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# THE FOOD MAGAZINE

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## Slimming Scandal

**Losing weight is big business and the slimming industry sells a whole range of products that promise a seemingly easy answer to weight problems. But do they really help? Here we look at meal replacement products and find they may be no healthier than a chocolate biscuit or a milkshake.**

For too many people slimming is an obsession, but for others it may be a matter of life or death.

According to the Health Education Authority 'Obesity is one of the most important health problems in the UK and is increasing in both adults and children.'

Nearly half of all men (47 per cent) and over a third of women (36 per cent) are overweight. Of these, one in twelve men and one in eight women suffer from extreme obesity for which urgent weight loss is considered medically essential. People who are overweight are more likely to die from coronary heart disease, stroke or hypertension and to suffer from diabetes, gallstones, some cancers and osteoarthritis.

It has been estimated that at any one time 20 per cent of the total UK population is actively trying to lose weight. In theory losing weight is simple — it is just a matter of ensuring that energy expenditure is greater than energy intake — by eating less, and/or by taking more exercise. But in reality eating habits are determined by a complex web of psychological and social factors. Making the kind of changes necessary to maintain a healthy weight can pose a considerable challenge.

So the overweight and obese turn for help to a whole range of diet products that the slimming industry offers, all promising a seemingly easy answer to weight problems. In this issue of *The Food Magazine* we take a look at meal replacements — the biscuits, snacks and drink mixes sold as a diet substitute for meals.

Miracle diet pills, appetite suppressants and very low calorie diets have already come under fierce attack by nutritionists. But our research found that even the less controversial meal replacement products offer poor nutrition and do little to help slimmers make the kind of dietary changes that will sustain a healthy weight.

In a specially commissioned survey we took a close look at meal replacement diet products — biscuits and bars, or mixes for drinks or other concoctions. All the products we examined promised significant weight loss. However our analyses show:

- These slimming products are not significantly lower in calories than other similar non-slimming products, such as cereal bars and milk drinks.
- None of the twelve meal replacement products met proposed EC nutritional standards.
- Many slimming products are in fact high in sugars and fats.
- These meal replacement products may actually encourage eating habits which lead to weight gain rather than weight loss.
- Some products suggested that people could lose weight at a rate faster than is recommended for safe long term weight loss.
- Virtually all the products suggest continued use once an ideal weight is reached.
- They are expensive. One product cost £3 a day for just three biscuits.

*Continued on page eight*



# THE FOOD COMMISSION

The Food Commission 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.

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**The Food Magazine Co-editors**  
Sue Dibb  
Tim Lobstein

**Information Officer**  
Martine Drake

**Subscriptions Manager**  
Ian Tokelove

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## Change of address

**Our new address is:**  
The Food Commission  
102 Gloucester Place  
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## feedback

### Fat facts

You recently ran an excellent article in *The Food Magazine* about vested interests and educational material being distributed in schools.

I found a leaflet produced by the Butter Council in my GP's waiting room. The information cannot really be faulted but I do find it alarming that such an organisation is surreptitiously promoting its product.

I feel strongly that it is not helpful for such leaflets to be distributed and that it would be so good to find that an independent body was giving advice in this way.

I find *The Food Magazine* one of the best things I have subscribed to - really informative and helpful. If I didn't refer to it frequently I would leave back copies in the doctor's waiting room!

Lindy Williams,  
Skipton, North Yorks

**Editors reply:** We share your concern over sponsored health education materials. On taking a closer look at the Butter Council's leaflet we noticed it makes no mention of low-fat spreads - we wonder why?

### Sweet babies

I cannot believe the number of GPs and Health Visitors who advise mothers to give very young babies brown sugar in water to relieve 'constipation'. Isn't this an unnecessarily early introduction to such a sweet taste?

I keep your item on baby herbal drinks pinned to the noticeboard - keep up the good work!

Pat Macdonald,  
Uxbridge, Middx.

### Added extras

I read with horrified interest your piece about artificial sweeteners in cider.

Recently in my local Safeways I read the following pinned onto the shop-baked bread section: 'The bread on these shelves may contain any or all of the following: Antioxidant, Artificial sweetener,

## Welcome to 1992



Welcome to 1992 and our new format magazine! We hope you find our new style more accessible and digestible, and would welcome your feedback and comments. As you can see we've now given greater prominence to your letters so keep on sending us your views, comments and discoveries.

Losing weight is a common New Year resolution. While many people, usually women, worry unnecessarily about their weight, for others being overweight is a serious health problem.

The incidence of obesity and overweight has been growing at an alarming rate for all age groups but particularly for women aged 25-34. The reasons are complex but changes in the way we now eat undoubtedly play a part. Snacking (or grazing) has to a large extent replaced more formal meals for many people, and greater reliance on processed and take away foods reduce awareness and control over what we eat.

But if gaining weight is easy, losing it can be difficult. In this issue we take a look at meal replacement slimming products and find that eating sweet biscuits or flavoured gloop is not necessarily a healthy way to lose weight.

