and exports were crucial. The creation of the EEC and its implied corporate expertise, should have been of inestimable benefit in facilitating this unprecedented challenge to environmental and public health authorities.

However, this is the real world. According to a report by The Institution of Environmental Health Officers, 'lack of preparedness ... lack of co-ordinated response ... sparse and at times contradictory' information, actually led to 'administrative chaos'.

The Shadow Minister of Agriculture, Dr David Clarke, has also written a report on the magnitude of the problems facing the authorities.⁽¹⁾

CONTAMINATION

Indications of the extent of policy inadequacy were reflected when items began to appear in the media, relating to EEC produce, allegedly contaminated with radioactivity, being rejected by several countries. A number of affected consignments were donated as Food Aid.

More policy confusion emerged, when a letter was received by environmental organisations throughout Europe, from a New Delhi based scientist, Dr Dharendra Sharma. He stated that 'The Supreme Court of India, in an historic decision ... has appointed a high level expert committee to determine whether the huge

quantity of butter (imported from the EEC), the bulk of which came from Ireland after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, was fit for human consumption.'

Sharma felt that dairy products banned by the EEC 'may be being donated to India and other Third World States ... the butter was donated, but the Indian government paid transport costs.

SAMPLES

The Committee appointed by the Court, comprising Professor M G K Menon, Dr P K Iyengar and G V K Rao, concluded that the levels for milk and dairy produce as fixed in India, are 'one of the lowest in the world' and that levels found in the consignment were 'below the permissible limits' and 'safe and harmless'.

However, public and media concern centred around the fact that the samples were taken from only three batches of the two hundred ton consignment. The Committee concluded it 'unlikely' that any of the sample packages were contaminated.

The Irish Dairy Board, Bord Baine, a major butter exporter, also denied the claim, but the Court decision was queried by former Indian Chief Justice, Mr Y V Chandrachud, who is seeking a review of the case. Sharma told the Food Magazine: 'All the members of the Committee were part of the nuclear industry. Our plea for independent scientists to be appointed was rejected by the Court.'

FURORE

The affair caused a furore, with editorial columns reading 'Bitter Butter', 'Contaminated' and 'No Butter Please'. The Indian Sunday Mail, printed in full a letter from Nobel Laureate, George Wald,



Chernobyl:

Professor Emeritus of Biology at Harvard University, pointing out that with radiation, '... any level may result in some damage, more dose, more damage. From that point of view, every dose is an overdose ... for persons suffering from hunger, it makes a gruesome choice to offer to relieve the hunger at the expense of eventual malignancies.'

Professor Wald's letter highlights questions about the European designated safe limits on foodstuffs, since they are several times higher than that found in the Indian consignment.

The affair pinpoints another problem. Bord Baine's spokesman stated that the Indian claims were wrong: 'butter does not retain radiocaesium.' There have been repeated statements by officials throughout Europe, that when milk is turned into a by-product, it loses its caesium content. This is a misconception, the radioactivity excluded by removal of water in the production process is lost; the rest, approximately fifteen per cent,

remains.

The Indian affair led to research by Mr Frank Cook MP, who found that eleven countries had complained to the EEC about contaminated produce. More reports raised that number to 19. Mr Cook has sponsored a House of Commons Motion seeking 'urgent investigation' into the problem. A supportive amendment was sponsored by Mr Winston Churchill MP.

Research for the London Food Commission has yielded some disturbing incidents.

Egypt is known to have rejected five consignments before instigating stringent import regulations. However, according to Mrs M Mizbah, at the Egyptian-British Chamber of Commerce in London, a consignment of flour from Italy, manufactured from Greek wheat, was accepted by a pasta factory on the Red Sea. Subsequently, it was found to be so highly contaminated that the factory was closed down. Over a year later, ways were still being sought to de-contaminate it.



Wagons containing contaminated skimmed milk powder are guarded by West German soldiers

is still disquiet over the matter. One senior official commented that the importance of EEC trade links has been pointed out to his government and that, 'There is some cause to wonder whether official reports of EEC countries are always accurate ... Disposal of unacceptable things has been going on in Africa for generations. There is a lot of EEC pressure over this. There is a Ghanaian saying: "We have our hand in their mouth".'

DANGEROUS

A journalist with the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) in Malaysia, Teh Chin Chai, in a recently published book⁽²⁾ claims that in July 1986 'thirty nine containers of Birch Tree powdered milk and 4,000 cartons of Dutch Lady milk arrived in the Philippines armed with safety certificates from Holland. Tests revealed that both contained dangerous levels of radiocaesium ... In September, the government found high levels of radioactive substances in six other brands of milk powder, four ... from Holland and one each from Britain and Ireland.' (Malaysia's limit on caesium content is 180 Bqs per kilo.)

The situation caused real fear, with CAP receiving letters and calls from parents seeking advice. The mother of one three year-old wrote: 'Please help me to find ... which brand (of milk) is safe, our stock is running low and I don't know which brand to choose'.

REJECTED

Singapore rejected no less than 240 consignments of contaminated food to the end of October '86.

The problem appears to be 'two tier'. Claims of high readings, if correct, mean that the produce should clearly never have reached the open market in the first place. It should have been disposed of under strictly monitored conditions, with appropriate safety procedures for handlers and for

decontaminating vessels, vehicles and holding areas.

Other consignments have been rejected on the basis that they are within EEC limits, but exceed the importing country's safety levels. The EEC official line would seem to be that these countries are unrealistic ('unreasonable' is a frequently used term) since it is now exceedingly difficult for the Community to achieve a nil limit.

Interestingly just prior to Chernobyl, the Irish Nuclear Energy Board brought out a report, the result of two years' careful monitoring of the Irish Sea's radioactive pollution from Sellafield (formerly Windscale.) The report showed that whiting had been found to have a caesium reading of a little over 100 Bqs per kilo.

BABIES

The writers commented that this was cause for some concern and that those eating 200 grams of white fish, or just twenty grams of shellfish daily should be regarded as a 'critical group'. Just weeks later, a safe limit for milk powders for babies – the most vulnerable group of all – was designated by the EEC at 370 Bqs per kilo. The limit in meat in the UK was fixed at 1000 Bqs per kilo.

Out of the controversy, one indisputable fact emerges: public confidence in government controls over radioactivity in foodstuffs has been severely shaken. At home and abroad there is justifiable cause for concern and a major independent investigation is needed. Even the most sceptical would acknowledge that allegations of contaminated produce from the EEC, circulating the globe, can do little good to the Community's commercial standing.

1. Chernobyl: An Enquiry Through Parliamentary Questions. Dr David Clarke MP, Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, April 1988

2. *On the Brink – Nuclear Proliferation and the Third World*. Ed: Professor Peter Worley and Kofi Buenor Hadjor. Pub: Third World Communications 1987.

An ill wind...

In Bavaria, 260 goods wagons, containing 5,000 tons (5 million kilos) of whey powder, were found to have readings as high as 8,000 Bqs per kilo (the EEC limit is 370 Bqs per kilo for children). After spending some time in a siding in a small station in Bavaria – Rosenheim – where workers refused to handle it, the owners, Meggle Dairies, were compensated several million deutschmarks and ordered to 'destroy' the produce.

The powder, however, found its way to a trading company, Lopex, based in Frankfurt. In spite of previous assertions by the Environment Minister, Walter Wallman, that the powder was harmless 'unless it entered the food chain', Lopex allegedly attempted to export it to Egypt as cattle food and to famine stricken Angola for human consumption.

Public concern was such, that the Bavarian Minister responsible, Alfred Dick, gave a press conference in Munich, during which he ate some of the powder to demonstrate its harmlessness. It was subsequently moved to the

security of two army camps for safe keeping. The saga continues.

In October 1987, 750 tons of EEC dairy produce, donated as Food Aid to Ghana, were found to have radiation levels as high as 5,459 Bqs per kilo. The Finance Minister, Mr K Botchwey, who had responsibility for the shipment, immediately contacted the media to warn the public. His action led to a serious dispute between himself and the EEC Ambassador to Accra, who insisted that the shipment had been stringently tested and found to be safe before it left Hamburg.

It was agreed that the International Atomic Energy Authority in Vienna would carry out further tests, with representatives of all interested parties present. However, the Ghanaians were excluded from the tests, according to the Ghanaian Trade Commissioner in London, Mr Haizer. The consignment was cleared as safe for consumption.

A second test in Oslo also cleared the consignment. But well-placed Ghanaian sources say there

Big Mac goes to court

McDonalds Hamburgers Limited has issued a Writ claiming damages for defamation and an injunction against Transnationals Information Centre London (TICL) over a report which looks at their conditions of employment and work practices in the UK.

McDonalds' workforce of over

19,000 makes it one of Britain's largest employers. TICL is concerned at the attempts by McDonalds to limit discussion on employment practice, wages and conditions.

TICL's budget is very small and it has launched an appeal for funds to cover legal costs involved in fighting McDonalds' action. Donations can be sent to TICL, McDonalds Fighting Fund, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.

Missing BST data

Over 100 people attended the press launch of the London Food

Commission's nationwide BST campaign in April. Supported by 18 consumer, environmental and animal welfare groups, the campaign calls for a halt to the licensing until more is known about BST (bovine somatotropin).

One serious gap in the drug companies' submissions to the Ministry of Agriculture seems to be data on the vitamin and mineral content of BST milk. Chris Davis, spokesman for Elanco, one of the companies which wants to sell BST, told the Food Magazine that this information has not yet been published in the scientific literature. When asked to confirm that this micro-nutrient information was part of Elanco's submission to the Ministry, his response was 'no comment'.

The economic effect of BST in the dairy industry is another great unknown. Fears of repercussions, including job losses, if BST is introduced continue to put a question mark against National Farmers' Union official support for BST. Half of NFU county branches which have debated the issue are completely opposed to BST use, while the remaining half are opposed to current sales of milk while the trials continue.

The UK government is waiting for the European Community to

give its official view on the commercial use of BST. Sources in Brussels indicate that the Veterinary Committee may report this summer, but any decision hangs in the balance, because of concern that BST would cause intensification of dairy farming and reduce demand for milk and milk products. Consumer resistance to the hormone is also being voiced in Denmark and Germany through campaigns opposed to the licensing of the hormone.

A two-day conference on biotechnology 'Action Alert: the Bio-revolution - Cornucopia or Pandora's Box?' will be held in London on 7-8 October 1988. Issues for discussion include BST, release of genetically engineered organisms into the environment and patenting of animals. Details are available from The Athene Trust, 3A Charles Street, Petersfield, Hampshire GU32 3EH.

A recent national opinion poll commissioned by Compassion in World Farming showed an overwhelming 83 per cent of the public are opposed to the use of BST. Only 4 per cent were in favour.

CAN WE MEET YOUR TRAINING NEEDS?

The London Food Commission offers in-house training tailored to your needs.

- ★ school meals
- ★ food and children
- ★ healthy eating & health education
- ★ food and public health
- ★ food policy

To discuss your requirements ring Sara E Hill on 01-253 9513 or write to Education and Training Co-ordinator, The London Food Commission, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.

THE LONDON FOOD COMMISSION FOOD ADULTERATION and how to beat it

THE FACTS ABOUT:
ADDITIVES
PESTICIDES
NITRATES
WATER IN FOOD
IRRADIATION
FOOD COLOURING
GOVERNMENT POLICY
OFFICIAL SECRECY
FOOD POISONING

The facts about

- additives ● pesticides ● nitrates ● food poisoning
- irradiation ● food colouring ● government policy
- official secrecy

The London Food Commission spells out the dangers of food adulteration and suggests solutions, backing all its arguments with rigorous and detailed evidence.

This new paperback calls for an anti-adulteration alliance - a positive campaign for improved food policy.

295 pages ISBN 0 04 440212 0

Price £4.95 (plus 75p p & p). Available from Publications Department, London Food Commission, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.

Brussels Notebook

Of course the EEC's dark secret had to leak out sooner or later. You simply can't go on producing milk lakes and beef or pork mountains indefinitely without wallowing in the other fruits of animal productivity. A pig's gotta do what a pig's gotta do ... and that's shit!

Yes folks, it's the European Community's very own manure mountain! Farmers in some parts of Europe now produce far more than they can get rid of. It contaminates the air, it fouls rivers and canals, and it's even ruining the land.

With all the adulterated rubbish that is fed to farm animals nowadays, we should hardly be surprised to find that the quality of manure has fallen. The traces of heavy metals in the soil have gone up as a result; and with so much nitrogen turning into ammonia, the natural acidity of the soil is being upset.

The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture – to take one example – has tried to solve the problem

by various means. It obliged farmers to keep accounts of all the manure produced on their farms with a view to imposing production quotas.

But the sight of farmers burning their accounts in front of the Ministry, and the slightest suggestion that the fertility of the Minister's own garden was in urgent need of special attention, was enough to ensure that this idea went down the pan.

The mucky problem has not yet reached crisis proportions in all parts of the Community; but then livestock production has not stabilised either. It's only a matter of time before the something or other hits the fan.

Meanwhile, deep in the bowels of the EEC Commission in Brussels something else slightly less odorous has begun to rumble. The policy-makers have turned their attention to food. Stirring in the pot are a number of ideas for a new programme in food science and technology.

To be known as FLAIR (Food-Linked Agro-Industrial Research), it will focus on subjects such as food hygiene, safety and toxicology, food quality, and the impact of processing on nutrition and food wholesomeness.

The main aim of FLAIR is to promote the efficiency and competitiveness of Europe's food industry, as well as improving food safety and quality in the eyes of the consumer. It will specifically encourage transnational cooperation between research institutes and industry, concentrating on food processing and distribution.

