

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

Incorporating London Food News ♦ Issue 4 Volume 1 ♦ Spring 1989 ♦ £2.50

HEALTHY SNACK BARS



THE FACTS

SUPERMARKETS' NUTRIENT LABELLING - WE NAME THE BEST AND WORST

SUPERMARKETS' ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIENCE - SAINSBURY AND SAFEWAY TOP THE LIST

SUPERMARKETS' POWER - JUST SIX COMPANIES SELL 70% OF OUR FOOD

BABY FOODS: TEACH YOURSELF TO READ LABELS

ESSENTIAL MAGNESIUM - MISSING FROM OUR DAILY BREAD

MILK: DUMPING THE SURPLUS ON 3RD WORLD BABIES

NEWS: BABY MILK BOYCOTT, LABELLING CHANGES, EGG FACTS AND MEAT HAZARDS

CAROLINE WALKER REMEMBERED WITH A TRUST

JUDY SADGROVE'S DIARY

LETTERS

YOUR QUERY - SULPHITES IN WINE

BOOK REVIEWS

SCIENCE AND MEDICAL ROUND-UP

RECIPES FROM A CARIBBEAN KITCHEN

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

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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.

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LFC and the 1990s

To be told once in a week that the London Food Commission is closing down was surprising. To be told twice in a week brought a smile.

To clarify the situation for supporters and detractors alike, the London Food Commission is alive and well and changing direction. The LFC and its Council of Management have spent the last year planning changes designed to meet the new challenges which face food policy in the 1990s. European harmonisation; socially divided food markets in the UK; and an ever-growing public sophistication about food matters – all these changes will make truly independent voices like the LFC even more necessary.

That is why we are concentrating more effort into our public information work and into *The Food Magazine*. We want your help to see that work grow. Requests for speakers, consultancies and advice continue to show our work has an avid constituency. Subscriptions to *The Food Magazine* have doubled in its first nine months. We want them to double again. Thanks to all who write and give us their thoughts.

British food industries – from farm and factory to shop and cafe – today face a key strategic choice. Are they interested only in short-term returns or in longer term industrial and public health?

The history of UK food policy shows that this is not the first time such a choice has been needed. In the nineteenth century, food traders split over the issue and 'short-termers' went to the wall following public revulsion against adulteration, and the introduction of a tough Food Act.

Today some food industrialists are again balancing the morality and the business opportunities brought by the food and health movement. One industrialist, who has taken a principled stand against 'short-termism' over food irradiation, was recently honoured with a MBE for services to the industry and his business has blossomed. We wrote to offer our congratulations (such encouragement for positive action has always been a feature of the LFC's work). Canny folk know that to serve a quality-seeking public can bring cash rewards now as well as esteem and



respect in the future.

A note of warning. As the recent *Food Magazine* review of 1992 stressed, the Single European Act claims to 'take as its base a high level of protection' concerning European standards of consumer and environmental protection and public health. The word 'protection' is important here. In the run-up to 1992 there is already a bitter struggle over whose definition of protection is to

be accepted as the Euro-norm. Almost everything the LFC has worked for over the last four years resides in that word 'protection'.

This is why we are so pleased that one of the LFC's high profile projects, on food irradiation, has yielded one valuable victory. Whatever the eventual outcome of the European decision on the legality of irradiation, the LFC is delighted that the UK government and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) allowed a consumer representative into its party to the world talks at Geneva in December 1988. Though it took 6000 letters to Government calling for more openness, and a sometimes bitter argument with the food industry and civil servants to win this improvement in food democracy, it has been worthwhile. A precedent has been set for which all public health, environmental and consumer groups should applaud MAFF and the Government.

We see in the 1990s the continuing emergence of giant food companies. Some food firms actually see it as in their interests to fight for high standards to keep medium-sized competitors out of their markets. That is why in this issue of *The Food Magazine* we encourage our readers to look behind the advertising hyperbole of UK food retailers. These supermarket chains often come out of food and public health rows smelling of roses, appearing to reflect consumers' own needs.

An intelligent assessment of today's European and British food scene must take a more independent stance. Which is why, incidentally, more than a few stockbrokers, merchant banks, foreign governments and an occasional multinational have been known to seek LFC advice and facts! And, we are sure, they will be continuing to do so for many years to come.

Tim Lang

Unscrambling the facts

As *The Food Magazine* goes to press a rash of egg puns scream from newspaper headlines. Are eggs safe to eat? Just how many people have been affected? and were Mrs Currie's eggs pickled?

What cannot be disputed among the allegations and counter-allegations is the dramatic increase in food poisoning cases from salmonella enteritidis arising from infected poultry and eggs. The picture emerging is of an industry that is not subject to proper legislative controls.

'We exercise double standards in this country', said Alan Thompson, Institution of Environmental Health Officers. 'Food factories and restaurants are subject to strict hygiene regulations, but farmers are exempt'.

Current codes of factory hygiene concentrate on ensuring that only clean, whole eggs are sent to market, but as salmonella is now known to be found within the eggs this test is inadequate.

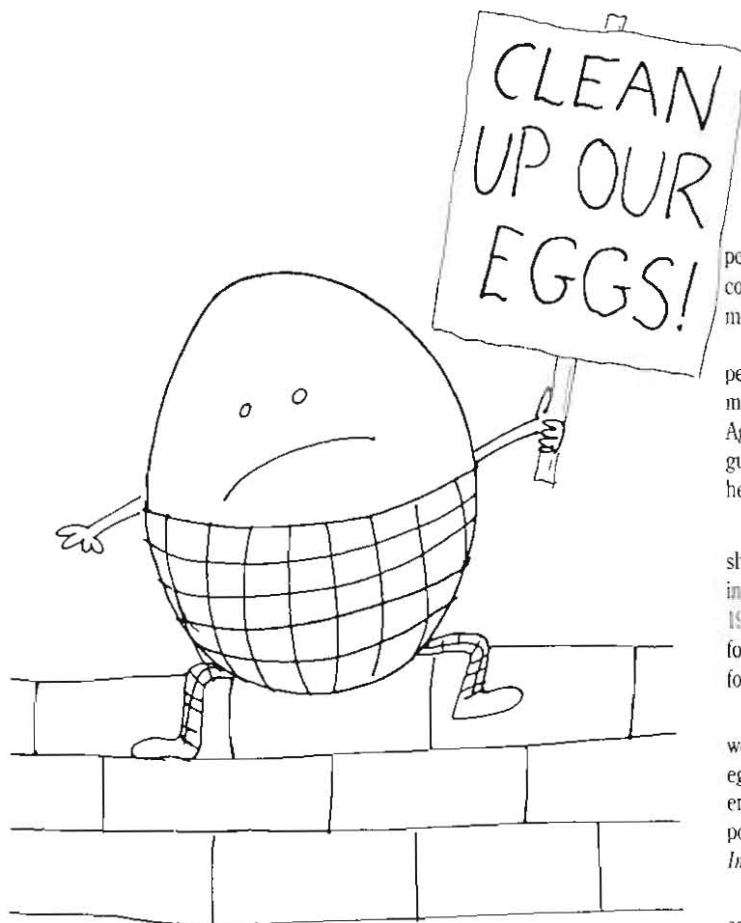
Feedstuffs have been found to be contaminated with salmonella - 21 out of 83 feed processing plants were found by MAFF to be infected - and salmonella is now endemic in breeding stocks.

There have been suggestions that Mrs Currie's controversial outburst was timed to force MAFF to take action. MAFF's response has been to issue a voluntary code of practice for poultry breeders and egg producers but with no statutory teeth. Critics argue MAFF is being too soft on the industry.

David Clark MP, Shadow Minister for Agriculture, has called for the code to be made statutory:

'Thus far, the Ministry of Agriculture has been alarmingly complacent about the salmonella outbreak. Not for the first time, they have put the interests of the producers before the health of the general public.'

In December the House of Commons Agriculture Committee announced that it was conducting a short inquiry into salmonella in eggs: the scale of the problem, the counter-measures that have been taken and the Government's role in responding to the situation. It will report to the House of Commons before the end of February.



FACT The number of reported cases of food poisoning traced to salmonella enteritidis Phage type 4 (usually associated with eggs and poultry meat) reached 8,541 by the end of November 1988, compared with around 3,500 for the same period in 1987. (Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre)

FACT Only about one in 100 cases of food poisoning is ever reported. There may well be up to two million salmonella infections a year in England and Wales - of these more than one million relate to poultry with the PT4 strain accounting for the bulk of these. (Dr Bernard Rowe, Director of the enteric pathogens division of the Government's own Central Public Health Laboratory)

FACT Salmonella food poisoning can lead to serious illness and may prove fatal to babies and young children, elderly people and those already suffering from other illnesses.

FACT Although thorough cooking kills salmonella, it is not killed by soft boiling, poaching, frying or scrambling eggs.

FACT There is now evidence that the salmonella enteritidis strain has adapted to live in the ovaries of chickens and has been found in eggs yolks where it cannot easily be detected.

(Professor Richard Lacey, Professor of Microbiology, Leeds University)

FACT Free range eggs are not necessarily any safer. (Howard Hellig, British Veterinary Association)

FACT It has been estimated that 80 per cent of raw chickens on sale are contaminated by salmonella. (Government's Food Hygiene Laboratory)

FACT Chicken feedstuffs are permitted to contain up to 8 per cent meat and meal products (Ministry of Agriculture) including flesh and offal, guts, feathers, feet and heads from dead hens.

FACT Chicken feed producers should comply with regulations requiring feedstuffs to be salmonella free. A 1987 MAFF survey of 83 establishments found 21 to be infected. No prosecutions followed.

FACT The UK egg industry is worth £300m a year with 30 million eggs consumed every day. But in December egg producers suffered a reported cuts of 30 per cent. (*The Independent*, 9.12.88)

FACT Research into controlling salmonella has been cut by the Government. The work of Dr Geoff Mead and his team at the Institute of Food Research in Bristol showed promising results. Unless industry money can be found the project will cease in March.

The Case of the Cannibal Cows

Alarm over the spread of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) has revealed some well-kept secrets about the cattle-feed industry. It is now known, for example, that cows do not simply eat grass and hay, but are fed compounds which include waste products from slaughterhouses - the carcasses, offal and bones of sheep, chickens and even other cows.

The image of cattle as ruminants grazing on lush pastures has been abruptly dispelled. The sheep disease 'scrapie' had not previously been found among cattle even though cattle and sheep had shared pastures and barns in the past.

Only in recent years, with the inclusion of sheep meat and bone-meal in cattle feed, has the disease crossed over from sheep to cows. According to the Central Veterinary Laboratory (CVL) '... waste materials, including sheep

carcasses and heads, may be used after processing to ruminant diets as a source of protein'.

BSE has now been identified on about 600 British farms. In July 1988 the Ministry of Agriculture imposed a six-month ban on the use of ruminant meat to feed other ruminants. This ban is being reviewed as we go to press.

In December MAFF announced a ban on the sale of milk from infected cows. This is not an easily enforced ban however, as the disease can only be diagnosed by a post-mortem examination. It appears to be affecting dairy cattle less than beef cattle, but according to the CVL this may be because beef cows consume more animal protein feed than dairy cows.

The disease should be notified as soon as it is suspected, but there have been reported cases of farmers trying to off-load suspicious cattle rather than have

them slaughtered. The Ministry compensates for slaughtered cattle at only half the market value.

No-one knows whether meat from infected cattle has already entered the human food chain, nor whether such meat poses a serious threat to human health. The brains and spinal cords of cattle are

permitted ingredients in meat products to be cooked prior to being sold for human consumption. However, there is some speculation that uncooked meat products which include mechanically recovered meat may inadvertently contain spinal cord tissue.

Selling bones as meat

A legal challenge has been mounted against meat product manufacturers who add mechanically recovered meat (MRM) to their products without any declaration on the product labels.

MRM is obtained from carcasses which have been stripped in the normal way and then put through high pressure 'massaging' rollers to extract the shreds of tissue that cling to them. The resulting mixture of tendon ends, gristle, connective tissue and bone fragments is pulped into a slurry and used to bulk out meat products and, according to manufacturers, can still be called meat.

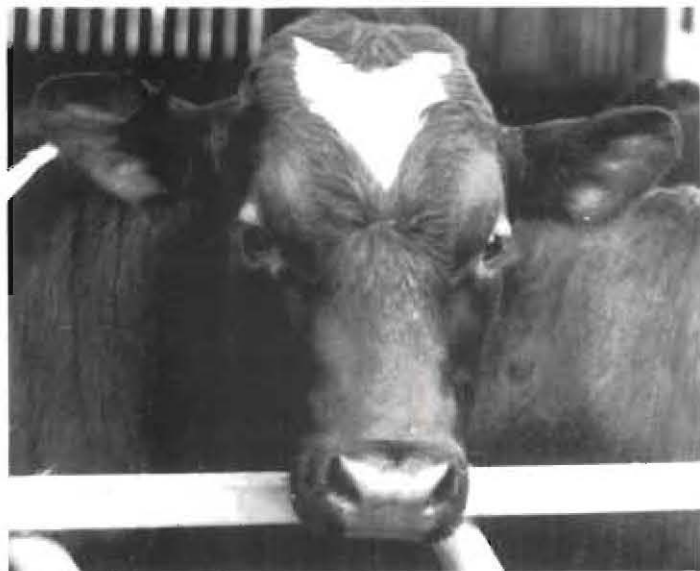
In an attempt to get a test case settlement, Shropshire trading standards officers took meat processors Bernard Matthews to court for including MRM in their products without any appropriate declaration on the label. Matthews lost the case but went to appeal. As we go to press the appeal date has not been set. An out-of-court settlement is possible

whereby Matthews agrees to print a suitable phrase on their labels, though it is not yet clear exactly what the phrase will be.

In the USA some meat products—such as hot dogs—are permitted to contain up to 20 per cent MRM but the labels must disclose it (in the USA it is referred to as MSM—mechanically separated meat). US meat manufacturers, aware that an MRM declaration may put customers off their products are now campaigning to remove the MRM declaration.

They want to replace it with a statement to the effect that the product contains extra calcium—a side effect of the ground up bone from the carcass which forms part of MRM. Consumer groups are vigorously resisting the idea.

Quite what phrase would appear on British products has not been decided. Phrases such as 'This product contains mechanically processed carcasses' would be strongly opposed by the meat industry.



Cattle have been fed sheep and cattle offal

EEC's lousy labelling

The European Commission's proposals for nutrition labelling, published last October, have been greeted with dismay by consumer and public health groups.

Their policy rests heavily on 'informative labelling' whilst deregulating food quality standards. Consumers will be expected to protect their interests by scrutinising food labels. However, providing nutritional information will not be compulsory unless manufacturers make a nutritional claim.

Amounts of sugars, sodium and fibre, as well as protein, fat, carbohydrate and energy will then have to be declared in g per 100g, or per serving for packs under 100g. If information is given on any type of fat, a breakdown into saturates, monounsaturates and polyunsaturates will be necessary. Data on vitamins may be expressed as a percentage of the EEC Recommended Daily Allowances.

Consumer and public health groups are critical because labelling will still be largely voluntary, resulting in patchy

provision of information rather than the full data consumers need.

But even these proposals, which will allow manufacturers to withhold so much nutrition data, have been negatively received by sections of the food industry. *Chemistry and Industry* reported that, 'the proposals are bound to meet with opposition from food companies throughout the Community'. It continued, 'Britain may be expected to kick up a fuss in Council discussion of the measures', an open acknowledgement of the fact that UK government ministers argue on behalf of the food industry rather than consumers in EEC debates.

Ingredients

Earlier last year the Commission put forward proposals on quantitative ingredient declarations. They proposed that in future, for example, a fish finger might read 'fish (51%), breadcrumbs (25%), batter (23%), vegetable oil'. But manufacturers are extremely unhappy about this idea and it looks as if it might be quietly brushed under the carpet.

Health claims misleading

Health claims such as 'low fat' and 'high fibre' are confusing and misleading and some of them at least should be banned, says the Consumers' Association (CA).

Claims on the fat, fibre, salt and sugar content of food should be strictly controlled, says the Association, responding to proposed new legislative controls from the Government's Food Advisory Committee.

Many of the claims revealed by a CA shopping survey include comparisons with the nutrient content of similar

foods, for instance 'half the fat of normal burgers', 'nearly twice the fibre of ordinary cornflakes' and 'lower sugar content than other bars'. Such statements can be ambiguous and misleading. The Government should authorise only certain claims with strict definitions and ban the rest, the CA says.

They also point out that when regulations are finalised, they will need to be fully explained to shoppers, so they understand what 'low fat', 'reduced salt', 'sugar free' and 'high fibre' mean.