In this issue of *The Food Magazine* we also question how key decisions on food are taken and who takes them. We report on fears that politics overruled science in the safety approval of a food additive. And we ask who sits on national and international committees and why many key committees are dominated by food business employees - a process that has been termed 'agency capture' by former food trader, Sir James Goldsmith.

And to commemorate 500 years since Columbus 'discovered' the New World we rediscover the American roots of many common foods from bubble gum to tonic water.

Sue Dibb & Tim Lobstein

Colour, Flavour Enhancer, Flavouring, Preservative or Flour Improver'.

The manager of the section could only say that to his knowledge everything baked on the premises contained all the aforementioned substances. Every bag of mix was inevitably accompanied by two mysterious sachets and he could only assume these contained the listed additives.

I can understand finding sugar

in my bread, but artificial sweeteners in every slice of mouthwatering shop-baked bread is a degradation to the palate and stomach.

Susy Ellis,  
Wimborne Minster, Dorset

**Editors' note:** The Bread Regulations actually prohibit the use of artificial sweeteners, although there is nothing to stop cakes and buns containing these ingredients.



## All party support for school meals

'Schools should not have to choose between books and meals for our children. As a nation we need to feed both minds and bodies,' said Margaret Morrissey for the National Confederation of Parent Teachers Associations, speaking at the launch of the School Meals Campaign at the House of Commons in January.

The Campaign, backed by 53 national organisations, was launched with all-party support and is calling on the government to reintroduce nutritional guidelines for school meals, to support school caterers and to provide adequate resources to ensure that meals are available to all children.

The Campaign comes as latest government figures show an eight per cent decrease in this year's central

government funding for school meals, which has forced many more schools to consider closing their kitchens. Rising unemployment, with greater numbers of children eligible for free school meals, is also putting the system under pressure in many areas. 'School meals are a vital service for all children, but especially for children from low income homes where school lunch may be the only substantial meal of the day,' said Fran Bennett, Director of the Child Poverty Action Group.



■ The Campaign booklet, *School Meals: Take Action!* (including a ten point School Meals Charter, a Checklist, Action Plan and Fact Sheet) is available from The School Meals Campaign, 102 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3DA price £2.50 (inc p&p). Discount for bulk copies available on request (Tel: 071-935 2099).

## Fat substitute first

The first UK foods made with a fat substitute hit supermarket shelves in January, with the launch of NutraSweet's fat alternative, Simplese in two new Tesco products — a low fat spread and a bio-yogurt.

NutraSweet's chemists have concocted their 'natural' fat alternative from milk whey and egg white proteins. Its intended use in food such as spreads, yogurt, ice cream, desserts and cheese promises all the rich creamy taste and 'mouth feel' of fat but with fewer calories and lower fat.

Tesco's Lowest Ever 5% Fat Spread contains as its name suggest only 5 per cent fat (by weight) compared to around 20 per cent for most so-called 'low' fat spreads and Simplese say many new products are in the pipeline. But whether such products can help significantly to reduce our fat consumption overall remains to be seen. Sugar consumption has not fallen despite the use of artificial sweeteners.

## ITC issues warning over Milky Way ads

Mars confectionery has been warned by the the Independent Television Commission (ITC) about its advertising slogan for Milky Way, 'the sweet you can eat between meals without ruining your appetite'. The ITC has advised that Mars should make clear in its advertising that it does not endorse frequent eating between meals and could do more to emphasise that Milky Way should be regarded as an occasional treat.

However the ITC has failed to uphold complaints by The Health Education Authority and Action & Information on Sugars that the ads breached ITC guidelines by encouraging children to eat sweets between meals, which enhances the risk of dental decay.

Campaigners for more responsible food advertising say the ITC has failed to enforce its own code and has made a mockery of its own guidelines which state that 'advertisements must not encourage children to eat frequently throughout the day'. The ITC says it accepts that confectionery advertising aimed at children 'must pay the fullest regard to concern about dental caries if it is to retain acceptability'.

The ITC decision on complaints against the slogan 'A Mars a day helps you work rest and play' is expected before Easter.

## Politics wins over science in food additive approval

Politics rather than science appears to have played a significant role in the US Food and Drug Administration's decision in 1991 to uphold its decision in 1990 to approve a food additive, which the Philippine producers call PNG (Philippines Natural Grade) carrageenan. Scientists say that PNG differs greatly from the refined carrageenan, which is already approved, and does not conform to the international specification.

Refined carrageenan, or E407, is a seaweed extract used to give a moist and succulent 'mouth feel' to a wide range of processed foods from ice-cream to sausages and the new McDonald's McLean burger where it is often described as 'natural'. Although approved for food use it has posed some safety questions in the past. World production of carrageenan is around 12,000 tonnes

a year costing around £11 per kilogram.

As PNG differs from conventional carrageenan in its method of manufacture and its overall composition and purity, it was highly surprising, even to conventional carrageenan producers, that the FDA approved PNG without requesting any toxicity testing. An earlier submission was rejected by JECFA in 1986 due to lack of toxicological data.

