

MICROWAVE OVENS
— HYGIENE
HAZARDS?

HOMELESS BENEFIT
CUTS

PHOTO-FEATURE:
MAFF CENTENARY

HOSPITAL MEALS
FOR MINORITY
DIETS

DIOXIN IN MILK
CARTONS

TWIN TRADING'S
ALTERNATIVE
NETWORK

RECIPES

BOOK
REVIEWS

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

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BUMPER
HOLIDAY ISSUE

FRUIT JUICE DRINKS
— MOSTLY WATER?

HEALTHY SUMMER
TREATS FOR
CHILDREN

FORTIFIED JUNK —
A CON TRICK?

SUPERMARKETS BUY
SOUTH AFRICAN

RAW DEAL ON RAW
MILK

LETTERS

REFERENCE
ONLY

Pamela Stephenson's
Pesticide Protest

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

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Indian Cultural Association
Islington Friends of the Earth
National Council for Voluntary Organisations*

National Eczema Society
National Housewives Association*
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South London Jewish Family Heritage
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General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union*
GMB Essex Branch
Health Visitors Association*
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Ealing Community Health Council
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Consumers, citizens and common sense

Remarkable powers have been ascribed to the London Food Commission recently by some commentators – apparently meeting with representatives of the food industry. Single handedly, they suggest, we have created the string of food crises: salmonella, listeria, BST, BSE, irradiation etc.

This is clearly absurd. We don't create the problems. Our role is more mundane: researching and informing the public about what is being done to their food and applying public health criteria to the debate.

A recurring issue is raised by the spate of food scandals: *who controls food?* If food is produced to be sold and consumed, does the consumer have the ultimate say over production? Does supply meet demand, or is demand shaped to suit supply?

What happens if consumers want things to be different? Not radically different, just a little less adulteration here, and the removal of an unnecessary, cosmetic plant growth regulator there. A bit more sensitivity to the environment. The margin of error to be wider, with the benefit of doubt going to consumers and public health. Not too much to ask, surely? Consumerist? Activists? I say common sense.

The consumer organisations which sprang up around the world in the 1950s and 1960s challenged producers by daring to assess goods independently. The notion of a 'shopper's guide' was born. It is hard to appreciate the drama of those times. Value-for-money comparisons and estimations of a product's life became legitimate criteria. Brands were named and products rated.

Ralph Nader challenged this 'best buy' approach. With his book *Unsafe At Any Speed*, Nader wrenched consumerism into the late 20th century. A particular make of car was unsafe in its design – the manufacturer knew so, calculated the insurance costs of paying out to victims and chose not to re-design because the deaths would cost less.

Something similar has happened with food. The nature of production, its impact on health, the role of the individual, the cosy committees advising government ... all these have



been brought onto centre stage in the 1980s. In response new alliances have been formed and new perspectives have emerged. And not just in Britain. Health educators have linked with food workers. Academics have linked with campaigners. Parents have turned their attention from the supermarket shelf to complain publicly about pesticide manufacturers and government regulators.

One perspective remains

common to all: a notion of 'them' tampering with 'our' food, the individual up against the powerful vested interests. The LFC has begun to get letters which say 'thank goodness for the LFC'. But what is the LFC's role as a citizens' advocate group and can consumer needs be promoted in the future? Post-1992 European consumers are on my mind. Our experience at the LFC has been that small, independent research groups like ours can be useful to wider consumer affairs. New groups bring new thoughts, new brains, new ways of looking at old issues. They can open up new alliances and create new rallying points and new challenges.

Ironically, the food industry, which has so many historically-rooted alliances, so many decades of 'public education', has much to teach us. I think of the *Grocer* magazine, wonderful value-for-money, set up in the 19th century as a voice for the retailer under attack for collusion with food adulteration. Given the industry's ample resources – advertisements, lobbyists, PR machines, publications – why the fuss about consumer organisations? Or have we hit a raw nerve?

And there is a second irony. Into the debate about consumers and consumerism, we must note a new concept: the prime minister's notion of the active citizen. Active citizens, she suggests, are responsible for their own lives, own their own homes, sweep their own pavements and shop selectively in a (de-regulated) free market. But can they ask awkward questions? Can they complain about the quality on offer. Can they seek publicity to promote their interests?

Why such a fuss when (passive) consumers become (active) citizens?

Tim Lang

With pleasure we welcome Sharon Smith to the staff of The Food Magazine. She takes over from Anita Green, to whom we sadly say farewell.

PESTICIDES

ACTION ON ALAR

'I cannot bear not knowing whether there is Alar in the apple juice I feed my child,' said one US senator. 'No American should be left wondering the same question, so it must be banned immediately.'

Both Republican and Democrat senators have reached bi-partisan agreement to pass banning legislation against the crop spray Alar following their acceptance that there was overwhelming evidence linking Alar to the risk of cancer. The Washington-based Natural Resources Defense Council has been studying for some years the risks to young children of eating a diet containing agrochemical residues such as fungicides, herbicides and growth promoters, and targeted Alar as being potentially responsible for causing cancer in one child out of every 4,200.

An estimated 100 million apples



Pamela Stephenson, Twiggy, Patricia Hodge, Patrick Ryecart and Anneka Rice are among the signatories to the campaigning letter. For more details, contact Parents for Safe Food at 32 Galena Road, London W6 0L

in Britain are destined to be sprayed this summer with Alar, a chemical used for its ability to keep the fruit blemish-free and to prevent it from

falling, so allowing the farmer to pick all the fruit simultaneously. Equal-sized and blemish-free fruit are supposed to be good selling points

when it comes to displays on grocery shelves.

In the USA consumer pressure has forced Uniroyal to withdraw Alar.

Dear Manager

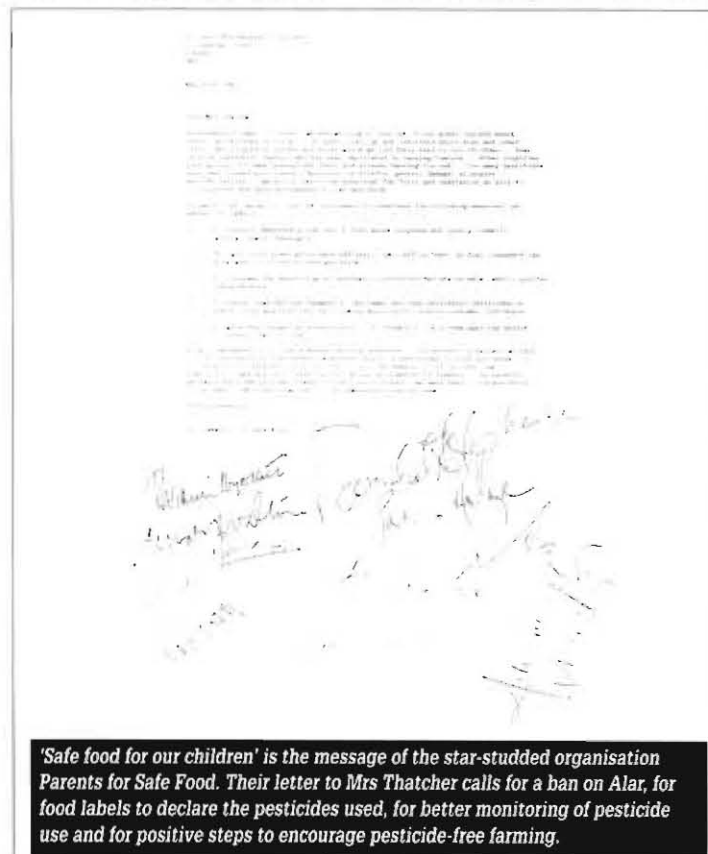
I am concerned about pesticide residues in food. I am particularly concerned about Alar and other pesticides sprayed on apples and fruit. I would like to be sure that my fruit and vegetables are healthy and safe to eat.

I would like answers to the following questions:

1. Will you label foods which have had pesticides used on them, so that consumers can know what is in their food?
2. Do you monitor residues in products that you sell? How often do you do this?
3. Will you tell shoppers the results of your tests?
4. Do you instruct your suppliers on how to reduce pesticide use?
5. Will you stop stocking fruit which has residues of Alar?
6. Will you be increasing the availability of organically grown produce through your store?

Yours faithfully

Valued Customer



'Safe food for our children' is the message of the star-studded organisation Parents for Safe Food. Their letter to Mrs Thatcher calls for a ban on Alar, for food labels to declare the pesticides used, for better monitoring of pesticide use and for positive steps to encourage pesticide-free farming.

PESTICIDES

It is not used in Italy or New Zealand. In Britain the Ministry has agreed to the continued use of Alar and a range of other products banned by other governments. Our table shows chemicals which the Ministry permits farmers to use which other countries prohibit.

But while we wait for a Ministry more responsive to consumer demands, we need not sit by and fret. Parents for Safe Food, the London Food Commission and the environment group ARK are encouraging parents to get active on the issue.

Parents can do something

- ★ buy organically grown products
- ★ wash fresh produce before use (this can remove some but not all the pesticides)
- ★ peel fruit and vegetables (this can also lower the risk, though unfortunately it can remove some good nutrition too)
- ★ if you have the opportunity, try growing your own vegetables
- ★ when buying fruit and vegetables, don't just go for the perfect-looking specimens, but get used to the idea that the 'blemished' ones may be less chemically treated
- ★ write to your supermarket encouraging them to ban Alar from fruit they sell and to stock a wider range of organic produce (see sample letter)
- ★ write to your MPs, MEPs and the Prime Minister saying how you feel, and – if you agree – putting the following points:

1. Pesticide residue levels in food should be lower
2. Treated products should have a label 'treated with chemicals'
3. Testing for residues should be frequent, with results reported publicly
4. Encouragement should be given to farmers to produce more organic food

Write to your supermarket and grocery manager.

Other countries ban these chemicals

Pesticide	WHO classification*	Use in UK	Banned
Amitrole (herbicide)	Acute hazard unlikely (but possible carcinogen)	119,000 kg/year (mainly orchards)	Sweden, Finland Norway
Azinophos-methyl (insecticide)	Highly hazardous	7,500 kg/year (fruit & vegetables)	India
Carbaryl (insecticide)	Moderately hazardous	16,000 kg/year (orchards)	W Germany
Chlordane (molluscicide)	Moderately hazardous	? kg/year (grazing pasture)	Sweden, Finland Turkey, Portugal
Demeton-s-methyl (insecticide)	Highly hazardous	102,000 kg/year (fruit & vegetables)	USSR
DNOC (insecticide)	Highly hazardous	3,600 kg/year (soft fruits)	Sweden
Endosulfan (insecticide)	Moderately hazardous	13,000 kg/year (soft fruits)	Bulgaria
Fonofos (insecticide)	Extremely hazardous	8,500 kg/year (cereal)	Malaysia
Methomyl (insecticide)	Highly hazardous	1,500 kg/year (cereal, hops)	Malaysia
Paraquat (herbicide)	Moderately hazardous	270,000 kg/year (vegetables, fruit cereal)	Sweden, W Germany Finland
Pentachlorophenol (insecticide & herbicide)	Highly hazardous	? kg/year	Sweden
Phenylmercury acetate (fungicide)	Extremely hazardous	? kg/year (seeds)	Turkey, New Zealand
2,4,5-T (herbicide)	Moderately hazardous	87,000 kg/year (grazing pasture)	Sweden, Finland
Thiophanate -methyl (fungicide)	Acute hazard unlikely (but possible carcinogen)	113,000 kg/year (cereal, fruit)	Finland

* This is a classification by the World Health Organisation based on the danger of using the chemicals. The risk is assessed only for the acute danger not for the longer-term risks of developing for example cancer, and we have added an indication where such a longer-term risk may be apparent.

Sources: Andrew Watterson, Southampton University, 1989; Pete Snell, *Pesticide Residues and Food*, London Food Commission, 1986; Greta Goldenman & Sarojini Rengam, *Problem Pesticides, Pesticide Problems*, IOCU/PAN, 1987.

Aldrin banned

Although banned in several countries for nearly 20 years, aldrin, a pesticide which produces the toxic derivative dieldrin, has continued to be available to farmers in the UK.

In 1988 the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

announced its intention to ban aldrin sales 'at the end of 1990'. But following the uproar over pesticides and growth regulators such as Alar, a press release from MAFF announced the banning of aldrin 'with immediate effect' on 18 May 1989.

Commentators wonder whether

the Ministry has confused Alar with aldrin, or whether they are just hoping that the public will make that confusion, and start buying apples again. Aldrin manufacturers are not upset as they had already run their stocks down after last year's banning notice.

Children malnourished: official

As you read this the government should have published — after only six years — the results of the survey of the diets of schoolchildren. Investigated in 1983, a draft report emerged in 1986 but only now is the survey officially published.

The delays are assumed to be due to the embarrassment the report might cause the government. Just three years after the 1980 Education Act abolished standards for the nutritional quality of school meals, the survey found a significant proportion of schoolchildren's diets was deficient in essential nutrients and that school dinners were a good opportunity for improving matters. But the government was planning through its social security reforms to abolish free dinners for the children of many poorer families and abolish free school milk. Local authorities were also to be required to offer meals service contracts to the private sector, thereby losing further control over the content of meals.

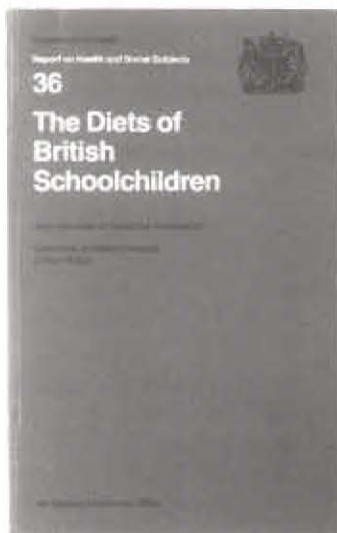
There is good reason for concern about the diets of schoolchildren. The draft report in 1986 revealed serious deficiency (below 70 per cent of recommended levels) of several nutrients:

- ★ 11% seriously deficient in calcium
- ★ 25% seriously deficient in iron (over 33% of girls)
- ★ 17% seriously deficient in Vitamin B2 (over 33% of older girls)
- ★ 33% seriously deficient in Vitamin A
- ★ a generally low intake of Vitamin D
- ★ 25% eating excess fat (over 40% energy from fat) especially older girls

Dietary fibre was not estimated, nor was sodium intake or the intake of sugars.

The report found that: 'Older children who ate out of school at cafes, take-aways and fast-food outlets etc had

Launching the report, and clearly not having read it in detail, David Mellor, Minister for Health, stated: 'It shows that schoolchildren in all social classes were well nourished, and thriving but ate far too much fat. All of them had adequate, or more than adequate, intake of nutrients...'



lower average daily intakes of some nutrients, some of which were not made up by foods consumed at other times of the day. Iron intake of older girls was particularly affected but generally the

nutritional quality of the diets of the older children who ate at cafes etc was poorer than the others.'

The report provides some ammunition for the defenders of good nutritional standards as part of the school meals service, and also for those alarmed by the poor quality of take-away foods and snack foods eaten by teenagers.

Wimpy additives

If you are sensitive to sulphites and don't want colouring in your ketchup, but you do want a fast food dinner, then you could do worse than pop into Wimpy and ask for their new leaflet called *Food File*.

The leaflet does not, unfortunately, give a full listing of the ingredients of their products. Such details are available in equivalent leaflets in the USA, and having to provide complete listings has



encouraged the companies to think twice about the content of some of their products.

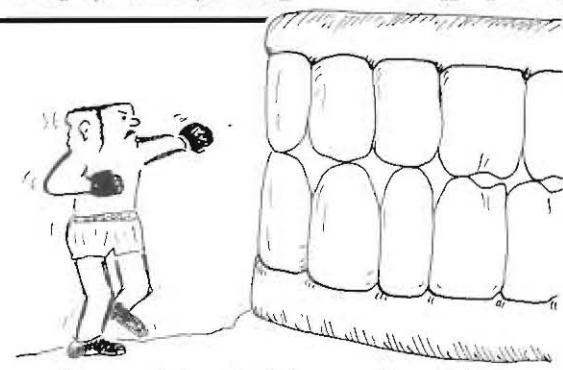
The Wimpy leaflet does at least indicate which product is likely to have certain specified additives, and also whether you will encounter unexpected milk, egg or gluten in your meal.

Sweet reasoning

A new round of conflict is taking place this year between the sugar industry and its critics. Public statements to the effect that sugar is natural, tastes nice, makes good food more palatable and need not be a threat to health are being promoted by the industry-sponsored British Sugar Bureau.

'The sugars in an apple are no different from the sugars in a chocolate bar,' declares Deputy Director-General Joanna Scott, implying that the two foods are equally beneficial to eat.

In contrast the eminent Professor Andrew Rugg-Gunn, speaking at the recent Action and Information on Sugars conference, points out that nearly all naturally-occurring sugars in our diet come from milk and fruit. Milk, he says, is not a cause of tooth decay. Fresh fruit is only a low-level cause of decay. Sugars naturally present in food are of very little importance as a cause of tooth decay compared with added sugars. He also pointed out that we should not be side-tracked by the industry's attempt to muddle sugars with starches. Refined starches can also



contribute to tooth decay, but their importance is less than that of added sugars.

The Sugar Bureau claims that sugar is a valuable means of making nutritious food more palatable. While agreeing that sugar is used to make many foods palatable and attractive, critics of the Sugar Bureau's 'information' suggest that the sort of food containing added sugar is most often of poor nutritional quality, being high in refined starches and fats. Soft drinks, confectionery, cakes and biscuits are of much more significance in the national diet than rhubarb or blackcurrants.

Changing sugar consumption is not just a matter of telling consumers to avoid sweet food, but involves policy reviews all the way from agricultural production of the commodity through

pricing policies, government regulations and labelling policies, conference delegates heard. The disease consequences of sugar need to

be made clear at every level.