US alcohol labelling

Public health campaigners in the United States of America have succeeded in persuading the US government to put the following new label on all alcoholic beverages:

GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) According to the Surgeon General, women should not drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects. (2) Consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery, and may cause health problems.

Worldwide BST campaign

Public awareness of the milk-boosting hormone, bovine somatotropin (BST), is growing around the world. The drug companies' global marketing strategies are being thwarted by groups and individuals who want to see a full debate about the costs and benefits of the biosynthetic hormone.

A full-length documentary on BST shown last Autumn in New Zealand is reported to have caused an uproar in the dairy industry there. In the USA, Jeremy Rifkin's *International Coalition Against Bovine Growth Hormone* produced a television commercial questioning the value of BGH/BST. Rifkin says: 'Don't call it BST, that's what the drug companies do. Call it BGH. They hate it.' In Wisconsin, USA, members of the legislative committee on biotechnology discussed a ban of

BGH at hearings held last October. One representative referred to BGH as 'unwarranted technology'.

In the UK, the latest parliamentary move in the BGH saga came when two Early Day Motions (EDMs) – an EDM is an MP's petition – were launched in November 1988.

The EDMs both called for a ban on BGH in milk production, and appeared in the Parliamentary Notices within days of each other. They are designed to test the extent of parliamentary support for a ban on BGH on each side of the House, ultimately with the intention of getting agriculture ministers to abandon plans to licence the hormone. 'We are pushing at an open door', said Sir Richard Body, ex-chair of the Select Committee on Agriculture, at the time of the EDMs' launch.

Quotes of the season

John McGregor, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, at a conference on 'Europe and 1992':

'In the case of food additives ... I understand that there has been some reluctance in parts of the UK industry to give information to my officials on patterns of usage for food additives.'

'I do urge you to provide the information we need. It will be handled in confidence. These negotiations are going to be difficult. Other member states take a much more restrictive attitude in this area than we do. Unless we have all the relevant information, we shall be handicapped at the outset. And that would not be in the interests of the industry ...'

'Some member states, notably France and Germany, are still pressing for the development of common food quality standards. We do not think that these are either necessary or desirable.'
(John McGregor, London, 10 October 1988)



SUPPORT OUR BST CAMPAIGN

☐ I/we support the campaign to halt the licensing of BST until more is known about its effects.

☐ I/we enclose a donation of £5 ☐ £10 ☐ £25 ☐ other £ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Please return to BST Campaign, London Food Commission, FREEPOST, London EC1B 1FX

US grape boycott

The United Farm Workers of America (UFW) led by Cesar Chavez, has again called for a boycott of Californian grapes. A short video produced by the four-year-old campaign argues the case on the grounds of health and employment rights.

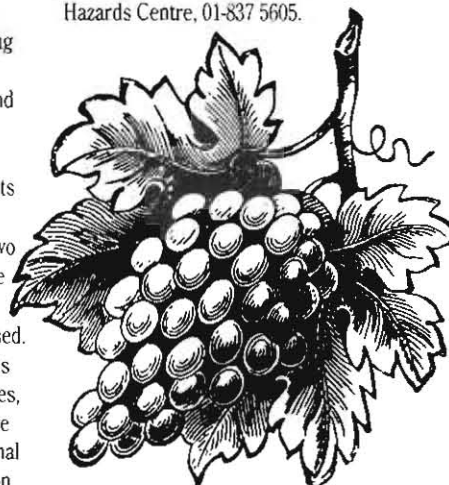
Cesar Chavez asks consumers not to buy table grapes, to put pressure on grape growers who, he says, are using pesticides toxic both to pickers and consumers. It is estimated that around 300,000 US farmworkers suffer from pesticide poisoning each year.

The five chemicals the UFW wants banned are captan, dinoseb, methyl bromide, parathion and phosdrin. Two years ago dinoseb was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency, though this decision was later reversed.

Many of the Californian vineyards are owned by multinational companies, yet wages and working conditions are deteriorating for thousands of seasonal workers of Mexican origin. The union

has only 31 contracts with growers today, compared with 100 in its early days.

State officials have obstructed union elections and attempts to improve employment contracts, but support for the boycott has come from the Rev Jesse Jackson. The 12 minute video is available on loan from the London Hazards Centre, 01-837 5605.





Author Tim Lobstein shows the fat in a halfpounder (Gina Glover/Photo Co-op)

Following the launch of our fast food campaign (*The Food Magazine*, Issue 3, Volume 1), three big name chains have agreed to publish product ingredients for the first time. It represents a major turnaround by a notoriously secretive industry, and an early success for the campaign.

Before the campaign launch, McDonald's said it would never print ingredients lists for its products. Two days later it changed its tune, announcing it had been thinking for some time that it might be useful, and that only 'production difficulties' had delayed the leaflets being distributed to their outlets. The leaflets, they promised, would be ready in the new year.

Wimpy decided within a week of the launch to prepare brochures for their restaurants, also in the new year.

Kentucky Fried Chicken are thought to be considering a leaflet listing their product ingredients, and

First victory for fast food campaign

the smaller chains Taco Bell and Pizza Hut are believed to be preparing to reveal all later this year.

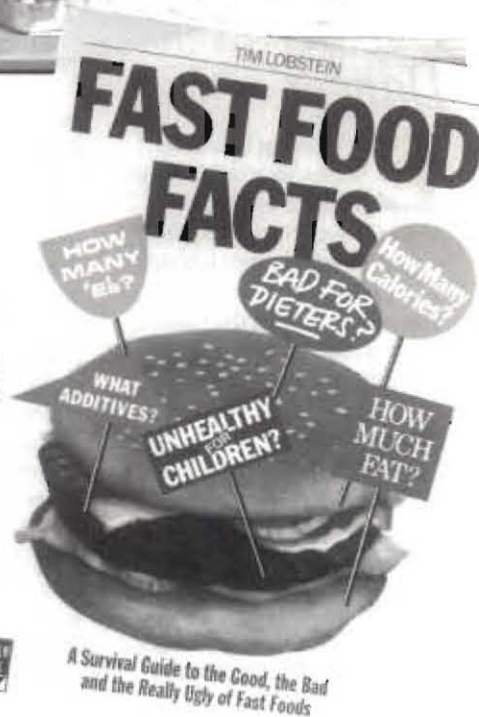
This sudden change of heart is a notable success of *The Food Magazine's* campaign', said Tim Lobstein, author of the London Food Commission's book *Fast Food Facts*. 'It's a pity they had to be put under such pressure before they revealed the contents of what they sell. I haven't seen any of the promised listings yet, but I very much hope the companies will also start to re-consider their product formulations now they'll be putting them in print. Getting information on what they're selling is just the beginning of the campaign to get decent quality food.'

Mike Jacobson, veteran US campaigner on fast foods and director of

the Washington-based Center for Science in the Public Interest, welcomed the moves in the UK, but pointed out that the UK still had some way to go. 'We've had ingredients listings available at the larger chains for some years here in the USA', he said, 'but we're calling for packet ingredients listings - with the information displayed on the carton - to be sure of getting the facts into people's hands.'

It's done with supermarket foods so we see no reason why it can't be done with fast foods - that should be no problem for the larger chains'

Fast Food Facts is published by



Camden Press
and available from LFC
Publications, 88 Old Street, London
EC1V 9AR. £5.95 (inc p&p)



Swedish coffee filters: 'brown to avoid pollution from a bleaching process'

Dioxin Danger

Evidence from Canada and Sweden has revealed traces of dioxins in milk, cream and other foods stored in bleached paper cartons and in coffee made in bleached paper filters. Although the British government is aware of this evidence, consumers have not been told about what could be an avoidable risk.

Dioxins and their close chemical relations, furans, are among the most toxic compounds yet discovered. They are by-products of the bleaching process which turns natural brown paper pulp white – a purely cosmetic process. Research has confirmed small amounts of the compounds remain in the bleached paper products and can migrate into foods, particularly fatty foods.

Even minute amounts (parts per trillion – equivalent to one drop in an Olympic-sized swimming pool) are extremely harmful to the environment and to humans. Dioxins are known to

cause cancer and birth defects and to damage the immune system.

In Canada a report from the government Food Research Division investigated the transfer of dioxins and furans from paper cartons into milk and cream. It concluded: 'Consideration of the extensive consumption of these common foods suggests that food in carton containers could represent a significant source of some of these contaminants to the human body burden.'

In Sweden, two studies showed tiny amounts of dioxins could be leached from chlorine-bleached filters into coffee. Subsequently Melita, the world leader in filters, has offered Swedish coffee drinkers an unbleached alternative. However this choice is not available to UK consumers.

Both governments are taking action. Dr Andrew Gillman of Canada's Health and Welfare Department told BBC radio's 'Face The Facts' (16 November 1988) that although levels were very small, lack of proof is no excuse for lack

of action. 'There is no desirable level of dioxins and furans and when you find a source you act to diminish it right away.'

But in the UK there has been no action to reduce the contamination. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) originally told 'Face The Facts' they were aware of the current research in Canada and Sweden but that there were no plans to start any here or to encourage British manufacturers to

reduce their use of chlorine bleached pulp.

However before the programme was due to be broadcast, MAFF said there had been a mistake and research was being carried out after all and Ministers certainly were not complacent on the issue.

Richard Ryder, the Minister for Food, told the programme: 'There is no doubt at all that there are some dioxins (getting into food) and for this reason I have asked three committees to look into this and they will be reporting quite soon.'

Pesticide ban delayed

Captafol, a cancer-causing pesticide used on soft fruit, vegetables and grain, is to be banned – but not immediately.

Following reports from the World Health Organisation and Food and Agriculture Organisation which suggested back in 1986 that the chemical was more toxic than previously realised, MAFF announced in October 1988 that

it would cease to permit the use of this fungicide on food products. Evidence that it causes cancers in rats and mice led the Ministry's Advisory Committee on Pesticides to recommend early withdrawal of the substance.

Captafol is mainly used during the Spring, and has been used on strawberry plants, leeks, potatoes and cereal plants. But, despite the long-awaited

announcement of the ban, the Minister has seen fit to allow farmers to continue to use the fungicide for another growing season. All through Spring 1989 it will

still be permitted, allowing growers to use up their stocks of the chemical before the ban comes into effect at the end of June.

British water fails the test

In England and Wales 298 water supplies have been found to be contaminated with pesticides exceeding EEC legal limits. According to Friends of the Earth (FoE) who carried out the survey, the worst breaches of the EEC's Maximum Admissible Concentration (MAC) were found in the Anglian, North-West, Severn-Trent, Thames, Wessex and Yorkshire regions.

The most commonly detected pesticides were Atrazine and Simazine widely used as 'total weed-killers' by councils and British Rail - both of which should be banned according to FoE.

In the Anglian Region, an area of intensive arable farming, 11 pesticides were found exceeding the EEC limits - the highest number recorded in the survey. These included the herbicide 2,4,5-T which was found in ground water sources at four times the EEC limit.

But instead of taking action, the UK government is pressing the European Commission to draft an

amendment to the Drinking Water Directive which replaces the MACs with limits for individual pesticides 'more closely related to health risks'. In effect this would be a relaxation of the limits, FoE claims.

Meanwhile, the report claims, water suppliers are not being advised to report, and in effect are encouraged to ignore, breaches of the MACs for pesticides in drinking water. In such circumstances, the Government has abdicated its role as the 'competent authority' under the terms of the directive.

Friends of the Earth are calling for water protection zones with prohibited or restricted use of certain pesticides; the installation of special treatment facilities in particular areas of extreme contamination; and most importantly no relaxation of the EEC limits.

► *An Investigation of Pesticide Pollution in Drinking Water in England and Wales*. Published by Friends of the Earth, 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ.

Cuts hit vital research

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has announced a £31.5 million cut in vital research, including work on areas of public concern such as pesticides, animal disease and pollution.

Unless industry picks up the bill, this research will cease by 1992, involving the loss of 1,500 jobs at up to 100 institutes throughout the UK, according to the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, which represents agricultural researchers, advisors and teachers.

The list includes research to which the Government has made political commitments, such as the use of fertilisers and alternative biological controls; reducing the use of herbicides and pesticides; and research into animal disease including those passed to humans, such as salmonella.

The Government's plans have already caused an outcry throughout the industry, with public opposition from farming organisations, including the National Farmers' Union.

Advisors to MAFF

A new line-up for the influential Food Advisory Committee has been announced by MAFF.

Out goes Professor James (author of the NACNE report), Professor Curtis (the present Chair), Dr Fulton and Mr Alan Turner. The new line-up is as follows:

Dr Ewan Page (Chair), Vice-Chancellor, University of Reading, and Chair, Food Research Institute
Dr Margaret Ashwell, Consultant in Food and Nutrition
Mr Michael Boxall, Company Secretary, Tesco
Dr Howard Eggins, Director, Bioquest Ltd
Dr Tom Gorsuch, Research Director, Colmans
Mr Tony Harrison, Chief Public Analyst, Avon and Gloucester County Councils
Professor Marian Hicks, Science Director, United Biscuits
Mr R Manley, Trading Standards Director, Cheshire County Council
Ms Patricia Mann, External Affairs, J Walter Thompson
Dr Bryan Nichols, Manager, Van den Burghs & Jurgens Ltd
Mr Tony Skrimshire, Manager, H J Heinz Ltd
Ms Anne Stamper, Lecturer and Education Chair, National Federation of Women's Institutes
Professor Paul Turner, Pharmacology, St Bartholomew's Hospital
Dr Roger Whitehead, Dunn Nutrition Unit

Dr Elspeth Young, Part-time Senior Registrar in Dermatology, Wycombe and Radcliffe Hospitals

This puts the score at:

Food industry-related	7
Academic and medical	4
Local authority	2
Consultant	1
Consumer advocate	1

A new member of the Meat and Livestock Commission's *Consumers Committee* has just been appointed: Mr Frank Pearce.

Mr Pearce is a past vice-chair of the Federation of Fresh Meat Wholesalers and is a manager for Grand Metropolitan with its massive food production and catering interests. The press release gave no indication which consumer organisation, or even which individual consumer, he is supposed to represent.

Something to grouse about

Chernobyl (or is it our own nuclear waste?) still has effects on our upland pastures and moorland. Sheep tested during last autumn in Cumbria were found to be increasingly radioactive according to MAFF's own statistics.

Sheep tested as they left the Cumbrian restricted area:

	No of sheep tested	Percent failing test	Highest radioactivity (Becquerels/kg)
June 1988	1825	0.0	653
July 1988	1387	0.1	785
Aug 1988	3883	3.5	1602

Northumbrian grass, heather and moss showed some of the highest national readings, coming in at 189 Bq/kg.

Ironically, those who can afford to eat grouse might want to think twice. North Yorkshire grouse, sampled in the days leading up to the Glorious Twelfth (12 August), the start of the open season for grouse, were found to show levels of around 200-300 Bq/kg, with some samples as high as 570-590 Bq/kg. The Government says there is no need for action (for sheep, at least) below 1000 Bq/kg. But how many ministers would knowingly eat the contaminated grouse?

In April's Food Magazine

- ★ The Greenhouse Effect: agricultural disasters and opportunities
- ★ A Century of MAFF: government food policies since the nineteenth century
- ★ Poverty and diet: a review of current research
- ★ The highly saturated vegetable fats - worse than butter?
- ★ Could breast cancer be linked to cows' milk? plus news, letters, recipes, guest writers and lots more!

Baby Milk Coalition launches new boycott

Bottle-feeding kills our babies', announced Raj Anand, a paediatrician from Bombay at a Washington press conference on 4 October 1988. Four years to the day after the end of the previous Nestlé boycott, Dr Anand was again urging people to 'Say No to Nestlé'.

Now, in over 20 countries - particularly Asia and Africa - Nestlé is accused of continuing to promote supplies of infant formula in hospitals, in direct contravention of WHO/UNICEF recommendations, and despite commitments given to boycotters in 1984.