However, the Philippine's submission for approval to the FDA was accompanied by intense political lobbying and appears to have been made, possibly by remarkable coincidence, at a time when the US was under great pressure from the Philippine government to withdraw American armed forces from the strategic military bases in the country. In seeking to appease the Philippine's government it would appear from

press comment that concessions were made and subsequently in October 1991 the US was granted a further three years extension of its naval base lease.

Following the FDA decision even the international seaweed producers association protested that food safety considerations had been thrown out the window. But despite these protests, the FDA stuck to its decision.

Fresh from its success in the USA, the Philippine's government began in 1991 to make the same submission to the EC, still with no toxicological data. It hopes for approval of its PNG product in the more lucrative European market.

The Food Commission is calling for the precedent set by the FDA to be overturned and for the EC food regulatory authorities to insist on seeing toxicological data, as is usual, before any decision is taken.

## Success for BST campaigners

The EC has agreed to extend the ban on the introduction of the milk-boosting hormone, BST, for a further two years until 1993. The European Commission agreed that BST would run counter to its efforts to reduce farm output. Overproduction of milk is running at 15 per cent despite the use of ever more restrictive quotas.



## New EC organic standards

New EC standards for organic foods which come into effect this June should boost consumer confidence, say the organic movement. But there are fears that restrictive labelling and advertising regulations may undermine the growing organic market.

The EC regulations state that only products which contain at least 95 per cent organic ingredients can be advertised or described prominently on the label as 'organic'. The other five per cent can only consist of ingredients and additives drawn from specific, but yet to be agreed, lists.

Products made with between 50 and 95 per cent organic ingredients may only use the word 'organic' in the ingredients list, usually in small print on the back of the product.

Many organic food producers and processors say the legislation is too restrictive and will halt product development. Few food processors will want to pay extra for organic raw ingredients which they are unable to advertise or mention prominently on the label, it is argued. There are also fears that the livelihoods of organic farmers may be at risk if the market for organic produce is reduced by the new regulations.

The EC has also decreed that labelling or advertising cannot suggest that organic food tastes better, is nutritionally superior, or is in any way more healthful than foods grown using pesticides, chemical fertilisers, fungicides or growth hormones. Standards for organic livestock production are expected at a later date.

## Promoting SAFE agriculture

Agriculture in the UK is facing a growing crisis, says the SAFE (Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment) Alliance launched last November. The SAFE Alliance brings together over twenty consumer, farming, organic, animal welfare, development and environmental organisations, promoting sustainable agriculture that is beneficial to the environment and produces safe and healthy food.

SAFE's ten point challenge supports whole farm management agreements which pay farmers for how food is grown, not for how much is produced.

'This would ensure that taxpayers' support is targeted at those farmers delivering the social and environmental goods not rewarded in the market place,' says SAFE's manifesto.

Farming is currently facing a financial crisis. Six thousand farmers

sold up in 1990, more than during any of the previous 30 years and nearly 4,000 full-time workers lost their jobs. Bankruptcies and suicides are growing at an alarming rate, reports SAFE.

Hugh Raven, SAFE's co-ordinator says 'We urgently need cash support for family farms and organic farmers. Right now the healthiest, most ecologically-sound sector of British farming is being forced out of business and off the land by present policies. What is so efficient about intensive farming that produces unwanted surpluses and so pollutes our water with pesticides that we have to spend hundreds of millions of pounds to clean it up?'

■ For SAFE's ten-point challenge to intensive agricultural policies contact SAFE Alliance, 21 Tower Street, London WC2H 9NS

■ Can GAP be SAFELY reformed? Hugh Raven writes on page 11

## One-third of carrots are contaminated

Government monitoring has found that nearly one carrot in three contains the pesticide triazophos at levels higher than the Maximum Residue Level (MRL). But rather than restricting the use of the pesticide or promoting alternatives, MAFF is proposing to increase the MRL to a level 50 times greater than the World Health Organisation level.

The Pesticides Trust says that full toxicity data on the pesticide has only recently been supplied to the government's Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP) despite the chemical's use for 19 years on a staple food crop.

## Greater access to pesticide data

In response to criticisms that the Advisory Committee on Pesticides is too secretive and lacks accountability, last November MAFF published a consultation document on greater access to information on pesticides.

The proposals to release additional scientific data on the safety of pesticides approved before 1986 have been cautiously welcomed. 'They are a step in the right direction,' says Peter Beaumont, co-ordinator of the Pesticides Trust. 'But we need greater freedom of information in relation to UK discussions with Europe.'

MAFF has also announced that 'consumer groups are now being invited to put forward names of experts to serve on the Advisory Committee on Pesticides'.

■ Copies of the consultation document are available from Mr K Marjoram, MAFF Pesticides Safety Division, Room 325A, Ergon House, c/o Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR (Tel: 071-238 6298). The consultation period lasts until 28 February 1992.