Meanwhile the industry is preparing its reply in the form of a conference at York University 8-11 July. Later this year the government's COMA report on sugars is due to be published, along with a new edition of *The Scientific Basis of Dental Health Education* from the Health Education Authority. The two major companies, Tate & Lyle and The British Sugar Corporation, will also be undertaking their first joint campaign to promote sugar, following similar generic campaigns in Australia and the United States.

For the conference report contact AIS, Department of Community Dental Health, Kings College School of Medicine and Dentistry, St Giles Hospital, St Giles Road, London SE5 7RN.

New training courses

Thames Polytechnic and Hygiene Audit Systems have combined skills and resources to establish a training unit providing food hygiene courses for the catering and food industries.

Courses are offered which lead to recognised qualifications from the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and the Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene or are tailored to meet specific needs of industry.

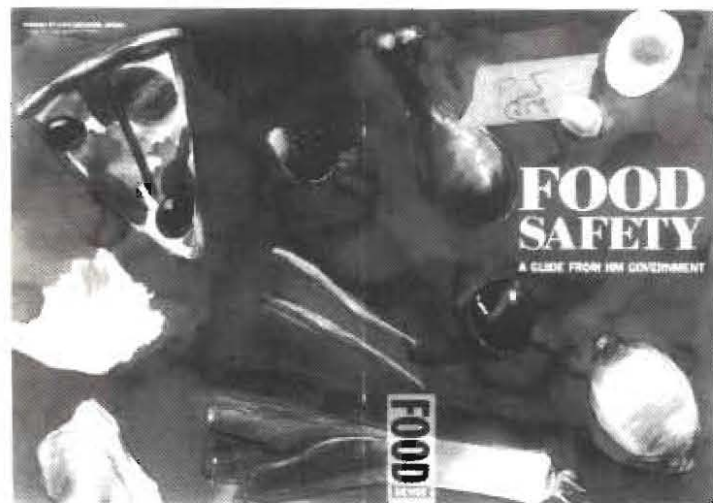
For details contact:

Food Hygiene Short Course Unit, School of Biological Sciences and Environmental Health, Thames Polytechnic, Wellington Street, Woolwich, London SE18 6PF, tel 01-316 8200.

Barbecue bugs

With food poisoning concerns in mind HCIMA, the Hotel, Catering and Institutional Management Association, have drawn up guidance notes for caterers planning to feature barbecued food this summer.

HCIMA Technical Brief No 8 covers handling and hygiene guidelines and is aimed to ensure 'guests enjoy the benefits of barbecues while minimising the risks.' HCIMA: 01-672 4251.



Don't blame the cook!

The government launched its delayed food hygiene booklet in May amid criticisms that little was being done to improve hygiene within the food industry and attack the root causes of food poisoning. Ten million copies of *Food Safety: A Guide from HM Government*, costing £750,000, will be given away in supermarkets and doctors' surgeries, advising consumers on hygiene in the home.

New research into food hygiene by environmental health lecturer Lisa Ackerley concludes that it is important not to place total responsibility for food

safety on the food handler at home. Food safety should begin at the manufacturing and production stages - the home caterer is only the last link in the chain.

Her report *Food Hygiene and Food Poisoning: A Study of Public Perceptions* recommends training courses for those involved in food handling, local government health promotion programmes, improvements in refrigeration design together with legislative changes and central government campaigns in food hygiene.

Listeria sufferers support group

In February 1989 a small self-help group was formed for those who have suffered from listeriosis, by two women whose own experiences of listeriosis had led them to experience isolation and guilt.

The group was formed to offer mutual support and to campaign for information to be more widely available to vulnerable groups and for clearer and more accurate food labelling.

Listeria monocytogenes is a food-borne organism found widely in nature, but which in rare cases can lead to serious illness. Pregnant women are particularly at risk as listeria may infect the developing baby and lead to miscarriage, still-birth, or severe illness in the mother and newborn baby. The

elderly or people who are ill or whose immune system is weakened can also be at risk.

Amanda Jupp, whose son was born with listeriosis, says the group would like to hear from anyone who has suffered from the illness.

'Since there are few statistics on miscarriage we would like to hear from women who suspect that they may have consumed contaminated food prior to their loss. Foods to consider would be unwashed raw vegetables, unpasteurised milk, soft mould-ripened cheeses or inadequately reheated cook-chill foods.'

Listeria Support Group, 2 Wessex Close, Faringdon, Oxon SN7 7YY

Safe Shopping, Safe Cooking, Safe Eating

A new book *Safe Shopping, Safe Cooking, Safe Eating* by Professor Richard Lacey warns how to avoid salmonella and listeria. He offers practical advice on shopping, storing and cooking food and on eating out.

The revolution that has taken place in food technology and the changes in our shopping and eating patterns have added to the risks of food poisoning. Lacey says that the provision of instantly available food carries inherent risks, and we must put more effort into safeguarding convenience foods. He suggests we should look beyond the advertising and the costly, glamorous packages that give an illusion of quality, instead we should buy raw ingredients of real quality and prepare the meals we want rather than those thrust on us by the suppliers of frozen and cook-chill products.

Dr Lacey, who is Professor of Microbiology at Leeds University, says that at present our food safety monitoring is simply not good enough. He calls for new legislation and a tough independent agency with which those who are now involved with

environmental health and food safety in particular can liaise. In the meantime, the onus is on us all to avoid food poisoning.

***Safe Shopping, Safe Cooking, Safe Eating* by Dr Richard Lacey, Published by Penguin, £2.99



Ethnic minority meals in Bloomsbury hospitals

Eleanor Carlson reports

Food is an important part of patient care and Bloomsbury Health Authority wants to provide nutritious meals that are acceptable to patients of all ethnic groups. An 18-month research project set up in January 1989 is investigating ways of providing ethnic minority meals and the problems involved.

The number of ethnic minority patients in Bloomsbury's hospitals is small, but they are of many cultures and backgrounds, each with their own religious and cultural food needs. A survey in June 1988 found that 25 per cent of patients wanted something other than a traditional British meal. Many patients were depending on their families to provide suitable food.

Bloomsbury's hospitals already buy kosher meals from the Hospital Kosher Meals Service and meals from other suppliers are being tested for their acceptability. Frozen Asian vegetarian meals and halal meat meals are bought by some hospitals. Patients should be encouraged to ask for them. The majority of Asians using these hospitals are meat eaters who believe rightly or wrongly that they will not get well unless they have meat or fish daily.

A limited variety of British vegetarian meals is also available in all hospitals.

Unless a hospital kitchen has the staff and space to prepare meals to religious regulations buying pre-cooked meals from commercial suppliers is one solution to the problem. Five manufacturers in the London area have supplied trial samples of their halal Asian and Middle Eastern dishes which were tasted by a panel of Bangladeshi and Pakistani members of the community and a group of non-Asian catering managers and dietitians.

The results showed that both the Asian and non-Asian groups agreed which manufacturer supplied the

most appetising food, nevertheless, the two groups did not agree on which dishes were acceptable. This means it is extremely important to involve the cultural group in question when decisions are made on selecting, purchasing and preparing food.

The research team has been liaising with local communities and a collection of recipes is being assembled for Asian halal, African, Caribbean and Greek Cypriot meals.

Extending the normal range of meals on offer to hospital patients and staff should not mean compromising the authenticity of ethnic minority meals or jeopardising religious dietary laws. For example, the following are not acceptable:

- failing to use halal meat when it is required by religious decree,
- reducing the amount of spices

used to satisfy traditional British tastes,

- adding a few spices to an otherwise British dish,
- substituting ingredients which are not normally part of the ethnic food culture,
- combining two recipes to make one dish just because the two traditional dishes are usually served together. The

new dish becomes an unrecognisable hybrid to the people for whom it is intended.

- failing to provide the major food (rice/bread) which should accompany more highly seasoned dishes.

As other health authorities have learned, providing meals for ethnic minorities does not improve patient care if the patients do not know they are available. Training in cultural food habits must be a continuous process for nursing and catering staff.

** This research is part of the Wolfson Foundation's Patient Care in the National Health Service project. Bloomsbury Health Authority has been awarded a grant to investigate ways of improving hospital meals for minority groups, but it is anticipated by Wolfson that the findings will be applicable elsewhere in the NHS.*

Nutritionist Eleanor Carlson and dietitian Moya de Wit are researchers on the Ethnic Minority Meals Project under the direction of district dietitian Cynthia Gomes.



Health worker Marcia Facey (centre) discusses healthier diets with the project researchers

Fungus food

Under the name of Quorn, a major promotion of *texturised myco-protein* has been launched in leading supermarkets, including Safeway, Tesco, Bejam and Sainsbury.

Derived from fungus, Quorn is described rather ambiguously in a Safeways leaflet as '...vegetable in origin — a distant relative of the mushroom (so distant, in fact, that it's nothing like a mushroom).' The Quorn Information Service (01-834 7711) describes the product as a 'tasty and wholesome new protein food with no animal fats.'

Being an early product of the revolution in biotechnology, Quorn has yet to find a useful role in our diet. It is thought by some to be rather tasteless, and in its basic form its only major competitor is soya tofu. The best chance for Quorn's commercial success is for it to be sold ready-spiced and disguised in pre-packed meals.

Testing hearts

The Coronary Prevention Group is offering a mobile fitness exhibition, available to employers, clubs etc, complete with testing facilities to monitor blood pressure, height, weight, fitness and to give advice on stress, diet, smoking and exercise.

Two nurses and a dietitian accompany the exhibition, which costs about £500 per day to hire. A set of the display panels is also available for hire. Contact Lydia Cole at the CPG: 01-833 3687.

The good-hearted boroughs of Barnet and Hackney

Residents of Barnet and Hackney will soon be benefiting from new campaigns to boost healthy eating.

In Barnet the local health authority and the borough council have launched a joint campaign as part of the national Look After Your Heart scheme. Local restaurants and caterers can display a Barnet Heartbeat Award symbol if they offer healthy food choices, have good hygiene standards and include no-

smoking areas.

Hackney Council and the City and Hackney Health Authority have awarded over a dozen cafes a Healthy Breakfast Award for offering low-fat milk and spreads, high-fibre cereals, wholemeal toast and poached or boiled eggs. 'People are more worried about what they eat, especially if they have had heart trouble' commented one cafe owner. 'The only thing that doesn't sell is muesli.'

Offal ban to beat BSE

Cattle offal including brain, spinal cord, thymus, spleen and tonsils will be banned from meat pies, sausages, pates and pasties to control the spread of the fatal cattle disease, BSE, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (see *The Food Magazine*, issue 5).

The total ban from human consumption was announced by John MacGregor, Agriculture Minister, in June following fears that the disease may spread from cattle to humans. BSE is similar to scrapie, a sheep disease thought to have spread to cattle by contaminated feed containing sheep remains.

Earlier this year following the publication of the Southwood Report on BSE, MAFF announced a ban on certain cattle offal in baby foods but came under increasing pressure to extend the ban to all foods.

The ban will not be immediate. Mr MacGregor announced that new regulations would be issued for consultation, but a spokesperson said they hoped 'the ban would be effective within a matter of weeks.' Although not allowed for human food, the offal can be used as bonemeal for fertiliser or for pet food, and can be used as feed for pigs and poultry.

Vital food research to end

The government is to shut the AFRC Institute of Food Research in Bristol next year, ending vital research into food safety in meat and meat products.

According to the Institute of Professional Civil Servants work on bacteria and hygiene in abattoirs, new slaughter practices, listeria and new pathogenic organisms will cease and the UK will have no co-ordinated science and technology centre for the £8 billion meat industry. Two hundred jobs will be lost.

The AFRC wants to shed Bristol's £3.2 million running costs, of which £1.7m has been designated 'near market' research. Under new government funding criteria such work must be financed by industry or closed down.

The closure will mean the loss of a new £1 million food processing hall where 'real life' food production lines can be duplicated, essential to test the reaction of bacteria to modern food processing techniques so manufacturers can ensure safe production practices.

Less Fat Fortnight

Less Fat Fortnight, the Health Education Authority's high profile healthy eating campaign, has been criticised for its involvement with a major food manufacturer.

The main sponsor of the two-week event launched at Alton Towers with television celebrities, John Craven and Roy Castle in June was St Ivel Gold, the largest manufacturer of low-fat spreads. Other supporters of the Fortnight include major supermarkets who were hosting joint HEA and St Ivel in-store promotions featuring money-off coupons.

The HEA's guidelines for commercial collaboration include the aim to support industry in their attempts to promote and provide healthier food choices. But dietitian Issy Cole-Hamilton questions whether there is any evidence that low-fat spreads actually help cut down fats in the diet. A 1986 survey suggested that dietitians using low-fat spreads ate no less overall fat in their diet compared with dietitians that used ordinary butter and margarine.

'Quite often people tend to end up using more and you're paying a lot for a product that replaces fat with water,' says Issy Cole-Hamilton.

According to Maria Reid, chair of the Community Nutrition Group: 'Many community dietitians and nutritionists may not be participating as they are unhappy about the single issue

approach of calling the campaign "less fat fortnight". It is important that dietary advice concentrates on an overall balanced diet.'

With this year's promotional budget set at £7 million, £2 million more than last year, St Ivel Gold aims to consolidate its brand leader position in the competitive low-fat spreads market. Together with dairy spreads low-fat spreads are the only real growth market in the entire yellow fats market. St Ivel is owned by Unigate, the largest producer and distributor of liquid milk in the UK.

Iwan Thomas of St Ivel told *The Food Magazine* that there were major consumer misconceptions about fat. 'People don't understand fats. We hope that this campaign will clear up those misconceptions'. And presumably enable them to see St Ivel Gold in a favourable light.

In recent years the Health Education Authority has come under much pressure to find commercial sponsorship for its health education campaigns, as its own advertising budget does not compare with those of commercial interests. Last year the food industry spent £570 million on advertising with chocolate advertisers topping the league with £81 million. By comparison the HEA's national 'Look After Your Heart' campaign has found it hard to find the £2 million or so it has so far spent on its television and press advertising this year.



Fruit juice drinks

Selling fruit juice diluted with water is illegal...unless it is sold as a fruit juice drink. We show you what you get for your money.

INGREDIENTS:
WATER, COMMINUTED ORANGES,
SUCROSE, GLUCOSE SYRUP, CITRIC
ACID, FLAVOURINGS, PRESERVATIVE
(SODIUM BENZOATE), ARTIFICIAL
SWEETENER (SACCHARIN),
ANTIOXIDANT (VITAMIN C)

**WHOLE
ORANGE
DRINK**

Free from Artificial Colour

Packaged like a fruit juice, featuring fruit on the label and advertised on television for their fruitiness, what do we actually buy when we opt for a fruit drink rather than a pure fruit juice?

The answer is a lot of added water – up to 95 per cent added water.

And if there isn't much fruit, how do they make the product acceptable? By adding sugar – up to 50 lumps in a one-litre carton!

Add some colouring agents, stabilisers, artificial sweeteners and pack it in fruit-juice style cartons at fruit-juice prices and what do you have...a consumer con trick.

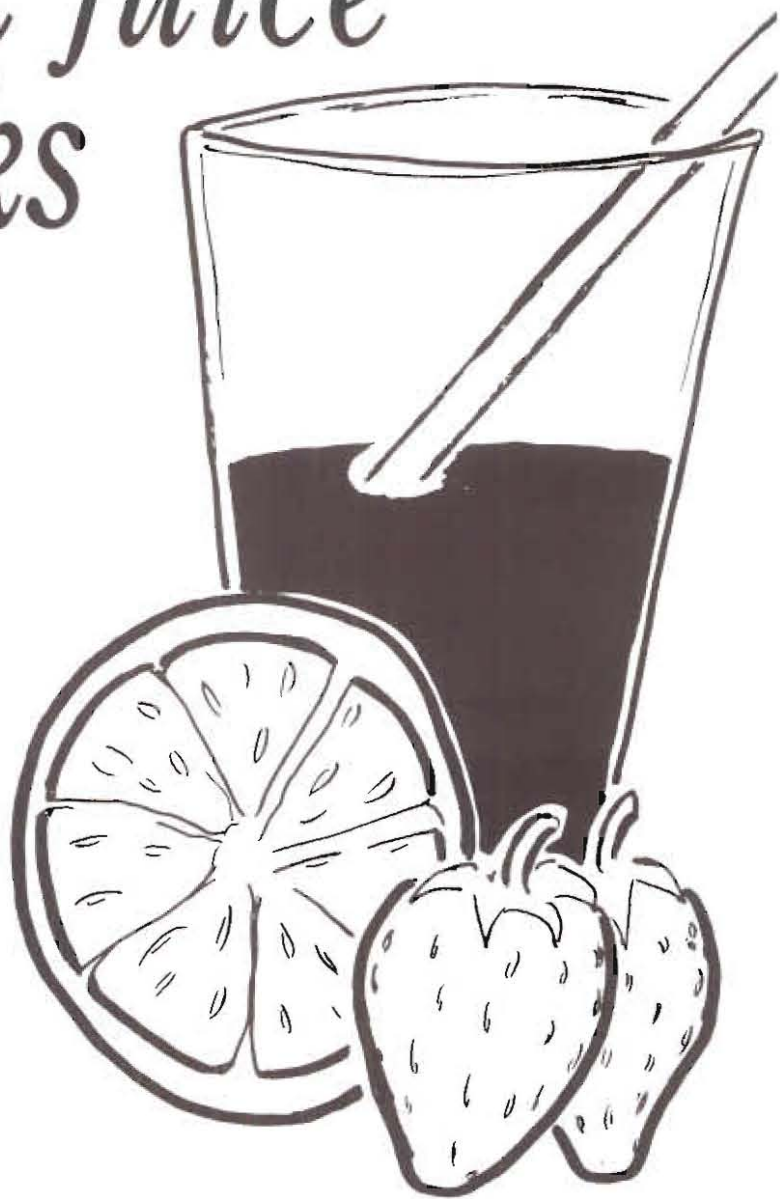
In collaboration with Southwark Public Protection Department we are pleased to name the names and give you the facts. As the table shows, even the biggest companies are not above selling sweetened water flavoured with a little real fruit.