FLAIR is expected to start in January 1989 and run to mid-1993 with a budget of £16.5 million. The programme has a definite market approach to food issues, and when it is put forward for adoption later this year, it should provide a useful focus for debate on European food policy ... providing, of course that enough members of the European Parliament are interested.

WORLD NEWS

Bottle-feeding in Pakistan

Douglas Clement, an IBFAN (International Baby Food Action Network) consultant reports that he personally recorded 264 violations of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes whilst on a two-week fact-finding trip of Pakistan.

The multinational infant food companies, selling about US\$5 billion worldwide, export US\$10 million worth of baby milk to Pakistan annually. An estimated 4.5 million infant feeding bottles are sold each year in Pakistan. Bottle feeding is a major cause of infantile diarrhoea which causes nearly 200,000 deaths each year in Pakistan.

Clement calls for a five point breast feeding promotion and protection programme for Pakistan. This will include sustained public education through schools and mass media, improved hospital practices to discourage bottle feeding from

birth, trained health workers who know how to support breast feeding effectively, curtailed industry marketing to adhere to internationally recognised ethical standards and prolonged maternity leave to permit mothers to work and breastfeed. (*The Muslim*, Pakistan, February 24, 1988 quoted in *Consumer Current*, April 1988)

Pesticides by consent?

Pesticides banned, withdrawn or severely restricted in their country of origin should not be exported to another country, unless the importing country has been fully informed of the reasons for the regulatory action, and specifically consents to receive the product. This principle of prior informed consent (PIC) took a step nearer the statute book after a resolution to include it in the International Pesticide Code by 1989 was passed by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the

UN. This followed successful lobbying by IOCU (The International Organisation of Consumer Unions) and its partners in the Pesticides Action Network.

However there is a long way to go before PIC is included in all relevant national and international codes and conventions, including the EEC. (*IOCU Newsletter*, April 1988)

Zambian milk ban

The Zambian government has banned the sale of unpasteurised milk direct from farmers to consumers because it may contain high concentrations of the pesticide dieldrin. Dieldrin, linked by the UN to cancer and recently the cause of a major meat export problem for Australia, is widely used in Zambia to control termites and as a pesticide in maize fields. Water running off the maize fields is being contaminated with dieldrin, then drunk by cattle.

It is believed that since the ban many farmers have been selling their milk to pig farmers so the problem may, in future, simply shift from milk to pork. (Consuming Interest, March 1988)

Plain Speaking

Not only is the European Community famous for the amount of paper it produces, but also for the special descriptions it uses for everyday products. For instance, so far as the EC is concerned, sheep and goats are identical and are both classified as 'sheepmeat', nuts are 'shellfruit' and flowers 'non-edible vegetables'.

Now, however, the European Research Institute for Consumer Affairs (ERICA) and the Consumers in the European Community Group (CECG) have launched a campaign together with a British Euro MP to get rid of all the jargon and encourage the Commission to speak in a language understood by ordinary people.

(*The Times*, February 2, 1988)

OFF THE SHELF

As Tony de Angeli, editor of *The Grocer* and star of The Jimny Young Show, told the Food Magazine, there are two ways of looking at soft ice cream. One is to look at the product's ingredients, the other is to ask whether you like it. Tony doesn't.

But several millions of us do. Soft ice cream accounts for one sixth of street sales of iced confectionery, and will be worth around £40m to the ice cream trade this summer. Ninety two per cent of the stuff is bought from mobile vans and kiosks, to be eaten largely by children. But what exactly are they getting?

Ice Cream Powder

Soft ice cream is made by reconstituting a commercial powder with water. Ice cream powder is made from concentrated skimmed milk to which fat, emulsifiers and stabilisers are added. The concentrate is then homogenised, pasteurised and spray dried before dry blending with ground sugar. The resulting powder is about 40 per cent sugar, 30 per cent fat, 25 per cent non-fat milk solids and 2 per cent emulsifiers and stabilisers. The powder is mixed with around two parts of water before going into the dispensing machine.

Hardened vegetable fats – such

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS such as saccharin are not permitted to be added to ice creams by law. This is part of the historic anti-adulteration regulations designed to prevent debasement and fraud.

But can you then eat a soft ice cream in confidence that there is no saccharin in your snack? Uh-uh. A careful look at the ingredients of the cones that hold the soft ice cream, and the coloured syrup that decorates it, shows that both these items may well have saccharin added to them.

It's called ice cream. It's sold from ice cream vans, and it's put in cones. We will eat about twenty million pints of it this summer – but what is it? What are we getting when we buy...

SOFT ICE CREAM?

MARGARET THATCHER is a food technologist by training. When she worked for Lyons at Hammersmith in 1950, her speciality was 'fat extension'. She wrote a paper on 'the elasticity of ice cream', addressing the question of how much air can be pumped into ice cream through sophisticated use of additives before it collapses.

Source: Cannon G, *The Politics of Food*, Century, 1987.

as hydrogenated palm or coconut oils – are commonly used in non dairy ice cream. To say they are vegetable fats may lead us to think they are better for us than animal fats, but in fact these are highly saturated fats with similar cardiovascular effects to an animal fat such as lard.

The 'mouthfeel' of ice cream depends on the amount of air trapped in the frozen emulsion. Without any air, eating the product would be like licking a hard 'ice cream lolly', whereas too much air makes the ice cream collapse.

Emulsifiers such as fat-derived diglycerides (E471), permit large amounts of air and water to be retained in the mix, at the same time masking its lack of raw material. Emulsifiers have the ability to stop the water separating out from the fat by reducing droplet size, while improving the texture, body and apparent richness of the ice cream.

Stabilisers are added to hold the extra water and stop the formation of ice crystals, which would give a sandy texture to the ice cream. Stabilisers currently used include gelatine (an animal protein), seed gums (locust bean, guar), seaweed extracts (alginates, carrageenan) pectins and cellulose derivatives (eg sodium carboxymethyl cellulose – a cotton industry by-product).

In a recent study of soft ice cream composition¹, David Walker, Shropshire Trading Standards Officer, accused the manufacturers of a practice which 'simply amounts to debasement'. Some mixes have solids contents below 30 per cent and the reconstituted mix can – using these sophisticated additives and specially designed equipment – be aerated to more than double its size. Modern soft ice cream can contain at least twice as much air and proportionally less total solids than its counterpart of 30 years ago.

'Overrun'

Added air is known as 'overrun', and its presence in foods such as ice cream can be attributed to the diligence of food scientists. These include Margaret Thatcher, who worked on the problem as a food technologist with Lyons in the 1950s.

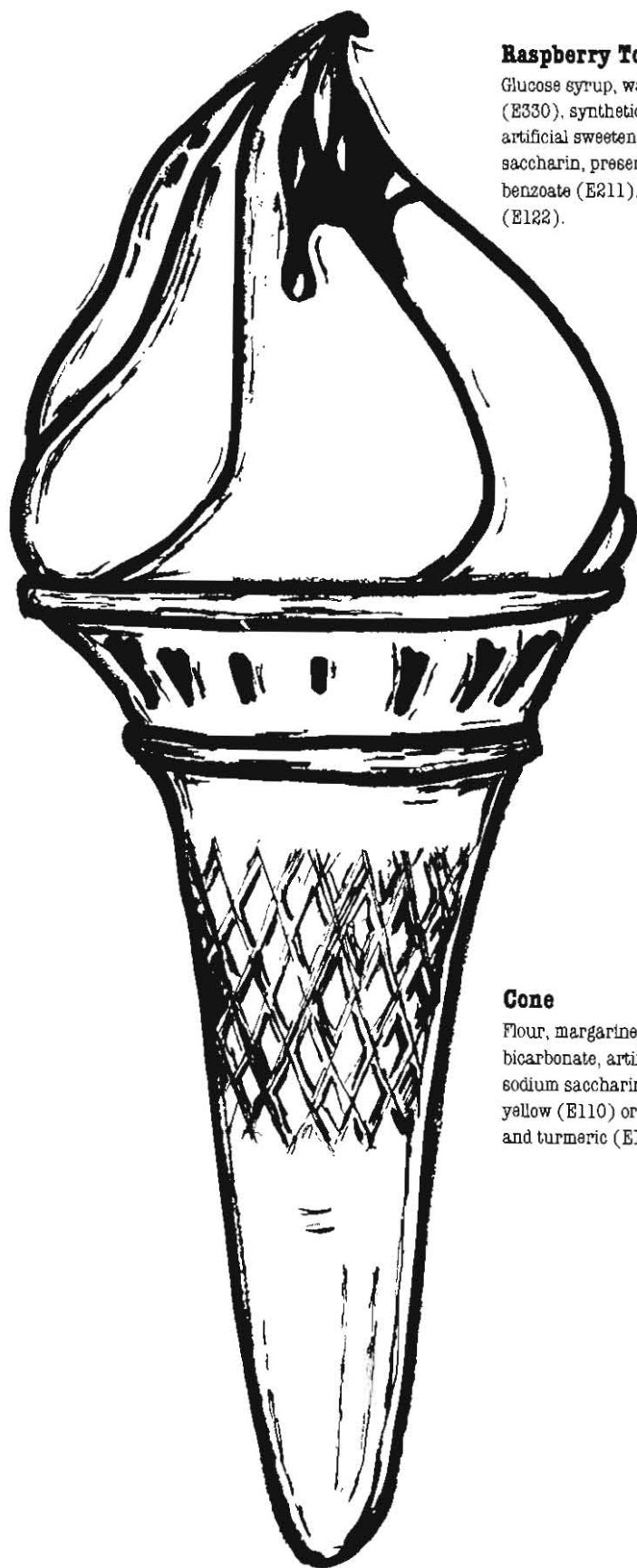
While aeration is an essential part of ice cream production, manufacturers have increased air content to cut costs, creating, according to David Walker, a 'snowy, fluffy and unpalatable' product. As one ice cream machine manufacturer put it in a sales brochure: 'The machine, the mix, the cones – our proven recipe for making big profits'.

The Ice Cream Federation has admitted that some companies may reduce standards to meet price considerations. Ice cream is bought by volume not by weight, so consumers have no way of knowing how much air they are purchasing. 'Intense economic pressure on manufacturers' from the dominant supermarket chains has also been a factor leading to the use of new technology to add extra air to ice cream.

Manufacturers are now using new technological developments to replace non-fat milk solids (NFMS) with whey protein, a by-product of cheese making. 'Whey

COMPETITION in the food industry is a relative concept. Amid rumours of Mafia murders and 'bumper car' vans among the smaller producers, the larger companies have been consolidating their position. One company alone – the brewing and food giant Allied Lyons – now owns the following major brands:

Lyons Maid
Bertorelli
Midland Counties
Mister Softee
Tonibell
Baskin Robbins (USA)



Raspberry Topping

Glucose syrup, water, citric acid (E330), synthetic flavouring, artificial sweetener sodium saccharin, preservative sodium benzoate (E211), colour carmoisine (E122).

Ice cream

50 per cent air, 33 per cent water, remaining ingredients: skimmed milk, hydrogenated vegetable fat, sugar, emulsifier fatty acid glycerides (E471), stabilisers sodium carboxymethyl cellulose (E466) locust bean gum (E410), tragacanth gum (E412), carrageenan (E407) sodium alginate (E401), synthetic flavouring vanillin, sodium citrate (E331).

Cone

Flour, margarine, sodium bicarbonate, artificial sweetener sodium saccharin, colour sunset yellow (E110) or annatto (E160b) and turmeric (E100).

Laboratory Service, it depends on heating the machine's interior to 65.5 – 76°C for up to 35 minutes, while the contents of the machine's reservoir are kept to 4°C. The pasteurising temperatures are supposed to be monitored and recorded in a log book.

Few prosecutions have been brought for failing to keep such records. Yet ice cream remains one of the most frequently sampled sources of microbiological contamination, and mobile vans are among the worst offenders. As many as one in five ice cream samples have been found to be contaminated, and in some summers it has risen to one in three of the samples collected from mobile vans.

Illegal

What passes for ice cream in Britain is not accepted abroad. Try to sell our soft ice cream in France and Germany and you could go to court. The same applies to the USA. The habit of substituting dairy fats with hydrogenated vegetable fats upsets European producers and consumers. They argue that if the product name specifies 'cream', it should be made of cream and no other fat.

In the USA ice cream made with vegetable fat has to be called 'Mellorine'. Ice cream in the USA must contain at least 20 per cent milk solids, whereas we allow milk solids to fall to as little as 7.5 per cent. The USA also limits the amount of added air. We also lack controls on the use of whey, emulsifiers, stabilisers and overrun, all of which allows standards to fall and the less scrupulous manufacturers to undercut the better products.

Researched by Eric Brunner

► For more details on the additives in ice cream see *Inside Story* on next page.

1. Walker D (1988), *Ice cream technology - its use and abuse*. Institute of Trading Standards Administration.

powder costs around £350 a tonne and NFMS costs £1200 a tonne. The economic advantages are evident' says David Walker, 'but the substitution can induce textural changes, lack of body and

smoothness, increase iciness and flavour deficiencies'.

Hazards

Modern state-of-the-art soft ice cream machines are self-

pasteurising. This technology means, according to the makers, that machines do not have to be cleaned out for intervals as long as six weeks. Although the technique is recognised by the Public Health

Reconstituted ice cream powder can pass itself off as ice cream only through the use of a cocktail of additives. Inside Story takes a closer look at ...

How to make ice cream

Traditionally ice cream was made of milk, cream, sugar and eggs. Now it is mostly air and water with saturated vegetable fat, sugar and milk powder – yet it still resembles ice cream, thanks to the food additive industry.