## Ostrich farming

It has not been lost on farmers looking for new ideas that the African ostrich appears to live on virtually nothing, neither food nor water, yet can produce the largest drumsticks ever seen, 20-omelette eggs and a nice pile of exotic feathers.

Though hard to imagine, research has begun in the USA on how to artificially inseminate ostriches. In a move to pre-empt the introduction of ostrich farming in the UK, on the grounds that such birds are entirely unsuitable for commercial, intensive rearing and would suffer considerable stress, a campaign has been launched by Compassion in World Farming and Chickens Lib.

■ For details contact CWF on 0730-64208 or CL on 0484-688650



EGG-LAYING WAS ALWAYS DIFFICULT



## US food irradiation claim is a lie says FIC

The UK Food Irradiation Campaign (FIC) is outraged to hear that the president of Vindicator, a US irradiating plant in Florida, has been quoted as stating that 'England will not accept US seafood unless it has been irradiated'. This is such a gross distortion of the truth that FIC is asking the UK government to investigate these claims.

Far from requiring food to be irradiated, UK and European legislators and food companies are keeping irradiation at arm's length.

In Europe only Belgium, the Netherlands and France currently irradiate more than just spices, although no foods have appeared in supermarkets labelled as irradiated.

Consumer resistance, which has contributed to the two year delay in formulating an EC directive on irradiation, may also explain why Germany has not adopted irradiation clearances formerly held by East Germany — instead it has imposed the West German 1958 ban on the entire country.

Fears of a consumer backlash have undoubtedly played a part in the decision of three UK manufacturers to develop spice cleaning treatments other than irradiation to replace ethylene oxide

treatment which has been banned throughout the EC.

### Florida first

As the first dedicated food irradiation facility in the USA is granted an operating license, Michael Upledger, a journalist working with the non-profit consumer group Food and Water Inc in the USA has taken up residence opposite the site, run by Vindicator. He writes:

'As of 16 January 1992, no irradiated foods had been offered or sold to the public by Vindicator (bar limited test marketing in the 1980s).

'Vindicator irradiated 1,100 lbs. of strawberries during the week of January 5-12. These were not distributed, but the company plans to irradiate another batch for sale in Miami, Florida. This will mark the first time in history that irradiated food has been offered and sold in a public market in the United States without a limited "test marketing" status and approval.'

Michael Colby, Director of Food & Water said: 'Since labelling is not required for all foods that are irradiated, we're recommending that consumers avoid all foods from Florida'. He claimed that by taking the campaign directly to consumers, they in turn 'will let the food industry

know that they will not tolerate radiation exposed foods in the market-place.'

### Disappearing plants

Data from the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) given to the Food Irradiation Campaign show the number of operational irradiation facilities remain small despite the number of countries and commodities with clearances.

In May 1991 only 25 countries were irradiating foods (UK not included). Details given for 23 show that of these, only 10 countries were processing more than just spices.

Since 1986, 15 countries appear to have stopped using or have dropped plans to develop a total of 43 facilities. Only four countries have begun work on new sites since 1986. Full details, including site locations, can be found in *The world-wide use of food irradiation, with emphasis on Europe*, available from the Food Irradiation Campaign, c/o The Food Commission, 102 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3DA. Price £20.00 (£3.00 to FIC supporters).

## Government go-slow on hygiene training plans

New regulations on hygiene training for food handlers are being delayed by the Department of Health. It is feared that the commitment made by Ministers during the passage of the Food Safety Act, that training of all food handlers would be mandatory, may be watered down.

The Department of Health first published a consultation document on hygiene training in December 1989. Over two years later the outcome of the consultation exercise is still awaited, with the Department of Health unable to say when an announcement will be made.

Last October DoH Under Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, told caterers not to wait for legislation to implement food hygiene training, but the delay is causing confusion and uncertainty.

Hygiene training was seen as a mainstay of the Food Safety Act with Ministers promising mandatory hygiene training for all food handlers. But the consultation elicited such strong opinions that sources say the government has put any announcement on the back-burner until after the election to avoid adverse reaction.

## Calls for Codex reforms

Codex, the body given the task of setting global food trade standards, faces growing criticism for its domination by corporate interests. Committees setting standards for pesticides, nutrition and drug residues in food include many participants from food and agrochemical companies.

The role of the Codex (formally the WHO/FAO Codex Alimentarius Commission) is becoming increasingly important as GATT negotiations and trade liberalisation create pressure for the harmonisation of global standards.

An analysis of Codex Committees by the National Food Alliance Trade Working Group shows that one-third

of the participants at a Codex Pesticides Committee in April 1991 were from agrochemical and food companies, while 50 per cent of the USA and UK delegations to a Nutrition Committee in February 1991 were company people. The UK delegation included people from Mars and Farley Health Products.

The process by which regulatory bodies become dominated by those who are supposed to be regulated is well-known in industry circles and has been termed 'agency capture' by Sir James Goldsmith.

