

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT
CONSUMER CHECKOUT

FISH SCRAPS RIP-OFF

LOCAL AUTHORITY
FOOD POLICIES

FOOD COMPANIES
FUEL INFLATION

ARTIFICIAL
SWEETENER
SUSPICIONS

LISTERIA
SURVIVES
IRRADIATION

RECIPES

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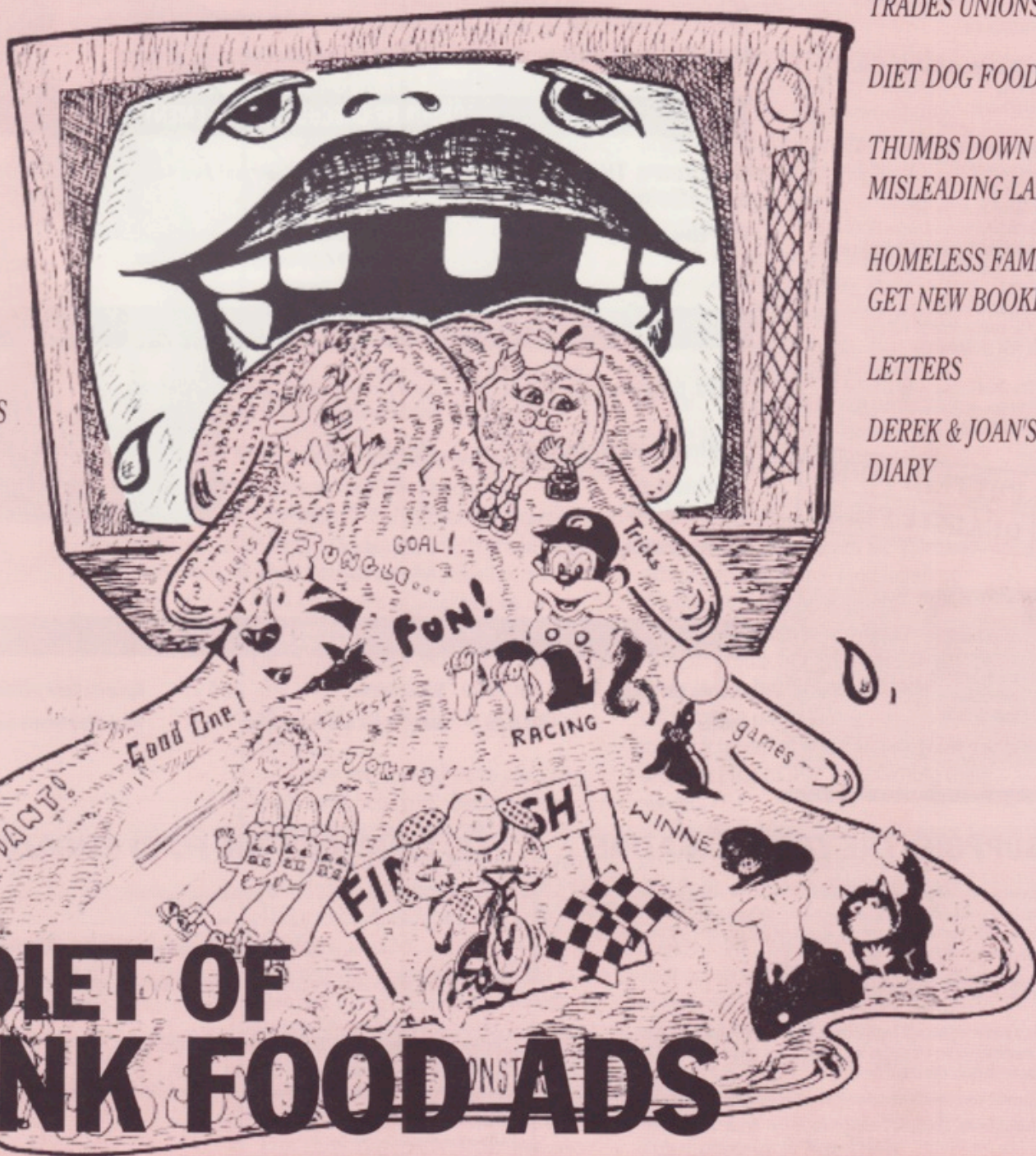
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LETTERS

DEREK & JOAN'S
DIARY

Issue 9 Volume 1 ♦ April/June 1990 ♦ £2.50



A DIET OF JUNK FOOD ADS

EXCLUSIVE SURVEY OF CHILDREN'S TV ADVERTISING

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

The Food Magazine is your consumer watchdog on food. We are independent of the food industry and government and rely on subscriptions, donations and grants for our funding. We aim to provide independently researched information on the food we eat to ensure good quality food for all.

The Food Magazine is published quarterly by The Food Commission, a voluntary organisation providing research, information, education and advice on food.

ISSN 0953-5047

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Designed by Artworkers,
402a St John Street, London EC1V 4NJ.
Printed and dispatched by Spiderweb,
14-20 Sussex Way, London N7.

Retail distributor: Central Books,
14 The Leathermarket, London
SE1 3ER (01-407 5447)

© The Food Commission (UK) Ltd
88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR
Tel: 01-250 1021

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EDITORIAL

Welcoming the changes



Welcome to our new, improved magazine with a special yellow page Consumer Checkout guide to brand names and products, along with the regular news pages, investigations, reviews, feature articles and — always highly valued — your letters.

The changes run deeper than just the colour of paper. April marks not only our second anniversary as *The Food Magazine* but also a change of direction. The magazine is now published by The Food Commission. The change of name acknowledges the wider readership for the magazine and the national and international issues we report.

The new body, The Food Commission, and its sister organisation the Food Commission Research Charity, will retain the broad alliance of professional, worker and consumer interests which provided the strength of the London Food Commission.

Our public stance will remain the same. We shall continue to investigate and expose the practices in the food industry which are hidden from consumers, we shall probe the links between official bodies and commercial interests and we shall prod the mainstream media to take up the issues we raise. To do this effectively we need your continued support.

There are several ways you can help us to help you. Become a Supporter — see opposite page — take out extra subscriptions for your friends and colleagues, and make use of our consultancy and research services.

Food has made big headlines in the last two years. Now public health, linked to 'green' concerns, is high on the political agenda. The LFC has played its part in creating and maintaining this political awareness. Tim Lang, the LFC's departing

Director, the staff of the LFC and the wider LFC network have much to be proud of. We wish Tim Lang equal success in his new role as Director of Parents for Safe Food.

In this issue our Consumer Checkout investigation looks at the onslaught of junk food advertising on children's television. Is it any wonder that kids clamour for highly sugared cereals, sweets, crisps and trips to McDonalds?

In these health conscious days manufacturers are always keen to inform us of the health-promoting properties of their products. Even sweet manufacturers call their products 'wholesome' or 'full of goodness'!

Now some manufacturers are going even further and linking their products to the prevention of heart disease or osteoporosis. But without a product licence these claims are illegal. Campaigners say advertising codes are too weak to ensure ads are always 'legal, decent, honest and truthful'.

But it's not just adverts that can mislead. On page seven we start our campaign to improve food labelling. Would you know how much strawberry there is in a 'strawberry flavour' product? Or how much fish there is in a fish finger? We want clear information on labels — manufacturers of good quality food have nothing to fear by revealing their secrets.

The Food Magazine will continue to criticise bad practice and promote good practice, to challenge vested interests and speak out for good quality food. We hope you can support us in this work. Keep sending in material for the magazine. We welcome contributions. Just as we welcome you to the new *Food Magazine*.

Tim Lobstein & Sue Dibb

Call to suspend fungicides after residues found in many foods

Campaigners are calling for the suspension of the use of a potentially carcinogenic fungicide following tests which found residues in a wide range of foods, including particularly high levels in brown bread and tomato ketchup.

The tests for the fungicide ethylene

bisdithiocarbamate (EBDC) and its more dangerous breakdown product, ethylene thiourea (ETU), were carried out on fresh fruit and vegetables, processed fruit and vegetable products, bread, crisps and baby foods bought from major supermarkets throughout the UK.

The survey carried out for Parents



Pesticide poisoning exported to the third world

Following research in seventeen third world countries, the Pesticides Trust has identified seven pesticides classified as 'extremely hazardous' or 'highly hazardous' which the World Health Organisation has so far omitted to include in its Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Code. The Code seeks to protect third world countries from the hazards of pesticides which are banned or restricted in the first world yet still exported to the third world.

The seven are carbofuran, dichlorvos, methamidophos, methomyl, parathion, monocrotophos and phosphamidon, all of which are known to have caused adverse health or environmental effects in more than one country. They are all widely and freely available in many third world countries under conditions which make their safe

use difficult or even impossible to ensure.

Many pesticides which are banned or restricted in exporting countries are freely available in third world countries. The international Pesticides Action Network (PAN) have long campaigned for the principle of Prior Informed Consent to be incorporated into the UN FAO Code. This would ensure that certain hazardous pesticides cannot be exported without first seeking the consent of the government of the importing country who have been made fully aware of the hazards.

However, according to a new report from the Pesticides Trust* (the UK wing of the PAN) the list of pesticides to be subject to PIC has been 'drawn up in such a way as to exclude many of the pesticides responsible for the widespread poisoning of third world

for Safe Food and Friends of the Earth reveals levels of ETU in apple, carrot, pear, potato and tomato-based products exceeding the World Health Organisation's recommended maximum levels.

EBDCs are a constituent of the fungicides, Mancozeb, Maneb, Nabam, Metiram, Zineb and Cufraneb which are extensively used on potatoes and wheat in the UK. EBDC and ETU have been linked with lung, liver and thyroid cancer and birth defects in laboratory tests. In the US, the Environmental Protection Agency has proposed a ban for most uses of EBDCs.

The UK government's Advisory Committee on Pesticides said in January this year: 'The use of these fungicides on wheat and potatoes does not lead to detectable residues of EBDC or ETU in foodstuffs based on these commodities.' However a senior civil servant told Friends of the Earth that he was 'not aware of any official tests by the government for ETU in crisps or bread marketed in the UK'.

But Andrew Lees of Friends of the Earth says: 'Our findings specifically contradict the ACP statement. Our survey found particularly high levels of ETU residues in brown bread.'

UK out of step over lindane

Cadbury's have pointed out to *The Food Magazine* that an error crept into our response to the Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance's letter (*The Food Magazine* issue 8) following our article on pesticide use in cocoa production.

We highlighted the insecticide, lindane, as a pesticide which is widely used in cocoa production in West Africa, residues of which turn up in the chocolate we eat. An investigation by the *Sunday Mirror* found small amounts of lindane residues in Cadbury's Bourneville Plain chocolate, Mars' Galaxy, Rowntree's Yorkie and Suchard's Milka Praline Crisp.

Cadbury's point out that lindane is not banned or restricted for food production in the UK. This is indeed the case, although the UK is out of step with other countries. At least seven countries, including Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and Singapore have totally banned the use of lindane, and at least a further sixteen, including the USA, Canada, the Soviet Union, New Zealand and Denmark, severely restrict its use.

Lindane is currently under review by the World Bank, whose guidelines are intended to minimise the problems posed by pesticides used in projects that they fund. Lindane is environmentally persistent and accumulative in humans, other mammals and vertebrates. Chronic health effects associated with lindane exposure include birth and reproductive problems.

It is environmentally persistent and has been found in Arctic snow, Canadian rainwater and in increasing levels in the North Sea. Levels in human breastmilk and human fat are a further cause for concern. The breakdown products of lindane, including chlorobenzene and dioxin, also have known health implications.

We apologise for the error which falsely implied that the UK government was following the good practice of other countries who have banned or restricted the use of this toxic pesticide.

people'.

The report calls for the immediate inclusion of these pesticides in the UN list. As one group in Paraguay concerned about pesticide misuse in their country point out:

'We do not understand how the industrialised countries, producers of pesticides which they do not consume, can allow those same pesticides to be consumed by less developed countries. What is the underlying logic? Perhaps we are more resistant human beings?'

* *The FAO Code: Missing Ingredients. Prior Informed Consent in the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides*, prepared by the Pesticides Trust for PAN International, October 1989, available from the Pesticides Trust, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN. Price £10 (inc p&p).

New research from Bristol Institute of Food Research finds unsafe temperatures in fridges and in foods carried home from the shops

Aspartame safety review

The government's advisory Committee on Toxicity (CoT) is to review the safety of the artificial sweetener aspartame, commonly marketed as Nutrasweet, following continued doubts about the validity of animal toxicity tests and criticisms that the regulatory process is unreliable.

Dr Erik Millstone of the Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University has presented the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) with new documentary evidence that aspartame was accepted in the UK on the basis of reports of animal tests which were not properly conducted or reported. His evidence suggests that at least 15 studies on the safety of aspartame were seriously inadequate. He says several of the crucial studies have never been repeated and his evidence shows that the company relied on these problematic studies to obtain permission to market aspartame. 'But,' says Dr Millstone, 'all

indications from behind MAFF's cloak of secrecy suggest that the government's experts and advisors have never scrutinised this crucial evidence.'

The 1982 Food Advisory Committee (FAC) report on sweeteners comments: 'In 1974 aspartame was submitted to us following an application for approval for its use in food, but completion of our consideration ... was delayed because of questions, which have now been answered, about the validity of the supporting toxicological data.'

'It took three years of persistent questioning by me to establish that the "questions" which delayed the FAC and CoT were only a small fraction of those which they should have considered,' said Dr Millstone.

He says that his evidence does not show that aspartame is unsafe, rather that its safety remains to be demonstrated and that the regulatory process is unreliable.

He added: 'Consumers continue to be at a serious disadvantage when trying to keep track of these matters because many of the documents and all the official discussions continue to be kept secret.'

Pilot safety fears over aspartame

Several hundred pilots in the USA have reported adverse reactions after consuming products containing the artificial sweetener, aspartame, according to the Aspartame Consumer Safety Network. Marketed under the trade name Nutrasweet, aspartame is widely used in low-calorie soft drinks.

Mary Stoddard of the US Aspartame Consumer Safety Network told *The Food Magazine* that pilots had reported a range of symptoms including memory loss and confusion, visual disturbances, headaches and gastro-intestinal reactions leading to safety in-flight problems. 'If pilots quit using these products their symptoms cease but return if they start consuming them again,' she said.

Pilots need to consume high levels of

liquid but their need to keep calories down make diet soft drinks an attractive option.

The Aspartame Consumer Safety Network is just one of several consumer groups in the USA calling for aspartame to be independently tested as a drug rather than a food additive. Their campaign is supported by Dr Roberts of The West Palm Beach Institute for Medical Research, whose book *Aspartame — Is it safe?* was published in March. In it he documents the results of his study of over six hundred patients who have reacted to aspartame.

Meanwhile the \$65 million US food retail corporation, Whole Food Markets, has banned aspartame products from their stores in Texas, Louisiana and California.

Drugs contain danger additives

The artificial sweetener sodium cyclamate which is banned in food in the UK, is being used in some medicines. A review of some medicines and their sweetening agents, published in *The Pharmaceutical Journal* last October, lists five cyclamate-containing brands of Penicillin VK syrup manufactured by Lilly and Dista and formulated for children. Under food regulations no artificial sweeteners are permitted in foods marketed for babies and young children.

The Department of Health's Medicines Control Agency told *The Food Magazine* there were no permitted lists for these substances. Cyclamates were banned from foods in the UK, the US and much of Europe in the late 1960s.

Medicines in the UK are not required to list ingredients such as sweeteners, colours or preservatives on the label as they are in some other countries. Last September the *British Medical Journal* published the results of a separate survey to assess the prevalence of colourings and preservatives in drug formulations in the UK.

The researchers analysed 2,204 proprietary drug formulations and found that 930 (42 per cent) contained addi-

tives that have been implicated in adverse health reactions. These accounted for 52 colourings and preservatives out of a total of 419 different additives used.

Erythrosine (E127) was the commonest colouring, being added to 191 drugs. Tough new restrictions on the use of erythrosine are being introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) as part of its review of colours in food. In future it should only be permitted in glacé cherries.

The researchers, at St George's Hospital, found that despite drug company claims that tartrazine and other azo dyes have been replaced over the past five years, these colourings are still in widespread use. White tablet formulations are commonly free of colourings and preservatives.

Sugar content of liquid prescription medicines, J Greenwood, *The Pharmaceutical Journal*, October 28, 1989, pp553-557. Survey of colourings and preservatives in drugs, Pollock et al, *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 299, pp649-651, 1989.



Number of drug formulations containing various colourings and preservatives that have been implicated in adverse reactions

Colouring:		Preservatives and antioxidants:	
Erythrosine (E127)	191	Benzoates (E210-213)	290
Sunset yellow (E110)	187	Parabens (E214-219)	95
Indigo carmine (E132)	142	Sulphites (E220-227)	51
Quinoline yellow(E104)	123	BHA & BHT	
Tartrazine (E102)	124	(E320 & E321)	13
Amaranth (E123)	97		
Ponceau 4R (E124)	95		

Government turns down licencing plan for food premises

The government has turned down the key recommendation of its own committee on food poisoning that food premises should be licensed by prior approval.

But the expert Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food, headed by Sir Mark Richmond, Vice-Chancellor of Manchester University says: 'We feel that, in order adequately to protect the public health, there is considerable advantage in prior inspection and approval before a food business is opened or a process started.'

In calling for a prior approval licencing system, Sir Mark said: 'A system of formal licencing involving prior inspection should in due course be extended to a wide range of food operations including all catering establishments and those premises carrying out butchery and processing of meat. We also believe a similar licencing system should apply to some processes used in the preparation of food, notably the process of manufacturing pre-cooked

chilled products, low-acid canning, aseptic packaging of food and vacuum packing including the sous-vide system, because of the potential dangers that arise when these processes are poorly carried out.'

But Kenneth Clarke, the health minister, moved quickly to announce on the day the report was published that the proposals 'go further than the government feels to be necessary. We intend to introduce a very simple form of registration of all commercial and permanent food premises.'

The government's response has been criticised by consumer groups and environmental health officers who doubt the government's full commitment to ensuring adequate public health controls throughout the food chain. Evidence that the government is not taking an especially tough line even on registration comes in its response to the committee's report where it says penalties for failure to register will be minimal. 'Registration is, however, clearly of right and penalties



Street vendors — may not need to register under the new regulations

for failure to register within the due period should not be set at a level which is disproportionate to the offence.'

Bob Tanner, chief executive of the Institution of Environmental Health Officers said: 'The government's proposals to introduce a simple form of registration as of right will, in the long term, prove ineffective as it is little more

than an administrative exercise.'

Concern has also been expressed that the government's plans for registration would not cover mobile catering businesses such as burger and ice-cream vans.

The recommendation that compulsory 'use-by' dates should replace 'sell-by' dates has been accepted by the government who, the committee recommends, should issue clear guidance to help ensure that manufacturers and enforcement officers all have a common appreciation of what products are to be regarded as 'highly perishable' and thus subject to the new 'use-by' requirements.

The Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food, in its first report says a wide range of measures should be introduced throughout the food chain to ensure improvements in safety. The committee was set up last year as a response to the rising incidence of food poisoning. The report has been broadly welcomed by consumer groups and food law enforcement officers who say the recommendations go a long way to meeting consumers demands for improvements in hygiene standards to protect public health.

The report recommends the introduction of a system of licencing for all catering premises based on prior inspection, the introduction of a compulsory system of 'use-by' dates for perishable foods and the introduction of a legally binding EC standard for fridge temperature control. It makes detailed and comprehensive recommendations for improvements in standards, monitoring and control throughout the food chain, including animal feedstuffs, slaughter-houses, food manufacturing and distribution.

It says more research is needed into the nature and incidence of food poisoning, particularly listeria, and recommends improvements in the collation and dissemination of information particularly to the public and the media.

The Microbiological Safety of Food, Part 1, report of the Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food, 1990, HMSO, £15.

MPs still concerned over listeria controls

Last December the House of Commons Social Services Committee produced a follow-up to its report on listeria (June 1989) which was critical of the government's record on warning the public, and particularly pregnant women, of the potential dangers of listeria.

The committee stressed that listeriosis, like all forms of food-borne illness, is preventable. Whilst it welcomed some of the steps the government had taken it still had some reservations and made further recommendations with particular regard to temperature control in the food chain. These include:

■ The Food Hygiene Regulations should require high risk foods, such as ready-cooked food and soft cheese, to be stored in retail outlets at or below 3°C. This standard, which is recommended in the revised cook-chill/cool-freeze guidelines for catering,

would be a safer standard than the 5°C which the draft regulations propose.

■ In order to restore public confidence, microwave oven manufacturers should release more details of the specific faults identified in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's (MAFF) research published last December (see *The Food Magazine*, Issue 8) which showed a significant number of ovens failed to heat foods thoroughly and evenly.

■ Regulations in the Food Safety Bill on registration of food premises should extend to all premises including mobile food businesses such as ice cream and hamburger stalls.

■ Thermometers in refrigeration cabinets should be a standard requirement and that they should be clearly visible to reassure the public that retailers are complying with food hygiene regulations

■ The government should ensure that fridge manufacturers make integral thermometers a standard feature.

■ The committee was concerned that the European standard, which from 1990 will replace the current British standard for fridges, is less stringent in that it does not specify an upper temperature limit for food storage. It recommends that in negotiating European standards which have implications for the health of the population, best practice standards should be adopted.

■ The committee was concerned that by closing the Institute of Food Research laboratory at Bristol, MAFF was divesting itself of laboratories with the capability to undertake work on food safety.

Social Services Committee *Food poisoning: listeria and listeriosis report: follow up*, December 1989, HMSO, £6.20

FOOD HYGIENE

New research from Bristol Institute of Food Research finds unsafe temperatures in fridges and in foods carried home from the shops

Majority of household fridges are too warm

Eighty five per cent of fridges in a pilot survey of 21 households operated at an average temperature above 5°C — the recommended average temperature to ensure safe hygiene standards. Researchers calculated that for two-thirds of the time food was kept refrigerated, above 7°C. Researchers at Bristol's Institute of Food Research are now carrying out a larger survey of 250 homes.

Average fridge temperatures ranged from 3°C to over 10°C. Temperatures below 3°C are required to prevent the

growth of listeria.

The current British Standard for fridges specifies that they must be able to keep food cooler than 7°C but, as the recent House of Commons Social Services Committee pointed out, in view of concern over listeria fridges should be capable of keeping food at 'temperatures of 4° or 5°C or less'. However there are concerns that the British Standard will be replaced by a European standard which specifies no upper limit for food storage at all. The committee recommends that EC harmonisation should be to the highest

not the lowest standards when seeking to protect public health.

But how do you tell the temperature of your fridge? Manufacturers are only now beginning to sell fridges with integral thermometers, a practice which should be standard say consumer groups. A fridge thermometer can be used to measure fridge temperatures to achieve a temperature below 3°C. It is important to remember that the top part of the fridge will be the warmest and that even leaving the door open for a few minutes can cause temperatures to rise substantially.



Temperatures rise on journey home

The Bristol researchers found that almost 60 per cent of households shopped for chilled foods once per week, 20 per cent twice a week, and a further 20 per cent three or four times per week.

Consumers took between two minutes and over eight hours to transport chilled foods from the shops to their homes and up to a further 90 minutes to empty their cars and/or shopping bags and place the products in their fridge. Typically, chilled products would be placed in the fridge within 30 minutes of leaving the retail outlet with approximately 15 per cent taking longer than an hour.

The researchers measured temperatures of 19 different types of chilled products bought from a large supermarket and carried to a parked car. They compared samples placed in a pre-cooled insulated box with foods left loose in the boot of the car. The shopping was then driven back to the laboratory and placed in a domestic fridge after a total journey time of one hour. Initial temperatures measured when the food reached the car ranged from 4° to over 20°C. Some product temperatures rose to nearly 30°C during the car journey whilst most of the samples placed in the insulated box cooled during the car journey, except for a few at the top of the box which remained at the initial temperature.

After being placed in the domestic fridge it required five hours before the temperature was reduced below 7°C.

Predictions using a mathematical model that calculated bacterial growth from temperature/time relationships indicated that increases of between 2 and 4.2 generations in bacterial numbers can occur during this transport and domestic cooling phase. Very small increases in bacterial numbers were predicted when the insulated cool box was used.

Maximum temperatures in products after a one hour journey in a car boot.

Product	Unprotected °C	Cool box °C
Beef pie	24	7
Chicken sandwich	32	10
Cooked chicken	28	12
Minced beef	18	9
Prepared salad	29	14
Quiche	26	18
Sausage (raw)	28	15
Smoked ham	30	14
Trout	28	5
Brie cheese	28	11
Coleslaw	30	14
Lasagna	21	6
Pate	25	13
Prawns	37	14
Raw chicken	24	4
Sausage roll	28	12
Smoked salmon	38	18

Shelf life expectations

Shoppers were asked how long they expected to store chilled products after purchase.

Fish, pizzas and quiches were expected to store for up to four days, beef burgers for five days, ready meals seven days, sausages ten days, pate 14 days and bacon up to 21 days.

Shop temperatures can be too high

Temperatures in supermarket chill displays can vary widely from below freezing up to 20°C say the researchers. Their initial survey carried out in a range of small to very large retail outlets revealed that average temperatures in chill displays varied considerably from cabinet to cabinet and also within cabinets.

A more detailed survey of seven delicatessen display cabinets for chilled unwrapped foods found temperature variation from -8°C to 13°C. One cabinet showed an average temperature of nearly 10°C.

The best results were obtained in a lightly loaded display in an air-conditioned supermarket. Foods in most cabinets were liable to dehydrate.

Attention has become focused on how temperature differences can be minimised to ensure food can be kept at

low enough temperatures throughout the cabinet whilst remaining unfrozen. Research has shown that in order to maintain temperatures below 5°C air must enter the cabinet at -2°C. This could result in products near air inlets being frozen. Research is recommended into a system that can achieve even air distribution throughout cabinets to minimise temperature differences. This is complicated for unwrapped products as air velocities should be low and humidities high to reduce dehydration.

Source: James, S J and Evans, J I, Temperatures in the retail and domestic chill chain. Published in proceedings of Cost 91 bis symposium *The Effects of Processing and Distribution on the Quality and Nutritive Value of Foods*, 2-5 Oct, 1989, Gothenburg, Sweden

It's fair to point out that this pilot survey was carried out last June — one of the hottest on record.

New research from Bristol Institute of Food Research finds unsafe temperatures in fridges and in foods carried home from the shops

Doubts cast on ability of irradiation to kill listeria

New research by Professor Richard Lacey at Leeds University has found not only that listeria can survive irradiation of chicken, but also that under refrigeration regrowth can lead to an increase in contamination after storage leaving higher levels of listeria compared with unirradiated poultry. *Listeria monocytogenes* is a particularly resistant organism whose growth appears to be accelerated once other, possibly less toxic, bacteria are killed by irradiation.

This new research comes as consumer and industry opposition to the introduction of irradiation intensifies, although the government's commitment to introducing irradiation through the Food Safety Bill remains as firm as ever. In February the Women's Institute and the Consumers' Association organised over 400 members to lobby MPs in opposition to irradiation.

Of 22 supermarkets surveyed by The London Food Commission and Friends of the Earth, J Sainsbury still remain the only one planning to sell irradiated food. A further survey of UK

poultry, spice and seafood companies is being carried out by the Food Irradiation Campaign this year. Throughout the UK local authorities are voting to ban the use of irradiated food in their catering and school meals subsequent to it being legalised.

The international Food Irradiation Network reports that the Australian government has decided to ban irradiation for three years. Australia is also calling on the World Health Organisation to re-open its safety investigation and produce a properly referenced report.

Meanwhile in Thailand, leading seafood exporters have been urged by consumer and trade union organisations from South East Asia, Europe, Japan and the USA not to damage the image of their products by using irradiation. The Thai irradiation plant, built with Canadian aid funds and which uses Canadian radioactive cobalt, stands to lose one of its principal foods.

Back in Europe, a Commission Directive to force all EC countries to permit the irradiation of 11 categories of foodstuffs will be back on the agenda later this year. Last year the European

Parliament voted for a Europe-wide ban on irradiation, with the exception of dried herbs and spices but the Commission wants to overturn that decision.

This time around strawberries and frogs legs have been left off the EC proposals. In the UK, McCormicks, the largest spices importer, has spoken out against irradiation and has developed an alternative heat treatment.

McDonald's says no

The world's largest burger chain has declared itself against irradiated food.

In a statement issued from McDonald's Chicago headquarters in March, the company announced its policy 'not to use irradiated food products in the preparation of foods' sold in its restaurants, saying only that this would ensure 'conformance with McDonald's Food Product Specifications which prohibit mis-branded and adulterated foods.'

The company joins several other leading US manufacturers now pledged to avoid all irradiated products, including Quaker Oats and H J Heinz.



Published jointly by The London Food Commission, Friends of the Earth and Parents for Safe Food, this new briefing paper provides a broad introduction to the issues and how readers can get involved. Price £1 from Food Irradiation Campaign, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.

Government approves genetically engineered yeast

A genetically engineered novel strain of yeast has been approved by the government for widespread use in the baking industry. The yeast will almost certainly be released into the environment with unpredictable consequences.

The yeast strain, manufactured by Gist-Brocades, has been approved for use by the government's advisory committee on novel foods and by the Health and Safety Commission's advisory committee on genetic manipulation who, along with the Food Advisory Committee, have endorsed the organism as safe for use. The yeast includes genes from a sister strain inserted to speed up the production of enzymes responsible for dough fermentation, so reducing

manufacturing costs for commercial bakers.

The bakers' yeast is the first UK approval for a genetically modified organism in food. There are no plans to label the products using the new strain of yeast. Commercial bakers cannot prevent spores from the man-made organism being released into the environment. When *The Food Magazine* contacted Allied Bakeries, makers of Sunblest, Vitbe, Mighty White and other leading brands, they stated they had no plans to use the new yeast, and their suppliers were not stocking it. Britain's other bread giant, Mother's Pride-makers British Bakeries, declined to comment.

The public interest group UK Genetics Forum (UKGF) is concerned

at the government's refusal to allow public access to the information on which the decision to approve the yeast was made. Although the government has announced that under the forthcoming Environment Protection Bill it is their intention to set up public information registers, the quality and quantity of the information will be entirely at the discretion of the Secretary of State. Calling for the establishment of an open-access Genetic Modification Commission, UKGF point out there are no proposals for the public or for interest groups to comment on proposed work involving genetic modification prior to commercial approval.

For more information UKGF, 3-4 St Andrew's Hill, London EC4.

Consumer group sues EC Patent Office

The Dutch group Contact Group Biotechnology and Society are suing the European Patent Office for granting a patent to US multinational Lubrizol for a genetically engineered plant.

The organisation is concerned that multinational companies will hold legal ownership rights of plant and animal varieties (see *The Food Magazine* Issue 8) and is calling on other groups to join its campaign against life patents.

Further information on the law suit: Vincent Lucassen, Herenstraat 11, 6701 DG Wageningen, Netherlands. The group is starting a newsletter, Biotekst — for details contact Gerda Dijkstra, Laan van Romen 19, 2651 DH Berkel en Rodenrijs, Netherlands.

Look again at the label

Pressure from consumers has convinced the government's Food Advisory Committee (FAC) to undertake a major review of food labelling. This should be good news. *The Food Magazine* has uncovered many examples of labels that are either misleading or uninformative such as the absence of full nutrition labelling or details of how much of an ingredient the product contains, for example the amount of fish in a fish finger. Methods of production, such as mechanically recovered meat, or the pesticides used are also usually omitted from labelling.

The Food Magazine would like to see the Food Advisory Committee making strong recommendations to government on all these issues.

We will submit to the FAC examples of labels that should be outlawed or improved. You can help by sending us food labels that you think do not provide the information you want to see. We shall feature your examples in future issues of the magazine.

Does this label inform or mislead?

Does this 'strawberry' milk shake contain any strawberry? You could be fooled by the picture of the strawberry and the words 'strawberry flavour' into thinking that it does. But you would almost certainly be wrong.

'Flavour' means the product may contain no real strawberry whereas 'flavoured' means it has to. Confused? If so you're not alone. Ninety per cent of shoppers surveyed by the Consumers' Association didn't understand the difference.

And if you look carefully it's 'Sally STRAWBERRY flavour' with a picture of her and not a real strawberry, which would only be permitted if the product did contain real fruit. We think this is misleading.

The carton also says 'low fat' but it doesn't tell you that the product is 'high sugar'. In fact the nutritional information doesn't mention sugar, even though over 60 per cent of the calories are from sugars.



'No artificial colour or preservatives'. Great you might think, just the kind of 'natural' product that would be healthy for your kids? We think you're being misled again. As we've already pointed out the product contains a strawberry flavouring agent, and as for xanthan gum, guar gum, hydrolysed wheat protein, an un-named

colour (illegally so) and sandalwood extract, these are hardly the kind of substances you would expect in a milkshake.

Algal poison in drinking water

Geoff Tansey finds evidence that blue algae in drinking water may increase the risk of cancer.

Seven dead lambs and a number of dead dogs in eastern England pushed the problem of blue-green algal blooms into the headlines in Britain last autumn. The animals appear to have died after drinking water from the Rutland reservoir, part of Anglia Water's main supply. Since then algal blooms have been found from Cornwall to Scotland.

Although the bloom problem is well-known in more tropical climates, with livestock deaths reported in many parts of the world, recent work suggests that toxin-forming species are widespread in surface waters in Europe. In Britain, 18 out of 24 sites with algal bloom showed toxic types of bloom. Even low levels of toxin in water from these sources may pose a threat to human health.

Blooms can occur anywhere, but flourish in water with high levels of phosphorous and nitrate or ammonia — chemicals typical of fertiliser residues from intensive farming. Bloom-contaminated water smells and tastes bad, but there may be more damaging effects.

Swimmers encountering the blooms can get skin irritations and, if swallowed, gastroenteritis.

Research in Australia by Professor Ian Falconer, at New England University, Armidale, New South Wales, has shown an increase in liver damage among residents following a heavy bloom in their supply reservoir, while neighbouring people not drinking the water were unaffected.

His most recent work suggests that even water with low levels of contamination could promote the growth of human cancers already present.

According to researchers at Dundee University, water supplies with algal toxin contamination should be treated with activated carbon filtration and water catchments should be managed and protected to avoid the problem. But the newly-privatised water companies may be looking for cheaper remedies.

Courses & events

Is poultry safe?

The Royal Society of Health is organising a one day conference entitled 'Poultry Meat — How Safe?' on Tuesday 22 May 1990 at the Society of Chemical Industry in London. The cost of £75 includes lunch and refreshments.

For details of the full programme contact the Conference Department, The Royal Society of Health, RSH House, 38a St George's Drive, London SW1V 4BH. Tel: 01-630 0121.

Kingston green food exhibition

Kingston Green Collective is assembling an exhibition on food issues to tour summer shows and events. The first showing will be at the Kingston Green Fair on 28 May 1990.

The exhibition will cover a wide range of subjects including infant feeding, organic farming, the food industry and third world issues and showing how they are inter-related.

If you want to contribute to the Food Issues Exhibition or visit it this summer contact Annie Mayer, 3 Braywick Court, Queens Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, KT2 7SQ. Tel: 01-541 1195.

Food hygiene & microbiology

Oxford Polytechnic is organising a short course in Food Microbiology from 10 — 12 July 1990. The course is intended to be an introduction to food hygiene and food poisoning micro-organisms. For details contact Dr L A King, School of Biological and Molecular Sciences, Oxford Polytechnic, Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP. Tel: (0865) 819240.

Science festival

Edinburgh's second international Science Festival, to be held during April, has food as its main theme. The festival promises a galaxy of conferences, lectures and exhibitions focusing on the mixture of science and technology in what we eat and drink. For details of the full programme ring the Science Festival Box Office on (031) 228 4756.

Complacency or panic over BSE?

Everyone agrees that too little is known about BSE, the 'mad cow' disease now affecting nearly 10,000 cattle in the UK and increasing at the rate of 200 cases each week. But there is little agreement about the degree of caution needed to stop the disease spreading to humans.

Food minister David Maclean has suggested that human infection is as remote 'as the chances of the sky falling in', while microbiologist Richard Lacey has warned of a 'worse-possible' scenario of half a million people developing the human version of the disease within the next 30 years.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) itself has reacted with customary sluggishness, taking nearly a year to ban certain cattle offal from human food and over a year to offer market-value compensation to farmers as encouragement to declare their diseased cows to the Ministry vet.

A ban on the use of sheep remains in cattle feed is now in place, although sheep remains may still be put into pig and poultry feeds. Cattle showing symptoms of BSE are not permitted to be slaughtered for meat but must be destroyed, although the disease cannot be detected before symptoms show and this may be up to seven years after infection.

Some cattle offal is being banned from human food in order to prevent possibly infected tissue from entering our food. But other parts of the animal may also be infectious — such as bone marrow, as the West Germans believe — and cross-contamination from neural tissue to muscle meat is possible when the head and spine are cut open for removal of the brain and spinal cord.



PHOTOJENNY MATTHEWS/FORMAT

Now, despite reassurances about the low level of risk, the government has declared a £12m research programme into various aspects of BSE. Many believe this massive injection of funds — at a time when research cuts are beginning to bite — reflects a measure of

panic at the Ministry, based on political fears of farmers losing their beef markets and possibly also scientific fears that BSE is a bigger problem than Maclean likes to admit.