Over 240 million air cells, 240 million ice crystals and 45 million fat globules can be found in a single ounce of ice cream. These have to be mixed into a smooth 'cream' and kept stable for long periods, and it is the combination of emulsifiers and stabilisers that helps this to happen.

ADDITIVES

Emulsifiers mix and bind fat and water. Mono- and di-glycerides keep air in the mix and prevent shrinkage during storage. They also give body and apparent richness to compensate for the reduced use of solid ingredients. Stabilisers prevent the formation and growth of large ice crystals during production and storage. If ice cream is allowed to grow warmer, the minute ice crystals grow larger, producing a coarser, sandy texture. Ice creams typically contain combinations of three or more stabilisers.

Colours are added to ice cream to replace the eggs and cream of traditional recipes. Colours are also added to ice cream cones and to toppings such as 'raspberry' syrup. Without the colours the cones would be pale – and might appear uncooked – and the syrup would be colourless since it's devoid of raspberries.

FLAVOURING

Several thousand synthetic and synthesised 'nature-identical' flavouring agents are available to manufacturers, and they don't have to tell us which ones have been used in our ice cream, cones or syrup.

Sweeteners and sugar obviously provide sweetness. In traditional ice cream sugar also provides bulk and texture. Levels vary from 11 to

18 per cent added sugar. Manufacturers like to keep the sugar levels high to appeal to the younger market. Artificial sweeteners are not permitted in

ice cream, but they are permitted and used in both cones and toppings!

Preservatives are used in syrups to slow down the growth of

harmful micro-organisms during long storage.

Researched by Melanie Miller

EMULSIFIERS AND STABILISERS

E471 Mono and di-glycerides

Synthesised from glycerine and tallow or vegetable fatty acids these may not be suitable for vegetarians or pork- or beef-avoiders. There are gaps in safety information, but they are presumed safe.

E466 Sodium carboxymethyl cellulose

Made from a cotton by-product, it appears to pass through the gut unchanged, but may produce flatulence and intestinal discomfort.

E401 Sodium alginate

Produced from brown seaweeds, no adverse effects have been reported and they are assumed safe.

E407 Carrageenan

Also known as Irish Moss, this is made from red seaweed. It causes colon ulcers in animal tests and may be toxic to animal embryos. One type, Degraded Carrageenan, induced cancers in several animal studies, but this type has been withdrawn from use. There is concern that some non-degraded Carrageenan may turn into the degraded form during strenuous food processing.

E410 Locust Bean Gum

Made from the seeds of the Carob tree, little is known about toxicity. Some of the safety data has not been published and it is still not fully tested.

E412 Guar Gum

Made from the seeds of an Indian plant, this is a traditional food ingredient in some parts of the world. High doses given to animals depressed their growth and produced inflammation in their intestines, but there is little information about the effects of low doses.

COLOURS

E100 Curcumin

A 'natural' yellow colour extracted by solvents from the herb Turmeric. Curcumin causes mutations (gene damage) in bacteria.

Pigs fed curcumin showed unusual growth of their thyroid glands and at high doses there was evidence of thyroid damage. There are currently no restrictions on its use.

E160b Annatto

An orange 'natural' colour extracted from Bixa tree seed pods. An official report in 1987 recommended that one type of annatto (solvent-extracted) should be banned because there was almost no toxicity data available. It has not yet been banned. Low levels of annatto can provoke intolerant reactions like urticaria (nettle rash) in a minority of people.

E110 Sunset yellow

An orange-yellow colour, this is one of the group of coal tar dyes originally developed for the textile industry. In some animal studies Sunset Yellow damaged the kidneys and adrenal glands, and it may provoke intolerant reactions such as urticaria in a minority of people. It is not permitted in Portugal, Norway and Finland.

E122 Carmoisine

A red coal tar dye developed for the textile industry, it may cause intolerant reactions like urticaria. It is banned in USA, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Japan.

SWEETENERS

Saccharin (no E number)

Developed in the 1880s, saccharin has been found to cause bladder cancer in rats but not in human studies. Despite official recognition of the animal data, there is no restriction on its use in this country, except that saccharin is not permitted in ice cream nor in foods for babies and young children but may well be found in cones and syrups. It is banned in Canada, and banned from food and drinks in Greece, Portugal and France, where it is sold only in tablet form as a table-top sweetener.

PRESERVATIVES

E211 Sodium benzoate

This occurs naturally in many fruits, but for a few people sodium benzoate can provoke intolerant reactions such as urticaria, purpura, asthma, migraine and hyperactivity. Animal studies have shown that high levels can produce problems such as foetal damage.

Much of the information in this table comes from *Additives – a Guide For Everyone* by Erik Millstone and John Abraham (Penguin, 1988).

As far back as the eighteenth century unscrupulous food traders tricked their customers – adding alum to whiten bread, watering down milk, diluting sugar with sand and adding brick dust to cocoa.

Now more than two hundred years later 'adulteration', as it is called, is a forgotten issue – yet food is still being debased in new, hidden ways. And today's consumers don't even know it's happening.

Food manufacturers, keen to tickle our jaded taste-buds, are continually conjuring up new foodstuffs. Thousands of new products are launched every year. Most are a triumph of technology and the skills of food chemists, but are they what we want and need?

Cheap, low quality foodstuffs are increasingly disguised as high value, attractive food. Added water, cheap substitutes, colourings and flavourings all contribute to the deceit.

But even relatively unprocessed food does not escape the 'chemical fix'. Fresh fruit and vegetables too can be contaminated – by pesticide or nitrate residues.

And all the legislation and advances in hygiene over the last century

FOOD QUALITY SUPPLEMENT

A London Food Commission 8-page special report

By Melanie Miller & Julie Sheppard



GINA GLOVER & CHRISTIE HARRISON/OPAP

have not yet succeeded in making our food 'safe'. Food-poisoning is at an all-time high. And the threatened introduction of food irradiation, far from preventing the problem, could simply help the unscrupulous re-cycle unfit food.

In short, our food is still allowed to contain substances which undermine quality, and threaten health. The time has come for all these seemingly separate problems to be viewed as one. They are all part of what is now dubbed the 'new food adulteration'.

These many threats to food quality demand a new and organised response from the public. We know it is possible to produce foods which will give consumers choice, convenience and enjoyment, without threatening their pockets or their health. At the same time the working environment of the food and agricultural industries can be considerably improved.

This eight-page supplement coincides with the publication of the London Food Commission's **Food Adulteration – and how to beat it**, and the start of our national **FOOD QUALITY CAMPAIGN**. Inside you'll find out why it's needed and what you can do to get involved.

**PUTTING FOOD
QUALITY FIRST**

Whose



Next year the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) will be asking us to join its centenary celebrations – a hundred years which have seen many changes and some important advances. But there is also a darker side to its history which we are being asked to forget.

Food has always played an important role in Britain's past – at times it has been a major political battleground. In the 1800s and early 1900s there were major public campaigns about food quality and adulteration. But from the 1950s it was assumed these problems would simply wither away as general income levels rose and the food supply improved.

The assumption was wrong. Now in the 1980s food quality has again become a major issue. Not content to see food simply as fuel, consumers are increasingly recognising that what they eat is a key to good health. And the record shows that in this vital respect, we in Britain may not have very much to celebrate.

Since the Second World War our food has been revolutionised. New foods, new processes and new markets have been conjured up in

In Britain 43% of fruit and vegetables analysed have detectable pesticide residues.

a frenzy of commercial activity. Until recently little thought was given to what effect these changes might have on food quality, nor their effect on our health.

Slowly we in the affluent West have come to see that simply having sufficient to eat isn't enough – that quality counts too. Having too much of the wrong kind of food brings its own health problems.

Paradoxically attention has now

switched to the possible health benefits of non-Western peasant diets, supposedly packed with all the ingredients our own diet so lacks – fresh, unadulterated foods!

Yet in Britain, forty-three per cent of fruit and vegetables analysed have detectable pesticide residues. And out of a total of 426

The use of colourings can deceive consumers about the actual amount of fat and fibre they are consuming, and in the long term undermine their efforts to eat more healthily.

chemicals cleared for use on Britain's farms, 166 are known or suspected of causing reactions or of links with cancer, birth defects, or genetic mutations. This means pesticides represent a significant risk to the health of agricultural workers and consumers.

Food adulteration affects health in several ways.

Take, for example, the unnecessary use of colourings in staple foods. Caramel (E150) may be added to white bread to make it look brown – and suggest a high fibre content. Alternatively, red and brown colours can be used in meat products disguising the real amount of fat and giving the appearance of a high lean meat content. This use of colourings can deceive consumers about the actual amount of fat and fibre they are consuming, and in the long term undermine their efforts to eat more healthily.

Food quality affects everyone. But debased food affects some more adversely than others, especially those on low incomes.

standards?

Do you want to know a secret?

Pit your wits in our Secrets Quiz.

- 1 What is 'meat' - as seen on food labels?
- 2 What's the difference between a 'strawberry flavoured' and 'strawberry flavour' dessert?
- 3 Colour additives all fall within E100-E180. Which range of E numbers correspond to added flavourings?
- 4 How do you tell the amount of sugar in a fruit yoghurt?
- 5 What ingredients must be legally declared on alcoholic drinks?

(Answers on page 16)

Notwithstanding Edwina Currie's infamous advice to Northerners to improve their diets, at the end of the day lack of money means poor nutrition. Those on low incomes are more likely to rely on foods which have been torted and pumped up with additives, air and water.

The end result is a diet low in appropriate nutrients and fibre and high in added fats, sugars and salt.

European harmonisation could mean lower food standards for all unless public opinion can be mobilised in support of good quality, unadulterated food.

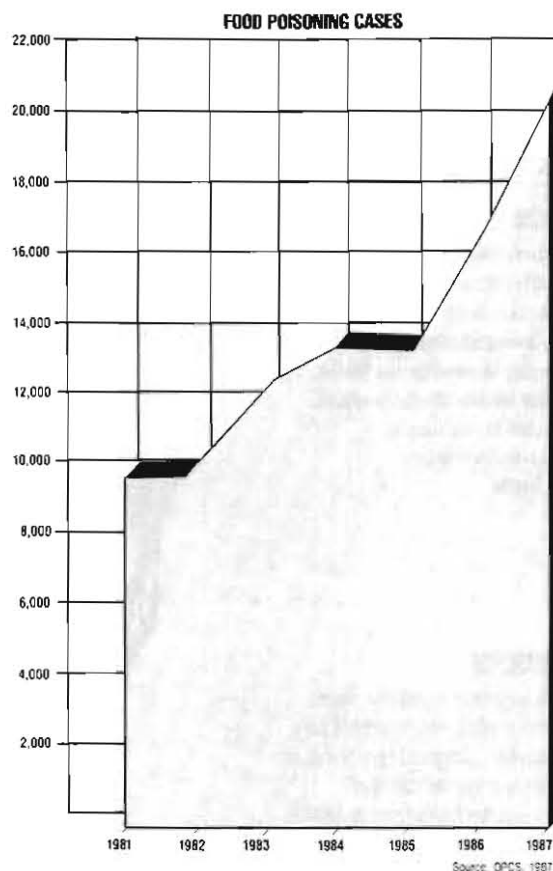
Compared with our European partners, Britain's standards are generally poor. Food colourings are just one area where Britain lags behind other countries. The UK and Eire permit 16 artificial colours - more than any other western country. This compares with only 11 allowed in France, and several in Norway. On top of

this, several countries prohibit colours in staple foods, while Britain condones their use.

Similarly with nitrate fertilisers. The UK has no limits on the levels of nitrate residues allowed in fresh vegetables. Yet Austria, Switzerland and West Germany have recommended limits for products such as beetroot, spinach and lettuce.

Countries with lower standards are an obvious threat to those with a more responsible approach to food adulteration. With the advent of the 1992 unified European market, there is a danger that the lowest common denominator will come to apply across the EEC - with British food leading the way in debasing food quality elsewhere.

Even Britain's few gains could be eroded. At present, food irradiation is not permitted in this country but is allowed in several European countries including Belgium, Holland, Italy, Norway and Spain. After 1992, if the EEC insists, Britain could lose its right to halt the entry of irradiated foodstuffs from Europe. As a result, another form of adulteration - one resulting in significant vitamin losses - would be added to an already depressingly long list.



FOOD POISONING

Technological advances have not succeeded in making our food 'safer'. In spite of much-vaunted improvements in hygiene, reports of bacterial food-poisoning have increased by 62 per cent over the last decade with a spectacular rise between 1986 and 1987. Last year over 20,000 cases were officially recorded.

According to the World Health Organisation microbiological hazards, like food-poisoning, cause more ill-health than the hazards of pesticide residues, food additives, natural poisons and toxic substances combined. Yet it receives little public attention.

Traditionally, the consumer has been blamed for food poisoning - with poor kitchen hygiene topping the government's hit list. But promoting good kitchen hygiene is only part of the answer. The environment as a whole is so contaminated with food-borne pathogens that nothing short of a general clean up will significantly reduce the incidence of food poisoning. And that means improving hygiene standards across the food chain - on the farm, in abattoirs, food processing factories, retail outlets and catering establishments.

European harmonisation could mean lower food standards for all unless public opinion can be mobilised in support of good quality, unadulterated food. British taxpayers spend huge

amounts of money each year supporting the food system. Surely we have a right to expect our government to protect the public interest and secure good quality food?

PRAWN COCKTAIL

Rich in nutrients, prawn cocktail is a popular way to start a meal. But the prawns may have been irradiated even though it's illegal in this country.

Frozen prawns may contain excessive water in the form of ice-glaze – from 15 per cent to a staggering 67 per cent.



LEMON

Not even the lemon garnish is unadulterated. Most lemons are dipped in a solution of wax and fungicide to improve appearance and longevity.