Following agreement at the International Organisation of Consumer Unions (IOCU) meeting last year, NGOs are calling for wider

representation on Codex, greater consultation with NGOs and tighter rules governing membership of national delegations. Adequate independent funding is also required for the work of Codex as NGOs are already concerned about industry attempts to fund such expert meetings.

■ For more details contact the National Food Alliance Trade Working Group on 071-935 2099.

### Agency capture

An example of industry 'capture' of Codex has been sent to us by Baby Milk Action.

It concerns a Codex meeting on follow-up milk, a commercial drink for older babies that has been described by the World Health Organisation — one of the two

agencies that gives Codex its authority — as unnecessary for babies and liable to discourage breast-feeding.

Ninety five delegates attended the meeting. Nestlé's alone had five people present, one each attached to France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and the UK.

In total food industry people occupied 41 seats at the meeting. By contrast, third world countries occupied ten seats: one from South America, five from Asia (including China) three from Africa and one from Turkey.

The UK delegation was seven strong, and included one each from Farleys, Heinz and Nestlé's. (For more on links between MAFF and Nestlé's, see the back page of this issue.)



## Money off healthy food

A novel scheme to help low income consumers buy healthier foods has been piloted in Dalmarnock, Glasgow. Households have been given 10p money-off vouchers to buy lower fat meat, fruit and veg, wholemeal bread, tinned fish and low fat yogurt in local shops.

The scheme which ran for three months at the end of 1991 was set up with £2,000 funding from the Glasgow Healthy Cities Project (funded by the World Health Organisation). Vouchers were distributed to around 6,000 people to be redeemed in local shops.

Liesl Popplewell, local health promotion officer, is pleased with the success of the scheme. 'This is a very deprived area. We had the support of local community and health groups who were able to help distribute vouchers and

talk directly to people about the scheme.'

The Dalmarnock scheme highlights the political and public health debate over the best way to encourage people on low incomes to eat a healthier diet. The government has so far refused to accept that cost deters healthier eating among low income households, despite much evidence to the contrary.

However Liesl Popplewell adds: 'People need a real incentive to change their diets.'

Local retailers confirm that 10p off can make quite a difference in somewhere like Dalmarnock, an area of high unemployment and a large elderly population.

■ A full evaluation of the scheme is being prepared for later in the year. For more information contact Jan Cresswell Tel: 041-553 1833

## Popular action

A new information pack from the voluntary organisation, National Community Health Resource, provides the inspiration needed to start up local food projects from a cookery class to a city-wide food policy.

The core of the pack is a half-dozen pages outlining the sorts of projects that have already got underway. Here we find a Monday Mums Group, which has taught itself the basics of healthy eating and produced a leaflet for children and is running a health fair. We find Cranhill Co-op in Glasgow, running bulk buy and Credit Union schemes on a low income estate. We find Sheffield City Council encouraging food co-ops and a community food shop in low income areas.

It's a useful pack and an excellent reminder that we don't have to sit and complain, we can get up and organise!

■ Price £4 from NCHR, 57 Chalton Street, London NW1 1HU (Tel 071-383 3841)

## Nutrition in Minority Ethnic Groups

ASIAN AND AFRICAN CARIBBEAN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



This briefing paper from the HEA brings together information on cultural food beliefs and eating patterns of the Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities. It looks at the pressures on these communities to change from traditional dietary patterns and suggests areas for practical health promotion.

■ Available free by writing to the Distribution Section, HEA, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9TX.

## 'Modest but adequate' diets beyond reach of poor

Researchers at York University have found that the cost of a 'moderate but adequate' diet is substantially greater than the average expenditure on food by the poorest 20 per cent of families.

The costs (using Sainsbury prices in October 1990) for three family types are given in the table. For alcohol the researchers use figures set at two thirds the HEA maximum guidelines for adults, and for soft drinks and sweets they use figures set at half the current estimated consumption levels.

The researchers comment, 'It is unlikely that households at the lowest levels of income would be able to purchase a healthy diet which allows a range of food choice commensurate with the notion of "modest but adequate" and which reflects the food habits of the majority of the population.'

■ Research by Michael Nelson and Anne-Marie Mayer. For more information contact The Family Budget Unit, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York, Heslington, York YO1 5DD (Tel 0904-433478)

### The cost of 'modest but adequate' food purchases in £ per week (October 1990 prices)

	2 adults	1 adult 2-3 children	2 adults 2 children
Food eaten at home	22.69	34.40	41.16
Alcoholic drinks	10.68	5.34	10.68
Soft drinks	0.49	0.64	1.00
Sweets and chocolate	0.46	0.55	0.86
Food eaten away from home	10.46	4.85	11.03
	£44.78	£45.78	£64.73

### Family Expenditure Survey: Poorest 20 % of families

All foods	29.87	17.37	37.78
Alcoholic drinks	8.40	1.00	3.71
	£38.27	£18.37	£41.49

## High price of healthy diet

A new survey from Sheffield says that many people find it hard to eat healthily because the right types of food are not available at reasonable prices in their local shops.

Researchers found wholemeal bread cost nearly 50 per cent more than white bread and shops in poorer areas offered the least choice.