Here are a few of the scarce facts:

- Scrapie — the equivalent disease in sheep and goats — has been around for centuries but there have been only a few cases of the human version (Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, affecting about one person in a million world-wide, with a strong hereditary component).
- BSE can be transmitted from cattle to other animals — eg mice — by direct transplant of brain tissue.
- It is not yet known whether BSE can be passed from one cow to another, nor whether BSE can be passed from a cow to her calf. Genes in sheep can affect the incubation period of scrapie.
- It is not known how infectious the meat from BSE-diagnosed cattle may be, nor how infectious the meat from cows incubating BSE but not showing symptoms may be. In sheep, the lymphatic system is infectious a year after the disease is first caught and the brain and nervous system two years after. Muscle, udder and milk are not infective.
- Scrapie virus is resistant to ultraviolet and ionising radiation and to many disinfectants. Bleach at a strength sufficient to corrode metal is considered effective to decontaminate the BSE agent. Surgical implements should be sterilised at 134°C for 18 minutes at 30 psi.

Attack on WHO baby-milk code

A new assault on breast feeding mothers is being planned by the promoters of bottle feeding.

Not content with having drawn the teeth from the World Health Organisation (WHO) baby milk marketing code, manufacturers are now aiming to weaken an ancillary part of the code which regulates the marketing of baby bottles and teats.

Under the WHO code, bottles and teats are included in the general requirement to abstain from promoting bottle feeding. Free samples of commercial baby milk are banned under the code, as are such strategies as company sales representatives

contacting mothers and company gifts to health workers.

Baby milk manufacturers in the UK agreed an alternative voluntary code which permitted many practices banned by WHO and this was accepted by the government in 1983, despite the fact that in 1981 the government had signed the World Health Assembly resolution adopting the stricter WHO code.

One of the shortcomings of the UK manufacturers' 1983 code was that it failed to include bottles and teats along with baby milk products. Now, nearly seven years later and after considerable pressure from such campaigns as the Baby Milk Action Coalition (BMAC),

the Department of Health has asked manufacturers to draft a bottle and teats code. This has been circulated for discussion and has come under attack for being just as weak as the 1983 baby milk manufacturers' code.

According to BMAC the bottles and teats code permits:

- promotion and advertising in health centres
- distribution of biased company information to mothers
- direct access by company personnel to pregnant women and mothers
- gifts to health workers
- a 'code monitoring committee' paid for by the manufacturers and with all members vetted by the manufacturers, including four manufacturers' representatives, and having no legal powers.

Company payouts fuel inflation

The large food companies are handing out rapidly-growing profits to shareholders with increases in dividends out-stripping inflation.

While the government battles against low-paid public sector workers in the name of controlling inflation the senior managers of the UK's largest food companies appear to be doing their best to fuel the inflationary spiral. Dividend payments made to shareholders have been increasing at rates far in excess of inflation and of any wage agreements in the industry.

An average annual rise in dividends of 18 per cent has been paid out by the UK's top 24 food and drink companies. Unilever alone paid out nearly £400m in dividend payments to its shareholders.

The same large food companies showed average annual profit increases of 18 per cent reflecting total profits before tax of over £8 billion, an estimated average of nearly £5,000 profit per person employed in the companies. While takings and profits overflow, food prices rises are

overtaking other retail prices. Latest figures showed an eight per cent rise in food costs over the year February 1989 to January 1990, with fresh seasonal foods rising nearly 13 per cent in the same period.

Price rises, year to January 1990

Food	8.0%
Fuel	6.1%
Alcohol	5.8%
Household goods	4.2%
Fares, travel	4.1%
Clothes, shoes	4.6%
Tobacco	2.6%

High food prices particularly affect people on a low-income, who spend a greater proportion of their money on food than those who are better off.

Rising prices also tend to encourage unhealthy diets. Recent research by The London Food Commission found that a basket of 'healthy' foods showed steeper price rises during the 1980s than a basket of less healthy foods, high in fats and sugars and lacking fresh fruit and vegetables.

TOP FOOD AND DRINK COMPANY PROFITS (SALES OVER £1BN ANNUALLY)

	Pre-tax profits 1988/89		Dividend increase
	£m	(increase)	
Assoc British Foods	237	(13%)	12%
Albert Fisher	45	(35%)	22%
Allied Lyons	502	(15%)	15%
Argyll	209	(19%)	17%
Asda (pre-Gateway)	247	(14%)	17%
Bass	529	(18%)	21%
Berisford	107	(6%)	0%
Cadbury Schweppes	251	(16%)	16%
Dalgety	110	(11%)	10%
Grand Metropolitan	732	(27%)	20%
Guinness	521	(28%)	33%
Hillsdown Holdings	151	(37%)	26%
Kwik Save	72	(33%)	35%
Nestlé	1,200	(3%)	17%
Northern Foods	85	(10%)	13%
Ranks Hovis McDougall	177	(13%)	20%
Reckitt & Colman	217	(14%)	17%
Sainsburys	402	(21%)	20%
Tate & Lyle	200	(67%)	22%
Tesco	276	(22%)	18%
Trusthouse Forte	232	(29%)	18%
Unigate	101	(7%)	10%
Unilever	1,802	(24%)	25%
United Biscuits	189	(11%)	10%
Whitbread	223	(19%)	22%
Median increases		18%	18%

Source: company reports, Labour Research Department

GATT urged to adopt greener stance at world trade negotiations

Tim Lang reports.

An international 30-person delegation of consumer, environmental and agricultural organisations met in Geneva in February to hammer out a common position on the current round of negotiations in the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs (GATT).

As one US pesticides campaigner put it: 'GATT is perceived as the rich man's club meeting in secret.' One delegate whispered 'often robbing the peasants en route' — a view more politely echoed by the councillors from food importing countries such as Egypt, Jamaica and Switzerland.

GATT sets the rules between 96 nations, accounting for 90 per cent of world trade. It is an unequal trade, hence the protectionist tariffs of some countries.

Japan in particular was urged by

delegates to continue to support its rice growers, and to broaden its no-residues pesticide policy beyond imported foods. All delegates agreed that pesticide use and residues are a key public concern globally.

The delegation was organised by the Brussels based, church-led European Ecumenical Organisation for Development. Chair of the delegation was the pioneer of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Dr Sicco Mansholt, now arguing passionately for agriculture's impact on the environment to be central in trade talks. Trade liberalisation is not the way to deal either with agricultural over-production or environmental concerns, he said.

Tough ecological standards are overdue globally. Delegates felt that GATT's assumptions went the other way

by seeing health and environment as unfair barriers to free trade. Ernst von Weizsacker of the Institute for European Environmental Policy in Bonn argued that the current GATT round was an opportunity for the European Community to take a lead and put into action the theory of high standards, but too rarely the practice, of the Single European Act.

Meetings were held with 12 national ambassadors or councillors at the GATT round. Many expressed surprise at the multinational delegation.

Europe's witty and urbane ambassador Tran van Thinh was pressed hard on European Community policy. Europe's current view is 'to adjust (EC) production for consumption and to help feed the whole world.' This kind of talk depressed third world non governmental organisation (NGO) delegates. Post war

experience has suggested that trade masquerading as aid serves the trader more than the recipient country's poor.

The NGOs in turn were given a hard time by the Cairns Group councillors from Australia, Argentina and Columbia. They argued that European consumers were having to pay too high a price for their food, artificially bolstered by CAP. That old dilemma of food policy — cheap versus high cost — exposed differences in the consumer camp. Should subsidies be reduced at the expense of food or environmental quality? No-one thought so, but that could be the bad news from GATT.

The US hard-line position was given by councillor Mary Revelt who said that agriculture is sick. 'We produce too much.' Containing production 'will hurt — economic development always hurts.' That is what we are worried about.

Food polici

Local authorities' concern with public health issues like typhoid and cholera, slum housing, sewers, water supply and food date back to the 19th century. Dave Denton of Southwark Public Protection gives a personal view of local food policies today.

Our current food legislation was first written in the mid-19th century following numerous food adulteration scandals perpetrated on the public by an unregulated and unscrupulous trade. Local authorities led the way in cleaning up the food trade by employing medical officers of health, public analysts, food and weights and measures inspectors to enforce the Food and Drugs Act of 1875 and related food laws.

Today the scene is quite different. Your council is more likely to be preoccupied with its financial affairs or local social services.

In many parts of the country environmental health officers, the main promoters of local public health policies, seem to be part of a secret service — barely discernible to the public they serve.

Pressures from central government, coupled with the demands of a welfare state, have taken their toll on the visionary elements of local government.

One of these elements is, or could be, a local food policy. It is very likely that the council is the largest provider of food in your district, through school meals, staff catering, social services homes, luncheon clubs and meals-on-wheels. My local authority prepares and distributes well over a million meals a year through its social services department alone. Coupling this with the high incidence in the UK of cardio-vascular disease and cancer of the large intestine, both of which may be positively influenced by diet, one can see a major opportunity for local residents to improve their health and quality of life.



STARTERS

FRENCH ONION SOUP
SALMON MOUSSE
SELECTION OF FRUIT JUICES

SERVED WITH ...

WHOLEMEAL BREAD
JACKET POTATO
WINTER SALAD
SELECTION OF SALADS

BEVERAGES

LEMONADE OR
COFFEE

Celebrating healthy food. Parents cooked, children served and teachers ate a wealth of wholesome dishes at a Healthy Lifestyles Evening held at Christ Church School in the London borough of Barnet in March. With support from the local sixth form college, the local dental health unit and several local retailers, the evening included displays, exercise sessions, quizzes, videos, advice on food studies and careers. The school restaurant and cafe provided opportunities to sample healthy meals.

More details from parent-governor Alison Handley or the head of home economics Sarah Bourn, Christ Church School, Warnham Road, London N12.

es go local

These diet-related diseases have their highest proportion of victims amongst low income groups, yet food quality, price and availability have not been taken up as poverty issues at national level. Providing informative labels on food rather than insisting on compositional standards means that the consumer needs to be quite sophisticated, as well as motivated, to make healthier choices.

How can your council make an impact at local level?

A recent survey of metropolitan local authorities showed that almost two thirds of them have, or are formulating, food policies. The principle areas of activity were:

- promoting diversity and accessibility of retail food outlets through transport and planning policies
- provision of healthier dietary choices in schools, with health education to underpin understanding and motivation
- consumer education on such points as composition of food — especially manufactured foods — balanced diet, healthier choices and value for money
- education and training of council employees especially in the catering services
- training of food handlers in basic food hygiene
- catering for special dietary needs by council services, eg the under fives, ethnic minorities and elderly people
- putting preventative public health on the local political agenda and enabling the council to project a positive, caring image
- enforcement food standards and hygiene legislation.

What does a local food policy look like?

Firstly, it should be a *local*, evolving policy created by cooperation between different council services and external agencies, like the district health authority. Spin-offs from this cooperation in Southwark include carrying out health and poverty profiles of the district, to improve awareness of the impact of all of the council's policies.

Secondly, the programme needs a well-integrated approach at a practical and political level. It must deliver definite improvements in people's lives, yet be flexible enough to cope with minority issues and other council priorities like local economic development and compulsory competitive tendering for services.

Special needs of ethnic minority clients

For example, Southwark council social services has specified nutritional guidelines for its meals-on-wheels contract caterer, taking account of the special needs of its elderly and ethnic minority clients by providing appropriate menu choices.

Finally, it needs an assertive food control enforcement programme in order to combat rising numbers of food poisonings and to inform local consumers so they may make effective use of food label information.

In summary then, a local food policy can fill a vacuum in national policy, help provide a sense of direction in local council services and, above all, enable people to take more control of their nutrition and so improve the quality of their lives.

Why Your Local Council Should have a Food Policy

to put health on the agenda

- diet related disease the single largest cause of death in Britain, especially among low income groups
- influence other policy makers, administrators and planners

to broaden the base of the "Food Lobby"

- to create a forum for the interests of low income groups
- to identify issues of local concern
- pool information with other Local Authorities

to improve the availability of fresh & whole foods

- local economic policies eg: letting of property, food cooperatives, central purchasing
- planning policies re: shopping, local transport, markets
- to change the environment and make healthier choices easier choices

to encourage consumer education on health issues

- provide information for consumers to make healthier choices
- improve control of personal nutrition

to counter the influence of the food manufacturing and retail interests

- assemble food composition and retailing data
- challenge status quo, explode myths, prick marketing bubbles

MENU

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MAIN COURSE

- VEGETABLE CURRY
- MUSHROOM & ONION QUICHE
- BROCCOLI & SWEETCORN QUICHE
- NUT ROAST



DESSERTS

- PEAR & APPLE CRUMBLE
- LEMON & RAISIN CHEESECAKE
- PINEAPPLE CHEESECAKE
- CARROT CAKE

FOOD POLICIES - TAKE IT FROM US

The Food Commission has extensive experience of food policies and their implementation, built up over five years of research and consultancy work with local authorities.

If you want to draw on this wealth of practical knowledge and insight, contact Tim Lobstein at Food Commission Research 01-253 9513.

Help for homeless families

Homeless families face many problems but a new booklet from the Bayswater Families Care Team aims to help with advice on eating healthily.

'If you are lucky it's just a few floors down from your room to the shared kitchen in the basement. If you're unlucky, there's no kitchen at all. You might have a kettle. You might have a cupboard. There is a sink, probably, but no fridge to keep food cool.'

Giving good nutritional advice to homeless mothers is usually the responsibility of midwives and health visitors. But as one health visitor commented: 'It's very difficult keeping things clean and sterile when you are washing and preparing food in the same sink that you have just washed a baby's nappy in.'

So what dietary advice can be offered to people who basically need good housing and an adequate income to provide nutritious food for their families? Health visitors Corinne Moore and Di Thomas of the Bayswater Families Care Team, acutely aware of the problem of poor diets among homeless people but continually being asked for dietary advice, worked with their local community dietitian Julie Nelson, to produce a booklet geared specifically to the needs of people in bed and breakfast accommodation.

'We needed some way of backing up the verbal advice with written information, but this had to be an very simple, clear form,' observes Julie Nelson. 'We used the Fog Index Test on our text, which is a measure of readability. A low score indicates a low reading ability needed. The booklet scored the same as *The Sun* newspaper, which is what we hoped. English may not be the first language for many of the families in bed and breakfast, and even if it is, the level of literacy may be low.'

'We also used lots of illustrations in each section, and raised enough funding to have it printed in full colour, making it attractive and encouraging people to browse through it.'

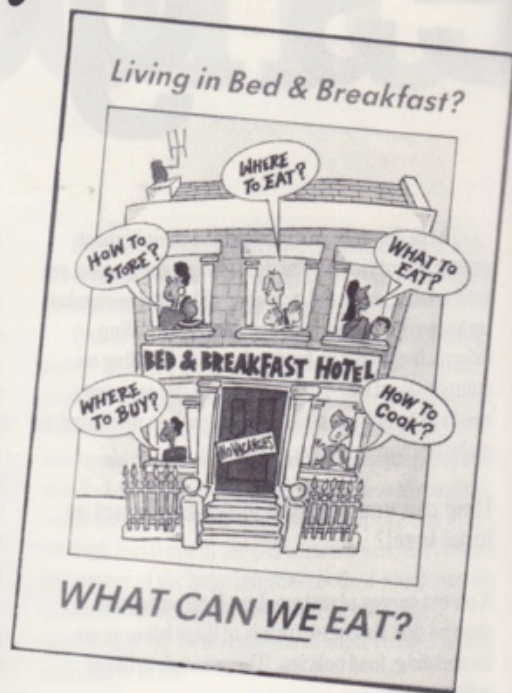
Neither the health visitors nor the dietitian had a budget for producing this sort of material and the health district had no cash to spare. Eventually, with some trouble, three sources of help were found: Capital Radio's Help a London Child, The Lord Ashdown Charitable Settlement, and The King's Fund, amounting to some £4,000 in total.

The booklet is based on extensive discussions about the day-to-day needs of people in bed and breakfast hotels. The main sections are:

- Hints about storing food
- Meals that don't need cooking
- Nutritious snacks and meals that are easy to prepare
- Healthier takeaway meals
- Local cafes with good facilities for children
- A map, showing local food shops, takeaways and cafes

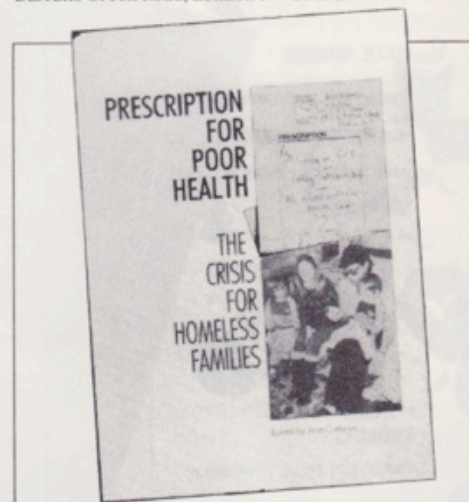
The booklet is felt to fulfil all the criteria originally set for it, and has been well-received by local health workers. 'But,' says Julie Nelson, 'we need to assess whether homeless families given the booklet feel the same way.'

'However useful and attractive the booklet may be,' she says, 'and however much advice we give on healthy eating and practical ways of providing healthy food in



bed and breakfast accommodation, we are not solving the basic problem for homeless families. Living in one of the richest countries of the world, we should not accept that people have no right to good housing or an adequate income to provide nutritious food for their families.'

Living in Bed and Breakfast - What Can We Eat, sample copy available by sending 30p plus an A5 s.a.e to Parkside Health Promotion Centre, Green Lodge, Barratts Green Road, London NW10 7AP.



AVAILABLE FROM THE FOOD COMMISSION:

Prescription for Poor Health: The Crisis for Homeless Families, an extensive review of health and homelessness, including a major section on homelessness and diet by Issy Cole-Hamilton, research associate of the London Food Commission.

£6.45 including p & p from Publications Department, The Food Commission, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.

CONSUMER CHECKOUT

The Food Magazine's special supplement and guide to brand name products

SWEET PERSUASION

We investigate children's television advertising

Selling food to children is big business and it starts young. But TV advertising does nothing to encourage healthy eating habits. Our exclusive survey found over half of all ads on children's TV were for food and soft drinks, far higher than any another category of advertising, and a staggering four-fifths of these food ads encouraged unhealthy diets. Only ten per cent could in any way be described as healthful.

Crisps, sweets, chocolates, highly sugared breakfast cereals, fatty fast food — they are all there, hour after hour, day after day selling themselves to our kids. Yet many children may be too young even to tell the difference between the programmes and the ads, let alone cast a critical eye over the hard-sell techniques.

For this, the first of our new Consumer Checkout supplement, *The Food Magazine* surveyed a week of children's TV and made some disturbing findings.

The majority of food ads promoted the sort of food dietitians say we should eat less of, yet, despite their poor nutritional rating, many of these products claimed to be 'full of goodness', 'wholesome' or 'bursting with goodness'.

Equally worrying are the tech-

niques used in advertisements. Exciting fantasy and animation predominate and children are used to sell to children, techniques that some other countries do not allow. Olympic heroes like Daley Thompson drink Lucozade and even Postman Pat has got his own brand of tinned spaghetti.

The effect of these ads on children is very powerful. Our own



survey illustrates just how powerful. Two classes of eight year olds rated Tony the Tiger (from the Frosties ad) and Ronald McDonald more favourably than their class teacher. Their father and grandparents were even less popular.