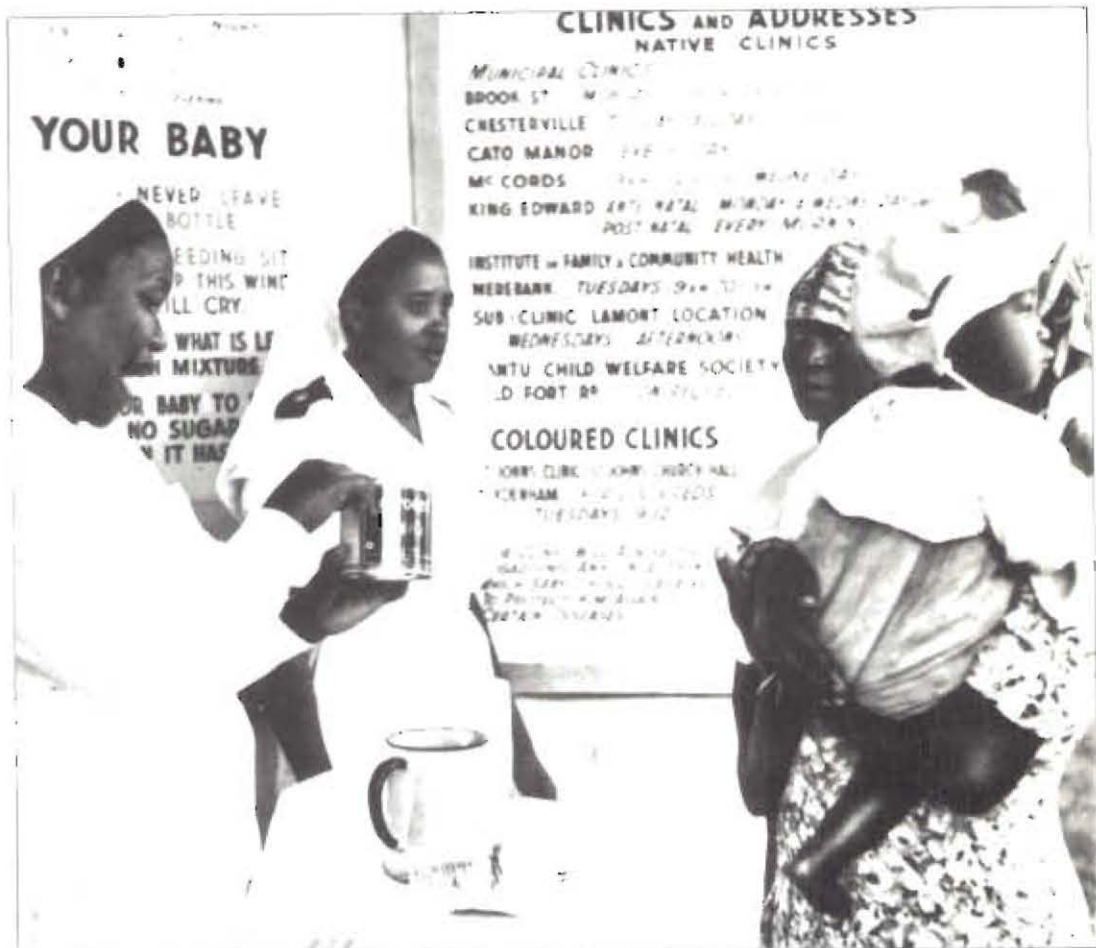
The initial campaign started in 1977 following worldwide exposure of the devastating effects of baby milk promotion. A WHO/UNICEF code adopted in 1981 provided a framework for the boycott campaign which spread to ten countries before Nestlé finally capitulated.

In the UK, the Baby Milk Action Coalition (BMAC) is launching a new boycott. According to BMAC spokesperson Patti Rundall: 'If we let Nestlé off the hook we will actually be strengthening the hand of the multinationals.'

'The signal sent out would be that grassroots organisations can be defeated as long as corporations have the power to outlast us. Nestlé was forced to admit that its practices might be dangerous to babies and promised to stop them. They must live up to their promises and it's up to us to see they do.'

For further information, videos or speakers for meetings, please contact BMAC, 34 Blinco Grove, Cambridge CB1 4TS

Weaning Ourselves off the Milk Companies A study day for all health workers, to be held in Cambridge on 18 February 1989. Contact BMAC at address above.



Company milk 'nurses' in the 1950s (photo: BMAC)

Co-ops debate Food Quality Charter

The Annual General Meeting of the Co-operative Wholesale Society held a lively and, from reports, heated debate about whether to support the LFC's Food Quality Charter. Some Co-op members were unhappy with the LFC's idea of a levy on the food trades to fund independent research in the public health and consumer interest.

In the end the AGM voted against the FQC, but voted for a motion which broadly supported the aims of the LFC Charter. The Co-operative movement was founded in the mid nineteenth century to provide food which met two criteria - no adulteration and prices the working classes could afford.

Irradiation: WHO speaks for whom?

In Geneva, 12-16 December, a historic meeting on food irradiation took place. A document written by Dr Fritz Kaferstein of the World Health Organisation (WHO), was tabled and dissected along with a report 'Food Irradiation: a Technique for Preserving and Decontaminating Food'. Supporters of irradiation may be pleased with the reassuring stance on safety, and the argument that irradiation is necessary to combat food poisoning increases world-wide. Critics are appalled that WHO could produce documents so biased, misleading and, in places, inaccurate.

At the meeting, European consumer organisations expressed concern that the WHO was endorsing irradiation as a way of combating food poisoning - a

position that undermines the WHO's own advice to eat a healthier, fresh food diet.

Recent outbreaks of salmonella caused by eggs in both the UK and USA indicate that a more effective public health approach would be to prevent the entry of bacteria into the food chain in the first place - and to ensure good hygiene and training.

Consumer groups from all over the world criticised the attempt to dismiss many safety issues that have yet to be resolved, official assurances notwithstanding.

It's long been established that irradiation damages food nutrients, even before cooking. Critics at the Geneva meeting asked why it was found necessary to use massive vitamin supple-

ments to irradiated food in studies which it claims showed no adverse effects.

The United Nations sponsored Environment Liaison Centre (ELC) based at Nairobi, is one group worried about the claim that irradiation can reduce food losses in developing countries. The ELC's *Eco-probe* newsletter in October pointed out that irradiation offers no guarantee of preventing recontamination. It is also worried that irradiation will deplete the nutrients of staple foods in under-developed countries.

The European Economic Community (EEC) is also privately arguing for irradiation on food poisoning grounds. The EEC published its directive on irradiation just before the Geneva meet-

ing. This gives the go-ahead to irradiation in time for 1992 and the completion of the internal market.

The UK government is now expected to approve irradiation within 18 months. The Ministry of Agriculture's Working Party on the issue - details of which are secret - is apparently now working on controls on irradiation for when it is legalised.

Assurances are to be given on food quality; documentary records are to be kept on irradiated consignments; premises are to be licensed; operations are to be inspected; and products are to be labelled. But public health officials, such as environmental health officers, are keen to see the fine print of Government proposals, particularly on licensing and controls.

Slimmers beware!

Pills claiming to be slimming aids which contain high levels of guar gum (E412) or locust bean gum (E410), may be banned later this year.

The gums are thickening agents permitted for use in food but not normally taken by themselves in large quantities in their dehydrated form. But they have been sold in this country as aids to weight reduction because of their ability to absorb water. The pills swell in the stomach and so reduce the

eater's appetite, while providing very few calories.

Several cases have been reported where the tablets or granules have started to swell while still in the throat (oesophagus), leading to blockage or even rupture. Two similar products, galactomannan and glucomannan gums, have already been banned. The proposals from MAFF will limit the use of guar and locust bean gums to 15 per cent by weight of any product.

Canada split

The history of the Consumers Association of Canada (CAC) has been stormy. First, it was disaffiliated from the world consumers' body, the International Organisation of Consumers' Unions. Then it took a highly contentious stance on food irradiation, appearing to support the unpopular technology.

The British Columbia Branch of CAC has now come out in strong opposition to irradiation. Not content with opposition to Canadian irradiation, the BC branch has put on record its opposition to the importation of

irradiated products.

Meanwhile Atomic Energy Canada has 'donated' US\$4.97 million to Thailand for an entire food irradiation plant to be located near Bangkok's Don Muang airport. This will irradiate prawns, mangoes and papayas for export markets - which include Europe. Canadian third world and environment groups are disturbed by this use of aid money.

The Canadian parliamentary committee wrote a report highly critical of irradiation, but was over-ruled, reportedly at cabinet level.

Inside Ice-Cream

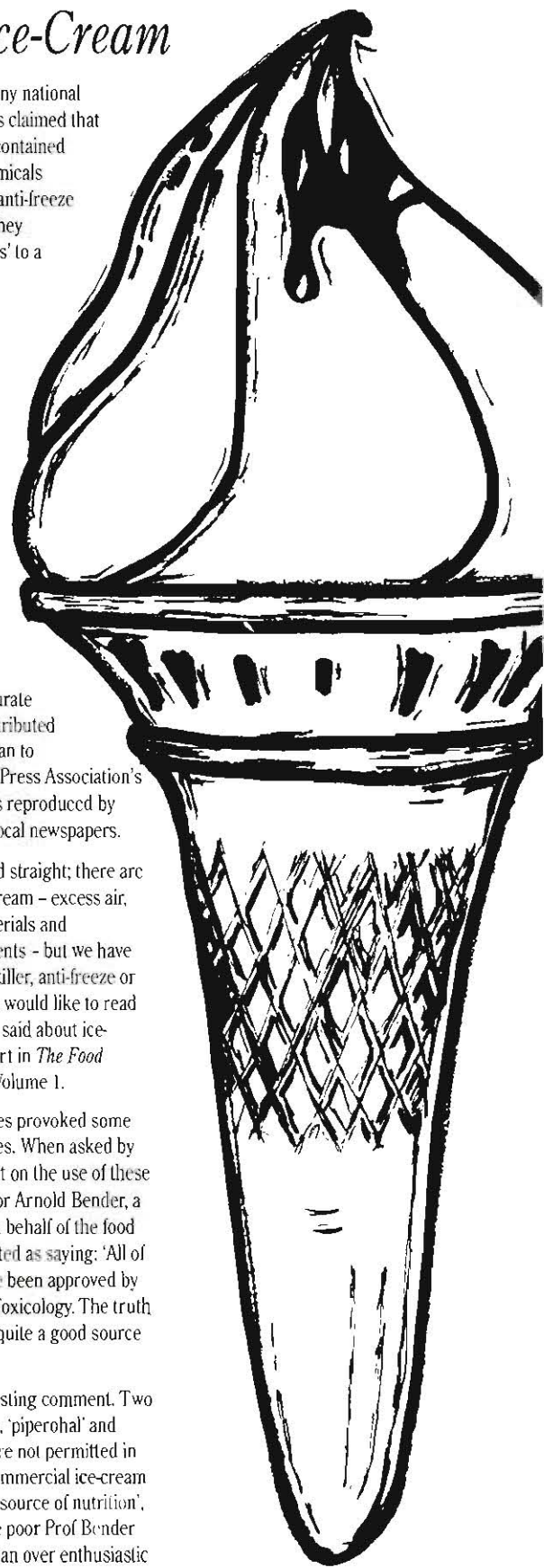
Last July many national newspapers claimed that ice-cream contained several dubious chemicals including lice-killer, anti-freeze and paint stripper. They attributed these 'facts' to a London Food Commission report on ice-cream. They were wrong. The London Food Commission criticised ice-cream, but not on these grounds.

The Press Association had condensed an article about ice-cream from *Healthy Living* magazine and in the process these inaccurate 'revelations' were attributed to the LFC rather than to *Healthy Living*. The Press Association's mistaken report was reproduced by many national and local newspapers.

To set the record straight; there are problems with ice-cream - excess air, low quality raw materials and unexpected ingredients - but we have no evidence of lice-killer, anti-freeze or paint stripper. If you would like to read what the LFC really said about ice-cream, see our report in *The Food Magazine*, Issue 2, Volume 1.

The press articles provoked some interesting responses. When asked by *The Sun* to comment on the use of these substances Professor Arnold Bender, a frequent speaker on behalf of the food industry, was reported as saying: 'All of these additives have been approved by the Committee on Toxicology. The truth is that ice-cream is quite a good source of nutrition.'

This is an interesting comment. Two of those substances, 'piperohal' and diethylene glycol, are not permitted in food at all. As for commercial ice-cream being 'quite a good source of nutrition', we can only assume poor Prof Bender was also a victim of an over enthusiastic press!



Veggie Mites

On 28 November 1988, the 'Choice' campaign was launched jointly by The Vegetarian Society, Animal Aid and the Athene Trust. The campaign is aimed at improving the variety and quality of vegetarian school meals following a survey which showed that vegetarian children generally got a poor deal.

The campaign material includes nutritional guidelines for vegetarian school children, a recipe book and menu planner. These will be sent to the catering manager of every Local Education Authority and every secondary school will get the recipe book. Promotional items such as a poster and menu boards are also



available.

For further information contact Juliet Gellatley, Choice, c/o the Vegetarian Society, Parkdale, Dunham Road, Altringham, Cheshire WA14 4QC: 061-928 0793.

Asian food in hospital

Recently Waltham Forest Community Health Council (CHC) received complaints from members of the Asian community about the availability of suitable foods for Asian patients in hospital. One problem was that local hospitals claim to be able to provide halal food but this was not being communicated to patients on wards. Some patients were even told by nurses that such food was not available.

The CHC called a public meeting on the issue. The director of hotel services for the district explained what the position was in theory.

Representatives of a number of Asian organisations and individuals then reported their experiences. These indicated that the theory was not being put into practice.

Serviced by the CHC, a working party met several times and tasted food at two hospitals and at a local luncheon club for elderly Asian people. These tastings showed that the food the hospital was buying in

was unsuitable for Asian tastes. For example, American rice was used rather than Basmati, and curry powder was used extensively. Furthermore, only halal dishes were available and not vegetarian meals. During the tastings, one supplier was identified who could provide balanced meals suited to local Asian tastes.

A policy was drawn up from the recommendations of the working party. Among those were proposals that vegetable fat should be used in all products including desserts and bread baked in local hospitals; serving spoons should be kept separate for each dish; gelatine should not be added to food other than jellies; multilingual information should be given about the availability of suitable halal and Asian vegetarian dishes.

This policy was adopted by the district and followed up with visits to local catering managers. One outstanding area where improvements are still needed is at

ward level. The kitchens are now following the guidance, but the problem lies in motivating and educating the nursing staff about the availability of Asian foods. With an absence of interpreters or link workers in the hospitals, further work needs to be done and a watching brief maintained. All the local Asian

organisations and places of worship have been circulated with a copy of the policy, plus information in the relevant languages about Asian food availability in hospitals. But the CHC also welcomes report backs and complaints for investigation, if and when problems do arise. It is acknowledged that transition from policy to practice will be a continuing process.

CAROLYN CLARK,
Waltham Forest CHC

Halal meals in Halifax

In April this year Halifax hospitals began to buy-in freshly made meals from a local catering firm called East West Kitchen. Following a successful six-month trial period a twelve-month contract has been agreed. Trevor Rhodes, hospital catering manager, is pleased with the service. 'The quality and range of meals is excellent', he says, 'and they have certainly filled a gap in the provision of foods which meets the requirements of the local Asian community'.

East West Kitchen began trading in November 1987 from Windsor Mill, in Halifax. They supply shops, restaurants and pubs with snack items such as samosas and pakoras, and also run an outside catering service offering both Asian and English menus.

The company is a worker co-operative, staffed entirely by women

from the area who, through lack of English and the constraints of their family commitments, find it difficult to get jobs elsewhere. They bring to the workplace all the skill and care of home cooking.

Everything is fresh - each curry is prepared with a blend of spices and masala created on the premises, and no instant curry preparations are ever used.

The Halifax hospital work has meant rapid growth for the firm to supply an ever increasing demand. The company ensures that new staff receive training in good practice, health and hygiene. As the scale of production increases, they are also upgrading equipment. Once it is installed and new menus printed, meat dishes will be offered to the hospitals alongside the present vegetarian range.

Weapons of the Bio-Revolution

At a conference held in London in October 1988, Friends of the Earth (FoE), in their first public statement on gene technology, attacked the work of Oxford's Institute of Virology (IoV).

The Institute's director Dr David Bishop, a leading proponent of biotechnology, had earlier told the conference of its work on insecticidal baculoviruses, which are being tested as pine tree pest control agents. But FoE's Andrew Lees revealed that the IoV also has a contract with the US Department of Defence to develop a new biological weapon. If the IoV

produces an effective vaccine against Rift Valley Fever the US Army will add this virus to its biological armoury.

'Action Alert: The Bio-revolution - Cornucopia or Pandora's Box?' was organised by the Athene Trust, an educational charity promoting environmental and animal rights issues. Held over two days, the conference had sessions on genetically engineered growth hormones, environmental impact of genetic engineering, patenting of transgenic animals and ethics of biotechnology. Proceedings of the conference will be published in mid-1989.