Less than a quarter of the local inner city shops surveyed sold healthy foods such as low fat spread, brown rice, wholemeal flour and lean mince. And where they were available, healthier foods cost more than the less healthy alternatives.

The survey of local shops in four inner city wards in Sheffield was carried out by Sheffield's 'Heart of

our City' project. Principal Health Promotion Officer Caroline Burrows says 'Six supermarkets offered the greatest choice and cheaper prices but as none are actually in the area, they may be inaccessible to many people with limited mobility. It is essential that the problems of food availability and price are addressed in disadvantaged areas.'

The project is working with local retailers, food manufacturers and the community to improve food pricing and availability.

■ Heart of Our City, Shopping Basket Survey, 1991 is available from Heart of Our City, 504 Barnsley Road, Firvale, Sheffield, S5 7AE. Price £3.50. For more information contact Caroline Burrows, 0742 735132.



## 'Pinch of salt' for Heinz claim

Heinz claim to have made 'significant reductions in added salt and sugar' in their best selling product lines. Their unobtrusive policy of 'doing good by stealth' has never been promoted says the food company.

That was until last autumn when with much acclaim Heinz were awarded a Caroline Walker Award for the food company that had done most for food and public health during the year. Good for Heinz!

Heinz say they have reduced salt and sugar levels by up to 25 per cent and for their most popular product — baked beans — salt has been cut by 14 per cent and sugar by 20 per cent. But does this mean levels are lower

than their competitors?

Not according to our survey of nine brands of baked beans. Six out of nine brands contain less sugar than Heinz, only Tesco and Crosse & Blackwell contain more; and all the products had no more salt — two even had less.

Both HP and Hartleys which score better than Heinz say their baked beans have been made to the same recipe for many years. 'Perhaps Heinz' claim should be taken with a pinch of salt' said a Hartley's spokeswoman.

In a baked beans tasting last year by the Consumers Association, Heinz beans failed to impress — rated

thirteenth out of fourteen, only Tesco's own brand was less popular. So perhaps it is hardly surprising that Heinz has been keeping quiet!

### Sugar and salt levels in nine baked bean brands

	Sugars (g/100g)	Sodium (g/100g)
HP	5.0	0.5
Happy Shopper	5.2	0.5
Londis	5.2	0.5
Hartley's	5.4	0.4
Safeway	5.4	0.5
Lifestyle	5.5	0.5
Heinz	5.6	0.5
Crosse & Blackwell	5.8	0.5
Tesco	6.0	0.5

## Baby milk companies continue marketing code violations

Aggressive and unethical promotion of commercial baby milks is contributing to the needless deaths 1.5 million babies each year worldwide, according to a report published at the end of last year by the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN).

Coming shortly after the Church of England's General Synod called for a boycott of Nestlé

products, the report *Breaking the Rules 1991* names 41 baby milk companies, of which 26 are based in the European Community, including Nestlé which break the WHO Code of Marketing for Breast-Milk Substitutes. Marketing practices that encourage a mother to switch from breast to bottle, combined with company misinformation to mothers and health workers, are largely to blame for breastfeeding failure, it says.

No company has yet fully complied with the Code. Nestlé, the market leader, violates the code more often than its competitors, but other frequent violators are

Hipp, Mead-Johnson, Meiji, Milupa, Nutricia/Cow & Gate, Snow Brand and Wyeth.

■ *Breaking the Rules 1991* is available from Baby Milk Action, 23 St Andrew's Street, Cambridge CB2 3AX (Tel: 0223-464420), price £2.00.

## Bangladeshi mothers need more support

Health workers should do more to encourage breast-feeding among Bangladeshi mothers, and should monitor very closely the sorts of foods being offered when their babies are being weaned, says a study of the Bangladeshi community in Newcastle.

Breast-feeding rates were found to be low amongst the 26 Newcastle mothers interviewed, with 15 mothers (58 per cent) failing to breast feed at birth. By contrast, breast-feeding amongst the same mothers when they were in Bangladesh showed an 85 per cent rate for at least 18 months.

After three months many mothers started to offer babies cow's milk and sweet drinks such as Ribena, both of which can undermine continued breast-feeding. The author of the study, Dr Mohammad Shahjahan, called for more breast-feeding support for Bangladeshi mothers.

■ More details from Barbara Wallace, Healthy Communities Co-ordinator, Save the Children Fund, F Floor, Milburn House, Dean Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1LF

## Consumers to get low-fat rules

Proposed regulations on fat labelling are expected to be announced this spring.

In a letter to the Coronary Prevention Group (CPG), the minister John Gummer has declared his intention to produce draft regulations based on the Food Advisory Committee's recommendations for better labelling. The move follows a detailed critique of 'low fat' claims made by the CPG last summer (see *The Food Magazine*, No 14). The regulations will propose:

■ **Low fat** will mean less than 5% fat in the product, and less than 5 grams of fat in a typical serving

■ **Reduced fat** will mean that the total fat content must be less than three-quarters that of similar products that make no claims

■ **Fat free** will mean less than one sixth of one per cent of the content is fat (less than 0.15g per 100g).