Research shows that by the age of four a child is brand-conscious even though he or she is unable to understand let alone evaluate advertising in the way that older children or adults can.

Is it fair to target children this way in the selling process? Other countries think not. The rules governing TV advertising to children in the UK are amongst the weakest in Europe. Belgium, Denmark and Sweden permit no children's ads on TV whilst other countries insist on health warnings for confectionery adverts.

Campaigners say that even our own weak IBA code, which says ads should not encourage sweet eating throughout the day and, particularly not at bedtime, is regularly flouted.

The IBA recently permitted an ad for Fruit Gums which used a child in pyjamas and Smarties ads and have been criticised for encouraging sweet eating at school. But single adverts are not the end of the problem. The Code does not attempt to monitor the cumulative effect of ads which taken collectively show sweet eating at all times of the day.

In this issue of Consumer Checkout we look at:

- TV advertising to children
- Frozen fish steaks — minced fish at £5 per lb
- Bernard Matthews' labels his mechanically separated meat
- Diet dog food for your rotund Rover
- And we ask 'what is an unwaxed orange?'

How much did advertisers spend in 1989?

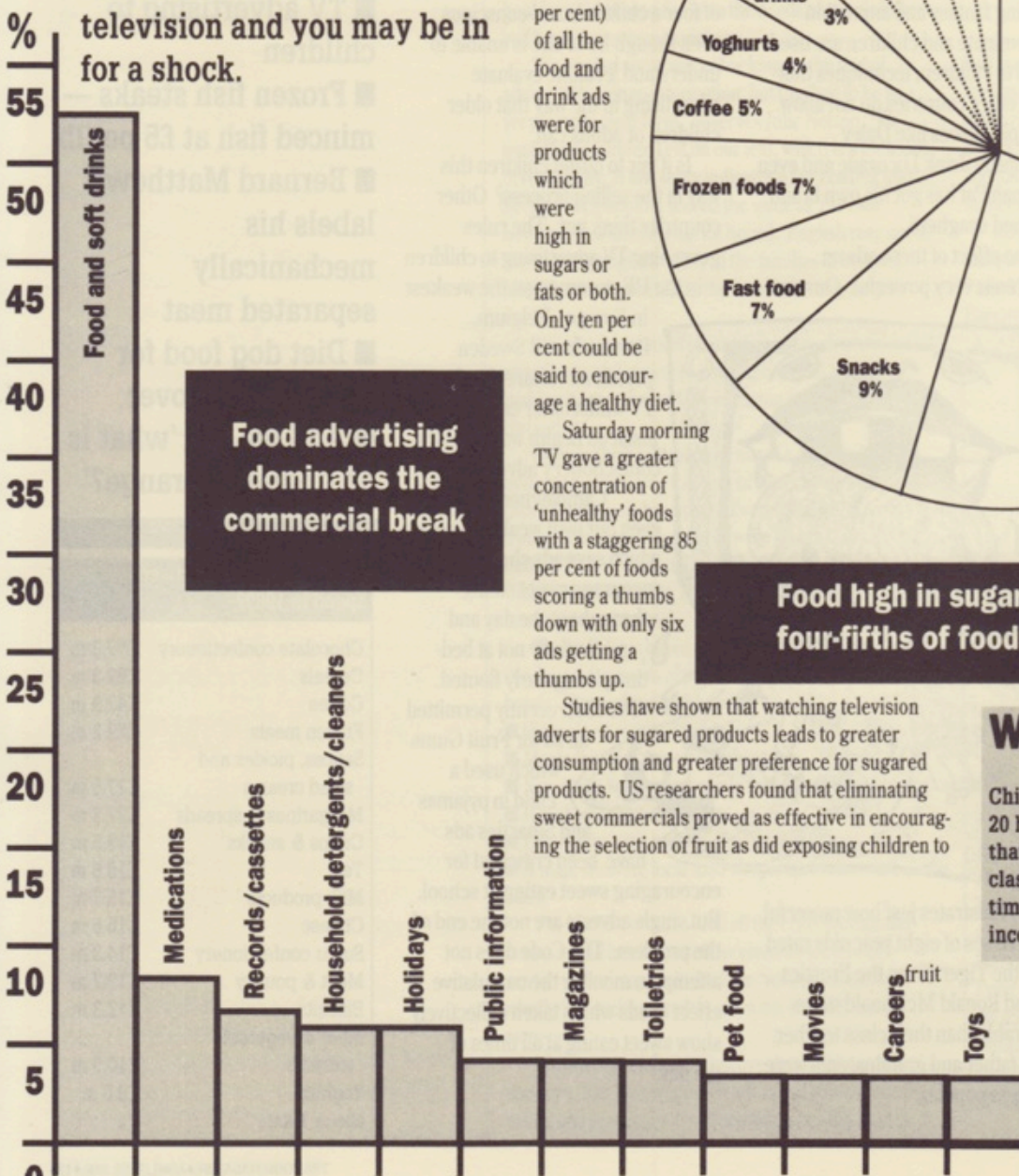
Chocolate confectionery	£77.3 m
Cereals	£62.3 m
Coffee	£43.9 m
Frozen meals	£29.2 m
Sauces, pickles and salad creams	£27.5 m
Margarines & spreads	£22.8 m
Crisps & snacks	£18.5 m
Tea	£18.5 m
Milk products	£15.7 m
Cheese	£15.6 m
Sugar confectionery	£14.3 m
Meat & poultry	£12.7 m
Biscuits	£12.3 m
Meat & vegetable extracts	£10.9 m
Yoghurt	£9.8 m

(Source: MEAL)

Are children fed a d

Yes says our exclusive survey of children's TV advertising

Do your children turn their noses up at your cooking? Do you feel mean when you say no to demands for chocolates or a bag of crisps? If so, sit down and watch an hour or two of commercial children's television and you may be in for a shock.



Food advertising dominates the commercial break

The Food Magazine monitored a week of ads on children's TV, from 4pm to 5.10pm on weekdays and from 8am to 1pm on Saturday morning, during one week at the beginning of February.

We found food and drink accounted for 53 per cent of all ads shown, eight times higher than any other products. In just over ten hours viewing there were 92 ads for food and drink, an average of nearly ten an hour.

We then looked at what kinds of foods our children were being urged to consume. The vast majority of ads were for highly sugared cereals, sweets, crisps, fast foods and soft drinks. In fact, nearly four-fifths (78 per cent) of all the food and drink ads were for products which were high in sugars or fats or both. Only ten per cent could be said to encourage a healthy diet.

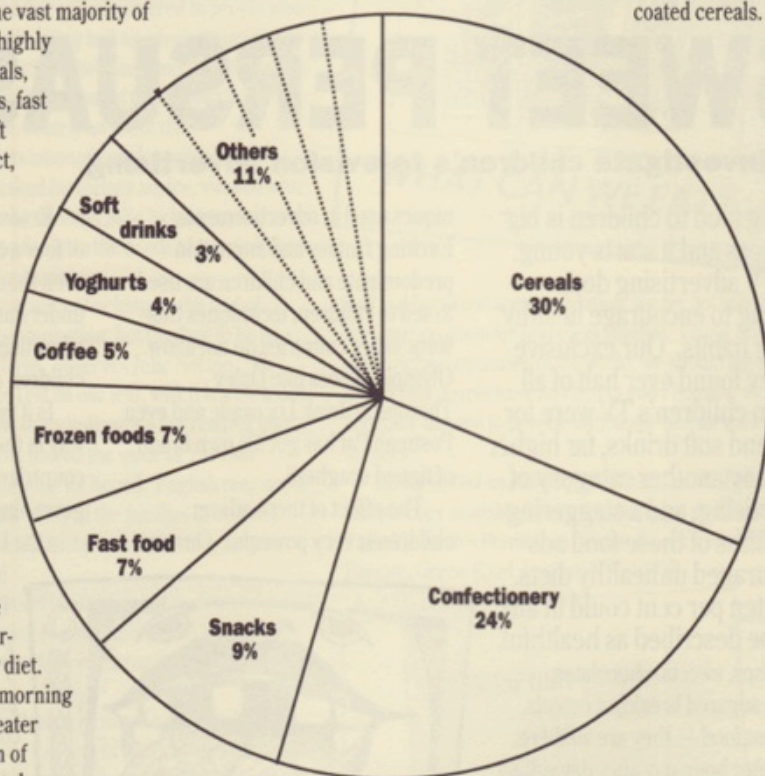
Saturday morning TV gave a greater concentration of 'unhealthy' foods with a staggering 85 per cent of foods scoring a thumbs down with only six ads getting a thumbs up.

Studies have shown that watching television adverts for sugared products leads to greater consumption and greater preference for sugared products. US researchers found that eliminating sweet commercials proved as effective in encouraging the selection of fruit as did exposing children to

commercials or nutritional public information ads (Gorn & Goldberg, 1987).

In just four hours of Saturday morning TV there were eight ads for Sugar Puffs. More than once ads for this cereal were shown twice within the same commercial break. Other countries would not permit this high level of advertising for single products.

Ad breaks included on average at least two highly sugared products such as confectionery or sugar-coated cereals.



Food high in sugars and/or fats make up four-fifths of food advertised to children

WATCHING THE BOX

Children as young as four spend an average 20 hours a week watching TV, over half of that commercial TV, with low-income social classes watching on average two and a half times as much commercial TV as higher-income social classes.

Diet of junk food ads?



Tony the Tiger rules OK!

Our exclusive survey of eight-year-olds shows just how powerful the characters used in adverts can be. These youngsters rated Tony the Tiger from the Frosties advert and Ronald McDonald higher than their teacher and even their own fathers.

We asked eighty-seven eight-year-olds to rate the popularity of people familiar to them - their father, their teacher and their grandparents - and three characters from highly advertised foods - Tony the Tiger, Ronald McDonald and Captain Birdseye. We asked, who would you like to take you out for a treat?

Top of the poll was Tony the Tiger, closely followed by Ronald McDonald. Teachers and fathers came next with grandparents and Captain Birdseye least popular.

TOP ADVERTISERS

The following were the most highly marketed products in our survey. All failed our healthy nutrition rating.

Product	No of ads
Sugar Puffs	8
KP Skips	8
Cocopops	7
Frosties	7
McDonalds	5
Cadbury's Creamy White Buttons	4
Munch Bunch Yoghurts	4

HOW THE PRODUCTS SCORED

	No of ads	Nutrition Rating (% calories from fat/sugar)
CEREALS		
Sugar Puffs	8	Thumbs down (65% sugar)
Cocopops	7	Thumbs down (37% sugar)
Frosties	7	Thumbs down (41% sugar)
Ready Brek	2	Thumbs up
Shredded Wheat	2	Thumbs up
Alpen	1	Thumbs down (23% sugar)
Weetabix	1	Thumbs up
CONFECTIONERY		
Cadbury's White Buttons	4	Thumbs down (over 90% fat and sugar)
KitKat	2	Thumbs down (over 70% fat and sugar)
Nestle's Milky Bar White Buttons	2	Thumbs down (over 90% fat and sugar)
Rowntrees Breakaway	2	Thumbs down (over 70% fat and sugar)
Cadbury's Wispa	2	Thumbs down (over 90% fat and sugar)
Smarties	2	Thumbs down (over 90% fat and sugar)
Cadbury's Chocolate (Fruit & Nut/Wholenut)	2	Thumbs down (over 70% fat and sugar)
Lion Bar	2	Thumbs down (over 70% fat and sugar)
Kinder Milk Slice	1	Thumbs down (over 70% fat and sugar)
Maltesers	1	Thumbs down (over 90% fat and sugar)
Milka Chocolate	1	Thumbs down (over 90% fat and sugar)
Dummy	1	Thumbs down (over 90% fat and sugar)
SNACKS		
KP Skips	8	Thumbs down (55% fat)
FAST FOODS		
McDonalds	5	Thumbs down (typical meals 45% fat)
Pizza Hut	1	Thumbs up
FROZEN FOODS		
Bernard Matthews Golden Drummers	2	Thumbs down (over 50% fat)
Bird's Eye Health Options	1	Thumbs up
Bird's Eye Fish Fingers	1	Thumbs up
Bird's Eye Alphabites	1	Thumbs up
Ross Microcook	1	—
COFFEE		
Maxwell House	3	—
Nescafe	2	—
YOGHURTS		
Munch Bunch	4	Thumbs down (55% sugar)
SOFT DRINKS		
Ribena	2	Thumbs down (99% sugar)
Lucozade	1	Thumbs down (99% sugar)
TINNED		
Heinz Spaghetti	2	Thumbs down (32% sugar)
Postman Pat Spaghetti	1	Thumbs down (29% sugar)
SAUCES		
Bisto Casserole Sauce	1	—
Oxo	1	—
Knorr Mince Mates	1	—
BUTTER		
Anchor	2	Thumbs down (80% fat, mostly saturated)
TEA		
Tetley Tea Bags	1	—
MEAT		
British Pork	1	Thumbs up (assuming lean)
KEY:		
Thumbs down = if eaten frequently would encourage a poor diet (more than 20 per cent calories from sugar or more than 40 per cent calories from fat)		
Thumbs up = likely to encourage a healthy diet		
— = can neither be rated thumbs up or thumbs down		
Healthy eating guidelines recommend an average of no more than 20-30 per cent calories from fat, no more than 10 per cent calories from sugar in the overall diet.		

SWEET

Largely promoting sweet or fatty foods, many television food advertisements aimed at children use messages of health and fitness. Here we take a closer look at some of the advertisers' promotional methods.

When Consumer Checkout looked at children's television it found many products high in sugar being promoted. The IBA Code of Practice states:

■ *No product may be advertised ... which large numbers of children are likely to see or hear, which might result in harm to them physically*

Sugar is a proven cause of dental decay, a painful and disfiguring disease to which children are particularly vulnerable.

Confectionery, soft drinks and sweet breakfast cereals can be argued to be physically harmful. The IBA code recognises these dental health concerns but only by requiring that:

■ *Advertisements shall not encourage persistent sweet eating throughout the day, nor the eating of sweet sticky food at bedtime*

■ *Advertisements for confectionery or snack food shall not suggest that such products may be substituted for a proper meal*

Campaigners say the IBA Code fails to protect children, and criticise advertisers for breaking the spirit if not the letter of the Code. The code also requires that:

■ *Particular care should be taken over advertising likely to be seen or heard by large numbers of children*

■ *No method of advertising may be employed which takes advantage of the natural credulity and sense of loyalty of children*

■ *Advertisements ... for products of interest to children must not mislead, taking into account the child's immaturity of judgement and experience*

■ *Cartoon characters and puppets featured in ITV or BBC children's programmes must not expressly recommend products ... or be shown using the product*

POSTMAN PAT SPAGHETTI

"Signed, sealed and delivered by HP"

Uses range of characters from well-known BBC cartoon

Fact: Sugar content — over 25% calories from sugar

SUGAR PUFFS

"You'll go monster mad for the honey"

Shows children in school lessons saying "I want my honey"

Fact: Sugar content — 65% calories from sugar

NESTLE'S MILKY WHITE BUTTONS

"With goodness from Nestlé Milky Bar"

Fact: Over 90% calories from fat and sugar

FROSTIES

"They're gr-r-reat...Tony's secret formula...brings out the tiger in you"

Implies Tony the Tiger can skateboard and win races only after his bowl of cereal

Fact: Sugar content — 41% calories from sugar



THAT HIDE

MESSAGES



RIBENA

"Full of blackcurrant goodness"

Implies the cartoon characters win races after drinking Ribena

Facts: Fruit content — less than 7%
Sugar content — 99%
calories from sugar

KINDER MILK SLICE

"School time, any time, children love the fresh taste"

"Mother knows that growing children need all the goodness they can get. New Kinder Milk Slice is full of goodness — milk, cereals and honey"
"The light snack that's full of goodness"

Facts: Cereals content — 3-4 grams
plain flour and less than a
gram bran
Sugar content — 25%
calories from sugar

MUNCH BUNCH YOGHURT

"Bursting with goodness ... the goodness bunch"

Shows cartoon fruit which may mislead you into thinking there is real fruit

Facts: Fruit content — nil
Sugar content — 55%
calories from sugar

MP backs campaign to protect children

MP Joan Lestor is to head a deputation from the Dietary Sugars Liaison Group to the IBA calling for action to protect children from advertisers who flout the Code of Practice. Don Sarll, a specialist in Community Dental Health, says many ads encourage the frequent eating of sweet foods and drinks between meals. The Dietary Sugars Liaison Group includes the support of the British Dental Association, the British Paedodontic Society, the Health Education Authority and Action and Information on Sugars.

THE TRUTH

BREAKING THE CODE

British dentists and health education bodies are taking issue with the advertiser's watchdog, the Independent Broadcasting Association (IBA), over children's TV advertising.

Not only are they concerned about the high level of advertising for sugared products aimed at children, but they say the IBA Code of Practice fails to protect children against aggressive marketing techniques, and some manufacturers are flouting the existing weak code without reprimand from the IBA.

The IBA Code of Advertising Standards and Practice states that: 'No product or service may be advertised, and no method of advertising may be used ... which large numbers of children are likely to see or hear, which might result in harm to them physically, mentally or morally, and no method of advertising may be employed which takes advantage of the natural credulity and sense of loyalty of children.'

Young children are known to be especially vulnerable to the use of fantasy, and are often unable to distinguish fact from fiction, yet fantasy is the single most frequently used advertising technique in ads for sugared products aimed at children. Additionally,

children are particularly vulnerable to special visual effects, such as rapid changes of shot and flashing of images on screen.

Health campaigners and many parents are concerned that this kind of advertising is unfair to young children, whose immaturity of judgement and experience should be recognised. Some adverts use techniques which, far from protecting children's vulnerabilities, actually target and exploit them.

A favourite technique of advertisers in these health-conscious times is to associate products with images of sport, energy or health. Remember Steve Cram running up mountains in adverts for the sugary cereal Start, or Daley Thompson drinking Lucozade? Winning races is a popular ploy in Frosties adverts and even the cartoon Ribena berries hop faster and win their race after drinking the 'goodness' of Ribena.

Healthy images are implied in adverts for Mars Bars and Quality Street chocolates where they are shown being eaten by doctors and nurses in a hospital setting.

The claims made are often misleading. For example, does Milky Bar chocolate really have 'goodness in every bite'? Is Rowntree's Breakaway chocolate confectionery really 'wholesome' or can Kinder Milk Slice claim 'all the goodness of cereals' when it contains only 10 per cent plain flour?

The IBA's Code of Advertising Standards and Practice fails to protect children from dubious adverts and its present form is weak and ineffective, say Action and Information on Sugar, a body of dental

and health professionals. It has found that the IBA Code is regularly flouted by advertisers. But the campaigners can claim a small victory after Rowntrees withdrew a Fruit Gum advertisement featuring Kevin the Fruit Bat, which appeared to encourage sweet eating at bedtime contrary to the IBA code. Don Sarll a dental specialist and member of the Dietary Sugars Liaison Group says the IBA had obviously failed in its duty by allowing the ad to be shown in the first place.