TWO NEW BOOKS FROM THE LONDON FOOD COMMISSION

THE LONDON FOOD COMMISSION **CHILDREN'S FOOD** Tim Lobstein

THE FACTS ABOUT:
DIET ESSENTIALS
COMMERCIAL BABY FOODS
ADDITIVES
FOOD REGULATIONS
LABELLING
FAST FOODS
FOOD TECHNOLOGIES
COMPANY MARKETING
GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The good, the bad and the useless

Children's Food

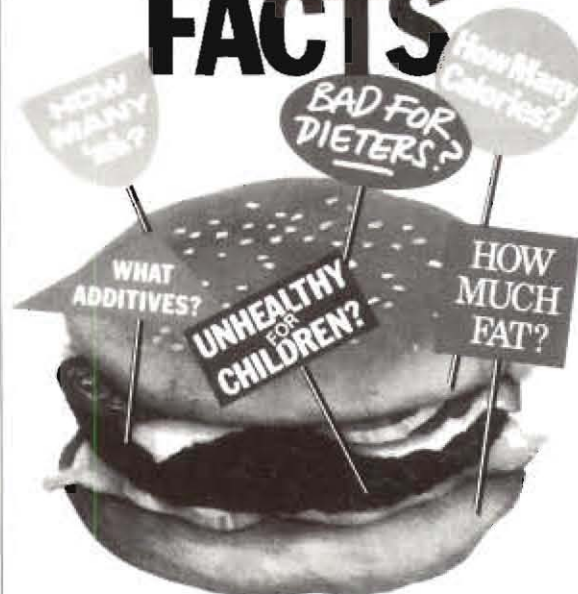
Teething rusks twice as sweet as doughnuts? Baby foods made of thickened water? Sugar Puffs sweeter than some chocolate bars and fish fingers less than 50% fish? What should a parent be buying?

The book is a catalogue of shame for the food industry and the trouble that may be in store for our children. More than this, the book goes on to help readers look critically at the labels on food products, gives the details about healthy eating and the sources of good nourishment; and provides an extensive section on what can be done in playgroups, nurseries and school meals services.

The London Food Commission's *Children's Food*, by Tim Lobstein (Unwin Hyman). Available late November. Order now from the LFC. £3.95 plus 80p p&p

TIM LOBSTEIN

FAST FOOD FACTS



A Survival Guide to the Good, the Bad and the Really Ugly of Fast Foods

Fast Food Facts

Beef burgers can be 40 per cent pig fat. French fries may be coloured with azo dyes and fried in beef fat. Fish batter rarely has any egg in it, and milk shakes may have wood pulp and seaweed along with up to eight spoons of sugar in them.

With comprehensive tables of nutrients and additives this book is a unique and highly informative look into the secretive world of fast food catering. Showing the good points and the bad, it helps health-conscious readers find exactly what they want and don't want, and where to get it.

You don't have to avoid fast foods. But you do need to know what is in them. This book reveals the facts the companies want to keep to themselves.

The London Food Commission's *Fast Food Facts* by Tim Lobstein (Camden Press). Available now from the LFC. £4.95 plus £1.00 p&p.

Cereal-based bars, introduced in supermarkets in 1981, have sold well as 'between-meal' snacks. In 1981 the cereal bar industry was worth £0.5 million. By 1984 it had grown rapidly to £10 million. Chewy cereal bar sales for 1988 probably reached £48 million, compared with £38 million the previous year.

Chewy bars have overtaken crunchy bars and are the prime growth sector. The move from tough, crunchy, dry bars to soft, chewy bars has been accompanied by increased use of chocolate coatings or chips – or sometimes carob for a 'healthier' image.

The snack bar market is dominated by companies such as Jordans, Quaker and Fox's; but there are also many small producers. Traditional chocolate confectioners such as Mars and Rowntree Mackintosh (now owned by Nestlé) are now moving successfully into the cereal bar market too.

Many cereal bars carry claims such as '100% natural', 'full of goodness', or 'high fibre' and trade on their 'healthy' image. But just how healthy are they? *The Food Magazine* surveyed cereal bars and turned up some surprises.

WHAT WE FOUND: FIBRE

You would expect cereal bars to be beneficially high in fibre. According to the Government Food Advisory Committee's recommendations bars can be labelled 'high fibre' only when they contain more than 6g of fibre per bar. Our survey showed the amount of fibre varied from less than one gram to 5.6 grams per bar (see table 1). All failed to meet FAC's 'high fibre' criteria.

Despite this, two made 'high fibre' claims. Jordans' claim is almost

justifiable with fibre levels of 4.3 grams to 5.6 grams per bar for their crunchy bars – much higher than the other bars in our survey. But Sainsbury's claim of 'high fibre' might

cent. Note this was only the added sugar – the ingredients list showed more hidden sugar

For most bars we examined, the ingredients list revealed high sugar

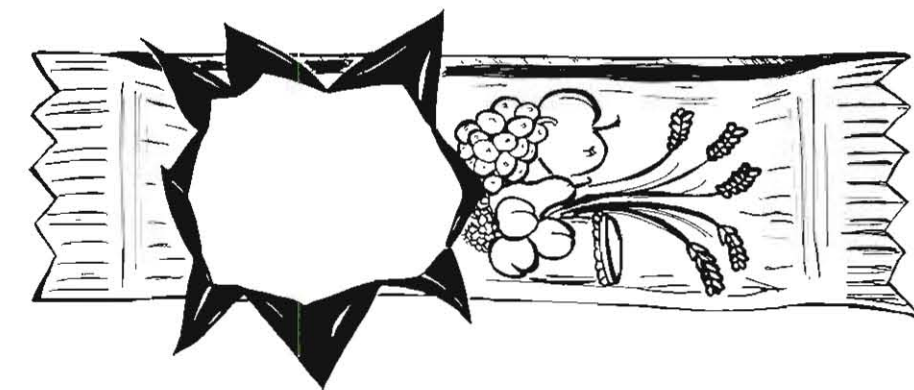
contributed by dried fruit and fruit juice.

Three cereal bar manufacturers claimed 'no added sugar' but their bars still contained hidden sugars.

Fruit bars and carob bars, recent additions to the 'health bar' market, are especially prone to 'no added sugar' claims. But is this fair to the consumer? One fruit bar making this claim contained 60 per cent sugar mostly from dried fruit. Others in the range had an average of 40 per cent.

A range of carob bars also claimed to be free from added sugar. But three of the seven contained added sugars at 34 per cent. The total amount of sugar was

much higher when sugar from other ingredients was added. One carob bar contained 47 per cent sugar; more sugar than traditional chocolate bars!



Crunch-time for cereal bars

Muesli and cereal-based bars have been marketed as a healthy alternative to traditional confectionery. Health food shops and supermarkets are now packed with a wide range of these so-called healthy snacks. But when it comes to the crunch, do they live up to their healthy image? Ana Sagües and Melanie Miller investigate for The Food Magazine.

be thought misleading at a mere 2.4g per bar.

SUGARS: ADDED AND HIDDEN

Cereal bars generally contain a mixture of oats, other cereal, fruit and nuts. While they contain some vitamins, minerals and fibre absent from traditional confectionery, most cereal bars still contain large amounts of sugar.

Most manufacturers avoided declaring the sugar content on labels. But four bars declared 'added sugar' ranging from 20.4 per cent to 27.5 per

use, often in forms that sound 'healthier' – such as raw cane, soft brown, muscavado – or disguised as glucose syrup, fructose syrup, corn syrup, lactose, dextrose, molasses and honey. Hidden sugar was also

CALORIES

The calorie content of cereal bars ranged from 76-150 Kcal, with a Sainsbury's product giving the highest per bar. The calorie content of fruit bars tends to be much higher. For example, a 45g fruit and nut bar with honey (Boots) supplied 201 Kcal – 8 per cent of the recommended daily energy intake for an adult male, and 11.6 per cent of the recommended intake for a six-year-old child.

Weight for weight, the calories in a fruit bar can be the same as in a Mars bar, but because the fruit bar is

Despite the interest in healthy eating, confectionery sales rose by 12 per cent in the three years to April 1987. Manufacturers enjoyed ever-widening profit margins.

Pre-tax profits of 5.6 per cent in 1984-5 increased to 6.1 per cent by 1986-7 among 65 leading companies.

Table 1: Fatty calories and little fibre in cereal bars

	Kcal	% calories from fat	Fibre (gm)
Granose			
Apple Muesli	104	29%	-
Hazelnut & Almond Muesli	115	39%	-
Chocolate Chip Muesli	121	48%	-
Holly Mill			
Crunchy Oat & Sesame	136	44%	0.7
Crunchy Oat & Sunflower	137	45%	0.6
Crunchy Carob	174	46%	3.2
Northumbrian			
Carob and Honey	146	38%	1.0
Bran and Honey	143	38%	1.6
Holland & Barrett			
Chewy Muesli	100	33%	2.4
Roasted Nut	115	42%	2.3
Carob and Orange	101	30%	2.3
Jordans			
Crunchy Honey & Almond	137	44%	4.6
Crunchy Orange & Carob	140	45%	4.3
Crunchy Apple & Bran	131	41%	5.6
Crunchy Coconut & Honey	139	43%	4.6
Chewy Raisin & Hazelnut	117	36%	4.6
Chewy Raspberry & Apple	120	35%	4.6
Fox's			
Chocolate & Almond Crunch	95	41%	0.9
Sultana & Hazelnut Crunch	94	40%	1.1
Honey & Oat Crunch	91	42%	1.8
Chewy Apple Jump	121	35%	1.1
Chewy Raisin Jump	121	34%	1.1
Chewy Chocolate Jump	130	43%	1.0
Quaker Oats Harvest			
Tropical Fruit & Nut Crunch	78	40%	0.7
Raisin Crunch	76	39%	0.7
Chocolate & Hazelnut Crunch	81	44%	0.8
Chewy Mint Chocolate	112	32%	0.8
Chewy Apple & Raisin	106	29%	0.9
Chewy Fruit & Nut	108	36%	0.8
Appleford Cluster			
Chewy Apple & Hazelnut	116	31%	1.2
Chewy Apricot & Chocolate	118	27%	1.2
Chewy Coconut & Honey	122	31%	1.4
Chewy Hazelnut & Raisin	131	36%	1.2
Sainsbury's			
Honey & Almond Crunch	150	38%	1.7
Fruit Bran & Honey Crunch	140	38%	2.4
Tesco			
Chewy Chocolate Chip	125	37%	1.3
Chewy Apricot & Chocolate	118	35%	1.9

Table 2: The quantities of vitamins and minerals found in cereal bars are not much higher than in chocolate digestive biscuits or currant buns

mg per 100gm	Vitamin B1	Vitamin B2	Niacin	Calcium	Iron
Quaker 'Harvest'					
Raisin Crunch Bars	0.18	0.15	1.0	87	1.8
Apple & Raisin Chewy Bars	0.18	0.05	1.0	35	1.7
Fox's 'Jump'					
Apple Bars	0.16	-	-	60	4.0
Raisin Bars	0.14	-	-	67	5.0
Chocolate Digestive	0.08	0.11	1.3	84	2.1
Currant Bun	0.18	0.03	1.4	90	2.5

smaller, you get fewer calories per portion.

FAT

The cereal bars average 18 per cent fat (by weight). Only one in four cereal bars in our survey contained less than 15 per cent. The percentage of calories from fat (see table 1) in cereal bars ranged from 27 per cent to 48 per cent. These are similar to a Mars bar which has 35 per cent of calories from fat.

Many cereal bars in the USA contain palm and coconut oil which are highly saturated. Only a few UK manufacturers said they used healthier vegetable oils.

COMPANY INFORMATION

Where manufacturers failed to supply adequate nutritional information on wrappers, we wrote requesting more information. Many manufacturers were reluctant to provide nutritional details. Excuses varied. Mars for example, whose cereal-filled 'Balisto' bar is expected to become a £50 million brand said: '... some of the information you want is confidential and, in these

circumstances, we prefer not to respond at all rather than give only part of the story.'

And from Fox's: 'I regret to inform you that after checking with our Technical Department the information you seek if not available on the product in the shops already, is of a confidential nature and cannot be released.'

Large companies claimed they were unable to supply detailed nutrition information without carrying out a very thorough analysis of the bars. In contrast, small companies such as Shepherdboy gave most information on wrappers.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey found that most cereal bars do not deserve their healthy image, being too high in sugar and fat, and surprisingly low in fibre. Manufacturers appear to be giving misleading information on their products. All but two failed to declare large amounts of sugar.

The EEC and UK government should not deny the public full, compulsory nutritional labelling. The use of claims of any kind needs to be minimised, allowing comprehensive nutrition information to present a true picture.

The average British baby eats its way through over £75-worth of ready-to-eat weaning foods in its first year. A recent survey found that at the age of five months more than 80 per cent of babies were being offered one or more of these jars and tins every day.

Sales are worth nearly £50m to the two leading companies, Heinz the market-leader, and Cow & Gate. Their 'fight for market share' has led to a price war and, we fear, pressure on food quality.

Parents buy weaning foods for their convenience, reassured by statements that they will supply a nutritious part of a baby's diet.

It is not easy to judge the ingredients from the packet. Indeed it is not easy to judge the ingredients from the contents, as the foods are blended into a fine puree and, as we show in the illustration, may well contain colour and flavour boosters which mask the real ingredients.

The large print on a label can be used by unscrupulous manufacturers to mislead customers into thinking the product is of a better quality than it really is, or distract customers from asking pertinent questions. The large print boasts the supposedly good features – many of which should be taken for

granted anyway – while the small print provides only a few clues as to the real quality.

Water is often the major ingredient, and other ingredients will include thickening agents to mask the amount of water present. The amount and quality of the meats used can be questionable: there is no minimum meat

WEANING READ THE S

When buying food for a small child parents want to be sure they are getting the best. What are the contents? Tim Lobstein, for *The Food Magazine*

WATER Often first in the list – is added in greater quantity than any other ingredient

BEEF No amount shown but probably below 10-15 per cent lean meat in this sort of meal. May legally include many unusual parts of an animal and mechanically recovered meat slurry

CARROT In the USA Heinz says it checks for pesticide residues in vegetables. They make no such claim in the UK.

POTATO Small quantities (5-10 per cent) so this is of little nutritional value, but it serves to thicken a watery mix.

APPLE JUICE Useful as a sweetening agent, allowing the company to say 'no added sugar'

MODIFIED CORNFLOUR Little nutritional value, providing only empty calories (like sugar). Sole purpose is to thicken the watery mixture.

TOMATO PUREE In such a small quantity (2-5 per cent) its main purpose is to add colour and a bit more thickening

RICE FLOUR Another thickener

SOYA PROTEIN Similar to Textured Vegetable Protein, a cheap substitute for meat, though lacking many of meat's vitamins and minerals

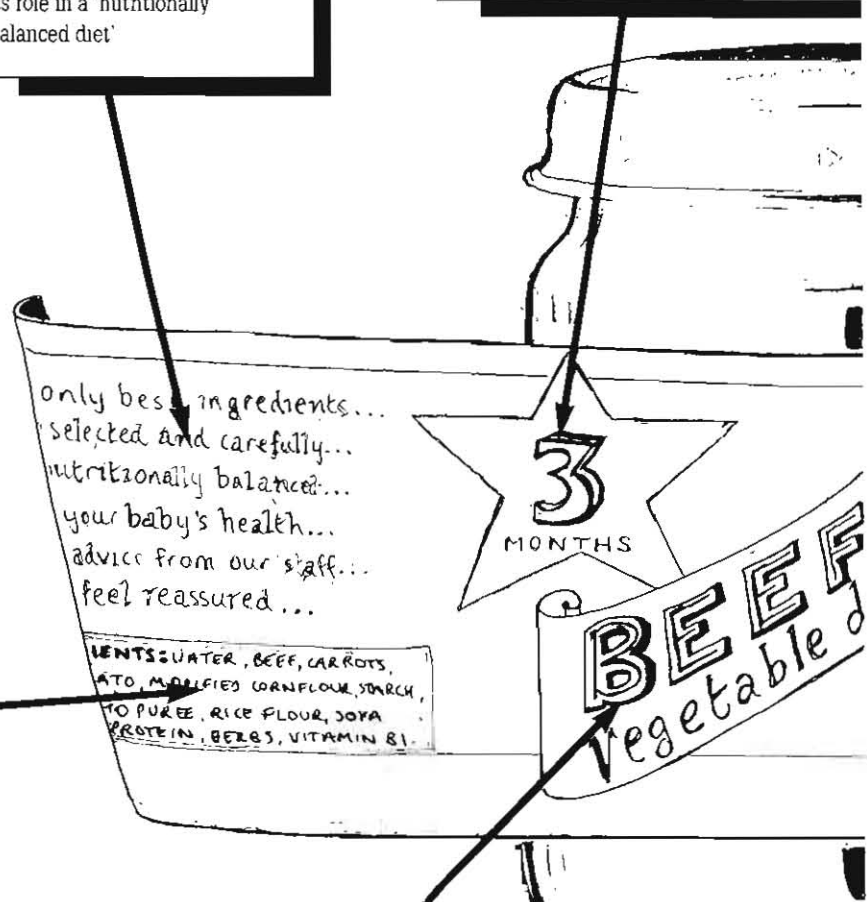
HYDROLYSED VEGETABLE PROTEIN A close cousin of monosodium glutamate (but msg is not permitted in baby foods), it gives a meaty flavour to the thickened mix, perhaps convincing the parent (obviously not the baby) that there is extra meat present.