Virtually all the 'low-fat' spreads currently on the market will have to be renamed as 'reduced fat' spreads. The use of the word 'very' (as in 'very low fat yogurt') is not recognised and will have to be dropped.

## Misleading the public on cholesterol

With a sensational headline 'Cutting Cholesterol Can Increase Risk of Heart Attacks' a *Sunday Times* article on December 22 claimed that a study in Finland showed that a low fat diet increased the risk of heart disease.

In a detailed rebuttal of this interpretation of the Finnish study, Michael O'Connor of the Coronary Prevention Group has pointed out that the study did not actually measure changes in people's diets. The study showed a small fall in blood cholesterol levels which appeared to be related to medication being given — indeed it appears that the drugs being given were closely linked to the increased risk of death. The real story was one about drugs which fail to prevent heart disease.



According to the WHO code, labels should show no babies and no idealised images of bottle feeding.



# The Slimming Scandal

**Sales of meal replacements are estimated to be worth over £20 million a year and are now the fastest growing sector of the slimming aids market. This follows the decline in popularity of very low calorie diets after adverse publicity and a critical government report.**

Meal replacements are typically sold either as biscuits or bars, or as mixes for drinks and other concoctions, providing between 100 and 225 kilocalories a 'meal'. They are generally designed to be eaten two to three times a day with slimmers eating one 'calorie controlled' normal meal of their choice during the day.

Advertisers now sell these products not just as 'slimming' products but as part of the 'health' market — products which offer a 'healthy aid to weight maintenance'. But as our survey shows most of these products are far from 'healthy'. And for manufacturers there is the successful marketing strategy of persuading slimmers to keep eating the product once they've reached their target weight.



## Too much, too quickly

Experts recommend that dieters should aim for a steady reduction in weight with an average loss of 1-2 lbs (0.5-1.0 kg) a week, achieved by cutting calories by 500-1,000 Kcal a day\*. Substantial weight loss takes time.

Cutting back even further on calories may result in an excessive loss of lean tissue, and a lowering of the metabolic rate. The body then needs less energy to sustain itself and dieters will regain weight at a faster rate once dieting stops — the reason why it is said that 'dieting makes you fat'.

Some products in our survey suggested weight loss in excess of this safe level, between 4-6 lbs a week. And none explicitly warn against losing weight too fast. Many products recommend a total daily calorie intake of 800 kcal for fast weight loss or 1,200 kcal for slower weight loss.

**Crunch and Slim** - 'lose up to 6lbs in your first week'.

**Slender** - suggests weight loss of 'up to 4lbs a week'.

**Lifestyle** - 'offers fast, permanent weight loss between 3-10lbs a week'.

**Slimfast** - says it offers 'fast' weight loss

**Body Plan** - offers a 'high speed' weight loss option

**Shapers** - promises 'rapid' weight loss.

None of these claims would be permitted under the EC proposal which states: 'The labelling, advertising and presentation of the products concerned shall not make any reference to the rate or amount of weight loss which may result from their use or to a reduction in the sense of hunger or an increase in the sense of satiety.'

The EC proposals suggest meal replacements should contain between 275 and 400 kcals per meal. All the products we examined fell below the recommended range.



## Poor nutrition

Care must always be taken about the quality of the diet while losing weight. One would expect a slimming product to be low in fats and sugars and high in essential nutrients. But despite claims to be 'wholesome' and 'nutritionally balanced', the majority of the products we surveyed, particularly the bars and biscuits, were high in fats and/or sugars.

### Fat

The EC proposes to set a maximum of no more than 30 per cent of calories from fat in meal replacement products. Fat levels in all but one (Lifestyle) of the seven biscuit products ranged from 37 to 47 per cent calories from fat. The highest were two Limmits products (45 and 47 per cent) and one Slender bar (45 per cent). In respect of fats and sugars the biscuit type products were generally no more 'healthy' than most normal biscuits or cereal bars. The drink mixes were lower in fat than the biscuit products.

### Sugar

All the products — from the chocolate coated sweet biscuits and bars to the fruit or chocolate flavoured drink mixes — were highly sweetened. In two products virtually half the calories were from sugars — in the case of one Limmits bar 46 per cent and in one Slender product 47 per cent.

Some products made a virtue out of their high sugar levels: 'You can eat Dutch Chocolate Cake for breakfast. With Lifestyles your sweet tooth will not be a problem.'

None of the drink mixes specified their sugar content although ingredients lists included several forms of sugars. Two products contained artificial sweetener in addition to other forms of sugars.

## Protein

All the biscuit and bar products were low in protein.

## Fibre

Only four of the seven biscuit and bar products could claim to be high in fibre. Not all drinks gave information on fibre content — only two out of five could be called high fibre on the information provided.