Don't be fooled

Read the labels carefully. The big print on the front of the carton may say 'contains real juice' or 'a refreshing combination of six fruit juices' or 'made with concentrated fruit juice', but take a look at the small print on the back or the side of the pack.

Real fruit juice should be just that – juice extracted from fruit and packed either fresh or reconstituted from concentrate. Some companies add a little Vitamin C (to help prevent the colour from fading) and some add sugar to make a sweetened fruit juice.

But fruit juice drinks can contain large amounts of extra water, sweetened with extra sugar and possibly saccharin as well, plus some cosmetic additives: the colourings and flavourings to turn water into 'juice'.



Top brands

Setting aside the squashes, cordials and sparkling soft drinks with very little real fruit, we buy in this country nearly £200m-worth of 'juice drinks' every year.

Leading brands of juice drinks are:

Libbys 'C' (owned by Nestle)	30% of market
Supermarket own brands	24% of market
Five Alive (owned by Coca Cola/Schweppes)	14% of market
Del Monte 'Island Blends' (owned by Nabisco)	14% of market

OFF THE SHELF

The real fruit in fruit drinks

Product	Estimated amount of fruit juice (%)	Price per litre ready to-drink	Added colour
Britvic 55	55	£1.08	
Bulmers Sparkling Apple	100	£1.04	
Calypso Orange	0	60p	✓
Capri-sun (various)	10*	86p	
Citrus Spring Lemon	10	67p	
Co-op Sun-up Tropical	under 45*	76p	
Co-op Good Life Tropical	100*	£1.09	
Del Monte Island Blend	under 55*	53p	✓
Del Monte Orange Burst	under 45*	53p	
Five Alive Mixed Citrus	under 55*	59p	
Five Alive Tropical	under 55*	59p	
Libbys Orange 'C'	15	45p	✓
Libbys Blackcurrant 'C'	5	47p	✓
Libbys Hi-Juice Um Bongo	25*	£1.00	
Libbys Moon Shine	under 45*	£1.00	✓
Lilt	5	57p	✓
Presto Apple with Vitamin C	10	36p	
Ribena Blackcurrant	5	59p	✓
Ribena Orange and Apricot	under 10*	£1.00	
Robinsons Whole Orange	5	96p	
Robinsons Orange Barley Water	5	96p	
Quosh Whole Orange	5	92p	
Safeway Orange 'C'	under 45*	47p	✓
Sainsbury Hi-juice Orange	15*	80p	
Sainsbury Fruit Cocktail	under 45*	79p	✓
Sainsbury Tropical Fruit	under 45*	55p	
St Clements Original Orange	10*	57p	
St Clements Tropical Fruit	10*	57p	
St Michael Sunfruit	under 45*	85p	✓
7-Up Lemon & Lime	0	57p	
Sungold Mango Nectar	50*	85p	
Supreme Hi-Juice Orange	20*	47p	
Supreme Apple Drink	under 08*	41p	✓
Supreme Grapefruit Drink	under 45*	41p	✓
Supreme Tropical Cocktail	under 45*	52p	✓
Tango Sparkling Orange	5	54p	✓
Thomas Hi-Juice Orange	under 15	96p	

* Manufacturer's data



How the mighty fall

The giant multinational Nestle pleaded guilty in 1987 to 215 charges connected with selling an adulterated product which it claimed was 100 per cent apple juice.

The product, manufactured by its US subsidiary Beech Nut, consisted of cane sugar, beet sugar, corn syrup and other ingredients but very little juice. The product was said to be 20 per cent cheaper to make than real apple juice.

The company was charged with intentionally shipping adulterated and mislabelled juice to 20 US states and to five foreign countries with intent to defraud and mislead. Beech Nut is reported to have paid a \$2m fine, far larger than any previous penalty under US food laws, and to set up a \$7.5m fund to compensate retailers and consumers.

National Consumer Week

The week commencing 25 September 1989 is to be National Consumer Education Week, launched at the Office of Fair Trading and with sponsorship from the Advertising Standards Authority.

Friday (29 September) is the day

allocated to food and drink. A guidance package for interested organisations is being prepared by the Consumer Education Liaison Group — contact Patricia Hutchinson, Bedfordshire Trading Standards Service, tel (0582) 402500 ext 3362.

Slimming pills ban

New restrictions on the composition of slimming pills have been announced by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. From 13 June 1989 it became illegal to sell food

products containing more than 15 per cent guar and locust bean gum. The gums are considered to pose a health risk. Taken as pills, they rapidly absorb water and may swell while still in the throat.

Sweetener in, emulsifiers out

The EEC have requested that we fall in line with their ban on certain additives, and in response MAFF have issued a restriction banning the use of four emulsifiers:

- 430 polyoxyethylene (8) stearate
- 431 polyoxyethylene (40) stearate
- 478 lactylated esters of glycerol and

• propane-1,2-diol dioctyl sodium sulphosuccinate
Meanwhile a new sweetener called lactitol is now permitted in our food. The additive is a by-product of cheese production, is not easily digested and is considered by MAFF to be of benefit to people on low-sugar diets.



'Weak' food industry criticised

Conservative MP Teresa Gorman, who is opposed to tighter food regulations, has criticised the food industry for not putting up a better defence to public concerns about food quality. In a circular letter she says:

Viewed from the perspective of Parliament, you in the food industry are putting up a very weak defence to attacks on your integrity. You are seriously in danger of losing your case by default. Oppressive increases in regulations, in response to the public outcry, will surely follow unless you get your act together.

She is even critical of her own government for its long overdue review of the Food Act '...which will result in far greater regulation and interference in the food industry. The protection of consumers can be fully guaranteed by the free operation of the market'.

Nuclear accidents & the farmer

A new Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food leaflet has been issued advising farmers what to do 'in the unlikely event of a release of radioactivity...'

The leaflet, along with a technical supplement on managing livestock and crops after evacuation of the area, is to be distributed only to farmers within the present evacuation zones around

nuclear installations. However copies are reported to be available from the MAFF Press Office: 01-270 8973 (fax 01-270 8443).

MAFF has also issued a booklet for farmers on what action they should take in times of crisis and war, entitled Civil Defence and the Farmer, price £1.50, ISBN 011 2412335.

Dairy trades oppose secrecy over BST

The Dairy Trades Federation is calling for milk from secret BST trials to be segregated and labelled. They are clearly worried about consumer resistance to the milk-boosting hormone bovine somatotropin.

In response to The Food Magazine's BST Not For Me campaign (see Issue 5) the Federation, which represents dairy companies, has written to state their opposition to BST's use while on field trials (see letters page 30).

Meanwhile Sainsbury's have also said they are opposed to the secrecy over trial farms. In a letter to one of their customers they state:

The primary purchaser of milk from all farms, including that destined for Sainsbury's, is the Milk Marketing Board and they are legally obliged under the 1968 Medicines Act to maintain the confidentiality of the trial farms involved. We are unhappy with this situation as it does not allow us to guarantee that none of the milk from these trials reaches Sainsbury's production units. We are in contact with the Milk Division of the MAFF and the MMB in the hope that this situation may be changed.

Because our customers' health is more important than the shelf-life of our food

**THIS STORE WILL NOT
KNOWINGLY SELL
IRRADIATED
FOOD.**



Irradiation ban to be lifted despite opposition

John MacGregor, Secretary of State for Agriculture is to lift the UK ban on food irradiation, despite increasing opposition that includes leading supermarkets, the British Medical Association, the National Farmers Union, and all UK consumers' organisations.

Tesco, Marks and Spencer and the Co-op say they will not stock irradiated produce though Sainsbury would, saying they will leave the choice to the consumer. The National Farmers Union, The Frozen Food Federation and the Poultry Federation are all now opposed to its introduction.

But irradiation is not an answer to the problem of food poisoning according to the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and the British Medical Association.

As the London Food Commission 1989 report *Food Irradiation and Food Poisoning* shows, contamination of food with poisoning organisms results from a breakdown in hygiene in food processing. Irradiation merely masks but does not remove many of the problems. Not only does irradiation leave the toxins behind, but it also makes harder, and in some cases impossible, the detection of poisoning hazards and sub-standard quality.

John MacGregor is about to do to a whole range of foods what Edwina Currie did to eggs. If any food has to be irradiated consumers will need to ask what was wrong with it', said Tony Webb of the Food Irradiation Campaign.

In contrast to the 'closed-door' approach of the UK government the Danish parliament held a three day

'consensus conference' in May in which a representative panel of lay people questioned national and international experts on all aspects of food irradiation.

The panel's report to the parliament recommends that Denmark should not permit irradiation of any foods on grounds of unresolved safety issues, inadequate controls to prevent abuses and damage to Danish food culture which stresses quality and hygiene. It calls for Denmark to oppose the EC Directive which would force Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and the UK to permit a wide range of irradiated foods.

Meanwhile the European Parliament has deferred to September a decision on a recommendation from its Environment Committee that the only irradiated food to be permitted in the EEC should be spices.

Irradiation —more abuse

An Early Day Motion in the House of Commons in June naming a number of British and Dutch companies calls for an investigation into abuse. It is suggested that a company trading in 'reject' prawns is 'under-irradiating' to leave sufficient contamination so that port health inspectors in the UK and other EEC countries will not suspect irradiation has been used.

Botulism survives irradiation

Experts have warned that food irradiation is not effective in controlling botulism as it neither destroys the spores nor the toxins.

Until the recent outbreak concerning contaminated hazelnut yoghurt there had only been nine outbreaks of botulism in Britain, affecting 26 individuals, since 1922.

Last year an outbreak of botulism affected 80 cattle in Northern Ireland. It was caused by the herd being fed a mixture containing litter scraped from the floors of chicken battery farms, including silage, feed, faeces and chicken carcasses and was used by farmers as a cheap source of protein. Investigators found feather, bone and muscle tissue infected with botulism.

Britain's EEC mountains

The stocks of food being stored in the UK under EEC schemes are, according to government figures, as follows:

Pig meat	62,000 kg
Butter	24,627,000 kg
Beef	27,497,000 kg
Grain	1,544,082,000 kg
Sugar	1,938,802,000 kg

SPECIAL REPORT

MICROWAVES: HOW DO THEY MEASURE UP?

MICROWAVES AND NUTRITION

Despite the fact that nearly half of all households in this country now own a microwave there are relatively few studies of the nutritional effects of microwave cooking.

Market research suggests that the success of the microwave is linked to the convenience it offers in terms of speed and cleanliness rather than the quality of the end product.

Whether using a microwave will improve your nutritional intake depends on how you use it. By cooking meals from scratch and using raw ingredients you are likely to retain more nutrients and cut down on fat consumption using a microwave compared with conventional cooking. For vegetables the reduced cooking time and use of less water in microwave cooking should, in theory lead to greater retention of nutrients such as vitamin C and folic acid. But the evidence is not clearcut, as tables 1 and 2 show, and microwave cooking may not be superior to steaming or pressure cooking. Baked potatoes are one of the most popular microwave

Nearly half of all households now own a microwave compared with under ten per cent five years ago. And microwaves are widely used in pubs, cafes, hospitals and even in corner shops for self-service fast food. But, asks Sue Dibb for The Food Magazine, what effects do microwave ovens have on our nutrition and are they safe to use?

dishes. Nutritional quality is marginally superior to conventional baking, but only if the skin is eaten. Migration of nutrients from the skin into the flesh does not occur in the short microwave cooking time.

Microwave cooking may reduce the amount of fat but not necessarily the amount of cholesterol in foods. Researchers have found fat and water losses in the heating of meat loaves and

burgers to be greater for microwave cooking than for grilling. But the fat loss does not carry a proportionate decrease in the cholesterol, much of which appears to remain with the protein. The increased moisture loss in microwave roasting of joints of meat may also carry with it water soluble vitamins so that microwave roasted meat may be marginally lower in some B vitamins, as well as fat.

READY MEALS

The most popular use of microwaves both in the home and in catering is not for cooking foods from raw but for reheating pre-cooked food either chilled, frozen or stored. Yet almost all studies have looked at the effect of microwave heating on cooking raw foods.

Studies of cook-chill catering have found substantial losses of vitamin C and folic acid, though the main losses seem to be in preparation and storage rather than re-heating.

Little seems to be known about the impact ready meals and other products for microwave ovens may have on diet and health. Does the increased use of microwave ovens encourage the consumption of more 'unhealthy' convenience foods not only in the home but in cafes and self-service stores?

In a recent survey 80 per cent of shoppers said they regularly bought pre-packed chilled or frozen food items.

Frozen and chilled ready meals are one of the food industry's few growth areas due mainly to the increase in microwave ownership and changes in eating habits with the decline of the family meal and growth in 'grazing' throughout the day.

MICROWAVES AND FOOD POISONING

Concern over listeria in pre-cooked chilled foods has raised doubts about the safety of these foods, which could undermine their increasing popularity.

Microwave cooking is less efficient than conventional cooking for destroying micro-organisms, due to the lack of uniform heating and so-called 'cold spots'. The

potential for food poisoning related to bacterial contamination is greater for foods heated by microwave oven than by conventional methods.

Microwaves only penetrate the outside few centimetres of food — the rest is heated by conduction. Microwave wattages vary generally between 500 and 750 watts for domestic ovens affecting the length of cooking time required. A dish requiring eight minutes cooking time at 700 watts will need almost an extra three minutes at 500 watts. Yet manufacturers instructions are generally written for either 600 or 650 watts. As microwave cooking times are so short there is a much greater risk that internal temperatures will not be high enough to destroy potentially harmful bacteria. Additionally the timers on cheaper models can be less accurate.

Studies have shown that cooking contaminated turkeys in a microwave to 76.6°C did not completely eliminate any of the three pathogenic bacteria from the turkeys (Aleixo et al 1985). In the USA, where over one third of raw chickens sold is contaminated with salmonella, research shows microwave cooking ineffective in eliminating salmonella compared with conventional cooking. (In the UK an estimated 60 per cent of chicken meat is salmonella contaminated).

Researchers cooking salmonella

TABLE 1

Vitamin C content of vegetables in conventional and microwave cooking

	Microwave no water mg/100g	Conventional mg/100g
Broccoli	116	73.2
Brussels sprouts	86.5	73.5
Cauliflower	84.6	48.2
Parsnips	14.1	6.9

(Source: Armbruster, 1978)

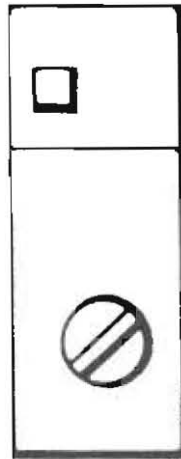
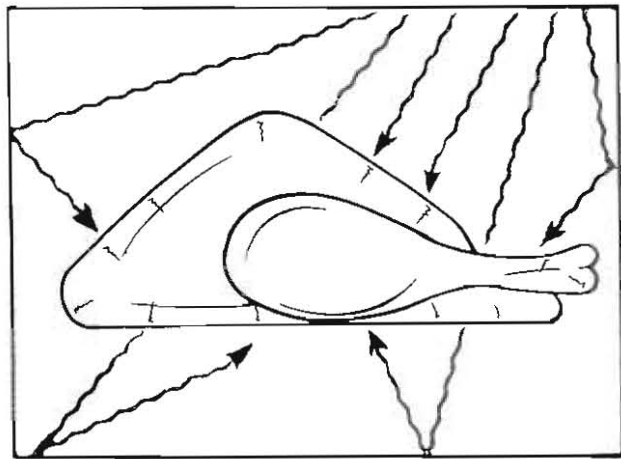
TABLE 2

Vitamin and folic acid in freshly cooked spinach

	Raw mg/100g	Microwaved mg/100g	Conventional mg/100g
Vitamin C content	26.5	13.5	17.0
Folic acid content	0.161	0.183	0.157

(Source: Klein et al. 1981)

SPECIAL REPORT



Microwaves penetrate about two inches. The rest of the food is cooked by conduction, which continues after the oven has been switched off. Ignoring this 'standing time' increases the risk that the food may not be thoroughly cooked and might remain contaminated

infected chickens, following manufacturers instructions, to 85-91°C found eight out of nine microwaved samples produced some type of positive culture and five out of the nine had very heavy growth. The researchers concluded that even internal temperature cannot be used as an exclusive means of determining the safety of all foods prepared in a microwave oven.

LISTERIA IN CHILLED MEALS

Earlier this year listeria was found in 25 per cent of pre-cooked chilled foods bought from leading supermarkets. Listeria can cause fatal blood poisoning and meningitis, miscarriages in women and death in the elderly and infirm. Research by Professor Richard Lacey at Leeds University found that microwave reheating according to manufacturers' instructions did not kill the bacteria. Of the 27 dishes tested, listeria was killed in only five (19 per cent). The mean temperature was 71°C (range 48°-100°C). In those where the listeria had been killed the mean temperature was higher 91°C (range 84°-97°C).

This research casts serious doubt on the UK Department of Health recommendations that pre-cooked chilled foods are safe if reheated to 70°C.

STANDING TIME

With uneven heating in microwave ovens, the use of standing time after

cooking is important to allow the heat to be evenly distributed by conduction. However studies of stuffed chickens found that even after the full cooking time of 38 minutes it took a standing time of 20 minutes for stuffing temperatures to reach 72-85°C.

As microwaves are primarily used for convenience and time-saving it is unlikely that users are going to leave foods for a period of time unless manufacturers make its importance clear on packaging. A MAFF survey last year found a low level of consumer understanding — only three per cent recognised the use of microwave ovens as likely to cause food poisoning.

It is also advisable to stir foods to assist even temperature distribution but many microwaveable ready dinners are

covered by film which makes stirring impossible.