IRON SULPHATE An iron supplement that should not be needed if there were plenty of red meat in the product.

HERBS Purely to appeal to the tastebuds of the adult server, to give a 'beef-associated' flavour.

Reassuring phrases about the 'pure ingredients', the 'careful preparation' of the product and its role in a 'nutritionally balanced diet'

Various age ranges are being offered, starting as young as the companies dare. Three months recommended earliest age to start weaning, as late as six months is fine.



Neither the quality nor the quantity of the beef is specified on this label. It has to be specified on other meat products – but baby foods are exempt for no obvious reason.

There could well be less than ten per cent lean meat in a jar like this, and 'lean' can include skin, gristle, head, tongue and tail

declaration (of the sort required on most other meat products) and it can legally include offal, brain, bowels, feet and testicles as well as mechanically recovered meat slurry.

The nutritional data can tell you how dilute a product may be. For example, a typical six-month old baby needs at least 15 grams of protein a

day. You soon realise that according to labelled protein content, a baby may have to eat four or five jars a day if it is relying on this as its main food intake. The figure for calories also indicates how dilute products are – seven or eight jars might have to be consumed every day if this is all the child eats.

One company in the USA admitted that if they were to remove the thickeners, and hence some of the added water, from their baby meals, they would have to increase the food ingredients by as much as 25 per cent or more. Our own estimate of the typical meat content of jars where meat is the main feature suggests that there is less than 15 per cent meat in a jar of 'Braised Steak Dinner' for example, and that it may easily fall below ten per cent. And that includes the fatty bits.

We invite you to teach yourself to read labels and to join us in the campaign to improve the quality of the food designed for our youngest children.

Adapted from the London Food Commission's book *Children's Food*, published by Unwin Hyman, 1988, price £3.95. Available by mail order for £4.75 inclusive of p&p, from LFC Publications, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.

G FOOD MALL PRINT

getting something good for their children. But how can they judge the
looks at the labels on ready-to-serve weaning foods

NO ADDED SUGAR: Nor should there be in a savoury product. In sweet ones there may well be non-sugar sweeteners like apple juice concentrates, allowing a sweet product to be sold as sugar-free.

NO ADDED SALT: No, but some tangy, flavour-boosting additions may well be present (see ingredient list). Watch out for salty ingredients like cheese and bacon, allowing salty food to be sold as 'no added salt'.

NO ARTIFICIAL FLAVOURINGS: Maybe not, but there could be some flavour-boosting ingredients that mask the added thickened water and the lack of food.

NO ADDED PRESERVATIVES: Some are banned from baby foods by law anyway. And a vacuum-sealed jar or tin should need no additional preserving agent.

NO ARTIFICIAL COLOURING: These are banned in baby foods anyway. Watch out for foods being used primarily as colouring agents, like tomato puree and Vitamin B2 supplements.

NO ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS: These are banned in baby foods anyway.

NO FLAVOUR ENHANCERS: Technically, flavour enhancers are banned in baby foods by law anyway. But several ingredients provide added flavouring to mask the lack of real food (see the ingredients list).

The nutritional analysis is given in a very brief form and may be of little use to most shoppers. It says nothing about the sugar levels, the salt levels or the saturated fat levels, nor the amount of water present. For a dedicated researcher they can give useful protein and calorie levels which could help evaluate meat and water content.

Sugar in a beef dinner? (but check for sweet ingredients like dried fruit, fruit puree or fruit juices)

Salt – no, but check for salty ingredients like cheese or bacon, and check for the other forms of flavour-booster which hide the lack of food and the excess thickened water.

NO ADDED SUGAR
NO ADDED SALT

PER 100g	PER 100g	PER 100g
Energy	Protein	Fat
Carbohydrate	Fibre	Salt

Do they help us shop for healthy food?

We found wide variations in the quality of information available. Less than half the products we looked at provided information which helped shoppers to make healthy choices. And in many cases the most important information was missing altogether. We also found that stores with good reputations were not necessarily providing better nutritional information.

Shopping basket

Using the healthy eating guidelines from the DHSS (COMA) and NACNE reports, we looked at the nutritional information provided for breakfast cereals, butter, baked beans, pork sausages, tomato ketchup, peanut butter and chocolate digestives.

Here we give a summary of which foods from which supermarkets display nutritional information about sugar, salt, fat and dietary fibre. 'Own brands' are included alongside a leading brand name.

A '+' indicates the amount is displayed, a '-' indicates no information given.

MAFF Guidelines

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) guidelines on nutritional labelling suggest three types of format. Only the most detailed (Category III) tells consumers what the sugar, salt and fibre content of foods might be, although

Being told to eat healthily is one thing. Having the information as you shop is another. We went to the country's leading supermarkets to examine the nutritional information on their packaged foods.

both Categories II and III show the saturated fat content of the fat in a product.

In many cases (eg breakfast cereals) there is the additional question of whether the sugar, salt or

fibre is present in a naturally occurring form or as an added extra during manufacture. The MAFF guidelines recommend stating only the amount of total nutrients present. This may avoid embarrassment to the industry but does not help consumers judge the quality of the food on offer. Only Tesco and Sainsbury's appear to be prepared to break the Government's recommendation and give figures for added sugar and salt.

Company plans

We rang the leading companies to ask what their plans were for nutritional labelling. Safeway said they were moving over to Category III labelling, and Gateway were increasing the labelling on a range of foods at all category levels. Sainsbury's and Tesco already aim for Category III labelling, or a similar labelling, on most products, while Marks and Spencer had no plans to improve the information they supply.

From our study we rate the supermarkets' nutritional labelling policies:

Sainsbury's and Tesco
- best of the bunch
Gateway and Safeway
- could be improved
The Co-op
- some way to go
Marks and Spencer
- a long way to go

Research by Anthony Twist

NUTRITION
An average serving of Sainsbury's Rice Pops (30g/1oz) will provide approximately one third of the Recommended Daily Amounts of Thiamin, Riboflavin, Niacin, Folic Acid and Vitamin B₁₂. These are all part of the Vitamin B group which helps food to give us energy and is needed for healthy blood as is iron of which Rice Pops are a good source.

	PER 100g (3.5oz)	PER SERVING 30g (1.05oz)
ENERGY	340 KJ/CALORIES	105 KJ/CALORIES
PROTEIN	14.55g	4.35g
CARBOHYDRATE AVAILABLE	61.0g	18.3g
TOTAL FAT	1.3g	0.4g
DIETARY FIBRE	4.5g	1.4g
ADDED SUGAR	8.0g	2.4g
ADDED SALT	2.8g	0.8g

VITAMINS/ MINERALS	% OF THE RECOMMENDED DAILY AMOUNT
THIAMIN (VITAMIN B ₁)	100%
RIBOFLAVIN (VITAMIN B ₂)	100%
NIACIN	100%
FOLIC ACID	100%
VITAMIN B ₁₂	100%
VITAMIN D	56%
IRON	30%

Nutrients	Quantity per 100 g	Quantity per 30 g
NIACIN	18.0 mg	5.4 mg
RIBOFLAVIN	1.6 mg	0.48 mg
THIAMIN	1.2 mg	0.36 mg
FOLIC ACID	300.0 µg	90.0 µg
VITAMIN D	10.0 µg	3.0 µg
VITAMIN B ₁₂	2.0 µg	0.6 µg
IRON	6.7 mg	2.0 mg
Energy value	1475 kJoules (352 kJoules)	445 kJoules (105 kJoules)

Cereal labels: many details from Sainsbury's, few from Safeways

SUPERMARKETS

THE GATEWAY GUIDE TO NUTRITION INFORMATION

Each 100 g of this product typically provides	Each 30 g serving typically provides	
Energy	1523 kJ/358 kcal	457 kJ/107 kcal
Protein	6.3 g	1.9 g
Carbohydrate	84.8 g	25.3 g
of which sugar	10.0 g	3.0 g
starch	73.6 g	22.1 g
Fat	1.6 g	0.5 g
of which saturates	1.0 g	0.3 g
polyunsaturates	0.2 g	0.1 g
monounsaturates	0.2 g	0.1 g
Sodium	0.3 g	0.1 g
Fibre	1.4 g	0.4 g
Vitamin and Mineral content per 100 g		% RDA* per 30 g serving
Niacin	18.0 mg	30%
Riboflavin	1.6 mg	30%
Thiamin	1.2 mg	30%
Folic Acid	300 µg	30%
Vitamin D	2.5 µg	30%
Vitamin B12	2.0 µg	30%
Iron	6.7 mg	17%

Nutritional Information

Nutrients	Quantity per 100g	Quantity per 30g
Protein	5.6 g	1.7 g
Fat	1.3 g	0.39 g
Carbohydrate	85.3 g	25.6 g
Fibre	2.1 g	0.63 g
Vitamins		
Niacin	18 mg	5.4 mg
Riboflavin B ₂	1.6 mg	0.48 mg
Thiamin B ₁	1.2 mg	0.36 mg
Folic Acid	300 µg	90 µg
Vitamin D ₃	10 µg	3 µg
Vitamin B ₁₂	2 µg	0.6 µg
Iron	6.7 mg	2.0 mg
Energy Value	1475 KJ (352 Kcal)	442 KJ (105 Kcal)

NUTRITION

Tesco Puffed Rice is fortified with 5 B vitamins, vitamin D and iron. The B vitamins, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid and B12 are needed every day to enable the body to convert the food we eat into energy. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium which is essential for strong bones and teeth. Iron forms a vital part of our red blood cells and is needed to help carry oxygen round the body.

CEREAL ONLY WITHOUT MILK OR SUGAR		
AVERAGE COMPOSITION	PER 30g (1oz) serving	PER 100g (3 1/2oz)
Energy	440 kJ/105 kcal	1467 kJ/350 kcal
Fat	0.3 g	1 g
Protein	1.8 g	6 g
Available Carbohydrate	24.9 g	83 g
Fibre	1.2 g	4 g
Added Salt	0.8 g	2.6 g
Added Sugars	2.9 g	9.7 g
MINERALS/VITAMINS		
Thiamin (B ₁)	30%	1.2 mg
Riboflavin (B ₂)	30%	1.6 mg
Folic Acid	30%	300 µg
Niacin	30%	18 mg
Vitamin B12	30%	2 µg
Vitamin D	30%	2.5 µg
Iron	30%	6.7 mg

THIS PACK CONTAINS 14 SERVINGS
INFORMATION

WHAT THEIR LABELS SAY

CORNFLAKES

	Sugar	Salt	Dietary Fibre
Co-op	-	-	-
Gateway*	-	-	+
Kellogg's	-	-	-
Safeway	-	-	-
Sainsbury's	+	+	+
Tesco	+	+	+

TOMATO SAUCE

	Sugar	Salt
Co-op	-	-
Gateway	-	-
Heinz	+	+
Londis	-	-
Safeway	-	-
Sainsbury's	-	-
Tesco	+	+

BUTTER

	Fat	Saturated fat	Salt
Anchor	-	-	-
Co-op	-	-	-
Marks and Spencer	-	-	-
Safeway	+	-	-
Sainsbury's	+	+	+
Tesco	+	+	+

PEANUT BUTTER

	Fat	Saturated fat	Sugar	Salt	Dietary fibre
Co-op**	+	-	-	-	-
Gateway	+	-	-	-	-
Safeway	-	-	-	-	-
Sainsbury's	-	-	-	-	-
Sun-pat	+	+	-	-	+
Tesco	+	-	+	+	+

BAKED BEANS

	Sugar	Salt	Dietary Fibre
Co-op	-	-	-
Gateway	-	-	+
Heinz	+	+	+
Londis	+	+	+
Safeway	-	-	-
Sainsbury's	+	+	+
Tesco	+	+	+

CHOCOLATE DIGESTIVES

	Sugar	Fat
Co-op	-	-
Gateway	-	-
Marks and Spencer	-	+
McVities	-	+
Safeway	-	-
Sainsbury's	+	+
Tesco	+	+

PORK SAUSAGES

	Fat	Saturated fat	Salt
Marks and Spencer	-	-	-
Safeway	-	-	-
Sainsbury's	+	+	+
Tesco	+	-	+
Walls	+	-	-

A '+' indicates amount displayed on the label

A '-' indicates no information given

* Gateway is currently improving its cereal packet information

** Fat content declared on Co-op's crunchy but not on their smooth peanut butter

How Green is your Supermarket?

Can you get free range eggs and organic vegetables in your supermarket? Can you buy aerosols and packaging free of ozone-damaging CFC? Does your local shop have a policy on food additives and food irradiation?

In an idea adopted from the United States, authors John Elkington and Julia Hales surveyed the larger British supermarkets and compared their ratings on these and similar green issues. They found no supermarket which fulfilled all their main criteria for green customers – the 'five star' rating – and some rated no stars at all!

Safeway and Sainsbury's won four stars, while Tesco and Asda earned three stars – both offer 'ozone-friendly' products. Tesco even sell lead-free petrol at their service stations and equip their company fleet with cars designed to run on unleaded fuel.

Supermarket star rating
 ***** no supermarket
 **** Sainsbury's, Safeway
 *** Tesco, Asda
 ** Gateway, Waitrose
 * Marks and Spencer
 – Bejam, Spar

(courtesy of Victor Gollancz)

Asda**

120 stores nation-wide, with another 16 due to open soon. The information requested was not easily available.

Stocks organic produce in 31 of their 120 stores. No policy on food irradiation. Asda are introducing specially labelled vegetarian food to their frozen and chilled range of products. Aiming to remove CFCs from all their own-brand products and investigating alternatives in meat and vegetable packaging. Claim not to use any unnecessary additives.

Bejam

265 stores nation-wide, specialises in frozen foods.

Helpful, but as a company not very progressive in this area. Do not sell any fresh produce. They thought their pork could well contain limited quantities of antibiotics and hormones. Do not sell free-range chickens – too costly. No free-range eggs. Have removed additives in new products.

The ecologically aware 'green' consumer poses a threat and an opportunity to the large multinational companies. According to the Green Consumer Guide survey, the larger food supermarket chains are beginning to respond. We report on their findings.

Co-op

The Co-op was not covered in the survey because they have 90 different head offices, each with a number of stores with different names operating under them, therefore there is no overall company policy.

Gateway**

An important chain, with 830 stores. They were quite helpful, although did not give this issue much thought.

Organic produce in most stores – Soil Association standards. Would not stock irradiated food because of consumer resistance. Special health food sections in the larger stores. Household products are CFC-free.

Marks and Spencer*

265 stores, all with food departments and selling only own-brand goods. Helpful, but not really woken up to potential of the green consumer. Said they had loyal customers who have shopped with them for a long time and whose priority is convenience.

No organic foods. Do sell free-range chickens. See no need for the irradiation of food. Offer a large range of vegetable-based meals suitable for vegetarians. Cutting back on additives, but still use them for appearance. Lists of suitable products are supplied for those on special (eg gluten-free) diets.

Safeway****

Very helpful, aware of all the issues and actively looking into ways of addressing them. They have a total of 165 stores and are opening one or two every month. The supermarket group doing most to appeal to the green consumer.

Stock the best organic range of any supermarket chain, with organic fruit and vegetables in every store – conform to Soil Association standards. Do not sell additive-free meat because there are no reliable standards or guarantees of quality yet. They sell free-range chickens in most stores. Too early to make a

definite policy on food irradiation.

Would first gauge customer demand but would label it if stocked.

According to the Vegetarian Society, Safeway's labelling was either non-existent or bad.

The first supermarket group to go entirely CFC-free in their own-label range. Had not yet considered the problem of CFCs in egg boxes and meat trays. Offer brown recycled paper bags as an alternative to plastic bags at the check-out. Also sell recycled loo paper.

Claim first supermarket chain to remove all unnecessary ingredients and contentious food additives, where possible and practical, from own-label products. They have information booklets on diet, nutrition, additives and organic produce.

Sainsbury's****

279 stores, nation-wide but not in Scotland.