LETTUCE

British lettuce treated with large amounts of fertiliser have been found to contain 10gms nitrates per kilogram – two and a half times the limit currently allowed by the Swiss. And one poor lettuce officially tested showed pesticide residues at nineteen times government maximum levels.

BAKED POTATO

Potatoes are high in dietary fibre and a useful source of vitamin C. But like other vegetables potatoes are not free from contaminants. Despite washing, peeling and boiling about 10 per cent of pesticide residues still remain. For baked potatoes no research has been done!

CHICKEN

A rich source of nutrients, lean chicken is often recommended for a healthy diet. But poultry is the most commonly reported cause of salmonella food poisoning in Britain. Inadequate cooking, poor storage and careless handling are partly to blame – but contamination of raw poultry is also an important contributory factor.

Irradiation is being marketed as one possible solution to the salmonella problem, sterilising contaminated meat. But some bacterial toxins may remain.

Frozen chickens may be adulterated with added water – up to 74 per cent is legally allowed but a recent survey found actual water contents of up to 19 per cent.



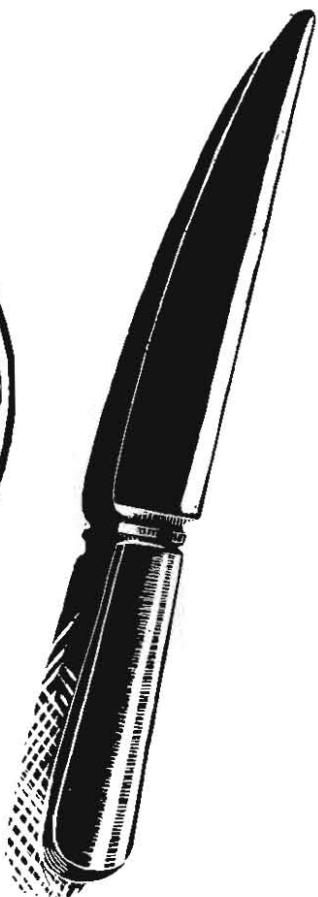
Prawn cocktail; chicken with baked potato and fresh vegetables; fruit yoghurt; and a small glass of wine – surely a palatable and healthy meal. Or is it?

In Britain today the way such food is produced and sold affects the quality of the food itself. Here we show the hidden problems in even the 'healthiest' of foods.

ISH VEGETABLES

are a valuable source of
ins, minerals and dietary

it according to the US National
arch Council the pesticides
for tomatoes carry the greatest
tial for causing cancer.
bbage and lettuce are the main
source of nitrate fertiliser
ues in the UK diet.
sidue levels of the pesticide
found in cabbage showed that it
nued to be used for several
s after being banned.



YOGHURT

Valuable for its calcium, yoghurt is often chosen by health-conscious eaters. But in this yoghurt yellow colourings, sweeteners and imitation flavours mimic a more expensive ingredient – real fruit.

Even 'natural' colouring is not necessarily better. One study of patients with urticaria (itchy weals) found that over twice as many reacted to the 'natural' colour annatto (E180b) than to the artificial colour tartrazine (E102).

The milk in the yoghurt may have come from cows treated with BST, a hormone which boosts milk production and which may affect the micro-nutrient composition of the milk.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

A wide range of additives and unexpected ingredients go into alcoholic drinks – and none of them are declared.

Take wine. In each growing season a vine may receive up to fourteen applications of herbicides, pesticides and fungicides. Sulphites which can provoke asthma attacks are added as a preservative to aid storage and transportation.

In beers and lagers colours and flavours may replace traditional ingredients and reduce processing time. Caramel colourings (E150) can be used to darken beer, while lager and cider can be coloured with tartrazine and other coal tar dyes. None of this has to be declared.



Daria Mumby

These problems are not inevitable. To find out what you can do turn to the back cover of this supplement for our Food Quality Charter. Join our campaign to

demand good quality, unadulterated food at affordable prices.

Counting the costs

A adulterated food imposes other hidden costs, which we, as taxpayers, have to shoulder. Take food poisoning for example. In 1985 one study estimated that salmonella alone cost the health service a total of \$4.5 million.

A more accurate tally would, of course, have to take account of other factors – loss of productivity, the costs of recalling and destroying contaminated stock and loss of public confidence in a

In 1985 one study estimated that salmonella alone cost the health service a total of \$4.5million.

particular product. The final bill for salmonella could run to tens of millions of pounds every year.

With some forms of adulteration we have to fork out several times over. Taxpayers pay three times for nitrate fertilisers, for example. Through the Common Agricultural Policy they support the over production in Europe of many basic food commodities, which depend on excessive fertiliser use. As a result, a family of four can be expected to spend an extra \$11.50 each week on food.

At the same time nitrate fertilisers produce pollution problems. In order to comply with

EEC limits on nitrate levels in drinking water, ratepayers are asked to pay again. Ratepayers, rather than fertiliser users, are footing the bill for the clean-up. And we pay a third time for nitrate residues, in costs to health.

The same is true for pesticides. The environmental costs of irresponsible pesticide use could prove to be enormous. According to some scientists the tenfold increase in pesticide usage from 1945 to 1974 in the USA has been matched by a doubling in pre-harvest losses of crops due to insects. Insects naturally kept in check by predators become pests when pesticides kill the predators. And pests soon develop resistance to many pesticides, especially if they are over-used. Again the environmental impact will not fall just on pesticide manufacturers and farms, but on the whole community.

Food adulteration is an extremely profitable business – for

It has been calculated that for every pound spent by manufacturers to advertise food, only one pence is spent to analyse it.

some. Unscrupulous manufacturers can boost their profits by selling distinctly inferior

Brand name or supplier	Weight of sample	% Meat content	Percentage Water	Percentage Other additives	Price per lb	Water content declaration required
Presto Mild Cure	4oz	78%	19%	3%	£2.36	Max 20%
Bowyers Honey Roast	4oz	94%	2%	4%	£2.64	Max 5%
Martensons Smoked Ham	4oz	83%	13%	4%	£2.64	Max 15%
Murrays Meat Market	4oz	74%	22%	4%	£2.20	Max 25%
Tesco Roast Ham	4oz	117%	0%	0%	£2.12	No decl. required
Safeway Smoked Ham	3½oz	100%	0%	0%	£3.40	No decl. required
British Home Stores Honey Roast	4oz	77%	17%	6%	£3.16	Max 20%

Source: London Borough of Greenwich, 1986

products at very superior prices – adding value as fast as they add additives, air and water – all quite legally.

Prawns are a good example of this kind of legalised fraud. Most prawns bought in this country are frozen. To protect them from dehydration during freezing – something which adversely affects their eating quality – they are sprayed with a thin coat of ice. But this 'ice-glazing', as it is called, can be done to excess, forming an extra thick outer coating of ice. The result is that the consumer ends up paying for water rather than prawn – up to \$10 for prawns worth only \$5 per lb.

There are no laws to control the amounts of ice-glaze on frozen prawns. But a maximum of 10 per cent ice-glaze achieves the desired technical effect. Any addition over and above that is a blatant attempt to cheat the customer. And figures as high as 67 per cent have been found in some brands.

The law, in theory, should protect us from adulteration of all kinds. But, in practice, the legal standards are too low, or are totally absent. And far too few resources are allocated to enforcing even existing legal standards. This creates a massive imbalance of power in the market

place between producers and consumers.

It has been calculated that for every pound spent by manufacturers to advertise food, only 1p is spent to analyse it. And the scale of adulteration completely overshadows the minuscule resources devoted to combating it. Food watchdogs such as Public Analysts are under-

The law, in theory, should protect us from adulteration of all kinds. But, in practice, the legal standards are too low or are totally absent.

valued. For example, only four out of every million food items purchased are analysed for pesticide residues.

Similarly, ratecapping has reduced the time spent by Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers in monitoring and enforcing food legislation. Food adulteration can flourish because too few people, with too few resources, have been actively monitoring it.

Quiz answers:

- 1 The legal definition of 'meat' includes diaphragm, head meat (muscle meat and associated fatty tissue only), heart, kidney, liver, pancreas, tail meat, thymus and tongue.
- 2 The 'strawberry flavour' variety contains no strawberries whereas 'flavoured' means it contains some real fruit.
- 3 A trick question. Flavourings are the largest group of additives but have not been allocated E numbers and are not even identified by chemical name.
- 4 You can't tell the amount since manufacturers are not required to tell you. You can assess the amount relative to other ingredients because they are listed in rank order of weight. So if sugar appears top of the list you will know that there's more sugar than any other ingredient, including the fruit. But even this won't tell you the actual amount.
- 5 Another trick question. There's no legal requirement to list the ingredients of an alcoholic drink. We challenge manufacturers to give us the information.

Colour	UK	Austria	Belgium	Denmark	Ireland	France	Greece	Italy	Netherlands	Norway	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	West Germany	USA	Japan	Canada	Finland
E102 tartrazine		•								•								•
E104 quinoline yellow										•					•	•	•	•
107 yellow 2G		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
E110 sunset yellow										•								•
E122 carmoisine		•								•		•			•	•	•	•
E123 amaranth		•								•					•			•
E124 ponceau 4R										•					•		•	
E127 erythrosine										•								
128 red 2G		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
E131 patent blue V										•					•	•	•	
E132 indigo carmine										•								
133 brilliant blue		•	•			•	•	•		•		•	•	•				
E142 green S										•		•			•	•	•	•
E151 black PN										•		•			•	•	•	•
154 brown FK		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
155 brown HT		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
129 allura red	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
No. additional artificial colours:	0	0	0	0	0	0			0	0		1		0	1	4	2	
Total no. artificial colours	16	8	11	12	16	11			13	0		10		11	7	11	9	

• Indicates colour prohibited in food.

Source: M. Miller, London Food Commission 1986.

Secrecy isn't something normally associated with food. But unfortunately, food is a very secretive business. Finding out about food – what's in it, how it's made and whether it's safe – can be an uphill struggle. Many key decisions about what we eat are shrouded in secrecy, both commercial and official.

And even the information which is freely available, is often incomplete and misleading.

Access to information is obviously crucial, especially when matters of safety are involved. But in the UK consumers only get to hear about new developments after government committees such as the Food Advisory Committee (FAC) and the Committee on Toxicity (COT) have made their recommendations – too late for consumer groups and other independent bodies to influence the final decision.

In 1982, for example, the COT report on sweeteners gave a new product, *Acesulfame K*, full clearance. It referred to 34 studies to support its decision – not one of them published, and all presented by the company wishing to market the product. MAFF's reason for not publishing the data? Private property. It belongs to the manufacturer, they said.

Governments often endorse secrecy under the guise of protecting commercial confidentiality. In this particular example, the unpublished material was obtained by a campaign group in the USA, the Center for Science in the Public

press release stated that organochloride residues in food were falling ... but it failed to point out that other residue levels were actually increasing! Ministry officials told a Select Committee that American data on pesticide toxicity was unobtainable. They

Ministry officials told a Select Committee that American data on pesticide toxicity was unobtainable. They were rapped by the Committee which had managed to obtain that data two weeks previously.

Interest. It used the US Freedom of Information Act to force disclosure. Some of the unpublished studies suggested the new product was associated with an increased cancer risk in some test rats, and raised cholesterol levels in diabetic animals!

As a result of public outcry, MAFF has agreed to place selected data in the British Library in future.

But selective disclosure can equally mislead. In 1986, the Ministry of Agriculture published its long-awaited survey into pesticide residues and contaminants. The accompanying

were rapped by the Committee which had managed to obtain the data two weeks previously.

The government's proposals for nutrition labelling will not give consumers the information they need. The list of foods exempt from declaring ingredients and additives is a long one – including unwrapped foods (such as bread, cakes and sweets), alcoholic drinks, and even standardised fast foods. Pesticide and fertiliser residues are never declared, neither are contaminants from packaging. There are no plans to label milk produced using BST injections.

The use of additives that do not have to be declared has risen dramatically. The market value for enzymes, for example, grew from around £200 million worldwide in 1984 to an estimated £600 million in 1987. Some new meat 'steaklets' and 'cutlets' should more accurately be described as 'bits of meat glued together in a steak shape'. But for the consumer these camouflaged products are difficult to detect.

Because most decisions about food are taken behind closed doors, adequate scrutiny by those at the receiving end is prevented. Food manufacturers argue that secrecy over matters like ingredients, processes and safety data is essential. While secrecy over marketing plans is justified, most other data could be made public. And given the widespread public concern over safety, excessive secrecy may in the end backfire on food manufacturers. It undermines public confidence in government controls and in food products.

Because today's food is increasingly complex and difficult to understand the public need to know is even more pressing. Secrecy, whether official or commercial, is bad news for workers and consumers.

ADDED WATER



FOOD QUALITY CHARTER

Britain needs a new Food Policy. All people have the right to good quality, unadulterated, enjoyable food at affordable prices. Food should be produced in a manner which consumers and workers can trust and be proud of. It is time there was once more a Ministry of Food.

1. Public Health Protection

Legal controls should be set to the highest standard, with priority being given to protecting the health of consumers and workers.

2. Access to Information

Government and industry should provide full and open access to all the relevant information about food, especially safety and technical data. Foods should bear full ingredient and nutritional labelling.

3. Democratic Decision-Making

Decision-making should be based on widespread public consultation. Evidence presented to government committees should be given in public, not behind closed doors. The Ministry of Agriculture should be turned into a Ministry of Food.

4. Enforcement

Food laws should be strengthened and rigorously enforced. More resources and powers should be given to food law enforcement officers.

5. Resources

An independent fund for research into and monitoring of food safety and quality should be set up with funds provided by a levy on the food and chemical industries.