An additional problem for microwave users is how to tell whether the food has reached a sufficiently high temperature. The government's booklet on food hygiene says only that food should be 'piping hot'. Some microwave ovens now come with a temperature probe which is inserted into the food. When a pre-set temperature is reached the oven will switch itself off automatically. But this does not overcome the problem of uneven heating and could perhaps provide a false guide as to whether the food is cooked properly.

NEW MICROWAVE IDEAS

In the USA, where 54 million households own microwaves, there is a

Browning Off Treatment

To counteract the uncooked look of some microwaved meats you can sprinkle browning over your meal to give it a 'delicious appearance'.

But what might you find in this concoction?

Typically mainly salt, together with paprika; the flavour enhancer, 621, monosodium glutamate known to cause flushing, headache and chest pain (the so-called Chinese Restaurant Syndrome) in sensitive people, and banned from foods for young children; the colouring caramel, E150, which could be one of several forms of chemical derived from sugar treated with ammonium salts, sulphites, acids or alkalis, and which do not all carry an entirely clean bill of health; and to stop it all sticking together — the anti-caking agent 554 Aluminium sodium silicate, not yet approved by the EEC.

Burns and Scalds

Researchers have reported a small but growing number of burn injuries associated with microwave ovens, the most frequently reported being scalding (contact with hot liquid or vapour) including that from milk in babies' bottles heated in a microwave.

The Department of Health's booklet *Feeding Today's Infants* warns that baby bottles should not be heated in a microwave because the heating does not ensure sterility of the bottles and there is the risk of scalds if feeds are heated in this way. As the bottle itself does not become hot this can give a false impression of the temperature of the liquid inside.

In the US all bottle manufacturers caution against heating bottles in microwaves but such warnings do not appear on all UK bottle packs. Our own survey found that Vantage and Pur carried no warnings.

Research published in *The Lancet* shows that oven users do not understand that microwaves heat in a completely different way from conventional heating appliances, resulting in actions which would probably not be considered by someone using an ordinary cooker. Haste and an attitude that microwave ovens are safer likewise result in injury. The *Lancet* warns that the increasing popularity of microwave ovens will result in more and more burn injuries, unless preventive measures are taken.



SPECIAL REPORT



rush to develop new products specifically for this market. 1987 saw a 46 per cent increase in sales of microwave foods to more than US\$760 million. In 1988 the giant food company Pillsbury spent 60 per cent of its research and development budget on microwave products.

One new development is 'shelf-stable products' which have a shelf life of 18 months. The food is sealed in an oxygen-free atmosphere in plastic trays and the great advantage is that it only takes two minutes to heat through instead of five for frozen foods!

A new development in microwave food packaging is 'susceptor plates'. These are thin layers of powdered aluminium built into the packaging to absorb microwave energy and heat the food to a high enough temperature to produce crisping of fish, for example, and browning of crusts of pies or pastries. First developed for Pillsbury's microwave pizzas, susceptor plates are now being incorporated into all its microwave food packaging.

One problem for microwave users is how to tell when food is cooked. Manufacturers are now developing a micro-ready indicator to combat variations in the wattages of microwave ovens which can be so great as to make the directions on packages worthless. The idea is that a tiny heat sensitive strip incorporated on top of the food container changes colour when the food is properly cooked.

AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS NOT COME...

The design of consumer products has entered a new phase with the advent of 'product semantics', the concept that products should be designed to communicate visually. Examples include hair dryers with wavy shapes and tea kettles with birds at their spouts for whistling. According to *The Wall Street Journal* (26

March 1987), Phillips Industries developed a microwave oven in the shape of a fondue pot, for use at the dining room table. The design looked more like a nuclear power plant, however, and was shelved.

ARE MICROWAVES SAFE TO USE?

Many people are concerned about the possibility of leakage of microwaves from their ovens. Manufacturers say that if used correctly in accordance with instructions microwave ovens do not leak and there have been considerable improvements in the last ten years. The British Standard allows for leakage up to five milliwatts/cm² at a distance of 50 mm although there is some pressure for the level to be lowered. But home leakage testers are not a good idea — tests have shown that they are often inaccurate.

In 1988 Islington Council in London carried out a survey of microwave ovens used commercially to discover whether leakage occurred from ovens under normal operating conditions. Many of the ovens surveyed were designed for domestic use. Of the 122 ovens tested, 25 per cent leaked above a level of 0.1mW/cm² and two ovens were found to be leaking above 5mW/cm² due to warping of the door. Less than half the ovens were totally leak-free.

Leakage was due to grease and foodstuffs adhering to door seals rather than mechanical failure.

This was an improvement on their previous survey in 1986 where, of 50 microwaves in use, all were found to be leaking to some degree. Despite manufacturers' recommendations that appliances should be serviced annually, 87.5 per cent had not been serviced since installation, some being up to seven years old.

Additional research Christine Adams

Recommendations

- ★ Improved consumer education to ensure greater understanding of microwave cooking process.
- ★ More independent research into the implications of microwave ovens for nutrition, particularly effects on diet of increased consumption of ready meals.
- ★ Investigation into the standardisation of microwave oven wattages to ensure uniform and simple cooking time instructions.
- ★ Clearer labelling on food packaging stressing the importance and reasons for standing time to complete the cooking process.
- ★ Improved training for catering staff using microwave ovens.
- ★ Department of Health to publicise its cook-chill guidelines for domestic and catering use.

Take Care

- ★ Take special care when cooking with microwave ovens to ensure foods are properly cooked — 80°C is a safer guideline — but as we point out it can be difficult to tell whether foods are thoroughly cooked. To be really safe only use a microwave to heat or reheat food that is known to be bacteriologically safe.
- ★ Ensure that your microwave is kept clean — a build up of grease can lead to leakage — and there is also a risk of bacteriological cross contamination of foods.
- ★ Ensure that microwave ovens are regularly serviced, particularly older models. If you are worried about leakage contact a service engineer or your local environmental health department who may be able to arrange leakage monitoring — do not rely on home leakage testers.

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JUNK OUT — GOODNESS IN. There's been a lot of talk about junk food and good eating but up until now that's all it's been. At long last one snack food manufacturer ... has done something about it. They have added vitamins to every packet of their product'. (Advertisement in *Teacher*, September 1988).

And it turns out they're not the only ones! As consumer interest and concern about food quality and healthy eating increases, so the imagination of the food industry knows no bounds. The attempts industry will go to to sell us foods that all nutritionists and health professional are trying to discourage seem limitless.

First, in response to the NACNE and COMA reports food companies managed to convince us that horse-food — bran — was the best thing since sliced bread. Then they persuaded us that to buy water in little tubs mixed with butter or margarine was the perfect answer to our weight and heart problems.

IN ON THE ACT

Soon the vitamin and mineral makers got in on the act and we learned that if our children popped a pill a day they'd all become angelic professional material.

And now, riding the same wave, the industry grabs us and tells us that what we have always thought of as 'junk food' may no longer be 'junk' because it is fortified with extra vitamins and minerals.

Fortification of foods with vitamins and minerals is not new and some is carried out by law. White bread has to be

Super food or super con?

Issy Cole-Hamilton looks at the latest attempts to jump on the 'healthy foods' bandwagon.

SOME EXAMPLES OF FORTIFIED FOODS

- ★ Ice lollies with added vitamin C
- ★ Orange pop with added vitamin C
- ★ Orange squash with added vitamin C
- ★ Crisps and other snacks with added vitamins and minerals
- ★ Instant desserts with added vitamins and iron
- ★ Vitamin enriched sweets (coming soon from Germany)

fortified with iron, calcium and vitamin B1, and margarine with vitamins A and D. Both were introduced as public health measures in the mid 20th century.

But mass fortification of otherwise nutrient-depleted foods is a relatively

new phenomenon and gives major cause for concern.

'Junk' foods tend to be manufactured from cheap, poor quality ingredients and include relatively large amounts of fat and sugar. For some people, children

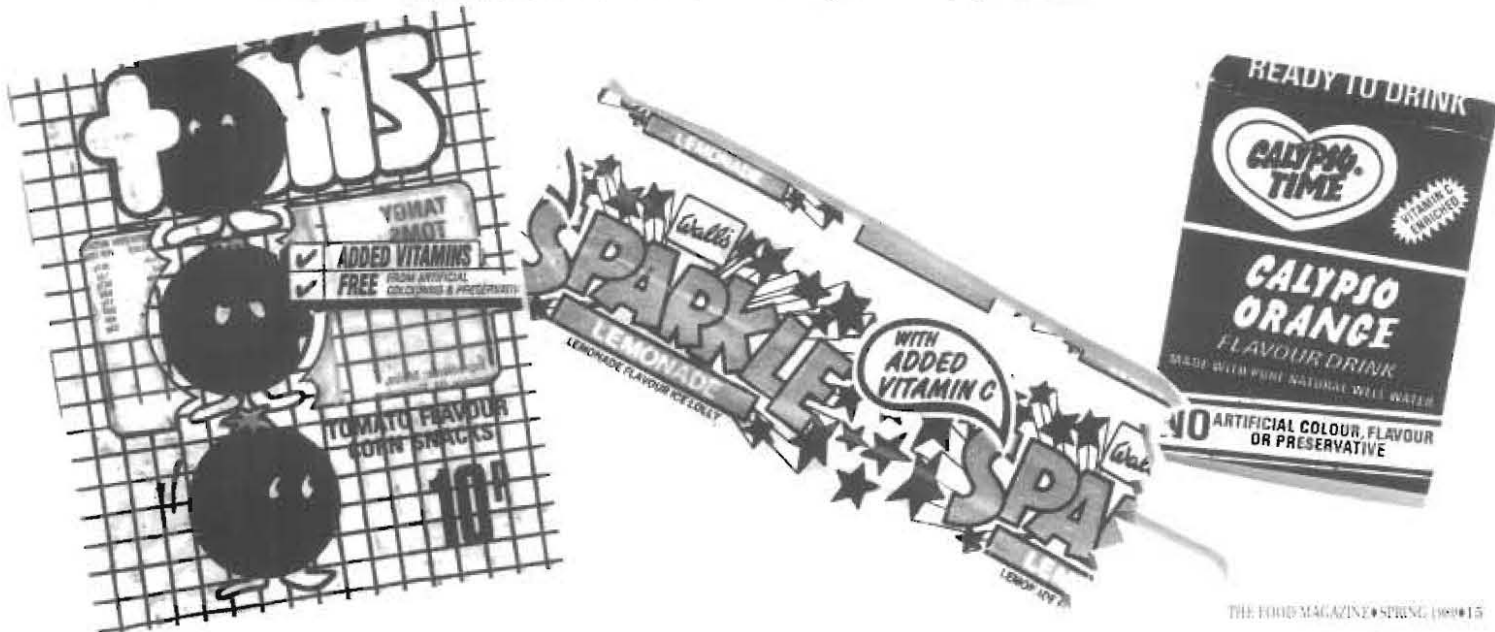
and teenagers in particular, they are a significant part of their food intake. Fat and sugar both provide calories with relatively few other nutrients and diets containing a lot of these foods are likely to be low in nutrients. Fortification with vitamins and minerals may well help to redress this balance but does not alter the fact that the foods are still high in fat, and often sugar, and depleted of dietary fibre.

CYNICAL

The food industry knows this. Behind the added vitamins and minerals claims on so many packets can only be a cynical attempt to save sales figures in the light of improved nutrition education of the public.

The confusing messages and priorities that arise from this type of sales technique can do nothing to enhance the health of most people. Eating healthily means more than just getting adequate vitamins and minerals. For many people it means major changes in the types of food they eat. Enriching poor quality foods with vitamins and minerals is likely to encourage people to carry on eating unhealthy diets, laden with fatty and sugary foods, and undermine all attempts being made by government and health professionals to improve the nation's health by improving eating habits.

This is very different from the claims of the fortified crisp makers who promote their products to 'meet consumers' increasing demands for healthier living' and say that the crisps will 'help achieve a more balanced diet for the British public'.





Among the speciality cheeses, goats milk ice-creams and rare breeds on display it was hard to recognise many products from the supermarket shelves. Of the big food manufacturers only Kellogg's had put in an appearance persuading us to 'grow up healthy' and try their new breakfast cereal Toppas. I found them a bit sweet but was assured that 'men seem to like them'.



'Pat and Tony Archer' visit the Soil Association stand

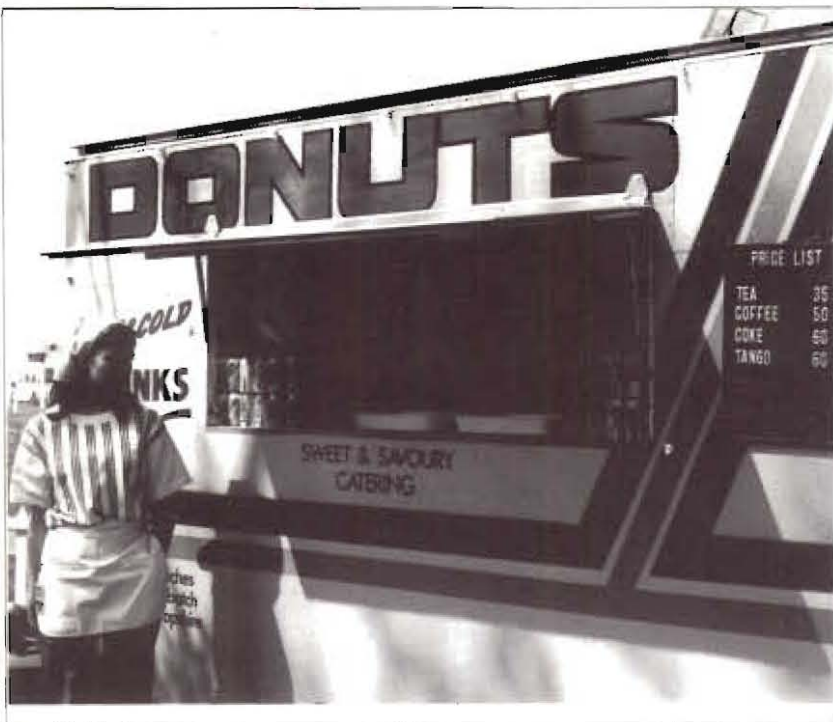
FOOD & FARMING FESTIVAL

This is British Food and Farming Year and to kick off MAFF's centenary celebrations Hyde Park played host to that well known marketing phrase 'the taste of the country come to town'.

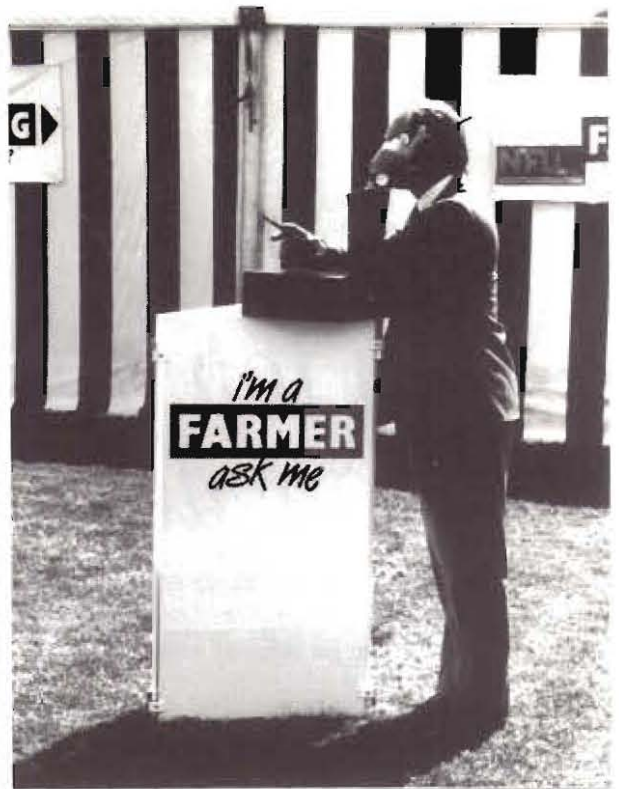
'Our Land, Our Food' was the theme of MAFF's own exhibition – rather a misnomer as 99 per cent of us do not own any of Britain's farming land.



This four-day event was sponsored by northern supermarket giant ASDA. Chairman John Hardman coyly described their contribution as a six figure sum — but less than the cost of a few television adverts — making it 'commercially sensible' for a retailer seeking to expand southwards.



With our appetites whetted by bite-size freebies where could we turn for our lunch? The best of British catering of course — the burger bars, doughnut stalls and hot dog stands each paying £1,200 for the weekend and their captive audience.



Despite the 'yokels in smocks' image of much of the show this one slipped through the net.



But the sun shone, and our feet ached at the end of the day and we had seen some pretty little piglets snuggled up already looking like a pack of sausages — so we must have had a good time.

Green top milk gets raw deal

As the Government climbs down on its ban on sales of raw, unpasteurised milk, John Neligan of The Association of Camphill Communities puts the case for 'green top' milk producers

Approximately two to three per cent of the liquid milk drunk in this country is green top milk. This represents 1.5 million consumers, mostly in country areas where fresh milk can be on the doorstep within twelve hours of milking. By the time milk that will be pasteurised has been stored in a farm bulk tank, transported to a dairy, stored in milk silos, pasteurised, bottled and transported to the distributor, this "fresh" milk is usually three and half days old.

In the past milk was responsible for a lot of ill health, particularly the transmission of tuberculosis and brucellosis. Since these diseases were eradicated in

cattle there has been no problem. There is minimal risk in drinking green top milk but in contrast the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre is becoming increasingly concerned about the post-pasteurisation contamination of milk.