A ban on children's advertising until after 9pm was recommended in 1977 by the Annan Committee on Broadcasting. But since then a climate of greater deregulation has prevailed with satellite TV and the promise of programme sponsorship opening up new opportunities for advertisers.

The Broadcasting Bill currently before parliament is likely to erode standards even further. Next year the IBA will be replaced by the Independent Television Commission (ITC). This will not vet ads prior to screening, but only review ads after complaints are made.

Andrea Castell, Senior Health Promotion Officer.

A food advertising charter

Action and Information on Sugar (AIS) believes that the present IBA Code should be completely revised and procedures for monitoring and taking action strengthened. The AIS Food Advertising Charter aims to protect the interests of children as consumers from today's hard sell onslaught.

- A new and effective Code of Advertising Standards and Practice.
- A high priority for health considerations.
- Better protection for children.
- Effective sanctions for Code offenders with immediate withdrawal of adverts, realistic fines and screened apologies and corrections.
- Greater public consultation and representation within advertising regulating agencies including consumer organisations, children's agencies, parents and health professionals.
- More public disclosure of the activities of regulatory agencies with publication of proceedings.

For more details contact AIS, P O Box 459, London SE5 7QA.

Other countries get tough

The UK guidelines governing advertising to children are amongst the weakest in Europe. Other countries such as Belgium, Denmark and Sweden do not permit any TV ads aimed at children. Others such as New Zealand limit the times of day ads are permitted or, as in Finland and France, restrict the use of children in ads to prevent children selling products to their peers. France limits the number of times a brand can be advertised a day and prohibits the use of cartoons and celebrities in children's ads.

Confectionery ads in Holland can neither

Consumer Checkout takes a close look at what you're taking off the shelf

Fish takes a battering

Frozen fish 'steaks' and 'portions' coated in breadcrumbs or batter — or in some cases both breadcrumbs and batter — can be a deceptively expensive way of buying fish. A survey by Worcester College found some products have as little as 40 per cent fish by weight, with corresponding prices equivalent to £5.00 per pound of fish.

In the same survey the researchers found the quality was low, consisting of fish flakes and fish mince 'reformed' to give the appearance of a whole fillet. Mincing fish is a trade euphemism for left-over trimmings, pieces left on the bone after filleting and whole fish too small to fillet that are massaged through a sieve to remove the bones. The process is the fishy equivalent of MRM (see 'Pound of flesh' overleaf). The resulting mix can vary in quality, with blood, skin and other non-muscle membrane material included in the cheaper types of mince used.

The word 'steak' may lead customers to assume that the fish inside the coating

is a single piece of muscle meat cut straight from the body of a fish. In reality it is likely to be reformed flakes and flaky pieces. Fish 'portions' are likely to include minced fish in varying amounts. Nutritionally the fish may be acceptable — even though much that now finds its way into fish mince was deemed suitable only for pet food ten or twenty years ago. But in terms of what you buy for your money the products are often very poor value. Worst of the bunch was Sainsbury Haddock Portions, while the best value for money was Tesco Fish Steaks (see table).

The results strengthen consumer calls for better labelling of frozen fish products. Last year the London Food Commission's survey of fish fingers found the fish content to range from 40 per cent to 49 per cent, resulting in a cost per pound weight of fish of over £6.30 (see *The Food Magazine* Issue 7).

There are no regulations governing the amount of fish that may be included

in such products, despite recommendations from the government's own Food Advisory Committee that there should either be strict standards or, at the least, an obligation on manufacturers to declare the amount of fish in the product. That was twenty years ago. In 1987 the government announced 'fish content and fish type — ie minced or fillet' would

have to be declared on labels. In 1989 revised draft proposals were issued then delayed because the EC wanted to look at them. They did this by September and John Gummer then wrote to *The Food Magazine*: 'It is my intention that the new regulations ... should be made later this year'. We are still waiting.

Unwaxed fruit appeal

Safeway has announced what its media department call a 'supermarket first' with the launch of unwaxed oranges onto the market. Apart from the higher price, unwaxed oranges are good news.

But what is a waxed orange? 'Waxing' is a euphemism for spraying or dipping fruit — usually citrus fruit — into a cocktail of antifungal preparations which act to preserve the fruit from getting mouldy. Paper wrappings may also contain these fungicides.

Treated skin may well find itself into your food. Marmalade is the obvious example, but then there is candied peel, used in a variety of puddings, cakes, buns and mince pies, not forgetting the obligatory slice of lemon in your gin and tonic.

Diphenyl has been found to induce tumours in laboratory animals. It also causes vomiting and eye irritation among workers in the food industry. Fruit shipped to West Germany and Italy must carry a warning label: 'with diphenyl — peel unsuitable for consumption.' There is no such labelling requirement for fruit imported into Britain.

Orthophenylphenol is implicated as a possible carcinogen and mutagen, and there is evidence that workers handling the chemical suffer eye or nose irritation and nausea.

Sodium orthophenylphenate, also used on cherries, can be fatal if swallowed in doses above 1.5g. Believed to cause destruction of chromosomes and may trigger genetic mutations.

Thiabendazole also used on other

fruits during their growth and sometimes used in medicines, its effect may be cumulative. It is banned as a food ingredient in the USA.

The names of these antifungal agents are stamped of fruit boxes and cartons throughout Europe, in accordance with EC law. It seems supermarkets, are reluctant to pass this information on to customers. Safeway's, when asked why information on fungicides is not displayed replied 'Most people would be confused by all the long names, even if we knew what they were.'

Ted Parratt

FROZEN FISH 'STEAKS' AND 'PORTIONS' — AN EXPENSIVE WAY TO BUY REFORMED FISH SCRAPS.

Product	Price per lb £	Fish inside ¹	Price per lb fish ² £
Birds Eye Cod Steak (breadcrumb)	2.15	52%	4.10
Birds Eye Cod Steak (batter)	2.25	48%	4.65
Birds Eye Cod Steak (wholemeal b'crumb)	2.25	56%	4.05
Sainsbury Cod Steak (batter)	2.05	66%	3.10
Sainsbury Haddock Steak (batter)	2.05	61%	3.40
Sainsbury Cod Steak (breadcrumb)	2.00	56%	3.55
Sainsbury Haddock Steak (breadcrumb)	2.00	56%	3.55
Tesco Haddock Steak (batter)	1.95	63%	3.10
Tesco Cod Steak ('light')	2.00	60%	3.30
Tesco Fish Steak (6) (batter)	1.45	54%	2.65
Sainsbury Haddock Portion (batter)	2.00	40%	5.00
Sainsbury Cod Portion (batter)	2.00	51%	3.95
Tesco Cod Portion (4) (batter)	1.65	47%	3.45
Tesco Cod Portion (4) (breadcrumb)	1.65	42%	3.95
Ross Fish Portion (batter)	1.65	41%	4.05

1 The method for analysing fish content relied on manual stripping and weighing of partially thawed raw product. The method is crude and, combined with variations in product batches, means that figures are indicative only.

2 Price per pound weight of fish alone, discounting the coating.

Researchers: Lynn Buttery and Debbie Muller



PHOTO BY NIDA PRINCE/FORMAT

Pound of flesh

A new phrase — mechanically recovered meat — has crept into the small print on your pack of sausages and burgers, or should do if Shropshire trading standards officers finally have their way.

Bernard 'It's Bootiful' Matthews was taken to court by Shropshire TSOs in a test case on the labelling of beef, pork and turkey products which contain mechanically recovered meat (MRM). This ingredient, classified as meat, is made by taking the carcasses of animals already stripped of their meat by normal butchering and churning them under pressure in a giant sieve to remove the remaining muscle meat, plus odd bits of connective tissue, gristle and sinew that still cling to the bone and occasional fragments of bone itself. Indeed a quick means of checking for MRM in a meat product is to see if calcium from bone is present.

The resulting fine grey slurry or paste is coloured pink and mixed in with the rest of the meat. Although nutritionally no worse than normal sausage it has been shown to be an excellent breeding material for bacteria, so careful hygiene is needed.

With emulsifiers and binding agents, MRM can be made sufficiently firm and solid to resemble normal meat products. As one commentator said, MRM is to meat what chipboard is to wood. But unlike chipboard, consumers cannot easily recognise when MRM has been used, and for this reason Shropshire sought a legal ruling on whether it should be declared on the label.

Telford magistrates decided that MRM should indeed be declared. That was July 1988 and Bernard Matthews promptly announced he would appeal. In February 1989 he withdrew his appeal after doing a deal with Shropshire: if Shropshire dropped further charges against him then he would start putting the MRM declaration on his packs.

It was widely expected that all MRM users would have to follow suit and start labelling their products too, but a Food Commission mini-survey of meat products in local supermarkets found

only one instance where the presence of MRM was admitted — a Bernard Matthews turkey burger (see picture) which declared 'Ingredients: turkey (mechanically separated), pork, water...'

Nearly two years after the magistrates' decision MRM is still largely not declared on labels.

Protracted negotiations between the British Meat Manufacturer's Association and trading standards officers over the precise wording needed on packets has allowed Matthews' competitors to avoid any declaration. He must wish he could make MRM of them.



Diet Dog Food

From the land where a restaurant doggy bag can feed a family for a week comes a whole new concept in animal care: 'lite' food for your rotund Rover. And for your podgy puss too comes Feline Maintenance, nicely offered as the food for 'cats who have lower calorie requirements'.

How do you know when your dog is fat? When you can't feel the ribs, says Hills, a subsidiary of Colgate Palmolive. The company is planning to bring to Europe its range of pet foods, marketed in the USA under the brand name Science Diet. 'It is a classic niche business' says Peter Chase, Colgate's newly-appointed pet food marketing director. The specialist pet food range takes about three per cent of US pet food sales, and a similar target in Britain would bring in up to £30m of the nearly £1bn cat and dog food market.

But pet owners claim their pets are

choosy and the chances of a new brand making headway are slim. The marketplace is highly competitive, with pet food advertising exceeding £45m in 1988 — adding 2p to a typical 35p tin of food.

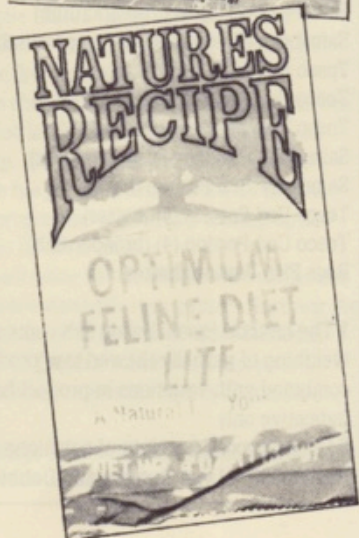
But Colgate believes there is still potential for growth. Their diet pet foods will be just one item in the Hills range — watch out for *Canine Growth* aimed at puppies, *Canine Performance* for dogs 'with increased calorie requirements' and the wonderfully American *Canine Senior* for the older dog.

If nothing else, such products take up a lot of shelf-space putting pressure on competing pet foods. It can't be long before rivals hit back with products designed specifically for each breed of dog. What on earth would they put in the pack for Rottweilers?

Product research: Lori Silberstein

THICKER THAN WATER

Any product which uses the blood enzyme 'glued-meat' binding system must be clearly labelled. Referring to news of a process using blood products to combine meat scraps into a steak-like product, food minister, David Maclean told Parliament in February: 'The 1984 Food Labelling Regulations state that food labels must carry details of any process which the product has undergone where the omission of such detail would mislead the consumer, and a name for the food which would distinguish it from other foodstuff with which it might be confused.'



FOOD FROM THE PAST



ALIMENTARY INTELLIGENCE.

MR. PUNCH. "DO YOU CONTROL FOOD HERE?"

COMMISSIONAIRE. "WELL, SIR, 'CONTROL' IS PERHAPS RATHER A STRONG WORD. BUT WE GIVE HINTS TO HOUSEHOLDERS, AND WE ISSUE 'GRAVE WARNINGS.'"

Popular discontent during the 1914-18 war led to cynicism about a ministry being seen to do something without doing anything. Critics might suggest little has changed in 75 years.

Reproduced with the kind permission of Punch magazine.

Selling hopes of good health

Eat oat bran and garlic capsules for a long and happy life? Food advertisers have broken new ground telling us their products can prevent disease. Dr Mike Rayner of the Coronary Prevention Group investigates the legality of making, often misleading, health claims.

Food manufacturers have always been keen to inform us of the health promoting properties of their wares. Beecham's Lucozade 'replaces lost energy', Nestlé's Milky Bars are 'nutritious and wholesome ... containing the goodness of full cream milk, cocoa butter and sugar' and Mars Bars 'help you work rest and play'. But over the last year some manufacturers have been going far further and mentioning specific diseases such as heart disease and osteoporosis, or physiological factors closely associated with those diseases such as blood cholesterol.

You might think you have seen such advertisements before now. Surely Flora is advertised on the basis that its high polyunsaturate content is good for the heart? But Van den Berghs have never said that. They have been particularly clever at persuading us that this margarine is more healthy than butter using a range of indirect marketing techniques but without once

mentioning heart disease.

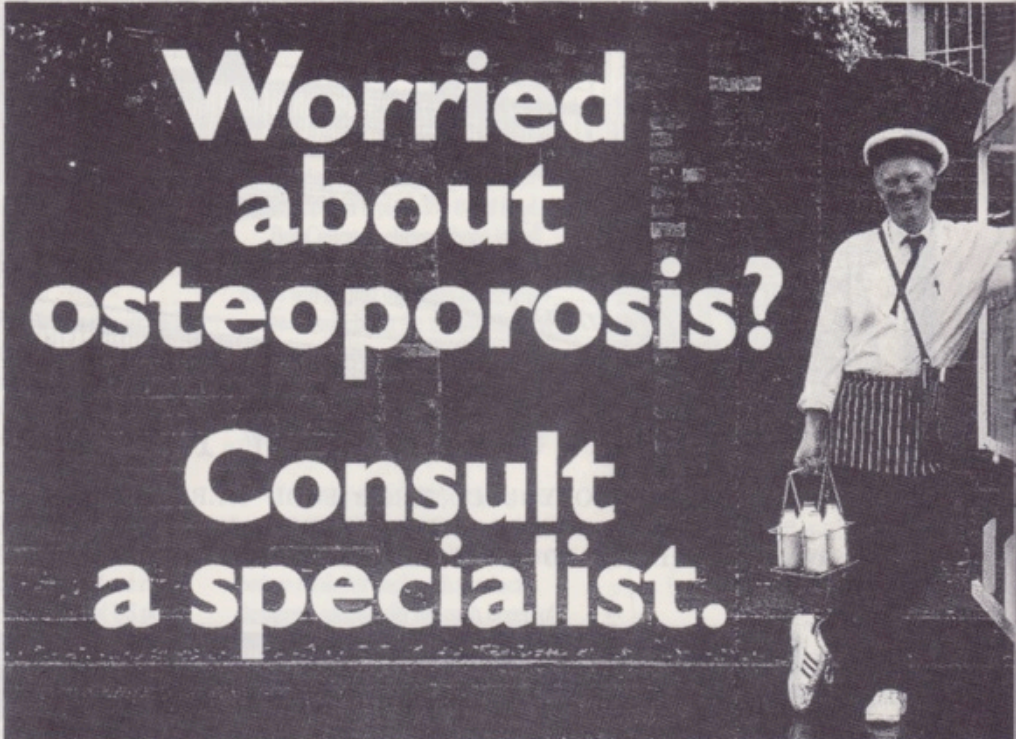
Only a handful of companies have, so far, used direct disease-prevention claims but these cases have set important precedents and herald an explosion of this type of advertising. This is what has happened in the USA and we must avoid the same thing happening here.

But why shouldn't manufacturers be allowed to tell people that eating their foods can prevent diseases? We now know that if most people in the UK ate less fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt, and more vitamins, minerals, fibre and other complex carbohydrates then rates of coronary heart disease, cancer and other diseases would fall. But the point is that no food by itself can prevent a disease — it is the overall diet which is important.

Food manufacturers might argue that anything they can do to help us eat a healthier diet must help. But let's look at their record over the last year.

Firstly, in May 1989 the National Dairy Council advised us on billboards, showing a milkman leaning on his milk float, to 'consult a specialist' if we were 'worried about osteoporosis' (a progressive weakening of the bones which affects one in four women). This advert was recently ruled to be misleading by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) whose expert advisor told them that there was 'no conclusive evidence that calcium supplementation resulted in a regeneration of lost bone' and the advertisers were 'requested to ensure greater clarity in future advertisements'.

Secondly, over the summer four or five food manufacturers who make oat-based products began to claim that oat-bran with its high soluble fibre content can reduce blood cholesterol levels and thereby help to reduce a person's risk of heart disease. The first



Worried about osteoporosis? Consult a specialist.

company to do this was Quaker with full-page adverts in the national press telling us of the heart disease preventing properties of porridge, and culminating in a newspaper, magazine and television advertising campaign in August for a new breakfast cereal from Kellogg's called Common Sense Oat Bran Flakes. The television advert, featuring a middle aged couple and a cricket bat, even implied that you would live longer if you ate this product. Other cereal companies and bakers of bread made with oats have followed suit with similar advertising campaigns.

Until recently there did seem to be growing evidence that soluble fibre — found in large amounts in oat bran but also present in beans, fruit, etc — could lower blood cholesterol levels, but the studies were frequently small and experimentally flawed. In January of this year an apparently conclusive study on the dietary properties of soluble fibre, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, showed that the 'cholesterol-lowering effect (of soluble fibre) in normal people, however, is probably indirect, acting through replacement of dietary saturated fat and cholesterol'. Share prices for Quaker Oats immediately fell.

Thirdly, starting last year there has been a series of adverts extolling the virtues of garlic and in particular garlic capsules with the headline 'Garlic could help to maintain a healthy heart and circulation'. But as Professor Philip James, Chair of the National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education (NACNE), says: 'There is no direct link between garlic consumption and the prevention of coronary heart disease that I know of.'

So judging from the relevant advertising campaigns of the last 18 months it seems that we cannot rely on food manufacturers to tell us the truth, the whole truth

and nothing but the truth. Even companies with a reputation for high quality foods can be caught out by new evidence throwing doubt on premature conclusions. There is a clear need for controls.

Actually those controls already exist in the form of the Food Labelling Regulations, 1984. Part two of schedule six, paragraph seven of these regulations states that any food claiming to be 'capable of preventing, treating or curing human disease' — defined as including an 'adverse condition' — should have a product licence under the Medicines Act, 1968. In fact no food sold for consumption by the general public would be eligible for a such a licence and so the Food Labelling Regulations effectively prohibit such 'medicinal claims'. Regulation 36 means that both 'express and implied' claims are covered. So a food manufacturer does not need to say in so many words 'eat this breakfast cereal and you won't die of heart disease' — they may break the law by just featuring a heart-shape on the packet.