Were aware of the issues we raised and in most cases were trying to address them. At the time of survey 50 stores stocked organic produce – have adopted Soil Association standards. If Government decided in favour of food irradiation, would support any labelling programme. Own-label range of vegetarian 'ready meals' – only supermarket range officially approved by the Vegetarian Society. Claiming to phase out colour additives. Aiming to eliminate CFCs from own-label toiletry and household aerosol products. Wide range of information leaflets on diet, nutrition and additives, but not available in all stores.

Spar

2,450 stores nation-wide. The central office has a policy only towards Spar's own-brand produce. Stores are individually owned and therefore supplies are ordered locally. Individual stores may be greener than the centre.

No organic range supplied centrally. Free-range eggs in some stores, but

customer demand is limited. Offer biodegradable plastic bags at the check-out – only group in survey to do this. Do not provide information sheets.

Tesco***

380 stores nation-wide, including 120 superstores.

No organic produce in any of their stores. Free range chickens are available in selected stores. Would not introduce irradiated produce until more research has been carried out – even if it was legalised by the Government.

Planned to remove CFCs from own-label aerosols – had not yet thought about CFCs in packaging of egg boxes and meat trays. Moving towards removing unnecessary additives from all their own-label products. Claim to have been the first supermarket to complete nutritional labelling beyond the legal requirements. Six supermarkets have Consumer Advisory Kitchens, with trained Home Economists advising on diet and nutrition. In all stores have a Nutrition Centre with information leaflets on fibre, fat, sugar and other ingredients.

Waitrose**

Have 84 stores in the Midlands and southern England. Helpful and clearly recognise this is an area they cannot ignore, but gave the impression they do not aim to be front-runners.

Organic produce available in about half its stores. Sells free-range chickens and have noted consumer demand for other free-range meat – but say as yet there are no standards for other animals. Would not sell irradiated food unless they were satisfied it was safe, wholesome and tasty and met with their standards. Would insist on labelling. A number of vegetarian dishes but few are labelled as such. Aiming to eliminate CFCs from own-brand products and other brands. Have not looked into CFCs in polystyrene trays. Information on additives and nutrition available at most stores though: 'We don't consider it our responsibility to educate the public.'

►Based on information from *The Green Consumer Guide*, by John Elkington and Julia Hales, Victor Gollancz 1988, £3.95

SUPERMARKETS

While their average size has grown, the gross number of the UK's grocery outlets has fallen dramatically in recent years. In 1961 before the self-service supermarket revolution really began, there were more than 150,000 grocery shops in the UK. Now there are about 40,000.

Six major companies now dominate the market: Tesco, Sainsbury's, Dee (Gateway/Finefare), Argyl (Presto/Safeway), Asda and the Co-op. Their joint share of the overall market has now reached an astonishing 79 per cent (see bar chart).

Tesco, is spending £1 billion over three years on new stores, distribution warehouses and electronic systems.

UK grocers' market shares 1987/88

Tesco	14.0%
Sainsbury's	13.9%
Dee (Gateway/Fine Fare)	11.5%
Argyl	10.7%
Presto	(6.1%)
Safeway	(4.6%)
Asda	7.6%
Co-op	12.1%
TOTAL	69.8%

Source: Verdict Research/Financial Times

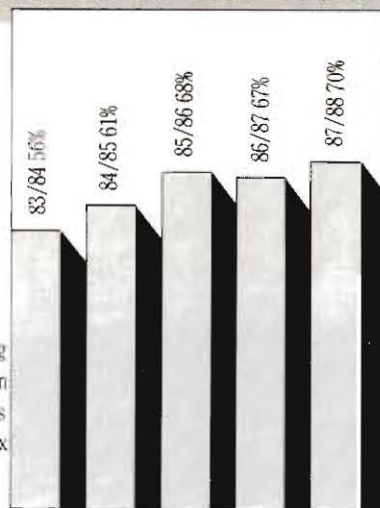
Asda is spending as much, mainly opening new stores. By 1991 there will be 400 Safeway stores including conversions from Presto stores, compared with 176 at the end of last March. Sainsbury's last year opened 16 supermarkets and plans to open 18 in the current year, adding a further 562,000 square feet.

But the concern of some financial analysts is one of potential market saturation with consequent diminishing returns for shareholders. If the major food retailers continue their rapid expansion then within five, or at the most ten, years there could be more super-stores (officially defined as shops with a sales area of over 25,000 square feet) than the volume of business can justify.

Despite gloomy forecasts, not all retailers foresee an end to growth.

Although the population of the UK is stable, food spending continues to rise. As more convenience products are developed, new products launched and

Increasing domination of food sales by the big six



(Source: Verdict Research/Financial Times)

BATTLE OF THE GIANTS

The 1980s has seen fewer companies controlling a bigger share of the grocery market. Here we assess the growing power of the high street giants.

more exotic foods made available, spending on food has grown, though not as rapidly as overall retail sales. In the 1970s price cuts were used to woo customers, at a time when inflation was high and shoppers were less affluent. The majority of shoppers in the late 1980s appear less concerned about price than quality and convenience.

Many city analysts also believe there is still a lot of growth to come from replacing small, often poor-quality shops with larger ones. Some forecast that the number of major food retailers in competition with one another will decline. At present the five leading food retailers have nearly 60 per cent of the

market between them, with the Co-operative Societies holding another 12 per cent. Some analysts believe that tougher competition will mean one, or possibly two, of the leading groups will have to merge with others or sell out, enabling the remainder to increase their market shares.

To continue to survive in such a competitive market, retailers have used own brand loyalty to hold on to their customers. Sainsbury's, Tesco, Safeway and Marks and Spencer have built up a brand image in their customers' minds as strong as that of any food manufacturer. M&S food departments offer no other brand than their own,

WHAT IS THE SIZE OF THE GROCERY MARKET?

Using the definition of all sales through all UK food and drink shops, the Department of Trade and Industry gave figures of £38.3 billion for 1987 and about £40.9 billion for the twelve months up to December 1988.

In 1987 80.5 million square feet of retail space was devoted to groceries in the UK (of which independents had 22 million and the Co-ops 14 million).

whilst Sainsbury's own label business accounts for about 60 per cent of sales.

A poll carried out last year of leading city analysts and company directors showed that Sainsbury's, Tesco and Marks and Spencer were among the top ten most respected companies in the UK. A survey, on behalf of publishers Hemmington Scott Publishing in conjunction with the Sunday Times, placed Sainsbury's third, behind multinationals Shell and ICI, with Marks and Spencer fifth and Tesco in seventh place. Tesco was tipped as the chain to watch in the future – 38 per cent of respondents said that of all the food retailers Tesco had gained most in business respect during the previous year.

New technology in retailing

EPOS: bar coding or Electronic Point of Sale enables the retailer to keep tight stock control. When passed over a laser scanner, the bar code on the product conveys to the retailer's stock computer the product's price, and provides instant sales figures. EPOS, together with the rationalisation of distribution networks, has enabled the retailer to keep less stock, and to know more accurately when deliveries are needed.

But things can go wrong. In one case a customer of the Co-op-owned Havant Hypermarket in Hampshire noticed that the bar-code computerised check-out attempted to charge her £6.90 for a small packet of string. Confusion ensued, resulting in delays of twenty minutes for shoppers, until someone was able to convince the computer it had got the decimal point in the wrong place.

In another incident, one busy Friday evening in

Welwyn Garden City's Asda Superstore – one of the first to have been totally converted to bar-code pricing – the computers inexplicably shut down.irate customers refused to leave the store without their food for the weekend. Eventually the police were called to evict about twenty frustrated shoppers, resulting in an angry fracas.

EFTPOS: Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale is an electronic means of having your shopping bill automatically and instantly deducted from your bank account. Recently little more than a retail manager's dream, it is now all set to sweep the supermarket tills. Retailers will get their money without delay, unlike the old-fashioned cheque and credit card system. In a world of high interest rates, and a national grocery bill of around £40 billion a year, those saved days means big money.



Not much Magnesium in a white loaf

There are many studies pointing out that diets low in magnesium may be one of the causes of high blood pressure and heart disease. A survey called the Honolulu Heart Study reported in 1987 that of 61 components of diet, low magnesium intake was most closely associated with high blood pressure¹. At the Cardiovascular Center in New York it has been shown that patients with high blood pressure have lower than normal magnesium in their body cells². It has also been shown that magnesium deficiency causes raised blood pressure and heart disease in animals.

A study published in 1988 in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* described a trial of magnesium supplementation in pregnancy³. The women given the magnesium tablets had fewer babies of low birth weight, needed fewer days in hospital and had less haemorrhage than the control women who did not have the magnesium tablets. This trial was done in Zurich among women enjoying a high standard of living by British standards, but nevertheless included a substantial number who benefited from magnesium supplementation and who were presumably living on magnesium-deficient diets.

RISKS REDUCED

This Swiss trial was preceded by other trials of magnesium in pregnancy in France, Hungary and elsewhere, notably in West Germany where it is claimed that magnesium tablets not only reduce the risk of low birthweight but also reduce the risk of high blood pressure in pregnancy⁴. Diets low in magnesium have also been shown to reduce resistance to infections and to produce a lower capacity for physical labour.

The Consumer Nutrition Center in the US Department of Agriculture has labelled magnesium a 'problem nutrient

Put Magnesium back in Bread

Magnesium – an essential element of our diet – is found in wholewheat but much of it is lost in flour refining. In Inside Story, Margaret Wynn and Arthur Wynn ask: should white flour and bread be fortified with this important mineral?

of the United States'. A survey of 37,785 individuals found that only 25 per cent consumed the USA's Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) and 39 per cent consumed less than 70 per cent of the RDA. What is the situation in the UK? We don't know as there is no British RDA for magnesium and the reports of the National Food Survey do not refer to magnesium at all.

In North America magnesium intake has declined in this century and a study from the Canadian Research Council suggests that this is primarily a consequence of the loss of magnesium during food refining⁵: 75 per cent of magnesium is lost in milling wheat, 83 per cent is lost in polishing rice; 97 per cent is lost in making starch from maize; 99 per cent is lost in making white sugar from molasses. Fats separated from their original sources contain little magnesium; thus in making butter the magnesium is lost in the whey-fed to pigs.

Vegetables are a major source of magnesium and Swedish studies show that vegetarians have adequate magnesium intakes. However, intensive agriculture steadily removes the magnesium from the top soil which becomes depleted in a few years unless replaced using dolomite or other sources

of magnesium. A deficiency of magnesium in the soil eventually inhibits growth but before this happens crops can be produced that contain much reduced amounts of magnesium. Reliance on one source of vegetables can prove unwise.

White bread is fortified with calcium, iron and thiamin by law, but not with magnesium. Magnesium is a more important nutrient for the heart than calcium or iron. The heart contains three times as much magnesium as calcium, and six times as much magnesium as iron. But white bread contains four times as much calcium as magnesium with which it

competes.

It is irrational to fortify white bread and flour with only two minerals – calcium and iron. Milling wheat to produce white flour also causes a loss of potassium, phosphorus, copper and zinc, all essential nutrients. The heart contains two or three times as much potassium as sodium, but white flour contains five times as much sodium as potassium because of the addition of salt to the dough.

While current research suggests that the shortage of magnesium is perhaps doing most damage, would it not be rational to fortify white bread with a balanced mixture of minerals to replace those removed in milling?

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The Damage of Milk Mania

For 99 per cent of our existence humans have survived without any milk other than breast milk. Only Europeans and a few other cattle-rearing people produce the milk-digesting enzyme, lactase, after infancy. Many Asians and Africans suffer from pain, wind and diarrhoea if they drink fresh milk. Non-human milk can be useful for those communities which live in an environment suitable for stock-rearing, but it is not essential for a nutritious diet and for many people it is an inappropriate food. Yet millions now believe that cows' milk is essential for health.

After the second world war, dried, skimmed milk (DSM) was seen by industrialised countries as 'a fortunate by-product of a domestic surplus-disposal problem'. It was more satisfactory to dump it in developing countries than to bury it (which was contemplated by the US Department of Agriculture) so the international agencies embarked on distributing tons of DSM around the world.

It had long been recognised that there were non-nutritional advantages: 'We aim not only at improving the standard of nutrition but also, as a necessary corollary, at expanding the market for milk' (Trinidad Nutrition Commission 1938).

The cows' milk obsession went hand in hand with scorn for breast milk. A World Health Organisation consultant who visited Nigeria in 1955 referred to mothers' 'impoverished milk'. Health workers told women to reduce the number of breastfeeds and to supplement with cows' milk. They were wrong. The quality of breast milk is astonishingly resilient, even in undernourished mothers, and it provides a high proportion of nutrients even in the second year of life. Substitute milks prevent a child from stimulating a good supply of superior breast milk.

In the Caribbean, women were discouraged from offering their babies prolonged breastfeeding. Their mothers keep them at it for sixteen to eighteen months; during the last seven or eight months the children draw an abundant supply of a highly unnutritious fluid from the breast. No amount of advice will prevent the women from carrying on this

Surplus production, mistaken nutritional theories and colonial domination have combined to create a false 'need' for cows' milk in virtually every country of the world, according to nutritionist GABRIELLE PALMER. This, she argues, has allowed the baby milk companies to establish their strong and profitable market.

deadly habit' (Colonial Health Administration 1917).

This attitude was still around in 1952 when British colonial nurses advised against breastfeeding after seven to nine months.

By the early 1960s UNICEF was distributing 900,000 kilos of milk annually and other agencies were embarking on similar programmes. Unless it is fortified, DSM lacks the fat-soluble A and D vitamins. Rickets (vitamin D deficiency) is not common in sunny countries, but vitamin A deficiency is possibly the most widespread nutritional problem of poverty. It is exacerbated by diarrhoea, which itself is more likely with the use of DSM. Xerophthalmia (eye damage due to vitamin A deficiency) is reported in 73 countries and in Bangladesh alone 30,000 children a year go blind as a result.

Though DSM donated by the USA is enriched with vitamins A and D, much EEC milk is not and in 1986 we sent out 94,100 tonnes as food aid.

Marginal undernourishment may slow down a child's growth, but the child can recover with no long-term ill effects. Eyesight has no comparable recovery.

It is well-known that donated food replaces local products. Yet in many areas where DSM is distributed, the traditional diet already included vitamin A-rich leaves, fruits and oily seeds. DSM was also distributed in countries where the use of milk after complete weaning was not customary, as many children were suckled by their mothers for three or four years. Any milk given by donor agencies was therefore perceived as a replacement for breast milk. DSM distribution spread the pattern of early substitution across the world, to the delight of the baby milk industry who could then persuade mothers to replace the inferior DSM with their expensive products.

Charities, church missions and other relief agencies did untold damage to breastfeeding and to the national health and economic independence of the newly independent countries through their energetic milk promotion. Although these agencies now promote breastfeeding, sadly this is part of undoing their own terrible mistakes made in the name of nutrition.

■ *The Politics of Breastfeeding* by Gabrielle Palmer, Pandora Press, 1988, £6.95.



Filippino baby - the target of milk surpluses (photo: IBFAN/BMAC)

Caroline Walker died last September, aged 38.

Taken as a whole, her contribution to the cause of public health in Britain as a scientist, nutritionist, teacher, lecturer, campaigner, broadcaster and writer, has no equal.

Caroline grew up in Hampshire, Hereford and Cambridge, and was educated at Cheltenham Ladies College and London University (BSc in Biology, KQC; MSc in Human Nutrition with distinction for her thesis 'Poverty by Administration', School of Hygiene).

Aged 17 she taught Palestinian children in

Israel with the VSO. She then worked in Amsterdam for Elsevier Publishing; for the Medical Research Council in Cardiff and Cambridge as a research scientist; and for City and Hackney, London in charge of the health authority heart disease prevention programme.

She was secretary of the National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education (NACNE)

working party, whose report on the food and health of the nation was eventually published in 1983, and co-wrote *Your Daily Bread: Who Makes The Dough?* for Agricap. She became secretary, then council member of the Coronary Prevention Group, founder council member of the London Food Commission and a member of the Nutrition Society.

Caroline co-wrote *The Food Scandal*, a number one best-seller in 1984, was advisor and contributor to the BBC *Food and Health* Campaign and wrote the BBC booklets: *Eat Your Way To Health*, *Food: Food For Health*, *Alcohol and co-wrote You Are What You Eat*, 1985-6.

She was a Woman of the Year in 1985, joint winner of the PPA Campaign of the Year in 1986 and became a Churchill Fellow in 1987. On 12 September 1987 she married Geoffrey Cannon. She died 22 September 1988.

Geoffrey Cannon remembers

Geoffrey Cannon remembers the summer day in 1983 when he first met Caroline Walker.