I have been involved in farming for the past 20 years. For the first five years I worked on intensive dairy and pig farms. On these units there was the feeling that if you kept in front of disease you could remain profitable. The pig ration had prophylactic antibiotics. The pig and calf pens had to be disinfected after each batch of animals. If there was any sign of diarrhoea or ill health you had immedi-

ately to attack the problem with antibiotics. But for the past 15 years I have been involved with organic farming. My prime concern is to increase the health and vitality of the soil, crops and animals. We have never disinfected a calf pen or had any problems with diarrhoea or had any losses of calves. The farm has steadily increased its productivity and profitability.

SALMONELLA

The bacteria most commonly implicated in outbreaks of food poisoning is salmonella. I want to know what the salmonella is doing in the herd in the first place. I believe that in well managed herds where the animals are fed on a healthy, appropriately balanced diet there should be no salmonella present. However, because of the prevalence of salmonella in animal feeds, poultry, calves (that have been mixed in auction markets) and human sewerage that is spread on the land, a code of practice for producers of green top milk is needed.

This should include:

- continued routine tuberculosis and brucellosis herd tests
- updated TBC and coliform tests on milk samples
- a feeding code of conduct
- tests of cattle and humans handling milk for salmonella and other potentially

pathogenic organisms

- restrictions on fertilisers applied to land, eg the use of poultry and human sewerage etc
- continued regular testing of water supplies

I feel that it is modern intensive forms of farming that are increasing the incidence of ill health and that is the real problem to be tackled. We should be trying to encourage healthy practices.

Green top milk is clearly labelled and it is of great importance that consumers should be able to go on choosing to purchase this wholesome milk. We know the dangers of smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, riding a horse or crossing the road. These are responsible for more days off work, ill health and death than a wholesome, nutritious produce like fresh green top milk.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information contact:

- The Association of Unpasteurised Milk Producers and Consumers, Path Hill Farm Cottage, Goring Heath, Reading RG8 7RE
- John Neligan, 7 Sterling Close, Pennyland, Milton Keynes MK15 8AN, tel (0908) 604294
- Dave Adams, Botton Farm, Danby, Whitby, North Yorkshire YO21 2NJ, tel (0287) 60871.



Free milk

Free welfare milk is still available to pregnant women and mothers of children under five who are on Income Support.

The Maternity Alliance has published a poster giving information about the benefit along with a leaflet in English, Bengali and Chinese. A starter pack of one A3 poster and 20 leaflets is available for 50p from the Maternity Alliance, 15 Britannia Street, London WC1X 9JP, 01-837 1265.

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SUPERMARKETS

APARTHEID FOR SALE

For over two decades the public has been urged by anti-apartheid groups to boycott products from South Africa. The last few years have seen more active moves being taken against supermarkets that continue to sell such goods, with shoppers being leafleted, trolleys full of South African products being abandoned at check-outs and shop workers taking industrial action against their management. Just as with 'green' issues, the companies have been made fully aware of some of their customers' feelings on the matter.

When it came to ozone-damaging aerosols or PVC-laden cling-film the leading supermarkets acted with speed. And even when it comes to equal opportunities policies, the same companies will produce laudable pieces of paper showing the efforts they are making.

But when it comes to taking action against racism in another country, which may oblige the companies to purchase from alternative, more expensive producers, many — though not all — of the supermarkets take a Pontius Pilate position. They wash their hands and say customers are free to choose as they wish.

We contacted the leading chains and asked them to make their positions clear. Most of them took the Pontius Pilate route, but one — the Co-op — took a principled position not to trade in South African goods, while another — Tesco — took a pragmatic position simply not to sell South African goods where the majority of shoppers might object!

While supermarkets fall over each other to prove how 'green' are their ecological consciences, their social consciences may remain untouched. The Food Magazine asked the leading companies for their positions on the retailing of products from apartheid South Africa.

Here are the details.

Sainsbury

'As retailers we have traditionally felt it wrong to adopt any political standpoint. We also believe it wrong to make moral decisions on behalf of our customers, who are perfectly capable of making their own decisions and indeed have a right to do so.'

'Accordingly we continue to offer the goods our customers have traditionally bought from us and, having made sure that South African produce is fully and clearly labelled, we leave the choice to the individual customers.'

Argyll: Safeway and Presto

'Some customers feel strongly both for and against purchasing certain products such as those from South Africa and other countries of origin. Safeway also believes it is solely up to our customers

to decide what they buy, rather than retailers making that decision for them. We are seeking and stocking alternative lines to South African produce, in keeping with the majority of our competitors: the only difference is that our choice of alternative lines is usually larger than most, due to that trading policy.'

'Whilst we are obviously aware of what is happening in many countries from which we buy products, that does not mean we should artificially restrict the freedom of choice our customers can exercise. If they choose not to buy something, we will obviously not stock it. This is the same for South African products as it is, for example, for any country's exports, as well as UK produced goods.'

'Our customers' views are taken into account, as are actual sales figures, when deciding which products we should stock to meet customer demand in line with our long held trading policy of offering the widest possible choice.'

Dee: Gateway and Fine Fare

'We only stock small amounts of South African products, mainly tinned and fresh fruit. These are clearly marked and in each case we try to ensure that an alternative is available. We do not believe it is our job to make decisions for customers. It is the customer's choice whether or not to purchase South African goods.'

Tesco

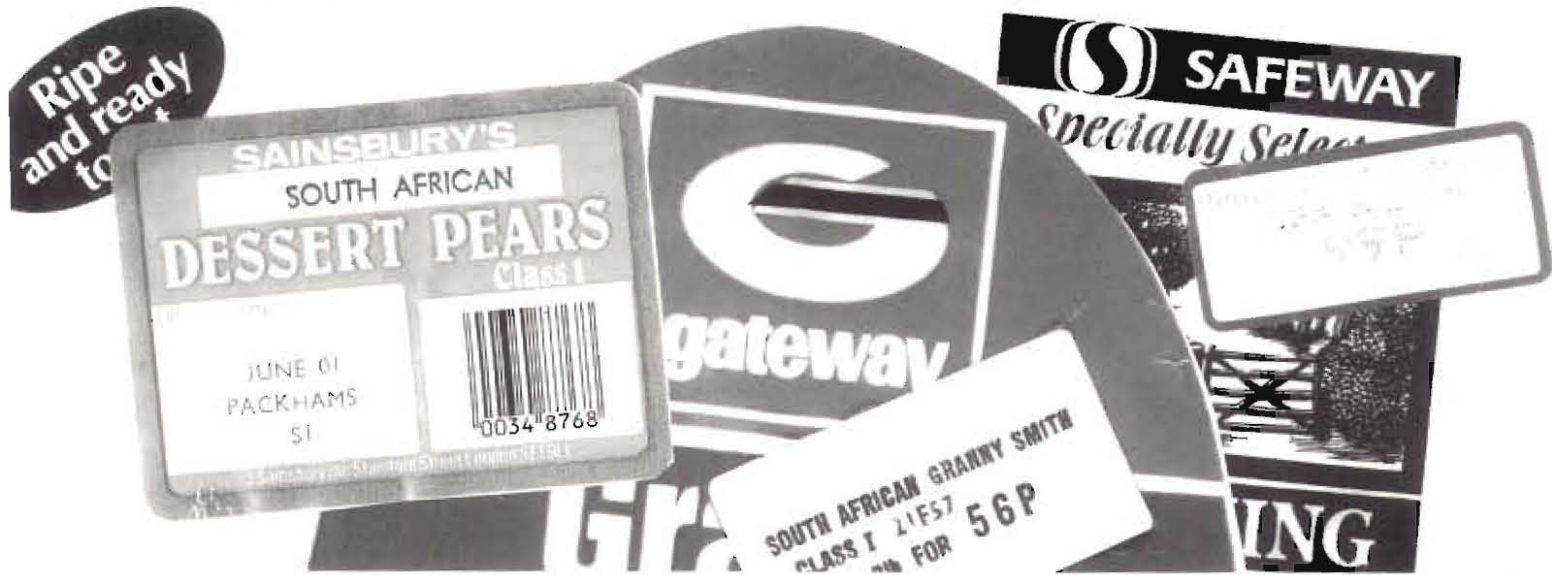
'For our own-label canned produce our policy is not to use South African goods. Other brands may include South African produce but the label will always state the country of origin.'

'With fresh produce such as fruit there seems, at certain times of the year, to be little alternative, but again we always state the country of origin. South African fruit probably accounts for five to six per cent of our fruit sales.'

'We have an obligation to our customers to provide a certain quality, and it has always been our policy to respond to consumers. In Bristol and in Brixton we sell no South African goods.'

Co-op

'Co-operative Retail Services has a policy of not supplying any South African products. Local co-operative societies are free to make their own policies and might be retailing South African goods, but these will not have been supplied by CRS.'



One in three consumers worried about food safety

Nearly one third of consumers say they don't get enough information to be confident that the food they buy is safe to eat – and 61 per cent say it should be the government's job to provide clear advice and information on food safety. So says the National Consumer Council's consumer poll on food safety launched with their Food Charter for Consumers

earlier this year.

An NCC spokesperson said: 'In order to achieve the aims of the Charter we must have a coherent food and nutrition policy which puts consumers first and we need an independent framework which ensures that their interests are properly represented and safeguarded.'

Labour's new food policy

Shadow agriculture spokesman Dr David Clark outlined Labour's new 'plough to plate' policy for food launched in May. The manifesto proposes a reorganisation of MAFF to become a Ministry of Food and Farming and the establishment of an independent Food Standards Agency reporting directly to the Cabinet Office.

Under a Freedom of Information Act Labour would ensure consumer access

to greater information. Speaking at the policy launch Dr Clark said:

'Vital to this new policy of openness is that we have more consumer representation on Ministry committees. For too long, the consumer has been excluded and the voice of the producer has dominated. We know to our cost that on occasions this has been against the public interest.'

1992 – so much to do, so little time

While the food industries of Europe are holding conference after conference on 1992, the voluntary and public health sectors have hardly begun to think through the issues. This was clear at the Forum on 1992 organised by the McCarrison Society, the London Food Commission and the Local Authorities Food Policy Network in the splendours of Manchester Town Hall in April. Everyone agreed that 1992 would have a great impact.

The great irony is that just as food and public health are firmly on the UK agenda a whole new context is taking over. That, said the National Consumer Council's Ann Foster, is just what offers

opportunities.

Geoffrey Cannon, of the McCarrison Society, posed the question: whose diet do we want – the UK's over-processed diet, or the Southern Europeans? For Manchester's chief environmental health officer, Mike Eastwood, 1992 meant another twist in the double demands of the law and public health standards. Practical issues of an unfettered market include who is to enforce the law? How are standards to be monitored? Sobering thoughts which were added to by the LFC's Tim Lang and Melanie Miller saying that 1992 challenges the voluntary sector to organise for pan-European information, lobbies and public health standards.

UK food companies

A useful league table of the larger food-related companies appeared in Food Processing in January 1989 which deserves a wider audience.

Showing the companies' sizes in

terms of total sales (turnover) it indicates the profitability of the company, and we have also computed the average profit per person employed.

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	Sales	Profit	Profit/employee
Grand Metropolitan	£5706m	8.0%	£3520
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Dalgety	£5003m	1.8%	£3760
Dee (Gateway/Fine Fare)	£4852m	4.0%	£2320
J Sainsbury	£4805m	6.4%	£3710
Marks & Spencer	£4565m	11.0%	£7370
Tesco	£4130m	5.6%	£3250
Allied Lyons	£3597m	12.2%	£5610
S&W Berisford	£3055m	2.9%	£8900
Hillsdown Holdings	£3039m	3.6%	£2480
Asda	£2674m	7.2%	£4320
Bass	£2585m	14.1%	£4650
Assoc British Foods	£2235m	9.3%	£3810
Unigate	£2159m	4.3%	£2670
Guinness	£2088m	19.5%	£13260
Cadbury Schweppes	£2037m	8.7%	£6440
Argyll (Safeway/Presto)	£2031m	4.0%	£2080
United Biscuits	£1837m	8.0%	£3750
Tate & Lyle	£1705m	5.4%	£7070
Whitbread	£1693m	10.8%	£3670
John Lewis (Waitrose)	£1578m	4.8%	£2110
Ranks Hovis McDougall	£1519m	7.5%	£3230

What price organic?

A Simon Wright reports

A new survey of shoppers has found a keen interest in buying organic food. A third of the 4,000 survey respondents said they would pay 10 per cent more, and one quarter said they would pay 20 per cent more for organic produce. Nonetheless, high prices for organic foods do put many people off buying them.

The most popular organic food items purchased were fruit and vegetables, followed by dry goods (flour, rice, pulses, pasta etc). When respondents were asked why they bought organic, health was given as by far the most important reason, with food quality and environmental issues lagging far behind. Three quarters of respondents defined organic foods as those 'grown without chemicals and fertilisers'.

After price another significant factor was particular products being unavailable — three quarters of respondents mentioned this. Only 10 per cent cited poor quality or poor presentation as a reason for not buying organic foods.

Virtually everyone expected to find organic foods in health food shops but over half also expected supermarkets to carry organic items. Less than 10 per cent expected to find organic foods in local grocers or green grocers.

All respondents agreed that there should be some guarantee system to ensure that food labelled organic was genuine. Half would like to see an

independent organisation carrying out this task, which augers well for the newly established United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards (UKROFS — see separate article).

When asked about increased availability of organic foods, the most

popular request was for more fruit and vegetables followed by dry goods, bread, dairy products and meat. Since half the respondents said they thought imported organic produce less authentic than UK organic produce, there is considerable incentive for British

farmers to go organic.

The survey was initiated by the Organic Food Manufacturers' Federation and took the form of a questionnaire published in the magazines *Here's Health* and *Health Today*. The number of people that responded reflected the high level of interest in organics among consumers.



Green Kitchen

A 'green kitchen' features as part of the Green Home Exhibition touring the country. The entire home is built and filled with over 1,000 environmentally sound materials and products. Included in the kitchen are organic foods, a CFC-free and energy-efficient fridge and natural wooden products from sustainable sources.

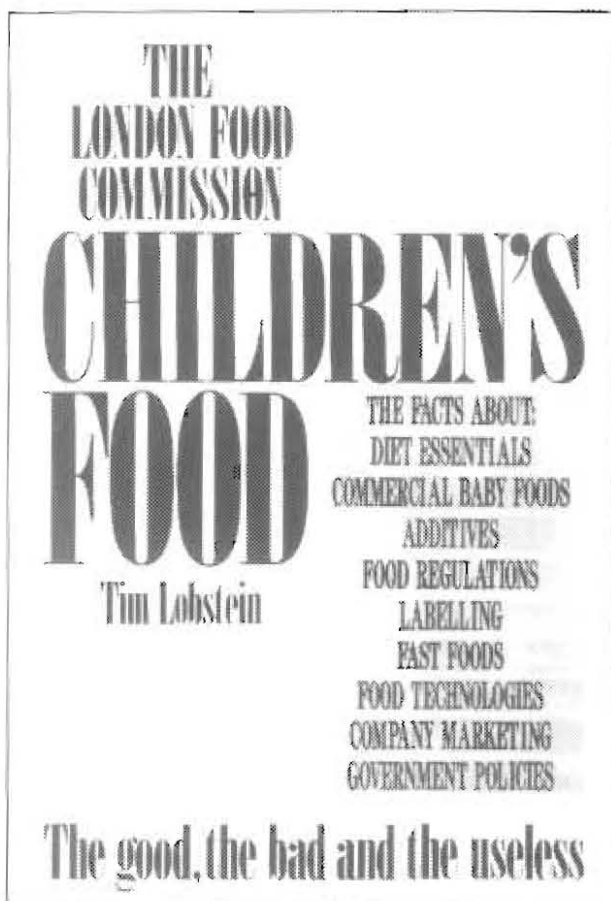
The exhibition, designed by the Women's Environmental Network, will appear at *Lifestyle 2000* and the *Here's Health* exhibitions in London in July before touring the country.

Organic Haringey

Haringey's local branch of Friends of the Earth, assisted by Haringey Council's Environment Unit, have produced an A3 poster/pamphlet describing and listing sources of whole and organic foods in the borough.

Available free, just send a stamped, self-addressed envelope requesting a copy to: Muswell Hill FoE, c/o 74a North View Road, London N8 7LL.

TWO BOOKS FROM THE LONDON FOOD COMMISSION

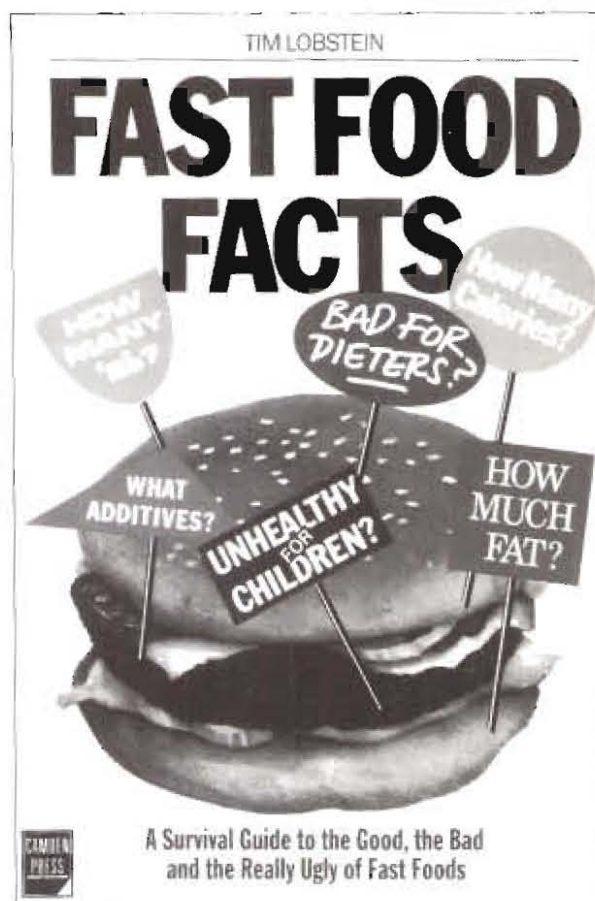


Children's Food

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).
Order now from the LFC. £3.95 plus 80p p&p



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 from the LFC. £4.95 plus £1.00 p&p.