There are two other sets of rules which govern what can be said in advertising. The ASA's Code of Advertising Practice covers billboards, newspapers and magazines; and that of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) covers television advertising. Both these codes are voluntary — advertisers who break them aren't fined, merely censured and the ASA doesn't even have the power to have the advertising withdrawn. Nevertheless the codes probably go some way to ensuring that advertising is 'legal, decent, honest and truthful'. The question is do they go far enough?

Take the adverts for Common Sense Oat Bran Flakes. In its initial form the television advertisement, first shown on 14 August 1989, suggested that just eating this cereal was enough to prevent heart disease. The Coronary Prevention Group (CPG) complained about this to the IBA and told the press that the advert was misleading. A few weeks later Kellogg's inserted a line in the voice-over to the effect that it would only do you good if eaten as part of a low-fat diet — a significant improvement. But the IBA had seen the advert in advance of screening and CPG has information that one of the members of its Medical Advisory Panel had advised the IBA that they did not think that the effects of soluble fibre on blood cholesterol could yet be mentioned. Why then was the advert allowed onto our screens? The IBA's current stance would seem to be that they see nothing wrong with either version of it.

The ASA is currently looking at all adverts for oat-based products under an internal monitoring process involving their own experts. But this means that five months after the CPG complained about Kellogg's advertisements they have yet to respond to the specific arguments in the complaint or take any action against the advertisers whatsoever.

To be fair, the IBA and ASA are not expert medical bodies and health issues are frequently controversial with much conflicting evidence to support the various views. This is why the law is supposed to prohibit disease-prevention claims. But the only people who can



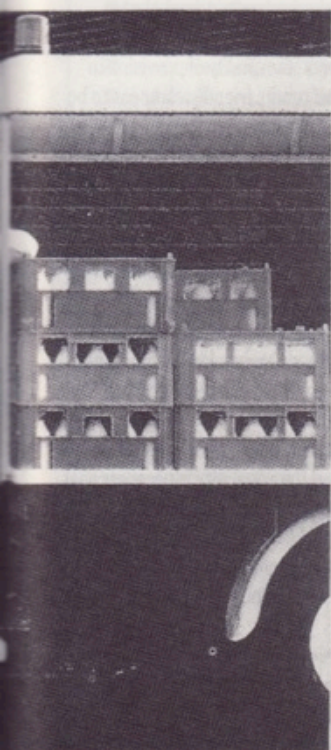
The ASA has yet to respond to complaints about Kellogg's advertisements.

enforce the law are trading standards officers — the IBA even says that 'it is not within our competence to comment on the interpretation of the law in such cases'. Moreover, by convention it is the trading standards — or sometimes environmental health — officers in the local authority area in which the company is based who deal with the possible breach. This means that a case is unlikely to go to court because court cases are expensive and trading standards officers say they need to have a relatively friendly relationship with companies in their area.

None of the advertisers mentioned above have therefore been prosecuted and even if they were the fine would not exceed £1,000. After much correspondence with Ealing trading standards' officers Quaker changed its advertising to omit specific references to heart disease — Quaker was still permitted to mention blood cholesterol levels — but the other advertising campaigns have been left unscathed. Trafford environmental health department — responsible for Kellogg's — are still taking counsel's advice six months after the start of the campaign and long after its main purpose had already been achieved.

The Coronary Prevention Group thinks that it is about time that something was done about all this. Readers of this magazine can help by writing to the ASA, IBA and particularly their local trading standards department if they spot an illegal or misleading advertisement. CPG considers that everyone needs to be sure of the exact legal position on health claims. This will be achieved only if a trading standards officer somewhere takes a food company to court. If the courts really aren't powerful enough to deal with the sort of advertising we've been seeing recently then the law needs to be strengthened.

Both MAFF and the European Commission are currently looking at the legislation concerning health claims. The CPG wants them to rule that all disease-prevention claims should be prohibited. The US Food and Drug Administration has recently announced its intention to introduce legislation to prohibit disease-prevention claims except in defined circumstances. This is a step in the right direction. We hope that the UK government might take an even stronger lead on this important public health issue.



Ask your milkman for more information about calcium.



Working for better food

PHOTO: JUDY HARRISON



Members of trade unions have long struggled to improve food and the way it is produced. Now a forthcoming trade union pack, written by Charlie Clutterbuck with support from The London Food Commission, considers the issues and ties them firmly into the union movement.

From food provision at work to the supply of school meals, from famine in the third world to the adulteration of food in this country, trade unions play an active role. It may surprise some people that trades unions were campaigning about food issues long before they hit the headlines.

The Cooperative movement in the late 19th century built its fame and power on the basis of offering and campaigning for cheap and unadulterated food. Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson moved the first School Meals Bill in 1906. It was the third Act of Parliament introduced by the new Labour members, sponsored by the trade unions. Such was its importance to working people.

There have been countless times when trade unions have refused to accept the state of food provided at work. And probably the greatest trade union issue of all is 'they've taken our tea-break away'.

Trade unions often provide the links for workers in the food industry in this country with the workers elsewhere in the food chain in order to compare pay, tactics and conditions.

And trade union members at a branch in Newcastle

campaigning to do away with Nescafé coffee at work because of the involvement of Nestlé baby milk in the third world.

Last, but by no means least, trade unions organise among the million-plus workers in the food sector, who are often particularly badly paid and employed only on a casual basis.

When dealing with these issues trade unions may not have seen the connections nor seen themselves as dealing with 'the food issue'. The forthcoming series of 15 "Food Fact Packs" will bring all the various aspects of food from a trade union view together.

Producers are consumers too

Trade union members in the food industry are both producers and consumers. One in seven of all workers are in some part of the food chain, stretching from farm and fishery, through processing and packaging, to distribution, retailing and catering.

Workers in the food industry face a possible double jeopardy. Working with food additives has been known to sensitise some workers to the chemicals. In so doing they may become sensitised to the same chemicals when they eat the food. There may also be a jeopardy to cheap food, however well meaning that sounds. 'My members do not earn enough to buy the food they produce' says one South African trade unionist, interviewed for the Fact Packs.

Trade unions in the food sector have to organise continually among a mobile workforce that is poorly paid. In 1985 the legal minimum rate for a typical adult worker in the hotel sector of the industry covered by Wages Councils was around £70 per week. In spite of this low level and the legal obligations on employers to observe it, the Wages Inspectorate found that in nearly four out of every ten (37 per cent) licensed hotels and restaurants visited in 1985 the employer was failing to comply with the Wages Council rate. Here is a trade union issue not only for those working in those trades

but for those feeding off them. The Fact Packs provide detailed information about pay and conditions in the food sector and also the actions of the food companies that control them.

Food at work

There is no legal requirement on employers to provide food at the workplace. The law says there must be somewhere to eat and says that there must be adequate welfare, but it does not specify that food must be provided. During the war there was a dramatically increased provision of food at work to allow women to work. In the early 1960s there were further increases in provision to attract workers to certain workplaces.

But during the last ten years there has been a noticeable deterioration in the quality of provision in many workplaces. Gone are the friendly canteens to be replaced by machines. Gone are the standard 'meat and two veg' meals that ensured many people had a square meal once a day and gone are the nighttime canteens. Instead the 'take-away' has taken over.

These changes in food provision at work were often resisted by workplace trade unions, but the unions felt powerless in the face of contractor services and apparent efficiency savings of new technology, like cook-chill schemes. Nobody stopped to consider the extra cost of food provision or the decrease in food standards that followed.

The Food Fact Packs provide information about these changes and about the particular aspects of cook-chill. It provides a negotiators guide to the introduction of such systems. The packs also include a survey that can be used by union representatives or members to check on what people think about the food provision at work.

It is from these surveys that many of the other issues about food can be raised. For instance:

■ How do people at work know if they are eating TUC-boycotted food from South Africa?



Dinner breaks and canteen conditions can be the starting point for trade union interest in food issues.

- Who are the contractors for the caterers and what unionisation do they have?
- Who makes sure that government guidelines on healthy eating are being followed?
- What are the laws on food standards?
- What union checks are there on food hygiene handling?

The Fact Packs pick up on each of these issues

giving help to anybody trying to set up discussions or education sessions. There are packs on adulteration, on laws and standards and on the social distribution of food, health and wealth. Trade unions have been able to deal with many of these issues better than individual

consumers because they have the lobbying power that individuals do not have. This has been the lesson of the trade union movement since it first started, so when dealing with food it is no different.

As these issues are tackled it is obvious that there are implications and ramifications that go further afield. Hence there are Fact Packs on the Common Market and TUC policy and the effects of 1992 as well as world food trade and the role of the UK.

Particular reference is given to South Africa. Interconnections between all these are probably best demonstrated by the fact that in the year 1985/86 the amount of oranges that were imported from South Africa was almost exactly the same as that pulped because of excess production in the EEC. So much for the argument that boycotting that fruit would put the prices up!

The Food Fact Packs will be distributed to trade union tutors, trade unions, and other TUC affiliates. They will be used as part of the teaching materials for union representatives, either on a special course or as part of other trade union courses. It is hoped that they are just the beginning and that tutors will generate various activities from these resource materials and that the ideas will feed back into a continual updating process, now that food is seen as a trade union issue.

Details: Charlie Clutterbuck.
Tel: 0254 55144 ext 2296

Now available: the new booklet which accompanied the Channel Four series.

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- food decision-making; Denmark's or Britain's?
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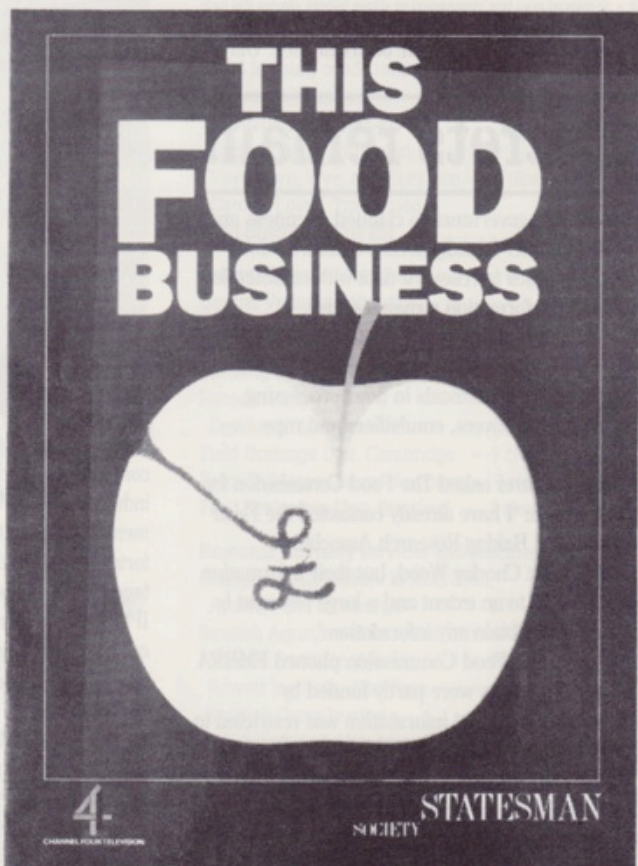
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Food research cuts begin to bite

As government cut-backs in food research bite there is little evidence that industry is picking up the bill. Tim Lobstein investigates.

Cuts involving 1,500 staff in dozens of research institutes throughout Britain are continuing despite union protests. Projects cut include those the government has previously said it is committed to funding, such as reducing the use of herbicides and pesticides and research into animal diseases passed to humans such as salmonella.

Many of the projects were identified in a secret report by MAFF official Christopher Barnes as 'near market' research which, he recommended, should be funded by industry rather than tax payers.

There is no clear definition of 'near market' and the cuts are scheduled to take place *before* alternative industry-funded projects have been launched. Only last

October some projects were still being tendered for by non-governmental agencies and no results of the tendering have been announced. But MAFF is determined to cut its research budget.

Agriculture and Food Research Council (AFRC) secretary, Professor Stewart, condemned the cuts saying they will have a drastic effect on the biological science base of the UK. The latest AFRC annual report shows a massive drop in staff levels over the last ten years from over 6,000 in 1979 to 3,639 in 1989.

One of the key trade unions, the Institute of Professionals, Managers and Specialists (IPMS), has

- Alternatives to battery hen systems.
- Pollution of the water supply from fertiliser leaching.
- Alternatives to using pesticides.
- Effect on meat of pre-slaughter animal handling.
- Research into the alternatives of using drugs in the diet of chickens.
- Research into reducing the need for fungicides during storage.

The London Food Commission is concerned that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has failed to give a clear and precise definition of 'near market' research.

Secrets remain

Despite the government's claimed openness and new consumer-friendly access to information, when it comes to research data with commercial value the information remains secret.

A college lecturer studying the quality of wheat-based products wanted information on the use of various chemicals in flour processing, including improvers, emulsifiers and rope inhibitors.

The lecturer asked The Food Commission for information: 'I have already contacted the Flour Milling and Baking Research Association (FMBRA) at Chorley Wood, but their information is classified to an extent and a large payment is required to obtain any information.'

When The Food Commission phoned FMBRA they confirm they were partly funded by government but that information was restricted to members and only possibly available for payment.

We can only assume that such secrecy will increase in an era when previously government-funded research is declared to be 'near market' industry-funded research.



called for a halt to the cuts and consultation to ensure continued research funding from such sources as industry levies. 'We are demanding that the government halts this butchery of research and provides a forum for staff, industry and the ministry to sit down together and devise a sensible funding system,' said IPMS general secretary Bill Brett. 'These cuts could not come at a worse time, with the increase of foreign competition, the removal of trade barriers and cuts in EEC support.'

Cuts proposed in Mr Barnes' report include:

- Research into the causes of mastitis in cows.
- Cattle hormone research, including BST.
- Stress effects in pigs, and improvements in the design of pig pens.

Without clear distinctions being made between market and non-market areas of research, the all-embracing category of 'near market' can be used to axe virtually any area of work that the minister wishes. Mr Gummer himself has suggested that scientists were merely attempting to protect their own research grants by claiming that their work concerned issues of public concern, such as food safety.

'The secret and closed nature of the Barnes review, coupled with the failure of government to publish the final report, has created uncertainty within the research community and a loss of confidence with the public at large,' commented one food research worker.

Consumer interests are supposed to be represented within MAFF by the newly created Consumer Panel.

Supermarkets unhappy to pick up the bill

Supermarkets have criticised the lack of government funding for food safety research.

Setting up a £500,000 fund last November to research food poisoning, the director of the supermarket-funded Food Safety Advisory Centre (FSAC), Michael Young, described the government's approach as a 'dereliction of responsibility'.

Mr Young acknowledged that their research may show that some production methods were currently unsafe and that improvements may cost extra money, but that at present there was a lack of basic knowledge in the area. He said the government's own research programme is lacking in key areas.



PHOTO:IPMS

Staff at Bristol Institute of Food Research give Food Minister, David Maclean a rough ride.

This is due to meet quarterly, which some regard as insufficiently frequent, and no indication has been given as to what material it will be able to inspect and which departments or committee it will answer to or advise. The Consumer Panel will have little impact on MAFF research policies if it continues to operate in isolation from the existing advisory committee structures, such as the Research Priorities Board, the Research Consultative Committee, and the AFRC Advisory Board and Research Committee, which are heavily weighted in favour of industry representation.

Where the axe may fall

Details of where cuts are expected, involving job losses of over 20 per cent of research staff, are shown below (based on an initial listing by IPMS and — where shown — subsequent action announced by MAFF). All cuts in funding are to be completed by March 1992.

Research	Job losses	Cuts (£)	Research	Job losses	Cuts (£)
Safety, quality and nutritional value of foods			Luddington, Stratford on Avon — closed		
Institute of Food Research			Rosewarne, Cambourne — closed		
Reading	50	749,000	Stockbridge House, Selby — to close		
Bristol — closure confirmed (redundancies notified)	91	1,354,000	Efford, Lymington		
Norwich	41	611,000	Kirton, Lincs		
Cattle, sheep, pig and poultry welfare			* Samples of Brogdale's unique collection of fruit tree species may be transferred 12 miles to Wye College and Brogdale taken over by the local authority as a heritage centre. Research and licensing of new varieties will only be undertaken for a fee.		
Institute for Grassland and Animal Production			Crops and animal research		
Hurley, Maidenhead			Experimental Husbandry Farms 160 4,000,000		
— closure or cut confirmed	82	1,180,000	Bridgets, Winchester — to close or cut		
Welsh Plant Breeding Institute	18	266,000	Drayton, Stratford on Avon — to close or cut		
Roslin, Edinburgh	19	270,000	Gleadthorpe, Mansfield — to close or cut		
Shinfield, Reading — to close	40	? 600,000	Terrington, Kings Lynn — to close or cut		
Animal disease control			Liscombe, Somerset — cut**		
Institute for Animal Health			Boxworth, Cambs		
Pirbright, Woking	9	130,000	Arthur Rickwood, Ely, Cambs		
Compton, Newbury	45	640,000	High Mowthorpe, Malton, Yorks		
Houghton, Huntingdon			Rosemaund, Hereford		
— closure confirmed	28	400,000	Redesdale, Newcastle		
Animal genetic research			Trawsgoed/Pwlperion, Wales		
Edinburgh Institute of Animal Physiology			**Liscombe is the one 'success' story for government proposals: half the staff will remain, funded jointly by government and local farmers on a 'near market' study of silage effluent.		
	30	430,000	Local farming conditions		
Agriculture and food industry buildings and environment, health of workers and livestock			Regional laboratories 150 4,500,000		
Institute of Engineering Research, Silsoe, Beds			Newcastle, Accrington, Carmarthen, Caernarvon, Rhydymyn, Wye, and Evesham — to close		
	73	1,040,000	Cardiff, Leeds, Trawscoed and Bristol — to be cut		
Arable crop research, chemical pollution and rural environment			Animal disease prevention		
Institute of Arable Crops Research Rothamsted, Harpenden			Central Veterinary Laboratory		
— to be cut	15?	145,000	— to be cut 100 2,500,000		
Long Ashton, Bristol			Farming research projects		
— to be cut	28?	291,000	Research and Development Units 15 400,000		
Plant growth and reproduction			Field Drainage Unit, Cambridge — ? closure		
Institute of Plant Science Research 30,000 (now mostly privatised, following Unilever's purchase of the Plant Breeding Institute, Cambridge, in 1987)			Farm Buildings Group, Newbury — ? closure		
Pesticide reduction and market gardening			Feed Evaluation Unit, Stratford — ? closure		
Institute of Horticultural Research			Research, advisory services and teaching		
East Malling, Maidstone			Colleges of Agriculture in Aberdeen, Ayrshire and Edinburgh 68 2,040,000		
— to be cut	107	1,530,000	Scottish Agricultural Research Institutes		
Littlehampton, West Sussex			Hannah Institute, Ayr 18 540,000		
— to close	58	840,000	Rowett Institute, Aberdeen 8 250,000		
Wellesbourne, Stratford on Avon	57	820,000	Scottish Crops Institute, Edinburgh and Aberdeen 32 950,000		
Plant, vegetable and fruit research			Moreduin Institute, Edinburgh 21 630,000		
Experimental Horticultural Stations 200 5,000,000			Torry Research Station		
Brogdale, Faversham			— to be cut 30 1,200,000		
Lee Valley, Hoddeston			— closed		

LETTERS

Eggspertise

Q Could you tell me whether eggs should be refrigerated or not?