It was five years ago, at a grand conference held at the Royal College of Physicians in London. One of the issues being debated that day, was

the meeting asked her to withdraw. She would not. I looked up at Caroline, for of course it was she, young and golden-haired; and saw that she was trembling. She remained standing, and asked if anybody in the room would support her.

Caroline told this story to Derek Cooper of the Food Programme just three weeks before she died. She never forgot that time she stood up, because of 'the isolation I felt'.

She explained: 'In the audience was a good handful of people who supported me completely - people from charitable organisations and universities; scientists who I thought well understood the connection between their work and their duty to the public, to tell the truth. And not one of them stood up. I was shocked. I was just about to sit down when Audrey Sheiham, who is now Professor of Community Dental Health at the University of London, stood up and said, "I will support you". And in the final words of that interview, her last public statement, Caroline said: 'He was the only one.'

CAROLINE WALKER

'Who can be entrusted with the responsibility of setting standards for public health? The room was packed and the air was charged.'

Towards the end of the day the woman sitting next to me stood up, and said that nobody beholden to industry could speak independently. This statement outraged many people in the room, and the chair of

Personal appreciations

The following are extracts from some of the many personal appreciations received after Caroline's death.

'So many of us will always treasure the privilege of having known her, and admire her immensely brave struggle against adversity.'

Dr Hugh Sinclair, Director, International Institute of Human Nutrition

'Caroline hasn't gone, she's still here, in her achievements and in our memories, and in the Trust. None of us will ever forget her.'

Vanessa Harrison, Producer, BBC Radio Food Programme

'I never did meet Caroline. I'm just one of many mothers whose

shopping habits and cooking methods have been influenced by her work.'

Deirdre Lyndon (enclosing a donation to the Trust)

'Caroline's legacy? I hope that my daughter grows up with just a little of her talent, vision, imagination, care and persistence.'

Gail Rebeck, Editorial Director, Century Hutchinson

'She was ahead of her time, but made a vital contribution to clearer thinking for better health.' Sir Francis Avery Jones, former Chair of The Royal Society of Medicine Forum on Food and Health

'I admired her very much, and gained a lot from her when I was at the DSS.'

John Patten MP, former Health Minister



THE CAROLINE WALKER TRUST

A trust has now been set up in Caroline's name, to continue work in her spirit and in particular, to protect the quality of food. You are invited to send your contribution to Geoffrey Cannon at 6 Aldridge Road Villas, London W11 1BP, cheques to be made payable to 'The Caroline Walker Trust'. It is the intention of the trustees to report on their work to all who donate £25 and over.

Proposals for collaboration from relevant professional organisations are especially welcome.

The founding trustees are Jonathan Aitken, Conservative MP for Thanet South; Geoffrey Cannon, Caroline's partner and co-author with her of *The Food Scandal*; Derek Cooper, broadcaster and president of the Guild of Food Writers; Jane Grigson, distinguished writer on cooking and the culinary arts; Professor Philip James, chief compiler of the NACNE report on British food and health and director of the Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen; Felicity Lawrence, editor of the Daily Telegraph magazine; and John Rivers, head of human nutrition at London University School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Donations have been received with thanks from:

Hyperactive Children's Support Group	Eric Verdon-Roe	Joyce Doughty
Elm Farm Research Centre	John Yarnell	Janette Drummond
Dr and Mrs K P Ball	Philippa Braidwood	Hetty Einzig
Victor Cook	Richard and Elizabeth Cook	Susan Einzig
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Anne Foster	Andrew Elchells and Isabel Walker	Brenda Harris
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	Annie Cushing	

hardly knew her, but greatly admired her for her courage and articulateness. Only there were more women like her.'

Arabella Boxer, food writer

She showed the way, we are bound to follow.

Drew Smith, Editor, *The Good Food* magazine

She will always be for me (and I know many others) a model of excellence

for those who want to achieve the basic human right of decent food and nutrition for everyone.'

Gabrielle Palmer, Baby Milk Action Coalition

'She was talented and eloquent to a level rarely seen around the world of food and nutrition, a force to be reckoned with; and yet she had a gentle charm which made delightful company.'

David Walker, former head of Public Affairs, Food and Drink Federation



"Yus, the dirty dog ses it wos butter, but I knoo it wos marjerine so I popped round to the Town 'All an' 'ad it paralyzed by the Anarchist!"

FOOD FROM THE PAST

Starting a new cultural corner of *The Food Magazine*, we shall be taking a look at the issues affecting food policies and social history in days gone by. Here we reproduce a McGill cartoon that refers to adulteration scandals resulting in the creation of a Public Analyst service available to local people concerned about the quality of their food.

POWER AND NEED IN AFRICA: Basic Human Needs and Development Policies

by Ben Wisner, published by Earthscan, pp 351, £9.95, paperback

This book passed my ultimate test for a heavy tome. I read it on the London Underground and almost missed getting off at the right destination. Ben Wisner's book is a distillation of 20 years' persistent work on development, a subject of many other heavy tomes, over which much blood has been spilled, and in which too little progress has been made. So what gripped me?

The book explores the tussle over the word 'need' and the different meanings assigned to it by world bodies like the United Nations, as well as voluntary bodies and state aid programmes. 'Surely', Wisner writes, 'there can be no argument over people's basic human needs for food, water, shelter, a minimum level of health care?'

His book is evidence that there is. Who defines 'need'? The World Bank, local villagers, nationalist sentiment? Wisner documents their rival interpretations and how their different definitions are continually fought over. On the way, the book teaches much about issues equally topical in Europe: the problems arising from policies aiming at self-reliance, for example, and the gap between environmental sentiment and the damage wrought by globe trotting multinationals.

As I read on the Tube, and later at home, I pondered our own European battle over food. Had the book been written on Europe, it would have had to address the tussle over the definition of 'progress' in food policy as well as 'need' for food. We Europeans need reminding by books like Wisner's that food is not just physical fuel or a factor in coronary heart disease. Food is also a battle for the mind.

Tim Lang

FOOD FIT TO EAT

British Nutrition Foundation, Sphere Books, £3.99

The British Nutrition Foundation, as most people know, is funded

largely by the food corporations. It does itself a disservice therefore by not acknowledging its paymasters as the inspiration for its new book *Food Fit to Eat*.

It would have been clearer if it had come clean about the motives behind this book – a defensive reply to critics of British food. Instead we have a masquerade. A stylish cover, beige background with bold design in red, yellow and blue, presents a campaigning image. *Food Fit to Eat* is subtitled 'can we survive our diet and the people who control it?'

'Survival' and 'control' are certainly issues that grab people's attention. How many people will pick up this book and be drawn by its strident and enquiring tone? 'If you want the facts about your food – to understand basic nutrition, get more goodness into your food preparation, or just outsmart the neighbourhood muesli set – then *Food Fit to Eat* is for you.'

The implication is that the book addresses key questions about food and diet, and does so from an independent stance.

Dr David Conning, director of the BNF, devotes only five of his pages (the book has 250) to the problem of heart disease prevention. Conning does a demolition job on the links between diet and heart disease, pointing out the failure of intervention trials and the poor understanding of the mechanism of artery narrowing. 'Usually in these circumstances, scientists would abandon the hypothesis and try something new', says Conning. The message is clear. We have been duped by foodies with 'entrenched ideas'.

But in the following paragraph the message changes: 'It is probably true that people will be better off if they reduce their fat intake.' There seems to be rather too much confusion here.

Barry Ricketts, ex food industry public relations man and contributor of three chapters to the book, coordinated its production. He negotiated a hefty advance of £15,000 against royalties with Sphere. Clearly large sales are hoped for. He told me that its launch 'did not quite start a row in the food industry' but he believed the book was 'as critical of the industry as anyone else'.

Its treatment of food flavours hardly bears this out. Flavours are not covered by the E number system and information on them is

withheld by official secrecy. This suits the industry but arouses suspicion among consumers, who would like to see safety test results published. But testing would 'involve millions of experimental animals, and enormous amounts of time, human effort and money'.

The book heaps praise on the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) whose 'response to such threats as radioactive fall-out from the Chernobyl accident was immediate and thorough'. MAFF committees are 'thorough and all-embracing, giving favour to neither producer nor processor'. This statement contrasts poorly with the facts: most advisory committees have little or no consumer representation and are dominated by industry members.

Food Fit to Eat is in my opinion a bland and complacent book. My only hope is that teachers and health educators everywhere spot the BNF's food industry connections before they buy it.

Eric Brunner

BRIDGES NOT BARRIERS

A pack of six booklets has been produced by Hounslow Teaching Centre which aims to broaden the cultural diversity of food studies curricula. It can be used as the basis for project work, exploring links between

local, national and international issues such as food, health, the environment and religion.

The booklet on *Interdependence* establishes links between the readers and the world. *Why Are People Hungry?* raises many important questions about hunger and poverty. Three booklets on *Food in Religions and Festivals* help students and teachers to investigate the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Islamic, Christian and Jewish religions. They include explanations of religious beliefs, festivals, dietary laws and the cooking and serving of food together with recipes, project ideas, a glossary and further reading. The booklet on *Resources* lists the names and addresses of organisations that can provide materials for multi-cultural work.

The booklets are written by Helen McClean, Advisory Teacher, Hounslow Education Authority; illustrations by Clare Fyfe, HEA, 1988. Available from Hounslow Teachers' Centre, Smallberry Green, London Road, Isleworth TW7 5AR.

THREE JEWELS OF TRADITIONAL COOKING

A little bit of this – and a little bit of that (£1.99) and *East West Kitchen: Pakistani recipes from the Punjab* (£1.99) feature traditional recipes which are rarely seen in print yet are in every day use by West Indian and Pakistani communities. *Japanese Foods* (£1.75) lets readers into the secrets of preparing sea vegetables and umebosshi plums and shows you how to use chopsticks and make sushi rolls.

The authors are all members of workers' cooperatives and the booklets reflect their involvement in their communities and in food business as well as their commitment to good food.

These three booklets are a good introduction to traditional and nutritious recipes used by three of the many black and ethnic minority communities living in the UK.

Published by Food and Futures Ltd 1988, 49 Halifax Road, Todmorden, Lancs OL14 5BB
Sara Hill

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Dear Food Magazine

I recently bought a delicious-looking bottle of Californian Grenache Rosé. An extra label had been stuck on the back of the bottle, partly covering the promotional text ('... a bouquet reminiscent of spring flowers ... a lovely Rosé with distinctive character.')

The extra label simply stated the importers name, country of origin and so forth, but being naturally curious I peeled back the label to see if anything had been deliberately covered. It had. Or so I believe. Underneath, in plain English (or rather plain American) were the words 'CONTAINS SULFITES'.

I would be grateful if you could tell me what this means, and why it should have been hidden by the extra label.

JOHN MOSSAM

Sulphites (English spelling) are a group of preservatives that are used by the food industry in a great variety of foods - dried fruit, soups, sauces, sausage

meat and beers and wines, to name but some.

They are included in ingredients lists either by name (sulphur, sulphite, bisulphite or metabisulphite) or by number (E220, E221, E222, E223, E224, E226 or E227).

Sulphites are, it is thought, the only food additives in use which have caused human deaths. They can provoke asthma attacks in susceptible people with at least six deaths identified in the USA. They are believed to provoke headaches or nausea in a larger number of people, and may also provoke wheeziness, a tightness in the chest or even skin rashes. Sulphites also destroy vitamin B1 (thiamine) and so put at risk anyone who is eating a diet already low in that vitamin.

On the other hand, they are of enormous value to the food (and drinks) industry. Sulphites inhibit microbial growth, they prevent enzyme activity, can prevent fats and oils from

going rancid and prevent colours - including added colourings - from fading.

In continuous flow automated plants, such as biscuit-making production lines, the use of sulphites to keep the machinery microbially clean allows the plant to run for hours or even days without stopping. Unscrupulous butchers can use sulphites to restore a 'fresh red' colour to old meat (though this is prohibited by law). In fermented products such as wine and beer, sulphites prevent discolouration and bacterial growth and stop fermentation continuing after bottling.

Sensitive people are thought to react to levels of sulphite as low as one milligram. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that the limit for all people should be around a third of a milligram per pound of bodyweight per day - around 45mg for a ten-stone person. Compare these levels with typical concentrations that

can be found in everyday foods in the USA:

three ounces dried apricots 175mg
bowl of green salad 160mg
four ounce glass of wine 40mg

In the USA it is estimated that at least half the population is exceeding WHO's upper limit. No comparable figures are available for the UK.

Requirements to label sulphites on all foods, drinks and restaurant foods have been proposed in the USA and have already taken effect in several states including California. Hence your Californian wine must, under Californian bylaws, declare the presence of sulphites.

Here in the UK there are no requirements for alcoholic drinks and restaurant foods to be labelled with ingredients or make any declaration about specific components. The importers of Californian wine, whether deliberately or not, are free to cover over the sulphite declaration as they appear to have done with your bottle of Rosé.

Sulphites in Wine

THE FOOD MAGAZINE FREE!

Free to your friends, that is. Let your inspired present to them be a gift subscription to Britain's liveliest Food Magazine.

We can enclose your message or card with the first copy they receive. Simply send us your instructions, including the names and addresses of your friends and a cheque or postal order for £12.50 for each subscription.

Cheques are payable to LFC Publications. Send to Subscriptions Dept, The Food Magazine, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.

Back issues - a few still available!

There are still a few copies left of the celebrated first three issues of The Food Magazine

Issue 1 includes

- ★BST - what are they doing to our milk?
- ★Jumping on the bran wagon - the inside story on added bran in our diets
- ★What's in canned meat - we take the lid off the canned meat industry
- ★How natural is natural - are misleading labels a trading standards concern?

Issue 2 includes

- ★8-page Food Quality Supplement - the hidden hazards of eating healthy food
- ★Soft-serve ice-cream - the inside story
- ★Homeless and hungry - preview report
- ★Chernobyl! after effects - the world trade in contaminated foods

Issue 3 includes

- ★6-page Fast Food supplement: the missing labels revealed at last
- ★School dinners and the launch of the FEAST campaign
- ★The costs of eating healthily: we look at inner city shopping
- ★1992 - what might it mean for UK consumers?

£2.50 inc p&p per copy, cheques payable to LFC Publications. Order from Subscriptions Dept, The Food Magazine, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.

Public Health Course

May we draw to your readers' attention the launching of our new course, leading to a Masters in Public Health degree?

It is a one-year full-time course based on the World Health Organisation's strategy of 'Health for All by the Year 2000', with its commitment to decreasing inequalities, increasing public participation and reorienting medical care towards primary health care and the community. The course will explore the relationships between lifestyles, environments and health.

Applications will be welcomed from individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, such as medicine and allied professions, health promotion, environmental health, health service management and community work.

Details and an application form are available from the MPH Course Secretary, Department of Community Health, University of Liverpool, PO Box 147, Liverpool L69 3BX.

Dr Ruth Hussey
University of Liverpool

Fast Food Fats

Do be careful about how you attack individual foods, won't you? In *The Food Magazine's* feature on Fast Foods (Issue 3, Volume 1) a casual reader might be given the impression that fast food is unique in that items are high in fat or contain a lot of salt. They might think that avoiding fast food would improve their diet, without asking themselves what they

decide to eat instead.

Remember that, for example, fresh milk can have more fat per litre than a milkshake, and a tin of sardines can have more fat, weight for weight, than fried cod and chips.

Perhaps you can make it clear that the main problem is that the range of foods you can buy in fast food outlets is very limited, and that the majority of them are likely to be high in fat. Therefore relying on fast food outlets to provide a balanced diet is not feasible. But for an occasional treat it is nutritionally quite acceptable.

J Turner
Sheffield

Right! We even eat fast food at the London Food Commission. But our study of Peckham fast food eaters found that a third of them were eating fast foods at least once a day - and that is the sort of diet which we believe is a real public health issue, not the occasional burger and fries.
(Ed)

Vitamins for schoolchildren

Diet and IQ is a fascinating subject area, with momentous implications, but I cannot see that the King's College, London, study you quoted on the back page of the Autumn issue sheds any real light on the findings of Benton and Roberts in January.

Benton and Roberts gave vitamin and mineral supplements to their schoolchildren for eight months. Naismith et al gave supplements for four weeks, hypothesising that this was 'likely' to be sufficient to show any changes. With such a major assumption at the heart of their study, how can it be 'clear', as they claim in *The Lancet* (1988, vol 2, p335), 'that no improvement in intellectual improvement can be expected? How can they even claim to have 'repeated the study'?

It may be that there is some other explanation for the reported gain in non-verbal intelligence, but it would be more persuasive if critics of their methodology not only suggested where this might possibly lie, but also took more care with the construction of their own studies and the conclusions they drew from them. For failure to do this Naismith et al were properly criticised in a later issue of *The Lancet*.