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New organic food standards

Simon Wright reports

In 1987 John MacGregor, Minister with responsibility for food, decided the organic food industry needed a set of standards to regulate production. In response, the government-sponsored marketing agency Food From Britain set up the United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards (UKROFS) which after 18 months' work, published its standards on 2 May 1989.

The standards cover the basic requirements for general organic production and then deal with fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and dairy products in greater detail. The intention is that a producer of organic foods will apply for registration with UKROFS. Producers who can prove they conform to the standards will be licensed to use the UKROFS symbol on their packaging.

Existing organic food producers have given the UKROFS standards a cautious welcome but at the launch many producers pointed out the shortcomings of the published scheme. The standards do not consider foods made from both organic and non-organic ingredients, nor do they consider imported foods — which comprise up to 75 per cent of organic food consumed in the UK. The chair of UKROFS, Professor Colin Spedding, agreed that these were significant omissions and that they would be rectified in the near future.

A more fundamental objection raised was finance. UKROFS has been established on a shoe-string and two weeks before the launch of the standards it looked like the scheme would

founder through lack of money. At the last minute further money was found and UKROFS now has sufficient funding for its first year of operation. Ultimately the scheme is designed to be self-financing with organic food producers paying a fee to belong. However producers have pointed out that in other countries the government pays for such schemes as a way of encouraging organic production. Certainly the newly-found 'green image' of the present government would be enhanced by such a move.

Setting clear organic standards should assist UK organic food producers and reassure consumers, but it does little to address the fundamental problem facing the organic food industry in this country: not enough home-grown organic produce is available. Agricultural subsidies continue to go to conventional farmers, but no financial incentive is available to a farmer who wishes to 'go organic' and conserve the environment whilst improving the food supply.

If organic food is to be made available to more people the price premium charged must be reduced. This can only be done through more farmers going organic. Such action is outside the scope of UKROFS. Perhaps John MacGregor will now match his stated commitment to organic food with his cheque book and will publicly rebuke his cabinet colleague Nicholas Ridley, who has urged farmers to grow organic food specifically to 'rip off' the consumer.

Dioxin in milk cartons

Milk carton manufacturers in New Zealand have agreed to stop using chlorine to bleach their packaging following a government report that toxic dioxin migrates into the milk itself, but UK manufacturers aren't following their example.

Dioxins and their close chemical relations, furans, are the by-products of cosmetic paper bleaching, are extremely toxic and known to cause cancer and birth defects and to damage the immune system.

In response to similar studies in Canada and the USA the New Zealand Department of Health carried out its own research on milk and cream. The results clearly showed that dioxin leached from the paperboard packaging into the milks and cream and 'at the higher dioxin levels found (eg 0.2ppt), low body weight drinkers of large quantities of milk (one litre per day or more) will receive a significant proportion (100 per cent or more), of the Nordic tolerable weekly intake from milk that has been packed in some of the cartons of the composition sampled in this survey.'

One of the leading New Zealand carton manufacturers, Tetra Pak will move over to alternative packaging this summer but Tetra Pak in the UK told *The Food Magazine* that they had no plans to do so here, claiming that the change of board in New Zealand was to overcome a marketing problem. However earlier this year the Department of Trade and Industry asked paper manufacturers to make a wide range of non chlorine-bleached products freely available.

Following consumer pressure after revelations that traces of dioxins have also been found in coffee made using bleached paper filters (see *The Food Magazine* issue 4) Melitta who supply 70 per cent of the world's coffee filters introduced an unbleached product onto the UK market in April. Already marketing unbleached coffee filters in other European countries, their UK product is now available from larger retailers.

The Women's Environmental Network launched their campaign for unbleached products earlier this year, prompting the government to take action to reduce levels of dioxin in the environment. A government report is due to be published this summer. But it has already been reported in the press that Ministry of Agriculture tests have revealed ten times the recommended level of dioxins in samples of cows' milk. One or two pints per day could exceed guidelines set by the government's committee on toxicity of chemicals in food.

Development education

This summer sees the formal launch of The Education Network Project, a Sussex University-based group promoting critical debate on development and environmental issues. Publications already available include *Education, Ecology and Development: The Case for an Education Network* (£6); *Benefit or Burden: The World Bank and the Environment* (£2); and *British Charities and Education* (£2).

For more details contact Mary Hoar at the ENP: 0273-606755 ext 3604.

What—no poverty?

For many people with low incomes, finding enough money to feed themselves and their families adequately can be a major problem. For those without homes and living in bed and breakfast hotels the difficulties are even greater.

In the past there was official recognition of this in the higher rates of benefit paid to these additionally disadvantaged families. A special allowance included a sum for eating out and the rent paid for them included rates, water, heating, clean sheets and other basic amenities. The Board and Lodging Allowance consisted of money for daily living needs including toiletries, nappies, clothes, fares etc as well as £21.70 per person per week to compensate for lack of kitchen

Last year 122,730 households were homeless. This April, amid claims that poverty had been wiped out, the government took away the right of homeless people to claim Board and Lodging Allowance. Issy Cole-Hamilton discusses the implications for the families affected.

facilities.

Last April the Board and Lodging Allowance was abolished. Homeless families now receive the same weekly

benefits as people with low incomes who live in their own homes, regardless of kitchen facilities available to them. On top of this homeless families now have to

pay, out of their reduced incomes, new weekly charges for fuel (heating and lighting), room cleaning, laundering of sheets, water rates and a contribution to household rates.

The net result is that a family of four moving into bed and breakfast is now nearly £45 a week worse off than they would have been four months ago. The more children there are in the family the more money they have lost. The disposable income of a large family with five children has almost halved (see table).

In order to soften the blow to some families already in bed and breakfast, the government offered transitional protection. For many people this lasted only 13 weeks and has now stopped.

In the old Board and Lodging Allow-

CASE STUDIES



Maria is a lone parent living in a bed and breakfast hotel in London with her two children aged ten months and two years. She has lived in the hotel for eight months and has no idea when she will be moving. When she first moved in she was told she would be there for three to four months. Her room is on the ground floor of the hotel and the kitchen is in the basement.

Maria visits a centre for homeless families and had been warned about the benefit changes she should expect in April. In April she received a leaflet from the DHSS about the changes at her hotel and her benefit was cut immediately. She now receives £24 less benefit and has to pay out £7.05 a week for breakfasts and services. She therefore has £31.05 less cash to spend each week. Almost all the cuts in her weekly expenditure have been from her food budget.

Before April she used to spend £40 to £50 a week on food. Now she has only £20 a week to

spend. As a result she and her children eat less meat and less fruit. 'I have to go for the cheaper fruits, anything else is completely out of the budget ... I make sure the children get nutritious food but now I have to go without. I look at fruit and say: "No, I must give it to the children" ... I don't know why I feel so tired lately; maybe it's because I don't eat so well any more. I have lost weight — about four or five pounds — My cupboard used to be quite full but now it is empty. In my home I used to bake bread. Now I don't even have a fridge so I can't save anything and save money in that way ... I do want to give them (the children) home-cooked food, but even if I didn't want to I couldn't afford jars or takeaways.'



Michelle is married and she, her husband and two children, eight and 22 months, have lived in a hotel for 21 months. Before April their income from Social Security was £102 a week, now it is £70. As well as the reduction in income they now have to pay

£11.40 a week for breakfasts they never eat and service they feel they do not get.

'We don't eat the breakfasts because they are not cooked properly. The eggs were either raw or they reheated old hard-boiled ones. The toast would be re-cooked if it wasn't eaten. It wasn't crisp. It was like chewing gum ... When I complained she said: "You've got no right to complain about this" ... I don't believe we are getting the amenities that we should. I clean my room. The only thing they do is Hoover it.'

Michelle and her family are also feeling the pinch and the budget which has suffered most is their food budget. They used to spend about £60 to £70 a week on food and Michelle was very conscious that they should all have a healthy diet. Now they have only £30 a week to spend. Michelle is still breastfeeding her eight month old son. 'I suppose that's helping as well'.

'£70 a week is ridiculous money to live on now. We've had to cut back on everything ... Food, well we're not eating properly.

Let's put it this way ... Originally we used to have quite a lot of fresh fish etc, we used to eat two or three fresh veg a day ... We used to buy a lot of fruit juices for the children which we cannot afford now.

'I feel I'm missing out. I miss the fresh fruit everyday and the juices. At the moment we're not only suffering from the money side of it, we're suffering because we've got no cooking facilities. Thirty families share four cookers.

'I suppose we're eating reasonably nutritious foods, but not perhaps as interesting for the children which makes them really picky.

'We'd be better off with a ration book. You could buy more with a ration book, I'm sure you could.'

Michelle sums up her situation at present like this: 'You hear so many people say about how animals are treated badly in zoos, they don't have enough room in their cages. I feel I'm being encaged in our room ... The other night we turned off the light and my husband woke up to find a cockroach on his neck.'

Benefit loss 1989 style



No more eating-out allowance for homeless people PHOTO: BRENDA PRINCE (FORMAT)

ance the cost of eating two meals a day was estimated at £3.10 per person. As long ago as 1985 this amount was shown to be barely adequate¹. Today the total disposable income of the vast majority of families in bed and breakfast is less than the old eating-out allowance alone.

Recent research in the Earls Court area of London has costed a week's food for a family of four — two adults and two school age children under 11 — living in bed and breakfast accommodation with daily use of cooking facilities at £42.25 during school holidays and £36.34 during term time.

For a family with very limited access to kitchen facilities the cost of a healthy diet for a week was £55.39 during term time and £64.06 during school holidays². All families receiving Income Support, ie

where the adults are unemployed or work less than 24 hours a week, receive free school meals for their children under 16. Families where one of the adults is employed, and who are receiving Family Credit, do not get free school meals and the minimum they would need

to pay for school meals in inner London is £2.50 a week for each child.

References

1 'Board and Lodging — effect of regulations on non-priority homeless claimants', London Borough of Camden, Agenda Item 7C, Housing Management

Committee, 4.11.85

2 'Eating for Health — costing exercise — Homeless Families in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation', Carol Williams, Riverside Health Promotion Service, London SW10 0UD, March 1989

Examples of the effect of the 1989 benefit changes on the incomes of homeless families

Type of household	Income from benefits before April 1989 (inc child benefit)	Income from benefits after April 1989 (inc child benefit)	*New fixed expenditure (estimated average)	Weekly disposable income after April 1989	Reduction in weekly disposable income
2 adults, 2 children aged 9 and 13	£118.55	£90.40	£16.00	£74.40	£44.15
2 adults, 2 children aged 2 and 4	£116.70	£84.80	£16.00	£68.80	£47.90
1 parent, 1 child aged 6	£58.35	£57.05	£10.50	£46.55	£11.80
2 adults, 5 children aged 6, 8, 9, 12, 13	£195.85	£131.25	£22.50	£108.75	£87.10

*Includes £1.50 per person per week for breakfast, plus 20 per cent rates and charges for water fuel and services.

Can a Third World co-operative ever
break out of small-scale trading and start to
rival the multinational corporations?
Twin Trading believes it can

Buying Third World goods from Oxfam shops or Traidcraft catalogues is all very well, but these are limited retail outlets argues Twin Trading's Pauline Tiffen. The producers may only be selling what Oxfam or Traidcraft buy from them and this hardly has any effect on the activities of the large, profit-oriented multinationals.

How can a small peasant farm growing pineapples ever hope to take on the likes of Del Monte or Libby and seriously compete for their markets? According to Twin Trading the answer lies in *networking* — bringing together the elements that make the multinationals successful, but as a co-ordinated network of agencies that can link producer groups in Third World countries with commercial outlets in Britain.

'Our network is made up of all sorts of organisations and individuals — co-operatives and private companies, government para-statal and peasant associations to name but a few. Our central concerns are trading, trade

development and technology transfer. And it has been our experience that technology transfer is nearly always a central part of trade development.

'So what do we actually do? We are involved in three very different types of trading activity. The first — trade networking — means building coalitions of groups from the producers right through to the most discriminating of consumers. The chain from production to consumption is incredibly long and

tortuous and involves all sorts of skills and elements. Successful networking is based on the practical experience that we are beginning to create from a multiplicity of organisations that all have different strengths, different foci and different resources to offer at various levels of development.

'The second activity is building trade bridges both to the commercial mainstream markets and also to organisations like Oxfam. Twin Trading acts as

facilitator and initiator bringing the parties together. Once we are sure that the buyer will not turn round and become an ogre we will withdraw — having brought together producer and buyer.

'The third type of trading, which is where Twin stands out from other "alternative" organisations, involves representing producer partners in the mainstream commercial markets. It is our concern that, as yet anyway, the alternative trading market is still too weak. It is too diverse and too small, a drop in the ocean of world trade. The producer groups cannot rely on the alternative system as much as we would like.'

One of the fundamental activities that underlies Twin's work is *bartering*. Twin was born

of the Greater London Council, and while still in gestation it could not (being part of a local authority) undertake commercial trading enterprises. So it arranged transfers of goods: it received primary products from countries such as Vietnam and Nicaragua, and gave in return technical training and processing equipment. Cash was never needed.

The necessity of avoiding cash trading quickly showed itself to be a virtue: the Third World partners could avoid having to find hard currency or take out expensive loans in order to buy the First World goods they needed. Bartering became the basis for much of Twin's networking strategy and the concept has been developed in some detail in their booklet *Countertrade*, showing how it can be made to work and pointing out pitfalls.

Variations on the theme, such as Trading Certificates and Commodity Credit Notes bring the idea of bartering into the arena of international trade and the more routine methods using Bills of Exchange (which themselves have become commodities nowadays). The point is to avoid using First World banks and hard currency while offering guarantees that a commodity will be supplied as promised.

The essential pre-requisites for selecting working partners are spelled out by Twin as being:

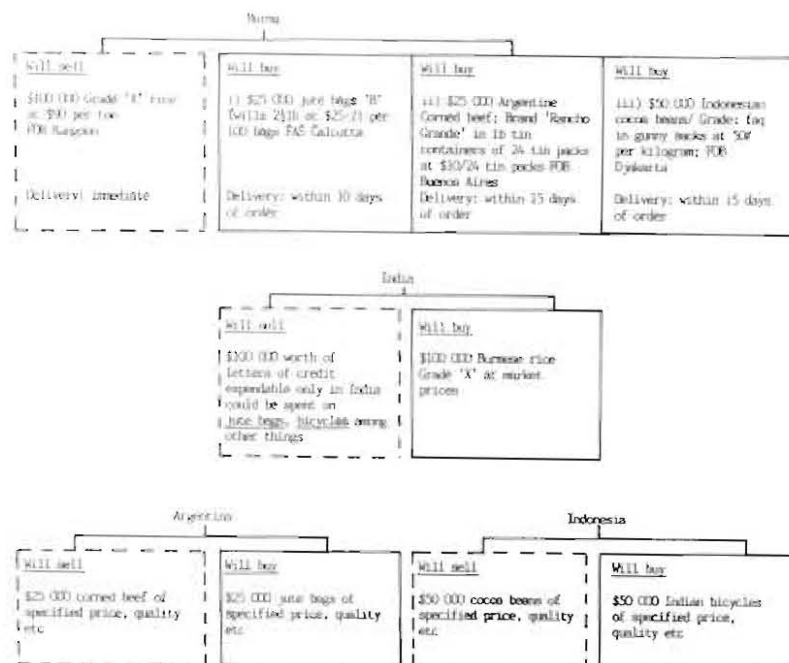
- total mutual trust through the acceptance of common principles of operation
- open information, joint sharing of planning and investment
- responsibilities being shared by mutual agreement
- the aims and direction of the project remaining in the hands of the Third World partner
- mutual agreement on fair prices and terms of trade
- eschewing all forms of bribery and corruption
- financial aid limited to start-up funding and advances on future deliveries of goods, so that there is no build-up of unmanageable debts

This, says Twin, is true partnership. 'Such relations can only be built slowly through day to day experience, with each partner sharing the risks in what is the hostile world of international trade.'

Twin Trading are at 345 Goswell Road, London EC1V 7JT, tel 01-837 8222

Trading for change

Stage I



Setting up a three-country set of deals may start like this



Trading partners: Brazil nut gatherers in Peru and coffee pickers in Mexico benefitting from TWIN's networking arrangements

PHOTOS: TWIN



Twin's work includes encouraging technological transfer to the Third World, acting as an agency for producers and linking producers with buyers. For example:

Trade

- ✦ finding buyers for Nicaraguan furniture, peanuts, rum, beer, tamarind, annatto, coffee
- ✦ finding suppliers of baking ingredients, soap fragrances and ice- packing equipment to Nicaragua
- ✦ finding buyers for Peruvian oregano, Brazil and pecan nuts and medicinal herbs
- ✦ finding buyers for Mexican honey, coffee, hibiscus tea and sesame seeds
- ✦ finding buyers for Angolan and Zimbabwean coffee
- ✦ finding buyers for fruits and vegetables from Canary Island co-operatives, St Vincent, Mozambique and Senegal

Technical assistance

- ✦ wind protection and irrigation equipment and training, supplied to Sahrawi refugees in Algeria
- ✦ water supply technology and an electronics training programme for Eritrea
- ✦ gold refining technology using Mozambiquean coconut shells (sic!) for Zimbabwe
- ✦ market gardening for village associations, and a mobile engineering workshop (made from the container in which the equipment came) for Senegal

Producer agency work

- ✦ finding suppliers of computer equipment and water treatment equipment for Mozambique
- ✦ negotiating shipping links between Mozambique and the Seychelles
- ✦ arranging for the supply of teaching aids in electronics and for the testing of rechargeable batteries for Nicaragua
- ✦ linking a Cuban textile group with a newly-formed textile co-operative in Zimbabwe
- ✦ providing market research for co-operatives in Nicaragua

TRADE FOR THE THIRD WORLD'S BENEFIT

For far too long now Third World countries and Third World organisations have had to stand back and watch themselves being ripped off. They were expected to provide the basic foodstuffs and minerals and other raw materials for First World countries to work up into manufactured and finished products. Third World producers in many cases get only a few pence for products that sell for pounds in the First World.