6. Need

The public has a right to good quality, convenient food. The addition of unnecessary substances to food and the use of unnecessary processes should be minimised.

7. Hygiene

Food should be produced and treated in the most hygienic manner. Legislation should be strengthened and strictly enforced. There should be mandatory hygiene training for all food handlers. Additives and processing techniques should not be used to conceal inadequate hygiene.

8. Environment

Food policies should help conserve natural resources and protect the environment for future generations.

9. EEC

The EEC should harmonise its food laws according to the highest standards, not to the lowest common denominator.

10. One World

No food or food technology which is banned in the UK should be exported to other countries. The UK should take a lead in setting high food standards. Surplus or substandard foods should not be dumped on world markets.

The Food Quality Campaign needs your support

What You Can Do

- ▶ Send a letter of support (and a donation if possible) to the Food Quality Campaign, c/o London Food Commission, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.
- ▶ Write to your MP, MEP, and local council and ask them to support the Campaign.
- ▶ Ask any organisation you belong to (eg Women's Institute, professional group, trades union, parent-staff association, environmental

group) to support the Campaign.

- ▶ Write to your local supermarket and food manufacturers to ask them what their company is doing to meet the aims of the Food Quality Campaign.
- ▶ Send a copy of any replies you get from organisations, MPs or manufacturers to the Campaign to keep it informed.

COLOURING



David Mumby

Big could be beautiful

Love them or loathe them, supermarkets are here to stay. They're in it for the money, but what about us, their customers – are we really being served? Julie Sheppard investigates for The Food Magazine.

One-stop shopping is now all the rage – but as the number of trips to the local supermarket drops, customer discontent seems to increase. Obviously for some people the 'supermarketing experience' is not all it's cracked up to be – so what's going wrong?

Last year *Good Housekeeping* magazine decided to find out, by polling its readers about supermarket shopping. More than 10,000 replied – 2,000 of them even enclosing an additional covering letter detailing their likes and dislikes. The results of the survey revealed many dissatisfied and angry customers. Lack of toilets, lack of automatic packing and carry out services and lack of cash points, topped their list of pet hates. Other complaints included trolleys with wheels of their own, long queues at check-outs and hassles when paying by cheque.

According to *Good Housekeeping* its survey indicates that supermarket shopping still leaves a lot to be desired. American and Europeans expect, and have obtained, the sort of facilities and services the British consumer is only just beginning to demand. Perhaps that's because price, rather than service, has always been a more important factor influencing where the British shop, compared with their counterparts abroad. But this may now be changing.

A Harris Survey of 100,000 supermarket shoppers found the majority no longer considered price the most important factor in grocery shopping.

According to Brian Offen, a director at Harris, there could be two explanations for this increasing insensitivity to price. Those not dependent on state benefits are spending proportionately less of their household budget on food as their living standards rise – so price becomes less important. Moreover, he says, 'the continuing rise of women at work means many do not have the time for shopping around for the lowest prices, and hence value convenience more'.

So, if the customer is demanding more than just low prices, how are the supermarkets responding?

A recent Survey in *Woman's Realm* provides a few clues. The magazine



Hi-tech shopping came to London Docklands, when superstore operator ASDA together with the London Docklands Development Corporation and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, launched a pilot teleshopping scheme earlier this year, with plans to extend it to 1,000 customers by the autumn.



Above some under-fives celebrate the first anniversary of Clapham's Gateway superstore in March earlier this year.

surveyed nine major multiples – ASDA, Co-op, Gateway, Morrisons, Presto, Safeway, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose – to check out store facilities and customer services. It looked at everything from carrier bag charges to cash machines; from help with packing bags to baby changing facilities; from toilets to telephone ordering.

The results showed a wide variation between stores with the best, Safeway (significantly a formerly US-owned retailer), offering the most comprehensive services, including automatic help at check-outs, carry out to car, toilets in most stores and cash points.

Most stores claimed to be catering for shoppers with disabilities, although few have ventured into teleshopping. They have also heeded consumer complaints about paying for carrier bags. But many stores have been very slow to introduce baby-minding facilities and baby trolleys.

Generally speaking the bigger the store, the better – which is good news for those who shop at the new, large, out-of-town super-stores, but bad news if you haven't got a car. At this rate those living on low incomes in the inner city will only have access to second-class stores giving a second-rate service.

As the only superstore in London to offer professionally run creche facilities to its customers, Gateway in Clapham can rightly claim to be winning hands down in enticing parents into their store. Superstore manager, Ken Glennon commented, 'Since we opened we've had over 18,000 children use the creche and people are constantly telling us how much they appreciate it'.

Although Clapham is the company's flagship store, some kind of supervised play area for children is also available at its 80 other superstores elsewhere in the country. And for the convenience of parents with very young babies, trolleys with specially designed baby baskets and in-store changing facilities are usually provided.

A spokeswoman for Gateway explained: 'Today's customers are looking for more than just cheap prices – they're looking for services. If you've got a choice of shopping somewhere with facilities for kids, then that's the store you'll go to.'

Don't bank on food banks

Recent moves in Whitehall indicate that the UK government may be going the way of the US in supporting the development of a nationwide system of food banks to feed the unemployed and poor. In this article, ANNIE STREET looks at the effects that the Reagan Administration's welfare policies have had – and what may lie in store for those living on state benefits in Britain.



The United States has never been renowned among industrialised countries for the generosity of its government benefits. Nevertheless since President Johnson initiated the War on Poverty in the 1960's, a complex web of federal, state and local government programmes have provided welfare assistance to low income Americans. Although these benefits are far from adequate in achieving a satisfactory level of nutrition they have played a key role in ensuring that millions of Americans are not completely destitute.

However, under Reagan there has been a vicious axing of these programmes. From 1982 to 1985 President Reagan made social welfare programmes the main focus of his budget cuts, slashing \$57 billion off low income programmes – almost half of all government spending cuts during that time – although social welfare programmes only constituted one tenth of the government budget. The Food Stamp Programme and the School Meals Programme, which provided free or highly subsidised meals to children from low income families (often their only 'square meal' of the day), were most severely cut. Two other programmes, the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) programme and meals for the elderly escaped only after sustained congressional lobbying by activists and members of the health professions.

The result has been widespread suffering and increases in hunger. A recent study sponsored by the Harvard School of Public Health concluded that hunger affects up to 20 million Americans every year. This is an astonishing figure, which has grown sharply during the Reagan years.

SUPERMARKETS

In place of government programmes, Reagan wants private enterprise to play a greater role in feeding the hungry. As a result of the hunger 'crisis' in the US, food banks have mushroomed during the Reagan years. Now there are over 70 major food banks each serving between 200 and 500 voluntary agencies and charities nationwide. These food banks are supplied by supermarkets off-loading their unsaleable products which would otherwise be thrown away. This activity

is a convenient way for supermarkets to claim a tax deduction on otherwise unsaleable food which is past its sell-by date; as well as giving them a good public relations image. Over 125 major food companies in the US now regularly donate unsaleable food.

The results of these policies is an increase in institutional feeding, and a growing inability of the poor to choose what they eat. With decreases in the Food Stamps Programme, people are increasingly dependent on eating whatever is provided for them in food parcel handouts, or on the menu of the numerous soup kitchens and community feeding centres which have sprouted throughout the US.

BENEFIT CUTS

The increasing privatisation of welfare in the US, exemplified by the growth in food banks, soup kitchens and charity-run institutional feeding programmes, has placed increasing strain on voluntary organisations, forced to take over where government programmes have been cut. However, these organisations are unable to fully replace the government's role, because of their limited budgets and coverage. For example recent cuts in the Food Stamp Programme have made over two million people ineligible, while decreasing the value of benefits for those recipients who do still qualify.

The increasing reliance of voluntary organisations on private funding and corporate charity places them in a vulnerable position. It makes funding difficult for those organisations which publicly analyse the reasons for hunger or attempt to organise claimants to push for increased state support. And from the point of view of the families themselves, this 'charity' is also arbitrarily dependent on what is available in their area, or on the eligibility criteria which an organisation imposes.

Should Mrs Thatcher follow President Reagan down the path of increased privatisation of welfare benefits, the outlook for low income people is indeed grim.

□ Annie Street worked on hunger and poverty issues in 1986 for the New York-based Consumers' Union.

In April the Minister of Agriculture announced that 127 organisations had been approved to distribute surplus EEC food in the Free Food Scheme. But several national voluntary bodies refused to participate. Tim Lang asks whether giving surpluses to the poor is a good idea.

This winter, most major UK voluntary organisations refused to get involved in the EEC Free Food Scheme, designed to lower beef and butter mountains by off-loading it on the poor and 'needy'.

Supporters of such schemes say that they get food no one wants, to people who want it. When people are hungry they want food not moral arguments. Critics say such schemes are fine as crisis solutions but not if – as has happened in the US and Canada – they create an institutionalised second tier retailing system. Paradoxically, too, the food involved is often the sort the government asks consumers to cut back on – red meats and fats.

Cold spell

The EEC Scheme began in February 1987 during a bitterly cold spell of weather. The European Commission hit the headlines by announcing the dispersal of surplus beef and butter to Europe's needy. The scheme was a failure. Far from being eroded, according to official figures, the butter and beef mountains actually grew! But behind this topsy-turvy tale lies an important policy battle. The government wants the voluntary sector to deal with surplus food, and the voluntary sector is reluctant. Why?

Last year the UK government persuaded the big charities such as Age Concern and the Salvation Army to distribute the food. Age Concern later sent the government a stiff note and a bill for nearly £200,000 for the extra work the food hand-out cost them. One charity had its warehouse floor collapse under the weight.

When the first EEC Scheme was in operation, local researchers and journalists had a field day. In Leeds, for example, there were severe problems of continuity of supply and a shortage of volunteers to distribute the hand-outs. Recipients were reported as saying that they should receive the food 'as of right'. A quarter of recipients surveyed thought the motivation for the scheme was the imminent General Election.

In Humberside, on one council estate

unemployed volunteers were doing all their work from a freezing church hall undergoing repairs. The vicar described things as chaotic. There was considerable confusion about how much food people were entitled to. Feelings ranged from appreciative, 'better than giving it to the Russians', through resentful, to angry.

The Third World within the First World

Food charity, however admirable in a crisis, is no permanent solution to food poverty as decades of experience with Food Aid schemes in the Third World demonstrate. There are numerous practical problems about distributing surpluses in a non-market way. And there is also the issue of health. Experience in both the First and Third World shows that surplus foods are often nutritionally inappropriate. The EEC Free Food Scheme is at odds with the government's own advice about the need to cut down on saturated fats. Beef and butter, even if culturally valued, are hardly the acme of

also agreed to meet some of the voluntary organisations' distribution costs. More importantly the voluntary sector is now advocating the advantages of a voucher scheme. Gradually the voluntary sector is being edged close to the US Food Stamps scheme.

At first sight food voucher or stamp schemes get over the moral and practical problems of hand-outs like the EEC's. But experience in the USA shows this not to be the case. The US group Public Voice, a food and health advocacy group, reports that in the state of Georgia food stamp use declined between 1980 and 1986 despite growing poverty.

The UK has all the necessary preconditions for a renaissance of 'Victorian' food philanthropy. Schemes such as food banks and Second Harvest – where surplus food from restaurants goes still warm to the poor – offer an apparent solution to the vicious circle of food surpluses, growing poverty, reductions in social security and growing public concern. Only one condition is not yet in place: tax deductions for the donor.

Experience from the US and Canada shows that government pressure on the voluntary sector is not enough. The

government has got to 'encourage' retailers, manufacturers and restaurateurs with cash or the offer of lowered tax liabilities.

Retailers

So far UK retailers are unhappy about institutionalising a secondary food retailing system. But in practice some are already involved. Marks & Spencer, for instance, have a company policy of not wasting food approaching its 'sell by' date, if possible. Many stores have regular liaisons with shelters, social services homes and worthy outlets. In the London Borough of Lambeth a senior manager was recently investigated for reselling food donated by Marks & Spencer for use in a social services residential home.

Are such schemes really the best way to move food mountains? They certainly aren't the best way to allow people on low incomes to feed themselves.

A bitter harvest?

nutritional adequacy. And they are not adequate bases on which to build what has now, according to MAFF, become a permanent scheme.

A letter from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations last October spelled it out to the Ministry of Agriculture. 'There is among us a strong majority belief that the voluntary sector should not be involved in this kind of 'free food' scheme.' Voluntary sector leaders worry that the EEC Free Food Scheme has moved from being an honourable response to the weather, to being a permanent scheme – and one more useful as public relations than as a solution to food poverty. Institutionalising a crisis solution can institutionalise a crisis.

Costs

By playing upon the voluntary sector's desire to tackle food poverty the government can box it into a corner. The EEC and the Intervention Board have

With more than 100,000 families now officially homeless, a new report asks what impact 'bed and breakfast' accommodation has on diets and health. Issy Cole-Hamilton reports.

I feel I'm going to collapse. If I don't go to my sister's I won't get a stable meal all week.'

The association between poverty, hunger and disease is not just a feature of distant famine in Ethiopia, but an everyday reality among the cheap hotels of our inner cities. An estimated quarter of a million people were registered as homeless by local authorities in 1986 – twice the number registered in 1979 – yet little has been published on how hard it is to eat healthily when you are homeless.

In a new study* of nearly 60 young mothers living in bed and breakfast

Sheila and her 14-month old daughter live in a room approximately 7 feet by 15 feet. The hotel has no kitchen and food is not allowed in the rooms. Sheila does not even have a kettle to make a hot drink. Sheila is frequently hungry, but worries more about her daughter who is often ill and does not seem to be growing.

hotels, almost a third said that because of lack of money they went without food themselves. One in ten said they could not afford enough food for their children. One woman said she sometimes went without food for a couple of days.