Edward Baldwin
Oxford

Ingredients:

Flour, Corn Flour, Sugar, Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil, Milk Powder, Fresh Butter, Salt, Glucose, Fresh Eggs, Sesame Seeds, Lecithin, Chemicals, Synthetic Flavours.

Net Weight when packed 165 gms.

Honest Labels

You might be amused by this ingredients listing I found on a packet of biscuits, sold in Karachi, Pakistan. In some ways I feel the 'chemicals' is more honest, don't you?

T Webb, Karachi

The McCarrison Society

The McCarrison Society was formed in 1966 by a group of doctors, dentists and a veterinarian, who were convinced of the supreme importance of nutrition in the promotion of health and the prevention of disease.

They had all been influenced by the 'holistic' philosophies of medical researchers McCarrison, Weston Price, Francis Pottenger Jnr and agriculturalists Howard, Balfour and Pfeiffer. They named their Society in honour of Sir Robert McCarrison who had died a few years earlier in 1960.

Membership of the McCarrison Society is now open to all those concerned about nutrition and the promotion of health. The Society aims to bring together professionals who share their views.

For more details contact Eileen Fletcher, 25 Tamar Way, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 9UB

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME FOR 1989

TUESDAY 25TH APRIL, 1989
AT THE TOWN HALL, MANCHESTER

'1992 - GOOD OR BAD FOR PUBLIC HEALTH?'

A one-day conference to be hosted jointly by the McCarrison Society, The London Food Commission and the Local Authority Food Policy Network

Speakers to include:

Professor John Garrow, Rank Professor of Nutrition (to be confirmed)

Dr Elizabeth Helsing, World Health Organisation

Brian Harrison, Chair of Manchester's Economic Development Committee

Dr Tim Lang and Dr Melanie Miller, The London Food Commission

Ann Foster, National Consumer Council

Dr Steve Watkins, Community Physician for Oldham and co-ordinator of the Local Authority Food Policy Network

The conference will consider

★What effect will the lowering of trade barriers within the EEC planned for 1992 have on public health in Britain and Europe?

★Will harmonisation be to the lowest or highest standards? What consumer consultation will take place?

★The possibility that the northern European health record on coronary heart disease and cancer, for example, will be 'exported' to southern Europe.

For further details and booking form contact Eileen Fletcher, Conference Organiser, 25 Tamar Way, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG11 9UB

★★★★

Saturday 20th May, Scottish Group AGM and Public Lecture, Institute of Technology, Aberdeen. Dr Derek McLean of Ninewells Hospital Dundee will be speaking on the prevention of heart disease. Details from Marion Bowles, 32 Dundee Street, Darlington DL1 1JX.

Saturday 5th August The Concept of Western Disease - a one-day conference to be held in London. Speaker Dr Dennis Burkitt.

Thursdays 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th October Food - Is the West Best? Four lunchtime lectures to be held at The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Saturday 25th November The Balanced Diet. A definition for the year 2000. Half-day conference to be held in London.

For more details contact Eileen Fletcher as above.

One way or another, every woman I know has a complicated relationship with food. And I know a lot of women. Most of my men friends, on the other hand, get hungry and simply eat. They fill their stomachs, satisfy their palates, and cease to think about food for another four hours and the next meal. Not so the women.

How many of them eat heartily without some sort of shame at their appetite? Most of the time they're either suppressing a desire for the sweet and creamy things of life and revelling in glorious self-control, or they're giving in to cravings for these forbidden fruits.

Men rarely dwell on what they have just eaten or on what they expect to eat in the future. But women can carry around guilt about consumption of chocolate, chips, or whatever for hours. 'God, no, I shouldn't have a biscuit... you should have seen what I had for lunch... I wonder if I can make do on just a bowl of soup for supper?'

The degree of guilt associated with consumption of calorie-rich food depends not only on the amount eaten, but also on how good the woman feels about herself. Surrounded by images of desirable slim beauty, women tend to objectify their bodies, just like men. If you're thin, you feel better about your body than if you're fat.

When I was 17, I made a resolution never to read a woman's magazine again. They did nothing but make me feel inadequate, forever preaching a philosophy of physical improvement and self-denial. Side by side with scrumptious-looking cakes and biscuits to delight husband, children, guests, would appear exercises to spot reduce those thighs... make up to chisel away at the cheekbones... hideous photos before and after a miracle diet.

TYRANNY

But it took another decade to recognise the total tyranny of a pair of scales. I had felt miserable every single morning because I was always heavier than I wanted to be. I threw the scales away one bright new day and have never weighed myself since (well ...



Judy Sadgrove's Diary

The Guardian's health editor, Judy Sadgrove, contributes this issue's guest column

once, at a family planning clinic, when I was instantly hit by that familiar feeling of fatness).

A history of disturbed eating, psychotherapy, and a lot of reading about anorexia and bulimia made me feel for a long time that I was a special case. Few could appreciate my tortuous relationship with food. But a couple of books confirmed the views I'd been developing about the importance of self-imagery, *Fat is a Feminist Issue* and *Dieting Makes You Fat*, and I began to feel so much better about myself I could almost dismiss those self-obsessive years of pain as so much adolescent angst.

MOOD AND FOOD

My fascination with food meant I learned a lot about nutrition. This, plus see-sawing between salads and sweets made me keenly aware of the relationship between mood and food. Sweet or salty fatty refined carbohydrates depress my levels of energy and leave me wanting more. The lessons are inescapable: NACNE-type food is good, the rest is bad.

I don't feel guilty if I eat chocolate nowadays, but I try to avoid it. People often comment that I eat a lot. Well I try to emulate men in that respect: eat as much as you want and then stop. But it's been easy for me. I haven't had to feed a partner or children. And I've had time to concentrate on myself.

Some of my women friends had more florid eating disorders than I had. But most of them never really thought of themselves as having a problem. Maybe I'm overly sensitive, but I notice that they're all now thinking about food: they don't want to get fat if they're pregnant; they want to lose weight when they've had the baby; partners and children eat nutritious meals, they eat scraps.

It saddens me to see women expend so much emotional energy on food. Men eat it, women worry about it. And it saddens me to see the industry target this anxiety so accurately. The business of nurturing others is too often carried out at the expense of self. Food is the symbol of love. Women happily love others, but find it hard to love themselves.

PLANTAIN STUFFED WITH SPINACH

1 large ripe plantain, big enough to be sliced into 4
small knob of butter
30ml (2tbsp) chopped onion
1 clove garlic, crushed
450g (1lb) spinach, washed and chopped
salt and black pepper, to taste
touch of grated nutmeg
1 egg, beaten
wholemeal flour for dusting
oil for frying
4 toothpicks

Slice the ripe plantain lengthwise and carefully fry in hot oil until golden brown on both sides. Drain on kitchen paper and reserve the oil. Saute the onions, garlic and spinach, flavoured with a touch of nutmeg and seasoned with salt and pepper. When cooled, put into a sieve and press out excess moisture. Curl the plantain slices into rings and secure with half a wooden toothpick. Pack each ring with spinach. Have a bowl ready with the beaten egg and a plate with flour for dusting. Heat the oil. Dip the rings lightly in the egg, then flour and fry, turning once only. Drain on kitchen paper. Serve hot or cold with salad.

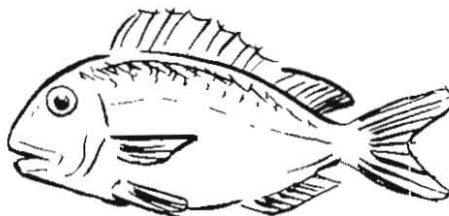
A few tips for stuffing plantain rings. Plantain should not be too brown-skinned or over-ripe, yet they must be ripe enough to allow the slices to curl into rings. If the plantain is sliced too thinly, the slices will break. However, if they do break, just mend them by joining with an extra toothpick. Remember to remove toothpicks before serving.

PLANTAINS

Plantains are a large member of the banana family, but they must be cooked and are not edible when raw. They are widely used throughout Africa and the Caribbean and can be cooked in a variety of ways whether green or over-ripe – roasted, boiled, mashed or fried – and eaten either as an appetizer, in soups, as a vegetable or as a dessert.

Exotic fruits and vegetables have become widely available, giving us all the opportunity to experiment with new tastes and combinations.

Here are two recipes from restaurateur Rosamund Grant's new book Caribbean and African Cookery



Travalli

BAKED FISH IN WEST AFRICAN TOMATO SAUCE

SAUCE:

30ml (2tbsp) palm oil
30ml (2tbsp) groundnut oil
1 large onion, chopped
1 tin 400g (14oz) tomatoes, chopped
2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
2.5ml (1/2tsp) dried thyme or a sprig of fresh thyme
hot pepper, to taste

Put the palm oil and groundnut oil into a heavy-bottomed saucepan and bring to a hazy heat. Carefully add the onions,

SEASONING MIX

Mixes of fresh herbs can be made a few days before you need them and stored in a tightly covered jar in the fridge. Here are three examples:

Garlic granules	Paprika	Paprika
White pepper	Curry powder	Cinnamon
Ginger	Sugar	Black pepper
Sugar	Dried thyme	Garlic
Salt (optional)	Garlic	granules
	Salt (optional)	Salt (optional)

Mix together approximately 2.5ml (1/2tsp) or more (as desired) of each of the portions to your own taste.

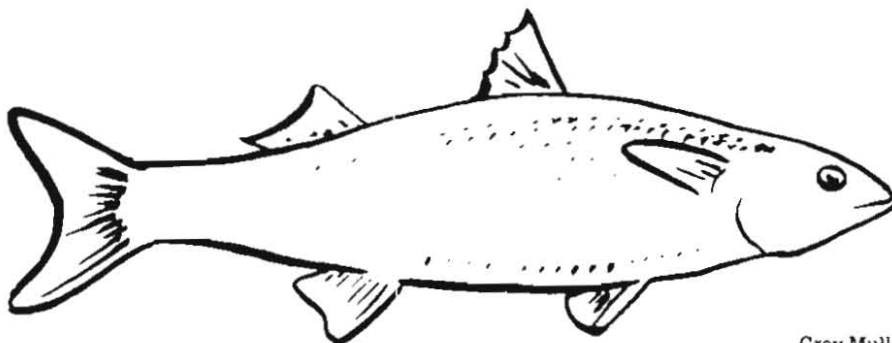
tomatoes, garlic, thyme and hot pepper. Stir well and leave to cook for approximately 15 minutes, stirring frequently; add some water if it becomes necessary.

FISH:

1 large travalli or grey mullet, cleaned and left whole
lemon juice
5ml (1tsp) seasoning mix optional (see box)
2.5ml (1/2tsp) black pepper

Wash the fish well, then score and rub with lemon juice, seasoning mix and pepper. Place in a baking dish. Pour sauce over the fish, cover with foil, and bake on Gas Mark 6 (400°F/200°C) for 30-40 minutes.

■ Rosamund Grant's *Caribbean and African Cookery* published by Grub Street, 1988, £10.95



Grey Mullet

WHAT THE JOURNALS SAY

Calorie needs of children, pesticide information, antibiotics in meat and aluminium in the brain.

ERIC BRUNNER reviews the journals

THE LANCET

GIVING KIDS LESS?

Roger Whitehead, who recently replaced Phillip James on MAFF's Food Advisory Committee, believes that current dietary energy guidelines for infants may need to be revised downwards. In practice this is important for bottle-fed babies, who tend to drink all they are given. The Dunn Nutrition Unit, Cambridge has reported on a new estimate of energy requirements in infants up to three years old. A study of 355 healthy children using stable, (ie non-radioactive) isotopes, produced estimates 'substantially lower' than current DHSS guidelines. Establishing the meaning of optimal nutrition is still a problem, since the criteria to be used in assessing its outcome (obesity? longevity? height? intelligence?) are arguable.

► Prentice A M et al, 'Are current dietary guidelines for young children a prescription for over-feeding?', *The Lancet*, 1988, vol 2, pp 1066-1068

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL

VETERINARY MEDICINES IN MEAT AND FISH

Antibiotic residues may still be common in meat. A non-specific test for antimicrobial activity gave positive results in about one per cent of animals between 1980 and 1983, particularly in kidneys from cattle and pigs. Sulphadimidine was detected at levels above the maximum acceptable concentration in one tenth of pigs' kidneys. Farmers have been told to observe withdrawal periods. There are as yet no tests for residues of aminoglycosides, penicillins or cephalosporins.

Oxytetracycline was found in some samples of farmed trout at concentrations 'unlikely to have any toxicological consequences'. There is 'still a possibility of inducing bacterial resistance to antibiotics' as a result of

such residues, says the author of the editorial.

► Truswell A S, 'Veterinary medicines in animal foods', *British Medical Journal*, 1988, vol 297, p 1216

NB: Though both natural and synthetic growth promoting hormones are banned in this country, signs of a black market came from the detection of trenbolone and oestradiol implants on beef farms in Anglesey last summer.

The New England Journal of Medicine

ANISAKIASIS COMING THIS WAY?

Sushi lovers should be alerted to the growing risk of anisakiasis, an infection of fish parasites present in raw or undercooked fish. As many as 80 per cent of Pacific red snapper and Pacific salmon harbour the parasites. The larval stage of the parasite caused the fifty cases recorded in the USA since 1958, most of them since 1980. The larvae penetrate the stomach or gut wall causing abdominal pain, fever, vomiting and diarrhoea. Removal of the worms is essential and may require surgery.

Occasionally the patient may cough up a live worm within 48 hours of eating sushi, or even feel one, the so-called 'tingling throat syndrome'.

► McKerrow J H, 'Anisakiasis: revenge of the sushi parasite' (letter), *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1988, vol 319, p 1228

BIOTECH BONANZA

The industry argues that if bovine growth hormone (aka BST) is not licensed they will be financially compromised. Some idea of the potential market for biotech products comes from the Amundson Report, on chemical engineering prospects in the USA, which estimates a world market of US\$69 billion in the year 2000. Gleaned from an ad in the BMJ we find the basic NHS price of Boehringer's biosynthetic tissue plasminogen activator, a protein which promotes the breakdown of blood clots after heart attack, is £960 per dose.

► National Research Council Committee on chemical engineering frontiers (Amundson Report).

Frontiers in chemical engineering: research needs and opportunities. Washington DC: National Academy Press, September 1988

CHEMISTRY & INDUSTRY

PESTICIDE IGNORANCE

A survey carried out for the Agricultural Training Board confirms that there is widespread ignorance about the provisions and requirements of the Food and Environment Protection Act even among owners, directors and managers of farms. Half the respondents considered that the 1986 pesticide regulations would make no difference to them, and nearly a quarter either knew nothing about the Act or the regulations made under it

Two hundred thousand copies of the MAFF leaflet 'Pesticides - guide to the new controls' were distributed in 1988. Since there are 300,000 farm premises in the UK, the survey findings are no great surprise. Suppliers, storers and users, including amateurs, are affected by the new regulations.

► Jenkins E, 'Is government doing enough to ensure safety of pesticides?'

Chemistry and Industry, 21 November 1988, p 724

ALUMINIUM AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Aluminium has been connected with Alzheimer's disease (pre-senile dementia) for several years, but this link is still speculative.

Aluminium is certainly neurotoxic since some patients on long term renal dialysis develop pathological changes in the brain. This 'dialysis encephalopathy' is associated with the build-up of aluminium in the nervous system, as is also the case with Alzheimer's. Birchall and Chappell, both of ICI, Runcorn, in their review of the neurochemistry of aluminium, suggest that it may interfere with the production of an intracellular 'second messenger' called phosphatidyl inositol in the brain. They speculate that the differences between Alzheimer's disease and dialysis encephalopathy may be due to the greater speed at which aluminium accumulates in the latter condition.

► Birchall JD and Chappell JS, 'Aluminium, chemical physiology, and Alzheimer's Disease', *The Lancet*, 1988, vol 2, pp 1008-1010

COMING SOON IN THE FOOD MAGAZINE!

Issues 5, 6 & 7 of *The Food Magazine* will include:

★ The Greenhouse Effect:

as the earth warms the agricultural costs could be enormous - but so are the opportunities

★ **A drop of the hard sell** - we look at the alcohol content of products sold for newborn babies

★ **Food from Third World countries?** we look at ethical alternatives to global exploitation

★ 100 years of MAFF

- the pride and the shame of this enduring body

★ Training trade unions

- a forthcoming union training pack on food

★ Should junk food have added vitamins?

Fortified crisps, ice lollies, soft drinks - are these the answers for worried parents?

★ Poverty and diet:

we give an overview of current research findings

★ **PLUS:** your letters and questions, science round-up, recipes, guest writers and news.