I understand that although the Department of Health guidelines say you should refrigerate, if you do then (a) cooking eggs contaminated with salmonella will be more dangerous since the eggs start from a lower temperature, and (b) if the shells are contaminated then condensation in the fridge will provide the equivalent of washing — and egg packers are forbidden to wash eggs since it removes the natural plugs in the shell and lets bacteria in.

Julia Stallibrass
London SW17

A Yes and no — it depends who you ask. Professor Lacey's book *Safe shopping, safe cooking, safe eating* (Penguin, 1989) makes just the points you make against storing eggs in the fridge and recommends keeping them in the cupboard, and using them within a week of their sell-by date. Unfortunately, eggs don't always have sell-by dates, so a week from purchase date would be reasonable.

But not everyone agrees with Professor Lacey. We phoned several leading supermarkets and the supermarket-run Food Safety Advisory Centre, plus the Science Museum's Food Information Service. All concurred with the Department of Health advice — you should keep your eggs in the fridge. The spokeswoman for Sainsbury's suggested

removing the eggs thirty minutes before use.

We also asked the supermarkets why they themselves kept the eggs on the shelf rather than in the fridge. The answer, it appears, is that eggs which are claiming to be fresh (Grade A Fresh) must be seen to be fresh and so according to egg marketing regulations should not be stored at temperatures below 8°C prior to sale.

Supermarket eggs must be seen to be fresh and must not be refrigerated.

Naming Nestlé

Q You reported that the baby milk conference in Manila condemned Nestlé's practices in the third world and you carried an advertisement against buying Nescafé. The company may make a lot of money from instant coffee but it produces other products, surely, that we should also be boycotting?

T Jordan, London N5

A It does indeed. It is Europe's second largest food company and although it does not, yet, market baby milk in Britain, it does market a wide range of other foods. You might like to note some of the other brand names it owns:

- Gold Blend
- Blend 37
- Ideal
- Tip Top
- Nesquick
- Milky Bar
- Dairy Crunch
- Smarties
- Fruit Gums
- Kit Kat
- Aero
- Polo
- Quality Street
- Black Magic
- After Eights
- Jelly Tots
- Rowntree jellies
- Sun Pat
- Gales
- Carnation
- Slender
- Build-up
- Coffee-mate
- Libby's Orange 'C'
- Um Bongo
- Chambourcy
- Nouvelle
- Buitoni
- Crosse & Blackwell
- Pasta Choice
- Healthy Balance
- Four Seasons
- Branston
- Sarsons
- Findus
- Lean Cuisine
- Tartex



PHOTO: PAM ISHERWOOD/FORMAT

E's-gone

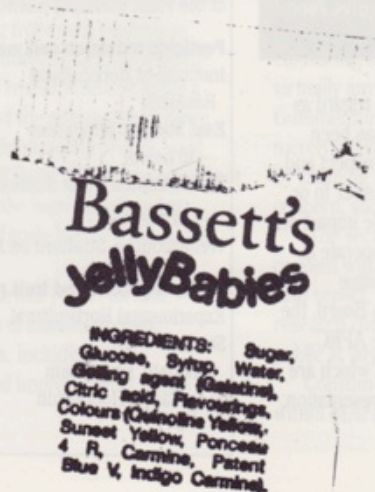
I recently attempted to buy some sweets for a children's birthday party that would not be too harmful as far as sugar and additives were concerned. I was concerned to discover how difficult this is and also how devious manufacturers are becoming.

As I scanned the small print for lists of E numbers I discovered that it now seems common policy for colourings and other additives to be declared by name rather than number. This is obviously

the latest ploy to confuse the unwary consumer: my own suspicions were only aroused because of the lack of slogans like 'no artificial colourings' etc.

This practice is presumably legal, but, I think you will agree, is an attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of anyone who is trying to avoid E numbers, and I feel sure many shoppers are being taken in by this.

Penny Brooke
Abbotts Ann
Andover
Hants



INGREDIENTS: Sugar, Glucose, Syrup, Water, Gelling agent (Gelatine), Citric acid, Flavourings, Colours (Quinoline Yellow, Sunset Yellow, Ponceau 4 R, Carmine, Patent Blue V, Indigo Carmine).

Workhouse food

Following your feature on prisons and the 19th century dietaries you published, your readers may be interested to note the sort of food being served in local workhouses around the middle of that century.

My colleague, Dr Maurice Caplan, lists the following dietary, commenting that it undoubtedly represented better nutrition than would have been available generally to the average rural labourer or urban operative:

Breakfast

Men 6oz bread, 2 pints skimmed milk

Women 5oz bread, 1.5 pints gruel

Children 4oz bread, 1 pint gruel

Dinner

Men 1 quart peas or else 1lb potatoes and 5oz boiled meat

Women 1.5 pints soup or else 1lb potatoes and 5oz boiled meat

Children 1 pint soup or else 12oz potatoes and 4oz boiled meat

Saturday dinner

Men 14oz suet pudding

Women 12oz suet pudding

Children 8oz suet pudding

Supper (Same as breakfast)

Furthermore, the recipes are worth noting:

Gruel: 8oz oatmeal, 2.5 pints milk, 5.5 pints water

Suet pudding: 8.5oz good flour, 1.5oz beef suet

An evaluation of these dietaries by Professor Crawford indicates a shortage of vitamins A and D for all inmates and a shortage of calcium and overall calories for women and children. Nonetheless he points out that a survey of 76 pregnant women in Hackney, East London, in the 1980's found even poorer nutrition than these workhouse women received over a century earlier.

Dr R J Neale, Lecturer in Human Nutrition, University of Nottingham

Statisteggs

I see from the current issue of *The Food Magazine* that the Caroline Walker award for science went to Professor Richard Lacey of Leeds University.

I do not know if the scientific aspect covered his work on salmonella in eggs but if so I think attention should be paid to his calculations on the subject in his

book *Safe shopping, safe cooking, safe eating*.

On page 70 therein, when reducing an infected egg rate of one in 70,000 by a factor of ten (to allow for reduction in risk due to cooking, natural resistance etc), he arrived at a figure of one in 7,000 instead of the correct figure of one in 700,000, thus overstating the actual risk 100 times. ...the amount of salmonella infection Professor Lacey expects in a year would thus take 100 years to develop.

The problem seems to have been overstated.

A H McKee FCA, St Albans

We showed this letter to Professor Lacey, who pointed out that Mr McKee had misread the book. 3,000 people each week were estimated to be suffering food poisoning from eggs, while 30 million eggs each day were being eaten. This gives one in 70,000 eggs leading to an actual food poisoning case.

Assuming that many infected eggs — say 90 per cent — get sufficient cooking or, for some other reason, do not lead to actual food poisoning, then the number of infected raw eggs would be much larger, perhaps as many as one in 7,000. Hence the figures in the book.

Stress and slaughter

Your correspondent M Blades (*The Food Magazine*, Issue 8) is quite right about the manner of slaughter affecting the quality of meat. This also applies to pre-slaughter stress. Some pigs, especially those with a Pietrain strain, are highly sensitive and the whole trauma of being rounded up and sent for slaughter can result in their deaths during transport or PSE meat — pale, soft exudative tissue.

Another condition, usually caused by stress some time before slaughter, is DFD — dark, firm and dry meat. Further complications are transport fever, a catarrhal and pneumonic condition of fatigue; transit tetany, mainly in cattle; transport fatigue, mainly in calves, characterised by scouring and pneumonia.

The spread of salmonella infections is known to be greatly enhanced by stress. Mixing of strange animals in transport or in lairages or overcrowding

inevitably causes stress, often leading to fighting, which in addition to causing DFD can result in damage to the carcass.

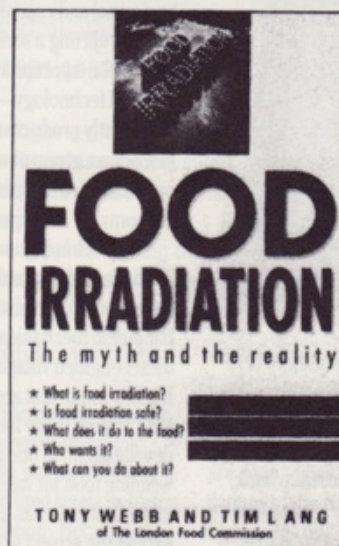
More than 20 years ago Dr R L Joseph, who worked on meat quality evaluation at Dunsinea Research Centre, warned: 'Stress must be minimised, since it causes exhaustion, depletion of glucose reserves (glycogen) in the muscles, and subsequent to slaughter, reduced concentrations of lactate and therefore a high pH value. Normal meat has a pH value of about 5.4 to 5.6 whereas stressed meat often has a value over pH6. Accordingly, animals must not be mixed with strange animals in the trucks or in the lairage since this is very distressing, nor should they be transported for more than four hours.'

The escalation of mass production

systems since this was written has greatly increased these problems, and the closing of smaller abattoirs means that very few animals indeed are transported for less than four hours. This will become worse in 1992 when frontier controls are abolished and farmers will be expected to transport their stock long distances to enormous abattoirs.

National Pig News of last July/August quoted the managing director of a leading pig company as having recently reported more pigs arriving dead at the abattoir, more pigs dying on the farm through stress, more drugs and hyperdermics used than ever before.

It is surely time that the meat industry faced up to these problems. J Bower, Hon Secretary, The Farm and Food Society, London NW11



Good food doesn't need irradiation. With the increasing need for stricter hygiene in food processing to ensure safe food, will food irradiation be a cure-all or a cover up? Will it be for the benefit of the consumer or the food industry? How can its improper use be detected and prevented?

Tony Webb and Tim Lang here assemble the alarming facts and address the urgent issues in the new edition of **FOOD IRRADIATION**.

Remember if any food has to be irradiated — ask 'What was wrong with it?'

Send for your copy of this controversial and timely book.

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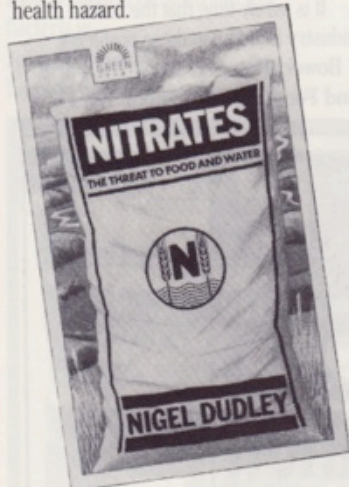
BOOK REVIEWS

NITRATES — THE THREAT TO FOOD AND WATER,

Nigel Dudley,
Green Print, 1990, pp 118, £4.99.

Between 1960 and 1980 the amount of fertilisers used in agriculture trebled and has continued to rise steadily throughout the 80s. Today farmers spend about £600 million on liquid nitrate fertilisers each year to boost crop yields.

With nitrate inputs from manures and slurries from intensive factory farms combined with the effects of ploughing up pastures to create more arable land, we now have a situation where nitrates are a major pollutant and health hazard.



Nitrate run-off has polluted rivers, streams and underground water sources and concentrations have increased in vegetable crops and livestock products.

In this useful and accessible book, environmental campaigner Nigel Dudley examines the roots of the problem and its effects on us and the environment. He then moves on to the practicalities of solving the problem. With farmers hooked into high input farming, EC subsidies and the powerful interests of agribusiness there are no easy solutions. Individual farmers may opt for organic farming but, says the author, it will take the commitment of the UK government and the EC to remedy this escalating threat.

Sue Dibb.

WOMEN AND THE FOOD CYCLE
Intermediate Technology Publications,
1989, 86pp, £5.95.

Millions upon millions of people, mostly women, depend for their living on the processing of food. But much of it is

monotonous and back-breaking; hoeing, weeding, husking maize, hulling rice, and pounding sorghum.

The usual solution offered to, or more often imposed on, these women is a factory. With modern equipment (but few spare parts), good wages (for comparatively few workers), conveniently sited (but only if you move to town), providing new markets (other town dwellers), and new products (imported foods), such industrial development is a total disaster for village women and their families.

Worse, factory products may undercut rural women's markets for their surplus foods. Their income drops, while the food on sale is increasingly cash only, not barter. The women end up having to work all the harder to compete with mass production.

Out of this harsh dilemma between traditional and capital-intensive production has sprung a series of projects centred on 'appropriate' or 'intermediate' levels of technology — smaller-scale but sufficiently productive to allow producers, often a group of women acting co-operatively, to compete in the cash economy.

The technologies involved, reported in this fascinating and optimistic collection of case histories, range from a hand-held mechanical rice huller to a diesel-engined village sorghum mill. Equally important are the social relations built around these forms of economic development: in one project, preparing weaning food for sale, the cash generated in the first year was used as a loan to extend the project to other women. In a second project, making deep-fried banana chips, the enterprise grew to the point where a formal wage scale was introduced for paying all the staff.

But just as World Bank-funded giant schemes can turn out to be economic failures, so small-scale projects can be ruined by unexpected events. A Botswana rural baking co-op lost most of its customers when a government-subsidised bakery opened in the capital. The co-op's collapse must be weighed against the advantages of a cheap bread policy. Cash income to village women must be placed against mass production in the city. This book gives powerful and practical arguments in favour of the rural women.

Tim Lobstein

TEACHING GREEN, A parent's guide to education for life on Earth,

Damian Randle,
Merlin Press Green Print, 1989, pp236,
£7.99

THE YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO SAVING THE PLANET,

D Silver & B Vallely,
Virago Press, 1990, pp120, £2.99.

Both these books are aimed at finding ways of getting children hooked into green issues, and are something of a rag-bag, or perhaps wheelbarrow, full of ideas, some old, some silly, some taken from other publications.

The first book is by far the most varied and interesting, with drawings and project work and contributions taken for the most part from the journal *Green Teacher*, which the author edits. The focus is on finding different ways in which green issues can be raised as part of a child's day-to-day experience — from looking at food wrappers to re-designing the school. The only thing missing is an index, vital in a jumbled book like this.

Whereas the first book is aimed at adults creating projects for children in groups, the second is aimed at children

as individuals. It is a brief guide to the main green headings, arranged alphabetically from acid rain to zoos. After a description of each problem there is a 'What Can You Do?' paragraph. Here's the one for hamburgers:

Eat bean burgers (but ask if they have been cooked in beef fat!) Write to your favourite manufacturer and ask them to supply a list of ingredients in their hamburgers. Then you'll know exactly what you're eating! See also *Fast Food*.

Again there is no index, and, despite taking most of their material on fast food and on hamburgers straight out of a London Food Commission book, there is no credit given or mention of the book in 'Further Reading'. At the same time it does, inevitably, leave out some of one's pet issues — nothing on food irradiation or battery hens. And the piece on malnutrition suggests: Try cutting out sweets for a week and send the money you save to aid agencies.

The book is weak, borrowing too much from others and with insufficient insight of its own.

Tim Lobstein

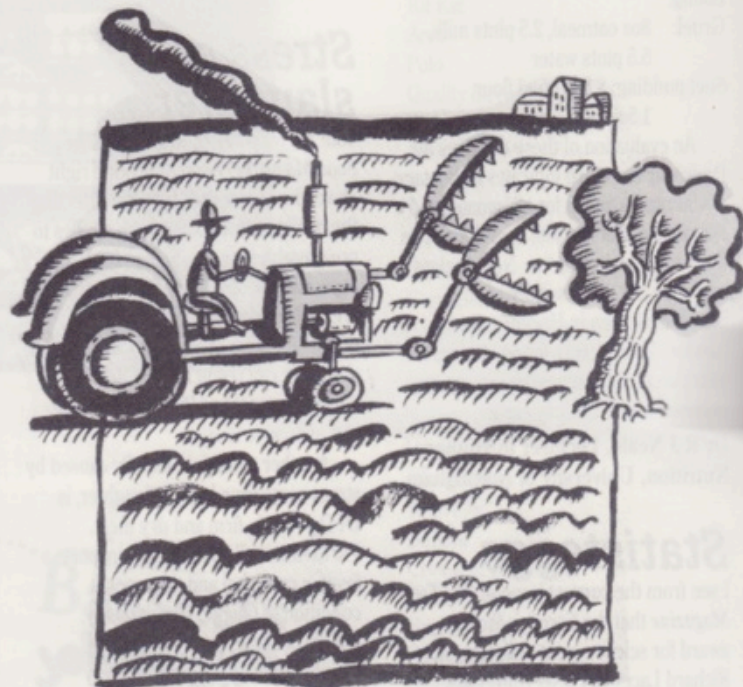


Illustration from the World Wildlife Fund's booklet *The Common Agricultural Policy and the environment*.

Details: Adam Markham, WWF International, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland.

COMA finds sugar guilty

Despite misleading articles in the press, the COMA report found that sugar is implicated in causing disease. Aubrey Sheiham reviews the report.

There have been claims by the sugar and confectionery industries that dietary sugar, sucrose, is not implicated in human diseases. Following the reports on sugars of the USA's Food and Drugs Administration (FDA), advertisements

sugars as those sugars enclosed in plant cells of fruits and vegetables. They were considered to be good for health. Non-milk extrinsic sugars, which were the main concern of the panel, are those sugars not located within the cellular structure of a food. These include table and recipe sugars, fruit juices and honey — sugars that have been processed and extracted from cells. These non-milk extrinsic sugars currently contribute 15-



COMA recommends sugar consumption 'should be decreased' to improve health.

appeared in the professional and public press claiming erroneously that sugar was not guilty of causing obesity, heart disease and other diseases such as gall stones.

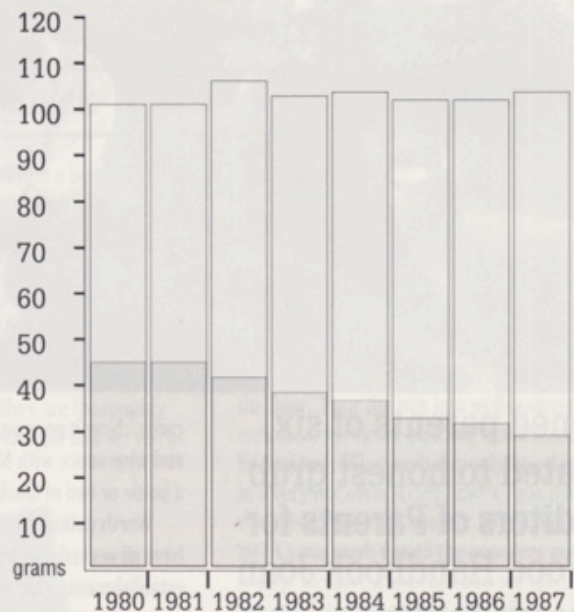
The FDA report was followed by the report of a task force set up by the British Nutrition Foundation, a body funded by industry. Their report was not considered an acceptable base for a government policy on dietary sugars and a panel of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) was asked to examine the role of dietary sugars in human diseases and to make recommendations.