A lack of storage facilities – or hotel rules forbidding mothers from keeping food in their rooms – meant that everything had to be bought in small quantities. And a lack of cooking facilities meant that mothers had to buy food ready-cooked from cafes and take-away restaurants. All this increased their food expenditure.

Nearly half the women did not have a fridge, either in their room or elsewhere. Ten did not even have a cupboard in the bedroom where food could be kept. While some tried to keep food cool on the windowsill, six said they couldn't keep food at all. Two women with babies of three and four months, who wanted to

start weaning, felt that they were unable to start giving them solid food, because there was nowhere to keep it.

Under the Association of London Authorities' Code of Practice, there should be one full set of kitchen equipment available for every five people, not more than one floor away. One full set includes an oven, four burners, a grill, a sink, a fridge and storage facilities. In this survey only four women had facilities which satisfied the ALA code.

Only five of the 57 families in this survey had exclusive use of a kitchen. Twenty two had no kitchen they could use at all. The rest shared a kitchen with at least three other families and many shared with larger numbers. Two thirds of the kitchens were two or more floors away, and many of the women were concerned about having to carry hot food, pots and pans up and down the stairs.

Those women without access to a kitchen did not necessarily have facilities in their rooms. One out of every ten women had no means of preparing even a hot drink; there was no kitchen and not even a kettle in their room. One woman had neither kitchen nor kettle, and lived in a hotel which did not permit food in the rooms. She admitted she kept cereal for her baby and mixed the powdered milk with hot water from the tap.

'It's not surprising that there is a high incidence of these illnesses when you think of the conditions people live in,' Marge says. 'It's very difficult to keep things clean and sterile when you are washing and preparing food in the same sink that you have just washed a baby's nappy in.'

Mothers were especially concerned about their children. Of the 46 women with children, 33 said that they did not feel they could give their children the food they wanted to.

Midwives tried to encourage new mothers to breast-feed rather than bottle feed. 'Bottle feeding has a high risk of gastroenteritis', explained a Manchester Midwife. 'A mother can sterilise the bottle and then put it down for a minute in the lounge. Another child may touch the bottle teat, infect it, and the mother gives it to the baby without noticing. That would not happen if she were living in a flat on her own.'

Janice was seven-and-a-half months pregnant at the time of the interview. She attended college and had to leave in the morning before the hotel breakfast was served. Lunch was usually her first food of the day and she could only afford to buy a snack such as chips or a sandwich.

The hotel had no cooking facilities of any kind for the residents to use and nowhere for storing food. She did not even have a kettle in her room. Her evening meal during the week normally consisted of chips and milk shake with an occasional pizza. Sometimes she just had biscuits and bread in the evenings.

This woman was desperately worried about her unborn baby because her doctor had told her that the baby's health was affected by her bad diet. She said 'I don't mind if I die, but if my baby dies what will I do?'

The report, drawn up jointly by the London Food Commission, SHAC (The London Housing Aid Centre), Maternity Alliance and Shelter, urges the relevant authorities to take action. Specifically it calls on local authorities, district health authorities and central government to

- ▶ Ensure that food and health policies specifically address the needs of homeless families living in bed and breakfast hotels, recognising them as a group of people at nutritional risk.
- ▶ Give all people being housed in bed and breakfast hotels written information about what standards they should expect and how to complain if the accommodation is below standard.
- ▶ Draw up guidelines for minimum standards within bed and breakfast hotels to include:
 - safe, well equipped kitchens with



STUART McPHERSON/SHUTTER

Homeless and Hungry

adequate food storage

- ☐ safety standards for cooking equipment in hotel bedrooms
- ☐ quality standards for breakfasts provided by hotels

► Monitor local food shops, cafes and take-away restaurants and encourage

them to sell healthy food

► Ensure that welfare benefits include the extra cost of a healthy diet, where cooking facilities are non-existent or limited; and the extra cost of special equipment such as slow cookers and well insulated kettles which can be safely

used and easily stored.

** Prescription for Poor Health - the Crisis for Homeless Families* published jointly by London Food Commission, SHAC, Maternity Alliance and Shelter, June 1988. Available from London Food Commission, price £5.95 plus 90p postage and packing.

Banking on the future

Susan George has done more than most to explain world hunger. An American living in Paris since she was 21, it was her book *How the other half dies; the real reasons for world hunger* in 1976 that first put her in the public eye. Subsequently she has described how a relatively few corporations were coming to control vast parts of the food system and the way food, hunger and power were increasingly intertwined.

Her latest book *A Fate Worse than Debt*, points to the impoverishment of poor, and increasingly, middle class people in the indebted countries, where the \$1 trillion debt crisis kills. 'Clearly,' she says, 'debt is the big new contributing factor to hunger'.

Since 1982 Latin America alone has contributed about \$140 billion, to the rich countries, while its people are getting hungrier. Children eat 'cakes' of wet newspapers, mothers can't supply breakfast and then only a little rice water at lunch. Ordinary people can't make ends meet. In Bolivia, for example, people have to work four to twenty times longer to buy the same amount of foodstuffs now as they did a decade ago.

Susan George writes lucidly of the human impact of the debt crisis and analyses why it's happening. The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) 'adjustment' policies are imposed on the debtor nations, forcing them to export to repay the interest. As more and more countries have been pushed in to exporting, they compete with our products and each other. Prices tumble, countries end up exporting more for less and jobs are lost in the industrialised countries as their markets shrink.

IMAGINATION

Although some talk of 'adjustment with a human face' for Susan George 'It can't have any more human face than slavery'. For her debt should be taken off the financial pages and put onto the political agenda.

'I would like to see the banks devote the same kind of imagination to Third World loans that they seem to devote to their business at home ... Why couldn't they start doing some social experiments and convert a part of their debt into local currencies?' The money could be put into

'City institutions cause hunger,' claims Susan George, in London this spring to launch her new book on the Third World debt crisis. She talked to Geoff Tansey about banking with a human face.



a national development fund for use by representative peasant or village groups.

At present, she says 'our tax money is going to the banks. Why? Because our governments continue to lend to the Third World. But since three quarters of their debt is owed to banks, it ends up back with the banks as interest'.

She does not favour simple debt

cancellation since this would reward some of the world's worst dictators and penalise some governments who are doing their best to repay. Rather money should be redirected to poor people, export drives curbed and growth used to feed people at home. Debt could be cancelled in return for ecological investments like saving tropical forests. There is, she argues, a way of turning the crisis into an opportunity for liberation. This requires a '3-D solution' – debt, democracy and development.

HUNGER

But what can an individual do? 'A whole lot as members of groups, but I tend not to advocate purely individual action, say eating one less hamburger, unless the money saved is contributed to Oxfam or whatever'. In the US she gave the example of community groups pressing the banks to do community reinvestment projects so a certain percentage of the banks' profits were reinvested in its community and in the Third World.

Since the mid-70s she believes the food debate has broadened immeasurably. The level of information and awareness is much greater but the failures have been in practical politics. There have never been as many hungry people as now, with hunger even resurfacing in the rich countries – 20 million Americans are currently said to be hungry. That is why the debt crisis matters for those concerned about food – whether it's the malnourishment of affluence in the north, or hunger in the south.

Things are getting worse, she believes. So what gives her the drive to carry on? Here she quotes an old American abolitionist hymn – 'Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide. In the strife of truth with falsehood for the good or evil side.' For her the moment came with the Vietnam War when she joined the anti-war movement. It was after that she worked on hunger. But whatever issue you investigate, she says, 'If you take it far enough you see the same forces at work ... it's always a question of power and profit'.

□ Susan George, *A Fate Worse than Debt* – A radical new analysis of the Third World debt crisis, Penguin, 1988, \$4.50.

Red or Green for Farmers (and the rest of us)

Richard Body, Broad Leys
Publishing, Saffron Walden, 1987,
£3.95 paperback.

Free trade in agricultural produce will cut the cost of food, promote world economic growth and benefit the environment, argues Sir Richard Body, MP. Pesticides are unnecessary, he says, because viciously cold North American winters allow wheat to be grown with minimum pesticide use.

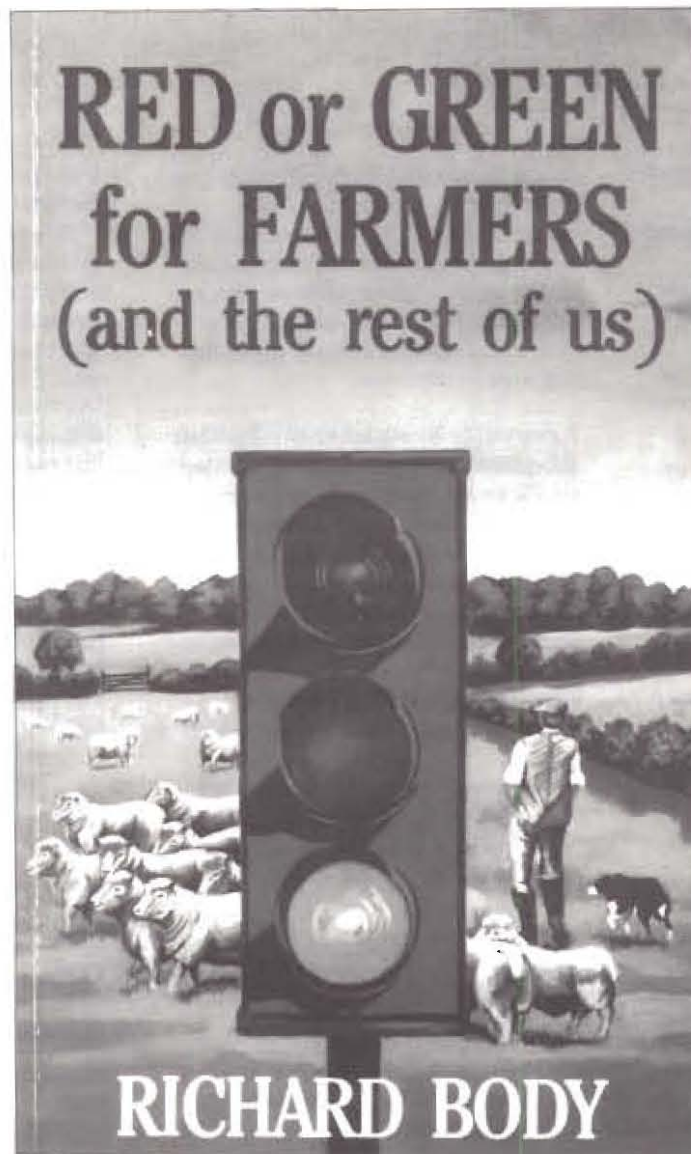
Antibiotics should be largely unnecessary too, but EEC farm support has expanded the acreage devoted to cereals and so promoted more intensive rearing of animals, resulting in heavy use of antibiotics. The author argues that people have already died from pesticide use and from infections stemming from antibiotic over-use.

Such practical illustrations make the book an interesting introduction to the free market case for agricultural reform and the steps needed to achieve it and support the environment. Sweeping changes, such as the abolition of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the creation of a new Food and Health Ministry are proposed.

While recognising the political power of multinational agricultural supply and food processing companies, the author offers no practical proposals on how they may be controlled. When such companies have more economic power than entire nations, world free trade is only possible if guaranteed by effective world anti-trust laws. If Sir Richard plans a further book we must hope his analysis of this subject is as lucid and interesting as the current study. **PS**

Food and Diet in a Multiracial Society.

Training Pack published by the
National Extension College for
Training in Health and Race (18



Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge
CB2 2HN), 1988.

This is an extensive training pack to be used by health workers in nutrition education – dietitians, health promotion officers, health visitors and their colleagues. It's a useful resource for anyone interested in its four main topic areas.

The introductory section deals with nutrition education. This booklet provides the core of the pack, tackling issues which are often ignored or avoided. It outlines the objectives of the other three units and describes a plan of action for the user. Two further units look at Caribbean and Chinese food and diet. These each contain a set of 30 slides with accompanying notes, plus a

booklet on the dietary provision of Britain's Afro-Caribbean and Chinese populations.

The final unit in the pack is entitled 'Infant Feeding – A Resources Review'. Although becoming quickly outdated, this booklet provides a useful overview of resources available on infant feeding, and is valuable reading for anyone who is contemplating producing more resources in this area. It can be purchased separately.

The four items in the pack can be bought in various combinations:

Complete pack £40.00
'Caribbean' pack £30.00
'Chinese' pack £30.00
Infant Feeding £3.50
RP

Healthy Eating: The Nutritional Breakdown of Everyday Foods and How Much You Should Eat

Isabel Skypala, Wisebuy
Publications, 1988, £3.95p
paperback.

This is the orthodox faith. Here in paperback form is a state-registered dietitian giving the established facts on food and nutrition, with listings of UK and US Recommended Daily Allowances of nutrients, and some 350 standard food composition tables to help us get our daily doses.

It gives a short and accessible version of the larger food composition tables which live in specialist libraries, and it provides a quick guide to the consensus view on what constitutes a healthy diet for the average person. But none of us is average, of course, and most of us don't know what our nutrient needs are or whether we are getting enough.

Such anxiety about our diets sells millions of vitamin pills and several thousand books on healthy eating every year. This book is probably the most sober and scientifically acceptable of such books, but nonetheless it can encourage 'food-tables-and-calculator' fetishism.

Just once, buried on page 34, do we find the caution, 'Only use the following recommendations as a guide'. But how much of a guide? And why do UK and US recommended intakes differ, sometimes up to 50 per cent or more? With such variation in what we each might need, does it help to have details, to the microgram, of nutrients in a tinned lychee or a teaspoon of chutney?