'It is not only that they get a low price in the first instance, but, because the movement or processing of their products after production or harvesting are generally dominated by companies whose interests lie in the North, they could not gain access to potential added

value. What is more, they often have to pay very high prices, much more than we pay, for the goods they need to import from the First World – tools and machines, medicines, teaching materials and sources of knowledge. Furthermore, what they get is often not at all suited to their needs, having been designed originally for the First World.

Twin Trading can help Third World organisations that become part of our network to engage successfully in international trade, often for the first time. It additionally can assist them in their purchases of more appropriate equipment at reasonable prices. Twin enables producers to improve the quality and standardisation, to do more of the processing

and refining, to be responsible for packaging, transportation and export, to do their own repairs, to develop their own technical infrastructure and manufacturing capacity. This is the best kind of aid because it generates independence and encourages local initiative and control. It means the Third World increase their participation in and benefits they receive from the process of production. This is much more than aid, more even than fair trading. It is the way forward for real development.'

✦ From *Third World Information Network: An Introduction*

CELEBRATING CAROLINE

Geoffrey Cannon reports on the work of the Caroline Walker Trust

Wednesday 11 October is a red letter day for everybody committed to the cause of food and public health. This year it's the day on which the work of nutritionist and food campaigner Caroline Walker will be carried on in her name, at the Royal Society of Arts in central London.

The events will start at 6 pm with a reception for old and new friends, followed by the first Caroline Walker Awards for those who have done most for food and public health this year. Jonathan Porritt of Friends of the Earth will give the first Caroline Walker Lecture. All this comes at the end of a year that began with the Great Egg Scandal and during which millions more people in Britain have taken a positive interest in food and health.

Judges for the Caroline Walker Awards are Simon Coombs, MP, Chair of the Parliamentary Food and Health Forum; Venessa Harrison, producer of Radio 4's Food Programme; Dr Kenneth Heaton, Chair of the Royal Society of Medicine Forum on Food and Health; Geoffrey Cannon and Jane Grigson from The Caroline Walker Trust.

There are five Awards to be given each year under the categories of Campaign, Education, Communication, Industry and The Caroline Walker Award. This final award is for the person whose work to promote public health by means of good food is carried out in Caroline's spirit — which she described as 'cheeky' — and which is also well-informed, enterprising and effective.

For more information about the awards, please fill in the form on this page.

Tributes to Caroline continue to arrive. Dr Peter Mansfield writes: 'One hectic week in October 1986 Caroline and Geoffrey (Cannon) involved me in a lavish conference on food additives, and had booked some of the overseas speakers for an additional conference put on by the Food Additives Campaign Team (FACT) the next day. As an out-of-town visitor I camped at their house overnight. There was no ceremony and some pressure over breakfast, with clipped conversation and brisk footwork to catch the cab. Tension mounted, and while Geoffrey tied up some loose ends indoors Caroline and I waited on the doorstep. Just then two or three local children came up to Caroline, whom they

obviously knew well, and for a moment her own concerns were forgotten; the youngsters had her complete attention, and the mutual affection was obvious. She amiably threw out one or two ideas, sensible but right up their street, for their day. They clattered off with carefree cheerful waves.

This showed Caroline's chief stock-in-trade: her ability to listen to ordinary people and give them her sound practical wisdom at their disposal without patronising them in the least. There must be many industrialists reformed by her influence who never felt the blow.'

And health worker Anne Flessig writes: 'I first met Caroline in 1982 when we both worked for City and Hackney Health Authority. Caroline never stopped talking food and was so enthusiastic I caught her interest. I have been reading ingredients lists ever since. She was always full of information, not just about nutrition and the food industry, but also about the history of food. When she found out something new, be it the date potatoes were introduced into this country, or a new sugar-free biscuit, she was so excited that we had to share her discoveries.

'One afternoon I can remember her bringing the latest low fat crisps into the office for a tasting. She certainly believed in the NACNE recommendations: many a lunch time we staggered back from the local market under the weight of fruit and vegetable bargains. Caroline was no killjoy health educator, though. I took a photo of her eating a piece of chocolate cake at a leaving party for one of the doctors. I threatened to use it as blackmail. She just smiled, licked her fingers and said "yummy".'

Caroline herself has won some posthumous awards. The Radio 4 Food Programme broadcast in celebration of Caroline last October has won the Glenfiddich Award as radio programme of 1988. Sir Richard Vickers, Director General of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, has written to say that Caroline has been given a posthumous

Winston Churchill Fellowship, for churchillian qualities displayed during her illness — apt enough, since, like the great man, she complained a lot! And on 15 June Jonathan Aitken, MP, Chair of The Caroline Walker Trust, accepted the Rosemary Delbridge Award to Caroline, for the person who had done most by lobbying and campaigning to make changes to legislation in the public interest.

The next issue of *The Food Magazine* will include an exclusive, special supplement designed as a programme for the evening in celebration of Caroline on 11 October, with full details of the short lists for the Caroline Walker Awards. Remember: if you want to make a nomination fill in the form on this page now — the deadline for nominations is 31 August 1989.

The Caroline Walker Trust

Donations to the Trust now total £13,966.97. This is well on the way to the first year's target of £20,000. Since the last issue of *The Food Magazine*, donations have been received from:

Colin Barnard
Mrs L J Chambers
Derek Cooper
Judy Cummings
Therese Dupois
Dr Martin Eastwood
Godfrey Holmes
Mrs C N C Horwood
Dr and Mrs G A Langsdale
Mrs J I MacTaggart
Evelyn Rose
P A Sargent
Prof Aubrey and Dr Helena Sheiham
Robert Smith
Anouschka Sparkes
Ann Sutcliffe
Dr Norman Temple
Christine Wade
Mary Watts
Jennie Wilde
The Farm and Food Society
The University of the Third Age

The Caroline Walker Awards

☐ Yes, I wish to support the evening of celebration for Caroline Walker, held on Wednesday 11 October 1989.

I enclose a donation of £5 ☐ £10 ☐ £25 ☐ Other ☐

I would like to attend the evening of celebration, please put me on the list of people who may be invited: Yes ☐

(Note: places are limited so please make your request known now. Those attending will be asked to pay their share of the cost charged by the Royal Society of Arts, and other administrative charges)

I nominate the following people for the Caroline Walker Awards and will assemble details of their work as requested by the judges. (Please specify category of award: Campaign, Education, Communication or Industry)

Name _____ Category _____

Name _____ Category _____

Name _____ Category _____

Name _____ Category _____

(list more names on a separate sheet if you wish)

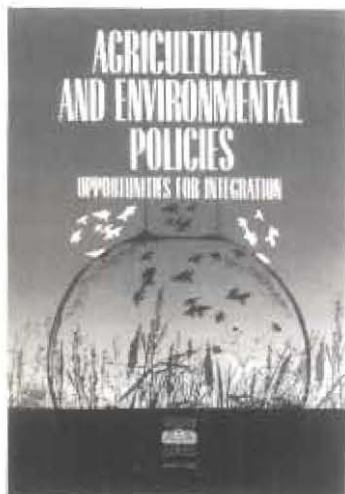
Your name _____ Tel _____

Address _____

Signed _____

(Please make cheques out to The Caroline Walker Trust and send them to the Trust Secretary at 6 Aldridge Villas, London W11 1BP)

BOOK REVIEWS



Agricultural and Environmental Policies: Opportunities for Integration
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1989, pp200, £12

I turned to this tome with some trepidation — another OECD book (*Food Policy*, 1981) had influenced my thinking greatly. My copy is dog-eared and (unusually for me) has pencil comments on every page. Would this book influence me similarly?

Agricultural and Environmental Policies has the familiar OECD feel — typeface print, no authors, impersonal, structural analysis. And yet they have done it again: this boring rich economies' clubhouse has tried to grasp a key problem for our times. Can agricultural and environmental policies dovetail or are they hopelessly at odds?

Being the OECD, the book doesn't quite answer the question. It does, however, try to show how policy makers can have a go at integrating these two areas. The OECD message is ultimately hopeful. It is possible to change agriculture to meet environmentally sound aims: cutting pollution and reducing unwanted residues. The book provides an invaluable checklist of everything the potential agro-environmental dictator could ever need — the ultimate shopping list.

For lesser mortals the inside knowledge is valuable. In Finland they have done this; in Australia, that. This project here, this fiscal measure or this dead-end there. This is OECD visionary writing in all its dead-hand glory. For Food Magazine readers who can bear to wade through the econo-speak, this is a must. My trouble is that I have to hand

this copy back to the LFC's library, so I wasn't able to scrawl on it in pencil!

Tim Lang

The Healthy Catering Manual Christopher Robbins; Dorling Kindersley in association with Evian, £12.95

For those of us who regularly bemoan the choice offered at catering outlets, whether our own work canteen or the local eatery, we could do worse than make a present of *The Healthy Catering Manual* to our local chef/caterer.

With over 20 per cent of food eaten in the UK coming from caterers' kitchens, Mr Robbins quite rightly believes that caterers owe us all a responsibility to ensure the food they provide includes a choice of healthy and attractive dishes. To this end Christopher Robbins has gathered together over 100 healthier than average tried and tested recipes from catering institutions around the country and sandwiched them between the pages of a glossy-looking hardback which would not look out of place on a coffee table.

The recipes include familiar dishes and ones with unusual ingredients like seaweed and tofu. But do not be misled. There are plenty of ideas here for both the budget-conscious public sector caterer with conservative customers as well as the high class restaurateur. The recipes are clearly set out with quantities given for 10 or 25 servings. A comprehensive nutritional analysis is given for each recipe with nutrients expressed in grammes and as a per cent of energy. The recipes reflect the emphasis Mr Robbins is encouraging: those for fish, poultry and vegetarian dishes far outnumber those for red meat. There is also a good selection of interesting and tempting puddings and desserts which every caterer knows are often the most unhealthy items on a menu.

But this is more than just a recipe book — half the book is devoted to explaining the principles and practicalities behind healthy eating, with sections on recipe modification, ingredients substitution, advice on making nutritional specifications to suppliers and notes on analysing recipes using food tables. An excellent section on marketing healthy eating has been included — an area many caterers have

little expertise in.

The first half of the book is rather wordy and the layout crowded, with little definition between the sections and the book is a little too glossy to be tossed around and actually *used* in a real life kitchen. But for all our sakes I hope this book is not left on the chef's office shelf because as Mr Robbins says: 'Every caterer whatever their circumstances can be a healthy caterer'.

Adriana Luba

Chicken and Egg: who pays the price?

by Clare Druce, introduction by Richard Adams, 1989, 102 pp, £3.99

Clare Druce is a leading light and co-founder of Chickens' Lib which campaigns against intensive poultry rearing. This is their credo — and it's a great read. It's racy, well referenced, up to date and written from an overt perspective which the reader can take or leave. Clare Druce argues that the problems which hit the poultry industry in December 1988 were no accident. The UK public was scandalized to learn the reality of modern egg production. Seeing batteries on TV must have pushed many closer to

on law enforcement and monitoring. This book gives the rationale: unless the rules and regulations governing poultry are altered, Clare Druce argues, we will continue to have problems. She ends the book by saying that 'there is another way — free range. But even here she is tough. As a seasoned campaigner, she is not impressed by marketing hyperbole.

In a particularly poignant section, she analyses the Moy Park company in Northern Ireland. This, she says, sells to leading mainland retailers like Marks and Spencer, but she is not happy. Behind the 'free range' label of Moy Park products is, she says, an intensive stocking system which relies on female birds to cut down on the aggression. The unwanted males go to the broiler industry.

The case for independent monitoring of 'free range' claims is well put. Even if you are not particularly concerned about animal welfare this is an informative, unusual book.

Tim Lang



Chickens' Lib's camp.

Like many in the animal welfare movement, the author is keen

LETTERS

Greenhouse Already?

The article by Eric Brunner in the Summer edition of *The Food Magazine*, 'Greenhouse warning: how much, how soon?' requires comment. While presenting the evidence from many sources in support of global climatic changes, summarised as the greenhouse effect, the conclusions and implications of the evidence are dissolved in an anodyne and over-simplified picture of the ramifications, particularly on the crucial relationship between climatic change and food production.

First, the question 'is it going to happen?' Anyone almost anywhere in the world who works on the land knows it is happening. Distinct climatic changes of a qualitative rather than straight forward quantitative nature have been noticeable, certainly for the past five years. A brief review of the farming press will show that crops are already being affected, either being too early and beyond protection from equally early 'pest'

species, or not suitable for the milder wetter winter.

Second, the beneficial Mediterranean south coast hypothesis. While the greenhouse effect may give higher average temperatures, this will not mean the smooth change of the Isle of Wight into Capri implied by the hypothesis. Much more likely is an accentuation of what we are currently experiencing in the temperate zones of the planet. A general warming in winter, but with extreme cold snaps. By contrast summer will be milder and wetter, but with extreme hot snaps. The extreme snaps will be accentuated by the persistent seasonal weather patterns, occasionally breaking through the effects caused by greenhouse gases.

The truth has to be faced that this emerging climatic pattern suits none has of the major food crops. The logic of this more complex picture is simple; if we do not mend our polluting ways, famine aided by flood will do it for us. The real

debate is whether it is already too late to prevent it.

Colin Johnson
Cenarth
Dyfed

BST Consumer Choice

In Issue 5 of *The Food Magazine* you encouraged your readers to place a 'tab' in their milk bottle to indicate to their dairy that they did not agree with the use of BST. However, I would like to point out that the policy of the Dairy Trade Federation — which represents all first-hand buyers of milk from the Milk Marketing Board (eg the dairy companies), on BST is that whilst we have been assured by MAFF that their independent advisers that there is no risk to the consumer from milk from cows treated with BST we are nevertheless against its use while on field trials for the following reasons.

- 1 There is clear evidence of consumer resistance.
- 2 Milk has always been regarded as an entirely natural product and as such is consumed in large quantities by young and old.
- 3 If the tests have to be continued we believe that the milk should be segregated and labelled.

Above all we believe in choice, both for the consumer and for ourselves as buyers of milk from the Milk Marketing Board, which is a monopoly supplier.

In the light of this, I do feel that the protest directed at dairy companies is somewhat pointless and would be better aimed, as you suggest, at the MMB, MPs or directly to John MacGregor, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Karen J Leech (Ms)
Dairy Trade Federation
19 Cornwall Terrace
London NW1 4QP

Organic Meat

In Issue 5 of *The Food Magazine*, you give a couple of sources of information about organic meat. Concurrently, the Soil Association has published a special issue of *The Living Earth* which looked in detail at the problems of meat production and the alternatives. Anyone wanting up to date information about sources of organic meat should write to us enclosing £2 and ask for 'The Campaign for Safe Meat' which gives a complete list of Soil

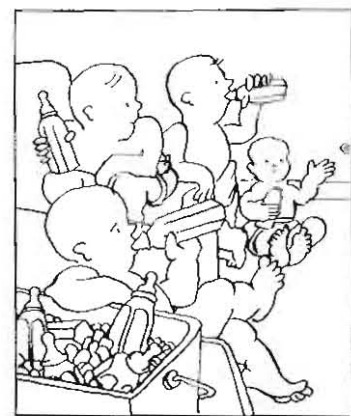
Association symbol holders and details of many outlets for additive-free meat.

Nigel Dudley
Soil Association
Bristol

Recycled Carcasses

Under the title 'Cattle disease in milk?' in Issue 5 of *The Food Magazine*, you state that the recycling of animal carcasses and offal back into feed for cattle will be prohibited until the end of this year. However, we understand from MAFF that this only applies to sheep carcasses and offal. It is not known what other waste products from animals may be fed to cattle, but certainly poultry litter, which may contain carcasses and offal is still permitted in cattle feed. Indeed, the Commons Select Committee on Agriculture in its report on salmonella considers the rendering industry performs a public service in disposing of this otherwise highly embarrassing material.

Joanne Bower
The Farm and Food Society



Gripe Illegal?

I was interested in your article 'Mother's little helper' concerning the alcohol content of gripe water. If it is the case that it contains five per cent alcohol by volume, could you please clarify how it can then be legally bought 'off the shelf' and given to babies and young children?

As I understand it is an offence under Section 5 of the Children and Young Person's Act 1933 to give intoxicating liquor to a child under five years of age.

Monica Chiles
Senior Health Education Officer
(Alcohol)
Frenchay Health Authority

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SOIL ASSOCIATION

SUPPORT ORGANIC FOOD & FARMING

HELP US BRING ABOUT A FAR REACHING IMPROVEMENT
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The Soil Association promotes organic farming as an environmentally benign system for high quality food production.

Members receive 'The Living Earth' magazine quarterly.

I want to join The Soil Association today.

Enclosed is my membership subscription/donation (cheques/POs made payable to The Soil Association Ltd) for:

£10* ☐ £15 ☐ £20 ☐ £25 ☐ Other £

Name

Address

Postcode

Signature

* Minimum for membership £10. If you would like to covenant your subscription we will gladly send you a form.



Please return to The Soil Association FREEPOST Bristol BS1 5YZ

A1

PROBLEMS

Aluminium in baby milk

I would be most grateful if you could give me advice as I am the mother of an 11 month old baby who has been taking soya based baby formula for the last eight months. I am reluctant to buy dairy products because of the cruelties involved in the dairy industry and also because of the growth hormones, antibiotics etc, that are fed to dairy cattle as a matter of course.