The COMA panel defined intrinsic

20 per cent of the average daily food energy supply in the UK.

The conclusions of the panel confirm the views of most nutritionists that extrinsic sugars, whilst not directly causing serious diseases, are indirectly implicated in diseases via obesity. Sugars may contribute to the development of obesity, concluded the panel, and as obesity plays an important part in the cause of a number of diseases such as diabetes, raised blood pressure, arterial disease, hyperlipidaemia and gall stones, it recommends 'that the reduction of non-milk extrinsic sugars intake should be part of general reduction in dietary energy intake.' The

We buy less sugar, but we eat just as much: declining sales of packet sugar have been replaced by increasing amounts of sugar 'hidden' in processed foods.



packet sugar

Sucrose bought as packet sugar (grams per person per day), National Household Surveys, HMSO, 1982-1989.

total sugar

Sucrose supplies moving into consumption (grams per person per day), Central Statistical Office, HMSO, 1981-1988

recommendation holds for overweight and obese people.

There was no evidence that extrinsic sugars have direct adverse metabolic effects in most people but high intakes do lead to high blood lipid levels in 10-15 per cent of the population. Because of this and the effects on some other subgroups, the panel recommended: 'those with special medical problems such as diabetes and hypertriglyceridaemia should restrict non-milk extrinsic sugar intake to less than about 25 to 50g per day.'

The link between sugars and tooth decay is strong and unequivocal. The sugar industry will have a hard job to change the conclusion: 'Extensive evidence suggests that sugars are the most important dietary factor in the cause of dental caries.'

In order to reduce the risk of caries the panel recommends 'that the consumption of non-milk extrinsic sugars by the population should be decreased. These sugars should be replaced by

fresh fruit, vegetables and starchy foods.' They do not cause caries.

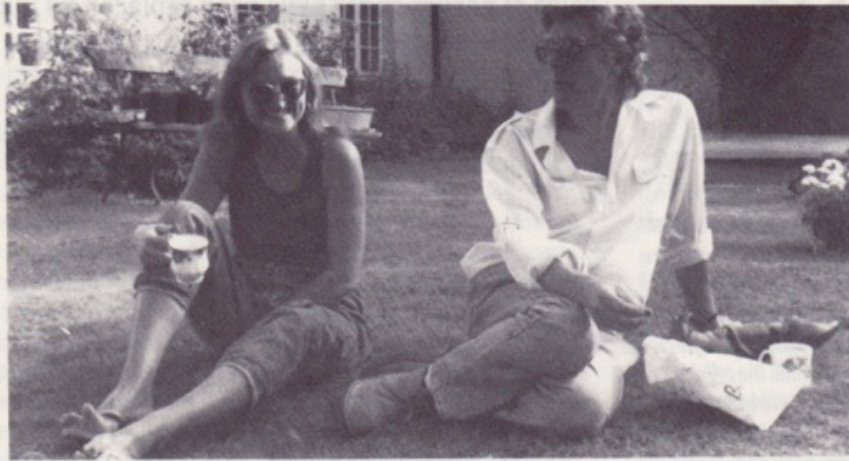
The conclusions and general recommendations of the COMA report are good. They confirm the recommendations of the National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education (NACNE) and the World Health Organisation report 'Healthy Nutrition' that the levels of sugar intake should be reduced to improve health.

The report is weak on specific recommendations on what industry and government should do. It recommends that food manufacturers produce 'low sugar' or 'sugar free' alternatives to sugar-rich products and that total sugars content should be included on labels.

These are hardly the hard-hitting recommendations to achieve the 50 per cent reduction which NACNE suggested was needed. To achieve that reduction will require more fundamental changes at all levels in the food chain.

Dietary sugars and human disease, COMA, Department of Health report on health and social subjects no 37, HMSO 1989.

Joan and Derek's diary



Seasoned parents of six, dedicated to honest grub and editors of *Parents for Safe Food Handbook* Joan and Derek Taylor contribute a personal view from East Anglia.

During the gales last month we were without electricity for three days. We regretted buying quite so much fish for the freezer. But we did not regret having bought a large bag of rice and a gas cooker and lots of vegetables for when the river rises and cuts us off from the road, and thus from the world.

Now the river is down, the electricity on and the milkman calls with raw milk and free range eggs. Life is good.

Tucked away here for months on end, working on the *Safe Food Handbook*, mole-like in a Suffolk winter, one forgets how expensive it has become to eat out. Recently, after delivering the manuscript, we decided to 'go mad' and, with the excuse that we were feeding up our beautiful, poor and hungry youngest daughter, we took ourselves to a well-known fish restaurant in Soho and handed over more than fifty pounds for a one-course meal with a glass of wine and coffee.

We who shop locally for our two selves, buying only the best of whole foods and cooking it simply, tend to lose sight of what people who eat out regularly in London and in posh provincial and country hangouts have long known: prices have got outrageous, plain silly and sometimes downright criminal.

Hundreds of pounds changing hands over a table for six! That sort of money used only to be lost at

cards. Now it goes on a bit of this and that in a herb and wine sauce with M Gaston's famed dessert and a bottle or two of Quélavezvous '89.

Worth noting, from our sons and daughters who have all served and waited in all kinds of establishments, that very few of the managements pass on the service charge to staff. It's also the case that not much of the cash left by the plate reaches the servants. It's all a bit cockeyed really. Too much is made of eating out as a way of life, we think. The poor must wonder what it's all about when they see the Roux Brothers on television tarting up Squirrel à l'orange.

Food has become one of the Great British Topics has it not? There was a time when talking about the price of fish meant idle chatter. Now it is more likely to be the *state* of fish. Everybody's at it.

'You can't eat anything these days and feel safe,' a cry from the heart of Kate a young and worried mother of two. We meet each week, says Joan, at a WEA social studies course.

In the group we often talk about food. Someone will express feelings of resignation. 'You have to die of something, I suppose.' Or, denial: 'I've given up worrying; you wouldn't be able to eat at all if you believed the stories in the media.'

Well...in the 1960s, Derek and I lived in California with our four eldest children, then quite little. We didn't know about problems with additives and chemicals. Two children had serious asthma and we didn't connect this miserable condition with the soft drinks and fast food they were suddenly consuming. Nor did our doctor.

Since then, somewhat self-taught, we've found what foods to avoid and how to find much nicer alternatives.

The signs are good. In this small town we asked our local grocer if he could get us another sack of brown rice — 50kgs — our third since coming here

twelve winters ago. He phoned to say he could and now was able to offer us a choice of three, including one organically grown wholegrain rice from Italy. This for less than the price of that one meal for three in Soho. It will last us four years.

On the same day Anne who runs the little organic produce shop from her converted front room phoned to say that she had received her first delivery of 'real organic beef' and would I like to speak to the farmer who produces it locally, near Bury St Edmunds. She, Louise, is a member of the Soil Association 'and proud of it'. At £2.50 per pound we bought beef which made the most succulent and tender stew cooked along with lots of vegetables and herbs. For fun we did price comparisons with a meal out; the stew cost no more than £6.50 and fed six people! We had eaten a fabulous meal and formed a new acquaintanceship in the wonderful world of organic real food.

Window gazing into eateries is such an absorbing pastime, from poison halls to the great brasseries of 'new' London. It is downright misery in some: little tableaux of disappointment, apathy and acid stomach, ashtrays with wet dogends, encrusted sauce-squeezers, bitten ends of pastry, damp burger-buns and grey grim faces wreathed in cigarette smoke.

Up market, the pleased smiles of the West End and Covent Garden long-lunchers shine with wine. So much to see and study for free. Once, in Mayfair, Derek was borne down upon by a market researcher wanting to know whether he could 'see the need for a new cocktail bar by Green Park station'. With the Ritz, Mayfair and Meridien Hotels within hooraying distance of each other he thought maybe 'need' was not quite the right word. But, hey! If people want to sit among a new set of potted palms and spend £15 for four drinks, then fine.

Maybe the '90s will change perspectives. The signs are that new information is increasingly available on the subjects that really matter — the lure of materialism, degraded food, the damaged environment and the alternatives.

We are not only what we eat — we should also be what we think and what we do. But it is a damn sight easier to think and do good things with a fully healthy stomach than half-crazed on fast foods and additives and sugar-rushes.

But anyway, that's enough for now. You will recall Moliere: 'It's good food and not fine words that keeps me alive.'

Parents for Safe Food Handbook is published by Ebury Press in May, price £5.99.

Oven oddities

All too often children are encouraged to eat sweet, salty and greasy foods. This can be a nutritional disaster for anyone, but for children such food sets the habits and dietary patterns for a lifetime. Using unusual recipes can attract children into the kitchen, and get them cooking and eating healthier food.

Here are three ideas taken from a book that deserves far wider distribution in Britain *Creative food experiences for children**. They are for days when you want the oven on. You will end up with some healthy — well, fairly healthy — and definitely unusual treats.

Pasta cake or 'noodle kugel'

Boil 250 gram of broken egg tagliatelle — long, flat noodles — until tender but not soft. Drain the pasta and stir it into the following mixture:

- 3 eggs
- 400 ml/14 oz plain yoghurt
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2-3 apples, chopped or grated
- 350 ml/12 oz cottage cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1-2 tablespoons of honey or brown sugar
- pinch salt

Spread it all in a buttered baking pan (13" x 9") and top with breadcrumbs and a sprinkle more of cinnamon. Bake for 35 minutes at 375°F, 190°C, Gas mark 5.

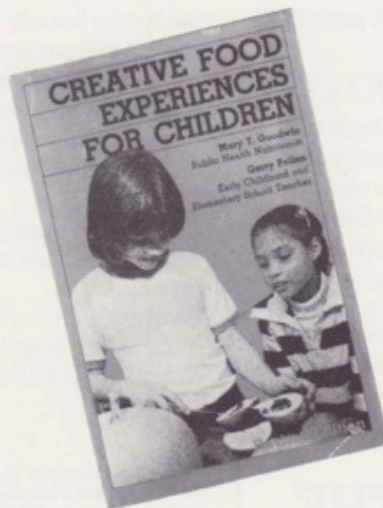
Soybean snack

Put a cupful of rinsed soya beans into a bowl, cover them with water and soak them in the fridge overnight. Next day, drain them well, spread them on a baking tray and put them in a very low oven, 200°F, 90°C, gas mark 1/4 for at least two hours. Then sprinkle a little olive oil on the beans, stir them to coat them all, and put them back in the oven another half hour. When you take them out sprinkle a little salt over them, if you like, while they are hot. When they are thoroughly cool they can be stored in a covered jar and served as you would salted nuts.

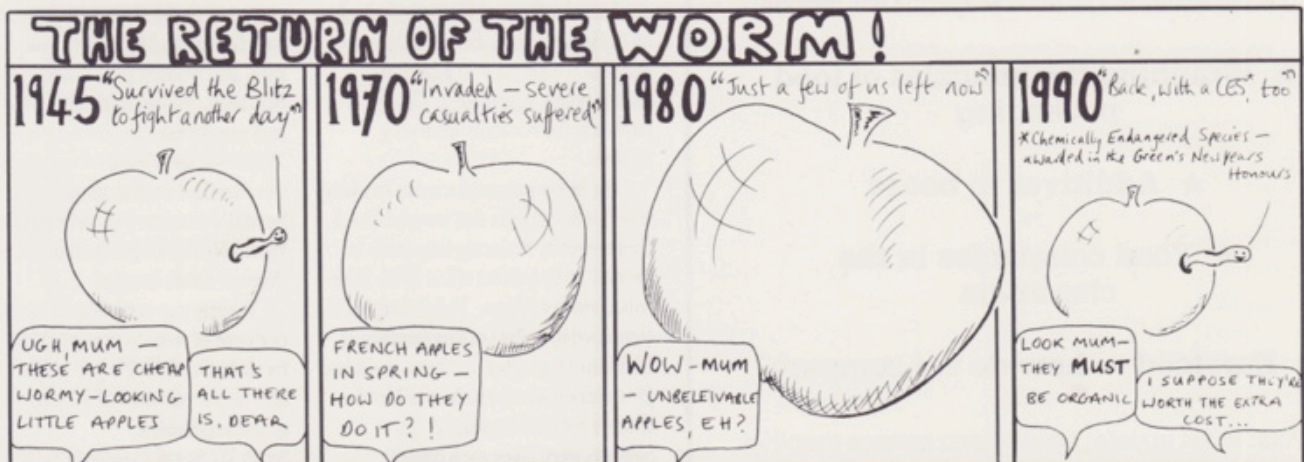
Crusty Popover

- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup instant dry milk
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- pinch salt
- 4 oz sifted wholemeal flour

Beat the eggs until light, add the dry milk and water, melted butter and salt. Blend well. Gradually beat in the flour. Pour the mix into well-buttered custard cups, individual yorkshire pudding moulds or a deep-cupped baking tray, filling each cup only two-thirds full. Bake in a very hot oven, 475°F, 250°C, gas mark 9, for ten minutes followed by another 20 — 30 minutes at 400°F, 200°C, gas mark 6 until the popovers are brown and crusty. Remove from cups and slit open to let the hot air out. Serve hot and eat as scones.



**Creative food experiences for children* by Mary T Goodwin and Gerry Pollen, Centre for Science in the Public Interest, Washington, 1980 (revised edition), ISBN 0-89329-001-7



WHAT THE JOURNALS SAY

Heartburn after eating, Japanese life expectancies, cholesterol effects of bran and eating greens in Scotland ...

Eric Brunner reviews the journals

EXERCISE AFTER EATING FOOD

In 1768 William Heberden described the 'painful and disagreeable sensation in the breast' induced by walking soon after eating. As well as this not unusual experience of chest pain in older people, many of us will remember the warnings about exercise after mealtimes we were given as children. We should take it easy for at least an hour or so, after a meal, for fear of potentially fatal cramps in exercising muscles robbed of their blood supply by the bloated belly. Or will redirection of blood to exercising muscles cause violent indigestion?

New research confirms that exertion should be avoided by anginal chest pain sufferers after eating. Younger, healthy people will do well to avoid strenuous exercise immediately after mealtimes, but seem to be unlikely to be taking a great risk with light exercise. If these conclusions seem obvious, it is interesting to understand the body's response to food.

Eight men and two women aged between 20 and 41 were studied to examine the effects of a modest meal, both during mild exercise on a treadmill and at rest. The meal increased heart rate and its output of blood, oxygen consumption, carbon dioxide production and breathing rate. Exercise increased

these effects relative to those measured at rest. But food did not have an effect on blood supply to the arm or leg, neither did it have any effect on blood pressure. The main response to eating is therefore that the heart works harder to raise blood flow through the gut. In this experiment mild exercise did not cause redirection of blood flow from the gut, or reduce the supply of blood to limb muscles after eating.

These findings make it clear that the stress of eating is borne to a large extent by the heart. The researchers even express their surprise that more patients with angina or heart failure do not experience problems after a meal. **Yi JJ et al, Effects of food on the central and peripheral haemodynamic response to upright exercise in normal volunteers, *British Heart Journal* 1990, vol. 63, pages 22-25.**

JAPANESE SUCCESS

In the past 20 years Japan has achieved improvements in life expectancy which are equivalent to the abolition of heart disease and most cancers in Britain. Exactly which factors are responsible for this remarkable feat is not certain. Economic development is the most obvious reason, in addition dietary improvements are likely to have

contributed to the improved longevity of the Japanese.

A Japanese boy born in 1986 can expect to live to 75, compared with 72 for an English boy. For girls, life expectancies are 81 and 78 respectively. Over the past two decades Japan has overtaken Britain, with an eight year increase in live expectancy compared to three years in this country.

While it may not be immediately obvious how wealth affects health it is certainly the most likely explanation for these figures. Japan has low inflation (1.4 per cent during the last decade), a growth rate of 4.2 per cent (UK 1.7 per cent) and had a gross national product per head of \$15,760 (UK £10,420) in 1987.

In recent years the Japanese diet has become less salty as a result of changed food product recipes, particularly the daily miso soup, and contains less preserved food. These changes are probably the cause of declines in stroke and stomach cancer.

Unlike this country, income differences in Japan have narrowed since the 1970s.

Marmot MG and Davey Smith G, Why are the Japanese living longer? *British Medical Journal* 1989, vol. 299, pages 1547-51.

cholesterol levels were not significantly different during the two periods, at 4.4 mmol/litre. However, both supplements did reduce blood cholesterol from the base-line level of 4.8 mmol/litre by eight per cent. Subjects ate less saturated fat and cholesterol and more polyunsaturated fat during both periods of supplementation, compared with the base-line. These changes in dietary fats were sufficient to explain all of the reduction in blood cholesterol say the researchers. Average blood pressures did not change during the experiment.

The report concludes that oat bran has little cholesterol lowering effect and that high-fibre and low fibre dietary grain supplements reduce blood cholesterol about equally, probably because they replace dietary fats. Adding a note of caution, the authors point out that the participants had low levels of cholesterol at the start of the study. It may be that oat bran is more effective at lowering cholesterol in those with high blood cholesterol. This report adds weight to the view that dietary balance of fats and carbohydrates is most important and adding bran performs no magic. **Swain JF et al, Comparison of the effects of oat bran and low fiber wheat on serum cholesterol lipoprotein levels and blood pressure, *New England Journal of Medicine* 1990, vol. 322, pages 147-52.**

COMING SOON IN THE FOOD MAGAZINE!

Future issues of The Food Magazine will include:

- ★ Wrapping the knuckles of food packaging
- ★ Additives in booze
- ★ Food companies in the classroom
- ★ Eurofood — how do we compare?
- ★ Plus: news update; your letters; science-roundup, recipes and guest writers

BRAN/CHOLESTEROL STORY CONTINUES

Previous studies have shown that eating supplements of oat bran may lower blood cholesterol. A new study, conducted in Boston, USA, sheds doubt on the value of such dietary supplementation as compared with a low fibre refined wheat supplement. Calorie intakes in the two diets were very similar.

The study was conducted to examine whether an oat bran diet lowered blood cholesterol by replacing fatty foods in the diet, or by a direct effect of the fibre contained in oat bran. The researchers compared the effect of supplements of 87 gram of high fibre and bran, and a low fibre refined wheat product on blood cholesterol in 20 healthy adults. Subjects were given each type of supplement for six weeks in a double-blind crossover trial. Mean blood

SCOTS NOT GREEN ENOUGH?

The Scottish Heart Health Study, based in Dundee, has recently reported on lifestyle and coronary risk factors in 10,359 middle-aged men and women in 22 districts of Scotland. Blood cholesterol levels and smoking rates, measured in 1984-86, were high — supporting the classical explanation for the Scottish number one position in the World Health Organisation heart disease death league.

Twenty per cent of men and ten per cent of women reported eating no fresh fruit, while 12 per cent of men and seven per cent of women ate no green vegetables. Smith WCS et al, Concomitants of excess coronary deaths, *Scottish Medical Journal* 1989, vol. 34, pages 550-55.