Perhaps the most generally helpful advice for most readers will be found in the few short pages on vitamins and minerals, which include helpful listings of their main sources. Lamb's liver tends to feature fairly frequently, as one might expect, but the lists do give a helpful overview of the richest sources of these essential nutrients. **TJL**

PROBLEM PAGE

Our school is one which might, under the proposed new regulations, opt out from local authority control. If this happens, what will happen to the provision of school meals for children?

If the Education Act is passed, and if it includes the opting-out clauses, then we understand that school governors will have considerable freedom to organise their own meals arrangements.

When the school first opts out, the governors may find they already have contractual commitments to continue with the services being provided at the time. As the contracts terminate, they may be renewed or new ones negotiated – that is up to the governors to decide. It is important to ensure that governors

follow 'good employer' practices to put out to tender properly, and make decisions openly. It is quite possible that your Local Education Authority would still be able to offer a meals service, and could tender for the contract. Contact your Local Education Authority to find out what its plans are.

I recently bought some Junior Disprol which claimed on the pack to be 'sugar free'. Before giving it to my child I tasted it. It was sweet and banana-flavoured – what is going on?

Junior Disprol is made by the Pharmaceuticals Division of Reckitt and Colman, the food giants. In their recent launch of sugar free Disprol they describe the product as being sweetened

with Lycasin, which is their trade name for hydrogenated glucose syrup.

This sweetener is a less easily digested saccharide, which is supposed to have less tooth-rotting effects than sugar. As a sweetener it is classed as one of the additives not permitted in foods for babies and young children – which the DHSS defines as up to three years old, although the Ministry of Agriculture says that one year old is the limit. Either way, this product would be illegal as a food, as it says on the packet that it is suitable for children over three months.

There is very little evidence that this sweetener can be harmful to humans. In fact there is very little evidence of its effects in either direction. But one effect that is recognised is that it can act as a laxative – so watch out!

Letters

Dear Food Magazine,

Congratulations on your first issue. It was nice to read a magazine about food which gave the readers facts and information about how food gets to the consumer.

I work in an internationally famous restaurant and was pleased to see the articles about catering, especially that by Yiannis Gabriel, 'Catering Workers Speak Out'. Consumers need to know more about what happens to the food before it is served to them. Hygiene in some catering establishments is poor. And catering wages and the lack of training don't encourage young people to come into catering as a career they can be proud of.

People pay a basic of about £40 for the six course meal in the restaurant I work in. Drinks and extras are on top of that. What do the people who serve the meal get? Before deductions, I get basic wages of around £66 per week. I also get a share of the service charges which can be around £40-50 per week. I also get a share of any cash tips left by the customer. This is allocated on a points basis between all the serving workforce in the restaurant – including the restaurant managers but not the chefs. They get paid less than I do, and they are so dedicated.

Why couldn't the wages be paid as a

basic? The catering industry relies upon customers tipping to make up the wages, otherwise people wouldn't work the unsocial hours. After about five years working in the catering trades I still feel this system of low wages is unjust and doesn't help the customer get higher standards.

My wages as the catering sector goes are not bad. And my working conditions are all right, except the hours which are terrible and stop me having any social life with anyone except other people who work in catering. This we all find a strain. Best wishes.
Name and address supplied; GMB member.

Dear Food Magazine,

Well done for the Magazine. I was interested in the article 'Grazing in Peckham'. Grazing is nothing new. A 1948 report 'Young Workers at Meal Time' by the London Council of Social Service spoke of people in the London area having six or seven food breaks in any 24 hours. As in your report on Peckham, the LCSS was concerned about some young people 'subsisting to some extent on snacks, sandwiches, toasted cheese, cakes and so on.' What has changed since 1948 is not so much the snacking or grazing, but the

quality of the foods and the power of the large food companies on the food chain.

Yours faithfully,
David Thomas,
Leigh, Lancs.

Dear Food Magazine,

Why should the prices of fruit and vegetables be so high in supermarkets? Supermarkets are supposed to compete to bring prices down.

I object to having to pay up to 3 times the price in a supermarket to that I pay at my local greengrocer in South London. The grocer is local, and the supermarket is further away.

The fruit and vegetables may be presented nicely in the supermarket but the taste is no better, and often bland.

Yours faithfully,
L Cook (Miss) London

Dear Food Magazine,

Your article 'Baby Milk Code – busting continues' in your recent edition of the Food Magazine unfortunately misrepresents the role of the Code Monitoring Committee for the Marketing of Infant Formula in the UK and regrettably misleads your readers

as to the facts.

Contrary to the impression given in your article, the Code Monitoring Committee is only concerned with those aspects of the WHO code which relates to the activities of baby milk manufacturers in marketing their products. Its role is solely and simply to monitor the FMF Code which was produced by the FMF (now FDF) with the full support of the Government to give effect to those aspects of the WHO Code in ways that are appropriate to the circumstances obtaining in the UK. This is wholly permissible within the terms of the WHO Code.

The activities of health professionals are outside the remit of the Code Monitoring Committee, being the concern of the DHSS and complaints about those activities are referred to them. A first report of the Committee which will indicate the range of the Committee's activities and progress has been finalised and recently published.

Yours sincerely

Dame Alison Munro DBE
Code Monitoring Committee for the Marketing of Infant Formulae in the UK
c/o The Food & Drink Federation
6 Catherine Street
LONDON WC2B 5JJ

Having a baby will change your life, they said, when my son was born seven months ago. Too true. But it has also given me a whole new perspective on food – and I am astonished by a lot of what I now see.

For instance. Imagine giving your tiny, teething infant a slab of sweet shortbread or a doughnut to chew on. Who'd be daft enough to do that? Well, I would if I bought most of the rusks on the market. Take the brands around emblazoned with 'sugars reduced' or 'low sugar'. Sounds great, till you read the ingredients panel armed with nothing more than a chemistry degree! Milupa's ideas on reducing sugar and mine are plantations apart. Their 'sugars reduced' rusks declare in considerably smaller print in the ingredients panel '17.2 per cent sucrose', 'glucose 2.3 per cent' and that's without counting the maltodextrin and dried fruit powders. I might as well give my baby a tooth rotting doughnut.

Boots 'low sugar' rusks aren't much better with 19 per cent sugars. At least Boots do get my vote for honesty since they come clean about total sugars in their rusks. But why can't parents easily lay hands on rusks without any sugars at all?



The Maternity Alliance and Health Education Authority report 'Sugar in Baby Foods' in May revealed 'widespread concern among mothers about the sugar content of baby foods' and that 'they were not always able to avoid added sugar if they wished to'. Some manufacturers are now using alternatives to sugar, the report revealed, which sound healthy to the uninitiated – concentrated fruit juices, for example, but the effect is just added sugars by another name.

Why on earth do babies need all these sweeteners? I decided to conduct a completely unscientific consumer test with my own willing volunteer from the moment he started on solids. Since I have a sweet tooth, I expected him to show a marked preference for sweet things – pears, bananas, tomatoes – rather than vegetables and meat. Three



Lynn Faulds Wood's Diary

months later, he doesn't even seem to mind whether champed up meat and two veg is hot or not! In a raw apple taste test, he more eagerly devoured sour slices of Granny Smiths than sweeter Golden Delicious.

I cannot find any form of definitive research into whether babies actually prefer sugary foods, or whether parents and manufacturers just expect them to prefer sweet things. Surely we ought to find out before we churn out another generation of sweet-toothed children?

Days after the birth of your child, while new mothers are wandering around the hospital ward in a happy haze, one of the visitors is a children's food rep, with bags of free samples and 'money off' vouchers to distribute. When my infant first went onto solids, I remembered this free offering and tried him out on it. After all a jar or tin takes just a second to open, and you don't have to engage brain at a time when the baby is engaging everything else.

The reaction from my previously voracious little person was stunned apathy. Now, as an inexperienced new mother, I could have concluded that he was going to take time to take to solids. I'd have been wrong.

So enthusiastic an eater is he that fresh foods don't even touch the sides on the way down. It's things in tins and jars he simply isn't too keen on eating.

Now I don't know whether you have ever tasted pre-prepared baby food? I hadn't until last week, so I also subjected colleagues on BBC TV's 'Watchdog' to a taste test. 'Horrible ... cardboard ... very salty ... tastes of nothing' were the most frequently used descriptions for the savoury dishes we tried. 'Very sweet ... tasteless' for the puddings. The most surprising part was that with the exception of Creme Caramel, no one could actually tell what the dishes were supposed to be!

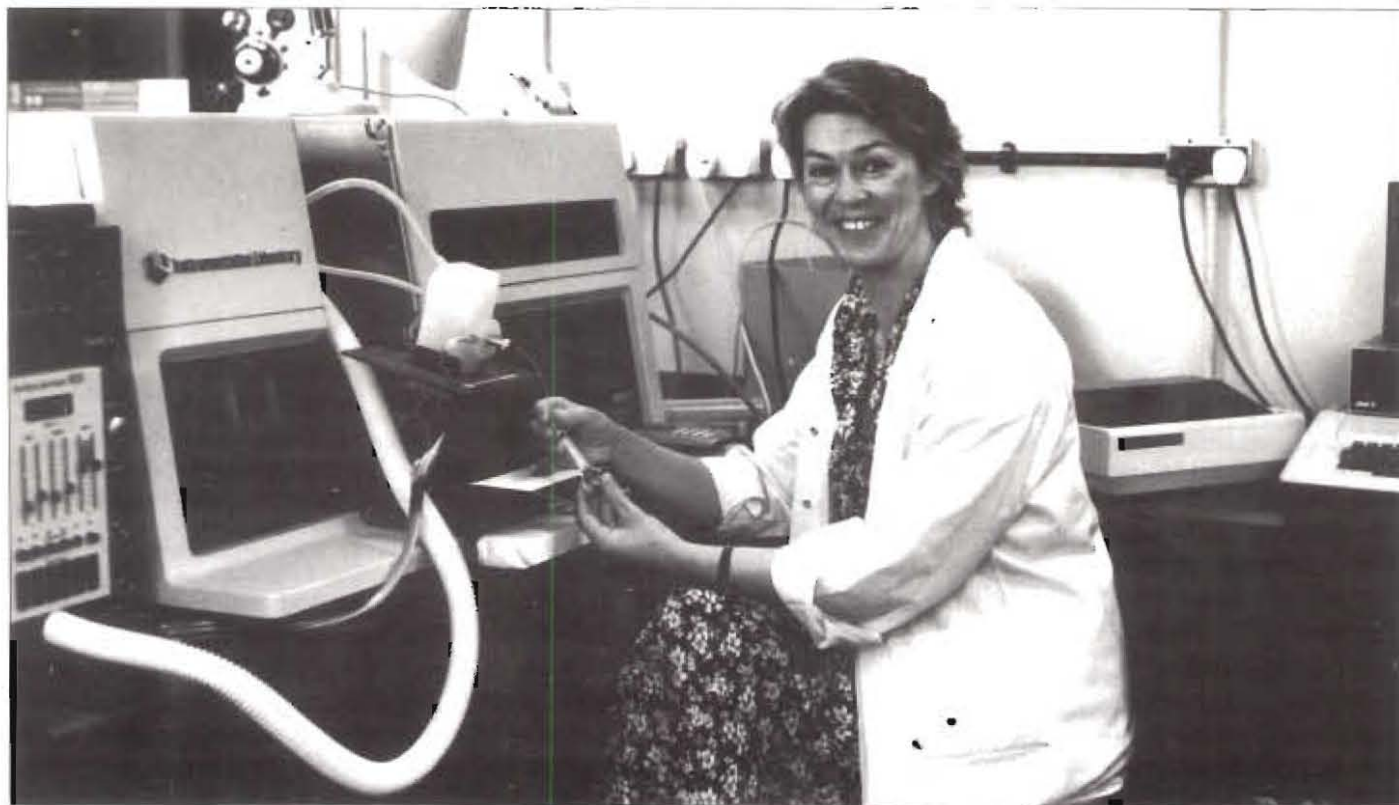
Now, when I asked before the test how many people would use tins and jars if they had a baby, most 'Watchdog' people thought they would. After the tasting – not one wanted to use them!

One of the lads who looks after our mail was perplexed, though. 'If you don't give them tinned food, what on earth do you feed them on?'

Okay. Small babies' taste buds are very different from ours. And we did only test a handful of foods from Lamb Casserole and Chicken Risotto to Baby Muesli and Creme Caramel. But for my money, there is no comparison between the taste of champed up fresh foods and canned equivalents.

Lynn Faulds Wood is presenter of BBC's Watchdog Programme

♦ ♦ ♦ *Lynn Faulds Wood*



ON THE JOB

Carol Vallis, 40, works as a Public Analyst. She is employed by London Scientific Services and is based at the GLC's old home in County Hall. She is one of the 92 officially appointed Public Analysts (and their deputies) throughout London and the rest of the country working on general analytical work which can include anything from checking on toy safety to analysing pesticide levels in food.

‘I didn't know what a Public Analyst was until I fell into a PA lab almost by accident. I studied chemistry at Warwick University and towards the end of my studies thought I'd like to be a forensic scientist. But by the time I'd finished I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I just got hooked!

I suppose being a Public Analyst is a bit like being a policeman, although I don't see myself as a law enforcement officer as such. It's more to do with protecting the public. It all started in the nineteenth century when unscrupulous merchants would add iron filings to tea – one of the earliest forms of adulteration.

As far as I know I'm the only female Public Analyst in the country at the moment. I suppose I'm more conscious of being a relative newcomer than of being a lone woman.