Several questions spring to mind as I am writing:

1 Are the levels of aluminium in baby milks, as quoted in the media recently, of any real danger?

2 Are only baby milk products of risk from these levels of aluminium or are all soya based products equally risky?

3 Would it be better to use ordinary soya milk, eg that made by Plamil rather than use baby formula?

Carolyn Shell
South Shields

We have received several similar letters and phone calls from parents concerned by our report on the aluminium present in commercial baby milk. Our intention was not to alarm parents but to make public information that has been given to us. We feel that every parent has the right to as much information as possible about the composition of baby milk, particularly when it is babies' sole source of food. Unfortunately the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the baby food industry seem to think that parents are given more than enough information already in milk advertisements and on labels.

We would like to stress, however, that the level of aluminium found in baby milks are still very small, and that it is only very young pre-term infants and those with impaired kidney function who are likely to absorb significant amounts of the element. The Department of Health tell us that they hope to carry out further research into these effects, but until then there is no necessity to remove milks from the shelves.

This aluminium scare is only one of many examples of problems that have occurred with baby milk, and it is not a new story. The Lancet published a report on aluminium toxicity from baby milk in 1985. In 1987 Noel Hunter, Trading Standards Officer for Warwickshire

County Council said that a legal maximum should be laid down or alternatively, that the amount of aluminium present should be stated on the labels. This has still not been done. The manufacturers say that they do not add aluminium and we accept this. But since they proudly boast how close their products are to breast milk — removing protein and minerals from cow's milk in the attempt to match it — they could explain why they have not been able to sort out this problem.

As for other baby food products, Warwickshire County Council found high levels in several ready-to-eat baby meals. Whether these present a hazard to toddlers is not known. Soya milk drinks may also have high levels but until manufacturers declare the levels on the packets we cannot know. We suggest you write to the companies and ask them: what is their policy on aluminium levels in their products, what levels are actually present, and when will they declare the levels on their labels?

Aluminium Packaging

I am concerned that many children may be drinking fruit juices and long-life milks from cartons lined with aluminium foil. Is it likely that some aluminium could get into the contents of the drink?
Mrs N J Barnes
Bournemouth

Aluminium-lined cartons, and also aluminium cans, may lose some of their surface into the food, particularly if the food is acidic. Milk is not very acidic but fruit juices and some soft drinks are.

The quantity of aluminium is not likely to be very high — although we know of no research to say exactly how high or low it may be. Many cartons are coated with a plastic film between the aluminium and the contents. There is little routine testing done as there are no regulations limiting the presence of aluminium in food and no requirements to declare aluminium levels on the package. But be reassured that after the first few weeks of life most babies can tolerate low levels of aluminium in their diets with no known ill-effects. Their guts do not absorb much of the element, and their kidneys can excrete what is absorbed. For further protection it is considered wise to ensure that the children are getting a diet rich in zinc — good sources of zinc include red

meats, seeds, nuts and wholegrains

Pesticide Sprays

I have read in the press that various insecticides sprayed on fruit are a cause for concern. Can you please advise if the danger is eliminated if the fruit is peeled?

R G Chandler
South Nutfield
Surrey

Pesticides and other agricultural chemicals sprayed onto crops fall into two main types: those which are systemic and those which are contact-acting. Systemic means that they enter into the plant and are distributed throughout the plant. Contact-active agents remain on the surfaces of the plant and are only effective at those sites. Chemicals applied after harvesting are likely to remain on the surface, while those applied during the growing period may be either surface-acting or systemic.



Unless you know which chemicals have been applied to your fruit you cannot know whether peeling the fruit will help. Most contact-acting agents can be washed off with slightly soapy water, or you can peel the fruit although this loses some of the natural goodness found near the surface. Clearly these procedures are of little use in the case of very soft fruits and berries, or fruits in ready-prepared forms — tinned or made into apple-pies, for example.

Systemic agents cannot be removed from fruit, nor can you be sure that cooking will reduce the problem as some chemicals actually become more of a hazard after cooking than before. Your best defence against systemic agents is to buy organic or at least to ensure you get a healthy diet which can help your body cope with the toxins it will meet when you do eat treated fruit.

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Pamela Stephenson's Diary

Pamela Stephenson, comedienne and food campaigner, contributes a personal view

'Mums' army marches on Number 10!
... Well, it was more of an amble really ... a ride in a smart car, a stroll to the meeting place, then a sprint across the road from the MOD ...

This was the launch of Parents For Safe Food, a campaign born of my fears, frustration and downright furiousness when it finally dawned on me that my children's food contained pesticide residues which carry a greater risk that I would ever wish them to be exposed to of cancers, tumours, reproductive ill-effects, allergies and other complaints. The turning point? Alar.

My kids have been drinking apple juice since they were weaned, usually three or four times a day. Now you've probably known the risks for ages (because you're smart — well you're reading *The Food Magazine* aren't you?) So have *Guardian* readers who've read the sterling work of Jaimes Erlichman, or anyone who's ever picked up a Tim Lobstein book, and I believe Derek Cooper once wrote an article on daminozide.

Informed choice

But for most people, you see I felt that if someone had given us a choice, if someone running a supermarket had just come up to me and said:

'Pamela?'

'Yes'

'You see that apple you're about to buy to make puree for your baby?'

'Yes'

'Well, did you know that it has been treated with about a dozen different pesticides including a growth regulator call Alar which when heated, as you're about to do, becomes a cancer-causing chemical called UDMH?'

'What do you mean cancer-causing?'

'Well, one study in the USA has put a figure in thousands on the number of children who will get tumours at some stage in their lives due to exposure before the age of six to Alar and eight other common pesticides.'

'But can't I wash it off?'

'Nope'

'I'm shocked. Do they have to use this stuff to grow apples?'

'Nope'

'Well, you know what you can do with your apple then!'

I only wanted to have been told. I only want to have a choice. Scientists will argue until kingdom come about the exact risks, but I, like many mothers and fathers, and customers everywhere, am simply not prepared to take any risks — particularly any unnecessary ones. I am determined that our voice will be heard. Actually it's such a reasonable request isn't it? Safe food for our children.

Dinner meeting

Anyway I called my friends. The more famous the better I thought. Had marvelously intelligent responses — most people were already aware of the problem to some extent. We gathered for a dinner meeting at my place and Tim Lang came to speak as 'the expert'. He was terrific, but not exactly an expert on who's who in show business. 'Who were those people?' he said afterwards.

So we wrote our letter and took it to the PM (see page 3). We half expected her to answer the door herself in Carmen rollers, brandishing a feather duster.

I was standing right by my fax machine when it suddenly belched out a letter headed '10 Downing Street'. 'A reply!!' I shrieked, but no such luck. Just a note to say she would be replying. Well, I suppose she's very busy, what with having to chat up President Bush and everything.

'Mummy, can we have sausages?'

'No'

'Why?'

'Because they could be contaminated with BSE'

'What's that?'

'Well, you see some sheep got this brain disease ...'

'Why?'

'... and they fed those sheep to some cattle ...'

'Why?'

'... and the cattles' brains got made into pies and sausages ...'

'Why? Ooh yuk!!!'

Exactly. Will it ever end?

RECIPES

It is the summer holidays and the children are screaming for ice creams, lollies and cold soft drinks. How do we meet the challenge?

Here are some half-way healthy alternatives to the commercial junk. With appropriate supervision the clamouring children can be put to work to make the recipes themselves.

Banana ice lollies

Simplicity itself. You need:

- ★ Some firm bananas
- ★ Lolly sticks, 2 or 3 per banana
- ★ Space in a freezer compartment

Just peel the bananas and cut suitable lengths. Carefully insert sticks lengthways and pop them in the freezer for a few hours.

Apple icicles

You need:

- ★ Lolly moulds
- ★ Apple sauce (made from eating apples which you have peeled, cored, chopped, gently stewed, sieved and cooled)
- ★ Plain yoghurt
- ★ Some ground cinnamon
- ★ Space in a freezer compartment

Use a fork to mix together equal quantities of plain yoghurt and apple sauce, adding a pinch or two of

Alternative treats

cinnamon. Pour the mix into lolly moulds, insert the handles and freeze for a few hours.

Quick ice cream

You need:

- ★ Frozen chopped fruit (such as strawberries, peaches, bananas which you have frozen for a few hours)

- ★ Cold milk (full cream tastes better!)
- ★ A little honey to sweeten, but you may not need it
- ★ A blender

Use about half a cup of milk for every whole cup of fruit. Put the ingredients in the blender (except for the honey, which you keep back to see if it is needed). Blend on high speed until the mix is smooth. You may need to stop and scrape the sides, replace the cover and blend some more. Before the last

blend check to taste whether the honey is needed. When thoroughly mixed, serve straight away as soft ice cream or pour the mix into plastic cups and freeze an hour or so.

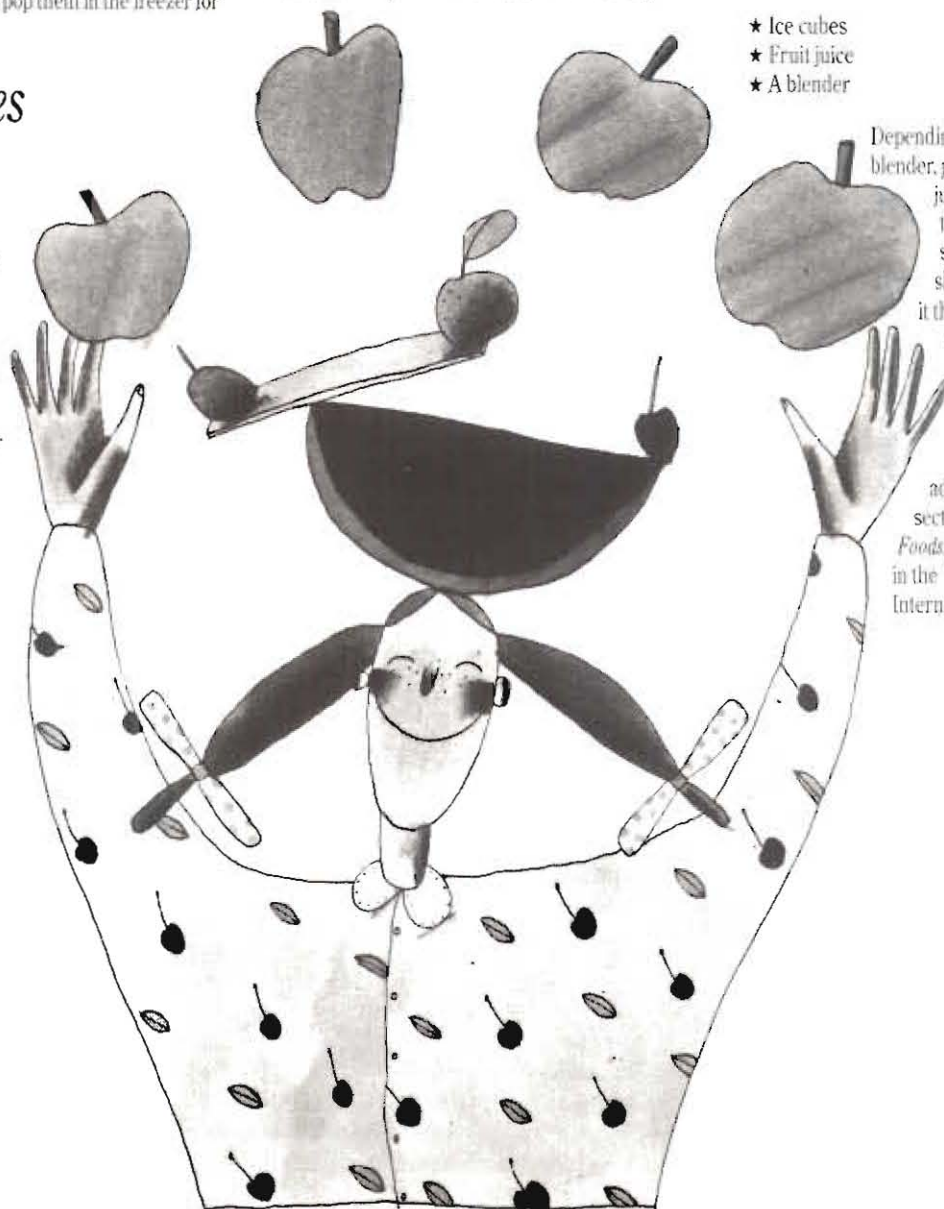
Fruit slush

You need:

- ★ Ice cubes
- ★ Fruit juice
- ★ A blender

Depending on the capacity of your blender, put half a pint of your favourite juice and, say, 25 ice cubes into the machine and blend at high speed till the mix is a slurpy slush. Add more ice if you want it thicker. Put into paper cups and eat with a spoon or drink with a straw.

These recipes have been adapted from the Kids' Cookbook section of the excellent book *Whole Foods for the Whole Family*, published in the USA by La Leche League International, 1981.



WHAT THE JOURNALS SAY

Recent studies have examined fats and cholesterol in relation to disease. Eric Brunner reviews the journals

SCOTTISH STUDY FINDS BLOOD CHOLESTEROL DOESN'T MATTER OVERALL

A high blood cholesterol level predicts death from coronary heart disease, but for cancer the reverse is true. This finding, not for the first time, emphasises the need to look at all the important causes of death and illness when assessing the evidence on food and health. This study, of 16,000 men and women aged 45 to 64 at its start in 1972-76, suggests that overall mortality will not be reduced simply by pursuing a policy stressing cuts in saturated dietary fat for the general adult population.

For women, the relationship between cholesterol and all-cause mortality is mildly 'U'-shaped. They are likely to live longest with a cholesterol of around 7 mmol/l (270 mg/d), an undesirably high level according to the current view. Cholesterols above and below this range predicted a higher death rate. Men had a slightly lower range of blood cholesterol than the women in the study. Their risk of death was constant with cholesterol above 5.6 mmol/l, below that risk was 15 per cent higher.

These findings should not of course send us all out shopping for lard. This is one result from an area where the average cholesterol level is relatively high (see below for some results from the USA). The entire study sample is likely to have eaten a high fat diet since the late 1940s.

Isles C G et al, 'Plasma cholesterol, coronary heart disease, and cancer in the Renfrew and Paisley study', *British Medical Journal*, 1989, vol 298, pp 920-24

USA TRIAL SHOWS BLOOD CHOLESTEROL LEVELS DO MATTER

Risk of death in middle age is greater if your blood cholesterol level is outside the middle range. That is the conclusion of the six-year results of the screening for the MRFIT (Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trial) of US middle-aged

men. The death rate was lowest in the 4.5-6.0 mmol/l (170-230 mg/dl) range and higher if cholesterol was above or below. High blood pressure and low serum cholesterol was linked with an increased chance of brain haemorrhage. Whether low serum cholesterol is one of the causes of this type of stroke is not known, but it seems that a new lifestyle message may emerge: don't let your blood cholesterol level get too high or too low.

The difference in results between the US and Scottish studies may reflect differences in income, social status and lifestyle of the male participants. In the Renfrew study the highest mortality group, those with low cholesterol, tended to be heavy smokers and of low social class. In contrast, the Americans are likely to be relatively well off, as well as more health-conscious.

Iso H et al, 'Serum cholesterol levels and six-year mortality from stroke in 350,977 men screened for the Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trial', *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1989 vol 320, pp 904-10

HIGH BLOOD CHOLESTEROL IS A MARKER OF HIGHER RISK THAN BRAIN CANCER

Deaths from brain cancer were analysed in relation to the cholesterol levels of 17,700 men in the late 1960s. These were the men who had taken part in the 'Whitehall Study' of London civil servants. Age, obesity and social class were not, unlike cholesterol, related to brain cancer. The risk of relatively rare brain cancer increases sharply with cholesterol level.

This contrasts with the finding of an inverse relation between total cancer mortality and cholesterol concentration in prospective studies. It seems possible that cholesterol metabolism is directly connected in some way with brain tumour development, but equally plausible that diet, stress or hormonal factors may be underlying causes of both high cholesterol levels and brain tumours. With our current state of knowledge it would be a clear example of the epidemiologist's 'ecological fallacy' to assume that high cholesterol is a cause of brain cancer.

Davey Smith C and Shipley M, 'Plasma cholesterol and primary brain tumours: the Whitehall Study', *British*

Medical Journal, 1989, vol 298

OVERWEIGHT MEN MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP HEART DISEASE

An analysis of data from the British Regional Heart Study (BRHS) shows that fatter men are more likely to have a heart attack, regardless of blood pressure. It has been suggested that lean men with high blood pressure are more at risk than obese hypertensive men. The BRHS data show that being over weight is almost as important a risk as raised blood pressure as far as heart diseases is concerned. The paper does not report deaths from all causes however.

Phillips A and Shaper A G, 'Relative weight and major ischaemic heart disease events in hypertensive men', *The Lancet*, 1989, vol 1 pp 1005-8

FISH OIL CUTS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, BUT IS IT SAFE?

Ten daily spoonfuls of fish oil (Maxepa) cut blood pressure in men in a

small controlled trial. But it is not certain this dietary supplement will be an effective replacement for diuretic drugs, though the blood pressure reductions seen are similar for both types of treatment. The long-term effects of such a high intake of polyunsaturated fish oils have not been investigated.

The one-month trial involved taking either 10 or 50 ml of purified fish oil (30 per cent marine, or n-3 fatty acids) daily, or 50 ml of safflower oil (80 per cent seed, or n-6 fatty acids) or 50 ml of an oil mixture similar to the types of fat present in the 'average' US diet. Only the high dose of fish oil was effective, but blood pressure returned to the levels measure before starting the supplement as soon as it was stopped. The fish oil is thought to work by causing dilation of blood vessels, lowering resistance to blood circulation. Other effects of the oil include lengthening of bleeding time and inhibition of prostaglandin E2, which may pose a risk to kidney function. High doses of fish oil may also increase production of lipid peroxides, linked with ageing, cancer and arteriosclerosis.

Knapp H R and FitzGerald G A, 'The antihypertensive effects of fish oil', *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1989, vol 320, pp 1037-43

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