PRESSURE

We work under quite a lot of pressure. Obviously every customer wants their samples done first. For example, I do analytical work for the Port of London Health Authority, checking whether food is fit to import into the UK. These samples have to be turned around within seven working days. You might be looking at a consignment of dried apricots for fruit fly infestation, for example, or checking a tomato

puree for mould content, or any food to see if it contains any non-permitted colourings, preservatives etc.

SAMPLES

Port inspectors can't sample every consignment of food coming into the country. From experience though they tend to know which foods could be a problem. So they know where to sample. It's said that if more money was spent on enforcing the law at the Ports it would save a lot of testing and money later on.

I also do analytical work for several London boroughs. For example, if an environmental health officer takes a formal sample of minced beef, one part of it comes to me. If something is wrong – say, too much fat – it can lead to court action, so there's some urgency. I've got about 28 days to make my report.

I also handle complaint samples which can be anything brought into a local town hall by a member of the public. One woman sent in a bottle of milk which appeared to have something in it. She hadn't opened it so the seal was still intact. We found two small rodents inside. That was a fairly open and shut case because it appeared the mice had been bottled at the dairy. But it's not always so straightforward. You have to keep an open mind about how the foreign object got into the food. The sample might have been

tampered with or left unattended for some time. You have to give an opinion, and you can't say things you can't prove.

Many years ago the Public Analyst was often in court, but now we're generally only called to court when a company wants to defend a case. Manufacturers may look for loopholes in the paperwork to get cases thrown out. We went to court with the milk bottle case and fortunately the dairy pleaded guilty.

LAWS

We also get informal food samples to analyse. For example, we may look at diabetic jams, to see if they comply with the Jam Regulations, or look at the amount of added water in cured meats. We have to check whether a food complies with any relevant legal standard, whether it contains any prohibited additive or contaminant, and if it's labelled correctly.

Analysing food can be quite expensive. For example, doing a full analysis on a sausage – that's analysing it for meat content and additives – can cost more than £60 per sample. There are more and more regulations, but no money to back them up at the enforcement level. If resources for enforcement get much more eroded at local government level, there might be moves for it to be done centrally. And then who knows how much would get done?

SUMMER SALADS

Summer brings with it a wealth of fresh fruit and vegetables, nearly all of which can be turned into appetising salads. This is cheering news for those concerned with maintaining good health and slim figures. Eating salads, regularly, at least once a day, is a good habit to cultivate, and also a pleasurable one. Vegetables contain valuable vitamins and minerals, as well as fibre. To get the most value from them, they should be eaten as soon after purchase as possible, and washed under a running tap, rather than being left to soak in cold water. Here are three simple recipes.

Cucumber salad with yoghurt and mint

This is a Middle Eastern way with cucumbers.

1 large cucumber
225g carton of thick Greek yoghurt
3 cloves of garlic
2 tbs fresh mint, finely chopped
1 tbs fresh parsley, finely chopped
salt, pepper, paprika

Dice the cucumber without peeling it, put into a colander and sprinkle with a dessertspoonful of fine sea salt. Place a weighted plate on top, and leave to drain for at least half an hour.

Crush the garlic cloves with a very little salt in the salad bowl. Add the yoghurt and chopped herbs, and grind on some black pepper to taste. Mix all together, then turn in the cucumber, which you have rinsed, drained and patted dry. Garnish with a sprinkling of paprika and a tuft of young mint leaves.

French Bean Salad

This is a favourite way of preparing freshly picked French beans, to appreciate their delicate flavour and texture. The beans are only lightly cooked, to make them more digestible. They should remain fairly crunchy.

1lb French beans
2-3 cloves garlic
French dressing made with 1 tbs lemon juice to 4 tbs olive oil, with 1 tsp fine sea salt, 1 tsp French mustard, pinch of sugar and 30 turns of the pepper mill
finely chopped parsley to garnish

Prepare the beans, rinsing and removing the stalk end, if necessary. Cook them for a few minutes in half an inch of boiling water, or steam, until just tender, but still a little crunchy. Drain and refresh briefly under running cold water, to set the colour.

Prepare the dressing in the salad bowl. Mix together salt, pepper, sugar and mustard, and then add the lemon juice and oil. Chop the peeled garlic finely and add that too. Finally tip in the beans while they are still warm, turning them so that they are well coated with dressing. Leave them to cool, and sprinkle them with parsley before serving. They are even better the next day.

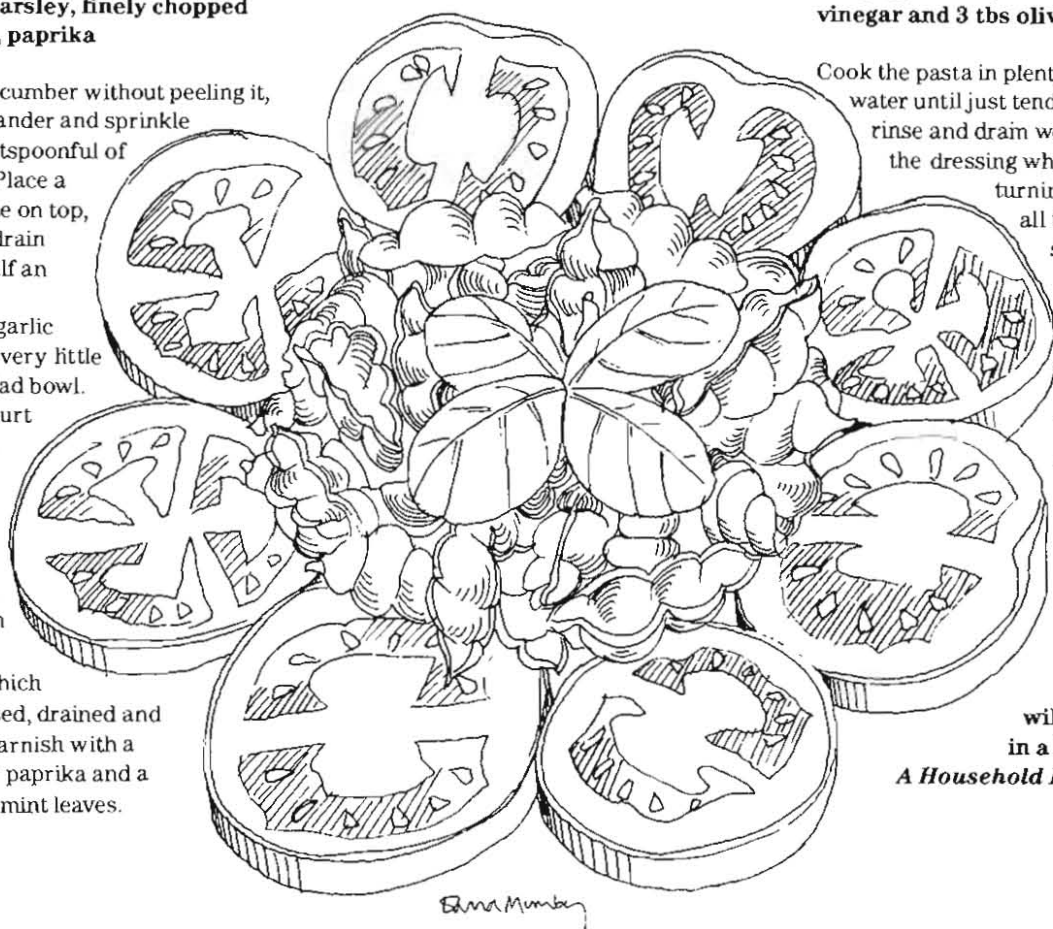
Pasta salad with basil and tomato

8 oz pasta shells
1 lb well-flavoured cherry tomatoes, quartered
6 spring onions, cleaned and sliced, including the green leaves
1 oz fresh basil leaves, or a good bunch, roughly chopped
3 tbs French dressing made by crushing a small clove of garlic into 1 level tsp fine sea salt, and mixing with 1 level tsp French mustard, 1 level tsp brown sugar, 20 grinds of the pepper mill, a scant tbs cider vinegar and 3 tbs olive oil.

Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling salted water until just tender (15-20 minutes), rinse and drain well. Mix in 2 tbs of the dressing while still warm, turning it in well so that all the pasta receives its share.

Mix the onions and tomatoes in the remaining tbs of dressing, together with half the basil. Turn into the pasta just before serving, and garnish with the rest of the basil.

These recipes will also be available in a forthcoming book, *A Household Legacy* by Amanda Goodfellow.



WHAT THE JOURNALS SAY

Red wine and migraine

Red wine provoked migraine in 9 of 11 people who believed that red wine, rather than alcohol in general, was responsible for their attacks. Yet none of another 8 people, with the same belief, developed migraine when they drank a vodka mixture with the same alcohol content.

The chemical present in red, but not white wine, has not yet been identified. Tyramine, which is found at high levels in cheese, has often been accused of being a migraine-inducing agent. But the wine used in this study had a low tyramine content and the authors report that red and white wines generally have similar tyramine levels.

◇ Littlewood JT et al 'Red wine as a cause of migraine', *Lancet*, 1988, vol 1, pp 558-559.

Heart disease and poverty

David Barker and Clive Osmond, researchers at the MRC Environmental Epidemiology Unit in Southampton have shown a strong relationship throughout England and Wales between infant mortality rates in the 1920's and coronary heart disease (CHD) death rates in both men and women reaching middle age in the '60s and '70s. Only three other conditions analysed – bronchitis, stomach cancer and rheumatic heart disease – show similar geographical relationships. All of these, like CHD, are associated with low income. The Unit's hypothesis is that poverty in childhood increases susceptibility to the so-called 'diseases of affluence' in later life.

The role of diet in this chain may be important, but is not certain since other material factors have changed over the same period. Further statistical and experimental work is needed to unravel these connections, the researchers argue. If the mixture of early poverty and later relative affluence is important in CHD we

could witness major increases in CHD deaths in the developing world, if such countries follow western-style models of growth.

◇ Editorial: 'Infant nutrition and cardiovascular disease', *Lancet* 1988, vol 1, pp 568-569

Appendicitis, bathrooms and vegetables

Another statistical study, of rather less gravity, has recently emerged from the MRC Environmental Epidemiology Unit. Analysis of the incidence of acute appendicitis in Britain and Ireland between 1979 and 1982 confirms that green vegetables appear to protect against acute appendicitis, whereas sugar and potato consumption are weakly associated with the illness. The link between potatoes and appendicitis may simply reflect the inverse relation between potato consumption and that of other vegetables shown in the National Food Survey.

Appendicitis rates rose steeply in the first half of the century and declined continuously in the second half. Proposed dietary causes do not explain this pattern, the authors say. They advance a 'hygiene' hypothesis, linking reduced exposure to infection as a result of improved domestic conditions, particularly decreased overcrowding and a decline in the numbers of people without bathrooms and hot water. The geographical relation between appendicitis and these indices of housing conditions support this theory.

◇ Barker DJP and Morris J, 'Acute appendicitis, bathrooms, and diet in Britain and Ireland', *British Medical Journal*, 1988, vol 296, pp 953-955.

Good ol' olive oil

Dietary guidelines have suggested that olive oil is neutral in its effects on heart disease risk, as measured by blood cholesterol

levels. New data from the USA, Holland and Spain shows that people who use high mono-unsaturated oils such as olive oil have a relatively high HDL cholesterol (high density lipoprotein) and low LDL cholesterol (low density lipoprotein). This is a favourable balance in health terms, and comparable to the benefits of a low fat diet rich in poly-unsaturated oils.

Olive oil has three advantages over other oils. It has a safety track record, based on its long standing use in Mediterranean countries, where CHD death rates are low. It is more stable in cooking than poly-unsaturated oils, which at high temperatures undergo chemical changes of uncertain health effects. Olive oil also tastes good.

Professor Barry Lewis of St Thomas's Hospital says that one way to obtain the essential fatty acids present in poly-unsaturated oils, but not in olive oil, is to use sunflower oil spread on bread and olive oil in cooking and salads.

◇ Polunin M, 'Olives make the heart grow stronger', *The Independent*, February 9, 1988.

Animal cloning challenge to European patent laws

Signs that agriculture is shifting to a new phase of industrialisation comes from work done by British scientists. Dr Steen Willadsen, now working in Canada, has used a technique called nuclear transfer to create genetically identical clones of sheep and cows. Microsurgery is used to remove the cell nucleus from a single celled embryo. The 'empty' cell is fused with another complete cell taken from a second embryo at the 16 cell stage. The fused embryo is then placed in a womb for development. Up to five identical clones have so far been produced from one 16 cell embryo.

At present the European Patent

Convention forbids the patenting of living creatures, protecting only chemical and other processes. Pressure to permit patenting of animals, as in the USA, comes from those who favour further investment in biotechnology to 'create' new highly productive animals. ◇ McKie R, 'Clone cows for farms', *Observer*, February 14, 1988.

The European Commission released a draft directive in April on the patenting of micro-organisms in an attempt to smooth the way for commercial exploitation of genetic and other biotechnologies. A summary of this document is available from the LFC.

Priority for small farmers

After eight years of litigation a judge in Alameda County, California has ordered officials to revise research standards to give 'primary consideration ... to the interests of the small family farm'. The University of California at Davis, which plans to appeal against the judgement, developed a square, thick-skinned and uniformly sized tomato which can be picked by machine, in 1975.

Other crops such as lettuce, strawberries and even grapes can be machine-harvested, encouraging the expansion of huge corporate farms owned by companies such as Union Carbide and Chevron. In 1979, 15 farmworkers, supported by the United Farm Workers Union went to court over job losses. In California the number of small-scale tomato growers had fallen in a few years from more than 4000 to about 600. Farm research at the University is supported by agribusiness companies, but it denies that its research benefits the big farmer over the small.

◇ 'Out of order', *The Economist*, November 21, 1987, p44.