## Vitamins

Advertising and labels make much of the vitamins and minerals added to products. However these nutrients are added to products with generally poor nutritional quality: adding vitamins does not turn a sweet fatty biscuit into a healthy biscuit.

Slimmers eating a varied, nutritious but moderately low calorie diet are unlikely to suffer from lack of essential nutrients. If a vitamin supplement is necessary then it would generally be better, both nutritionally and financially, to take a good quality multivitamin and mineral tablet daily.



## Not lower in calories

Generally, meal replacement slimming products are not significantly lower in calories than many snack foods.

There is nothing 'nutritionally special' about meal replacement products which can help you lose weight. By law a slimming or diet product must say it can only help slimmers lose weight if used 'as part of a calorie controlled diet'. If you lose weight using these products it is because you are eating less calories — you could equally do the same eating any ordinary chocolate biscuit or cereal bar. But no dietitian would sensibly recommend such a diet for losing weight and staying healthy. It would be far better to choose lower calorie, more nutritious balanced meals.



## Encourage unhealthy eating habits

Meal replacement products may actually encourage the kind of eating habits which led to the weight problem in the first place. Their emphasis on sweet, and often high fat snack foods, does little to encourage the kind of habits necessary to sustain a healthy weight.

One of the biggest problems slimmers face is keeping their weight steady once they have lost their excess weight. This requires changes not just in the kinds of food eaten but also in eating patterns. Meal replacements do very little to re-educate slimmers' eating habits — and so many diets are doomed to failure. It is perhaps not surprising that meal replacement manufacturers, such as Slimfast, Slender Plan, Shapers, Crunch



## How the meal replacement products shape up

Brand (Manufacturer)	Product	Type	Calories per meal	% Cals from fat	% Calories from sugars	% Calories from protein	Cost per meal
<b>Proposed EC standard</b>			<b>275-400</b>	<b>&lt; 30%</b>	<b>no standard</b>	<b>25-50%</b>	
Crunch & Slim (Crookes Healthcare)	Orange & Raisin Biscuit Meals	B	205	39	not given; contains brown sugar, refined sugar syrup	8	56p
Limmits (Scholl Consumer Products)	Mixed fruit milk chocolate-coated bar	B	210	40	46	10	66p
Limmits (Scholl Consumer Products)	Chocolate cream biscuits	B	207	47	22	5	50p
Limmits (Scholl Consumer Products)	Apple Chewy bar	B	183	45	33	8.5	65p
Carnation Slender (Nestlé)	Date, Peanut & Raisin bar	B	248	45	not given	11.5	41p
Carnation Slender (Nestlé)	Chocolate dipped plum fibre bar	B	180	37	47	6	69p
Lifestyle	Oat & Raisin cookie	B	197	30	38	10	95p
Shapers (Boots)	Blackberry & Apple yogurt based diet meal	D	90	2	not given; contains sugar & artificial sweetener (aspartame)	44	64p
Slimfast (Thompson Medical Co)	Chocolate Royale flavour drink mix	D	200	14*	not given; contains dextrose fructose & artificial sweetener	28*	65p
Slender Plan (Carnation, Nestlé)	Raspberry flavour drink mix	D	225	2*	not given; contains glucose syrup & sugar	29*	55p
Body Plan (Reckitt & Coleman)	Chocolate crunch flavour mix	D	100	9	not given; contains fructose, dextrose, artificial sweetener (aspartame)	51	93p
Firmaloss (Weider)	Dutch Chocolate flavour protein mix	D	170	5	not given; contains sugar & dextrose	49	50p

**Key:** B = biscuit and bar products D = drink mix products \* = made up with skimmed milk

and Slim, and Lifestyle, recommend slimmers to keep on using their products indefinitely.



### Selling less for more

For their content, meal replacement products are expensive. The cost of a biscuit or drink mix 'meal' ranged from 50p to over £1.00. A month's recommended usage could cost a would-be slimmer between £30 and £78, plus of course their regular daily meal.

\*Obesity and Overweight. A briefing paper prepared for the Health Education Authority by Professor J S Garrow, Department of Human Nutrition, St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, London, 1991.

Researched and written by Sue Dibb.  
Additional research: Juliet David.

## EC Directive

The draft EC directive on foods intended for energy restricted diets proposes that meal replacement products should fulfil the following criteria:

- Calories must not be less than 275 kcals and not more than 400 kcals per meal.
- Protein – not less than 25% and not more than 50% of the total energy
- Fat – not more than 30% of the total energy
- No advertising or labelling of the product should make any reference to the rate or amount of weight loss which may result from their use or to a reduction in the sense of hunger or an increase in the sense of satiety.

## PRODUCT RESEARCH REPORTS

The Food Commission publishes detailed product research reports examining leading brands and their markets, consumer perceptions, product claims and current legislation on product standards and marketing.

### Bio-yogurts

Nine leading brands  
30 pages  
Price £125  
Oct 1991

### Meal Replacement Slimming Products

Twelve leading brands  
32 pages  
Price £125  
Feb 1992

### Available now

From The Publications Department,  
The Food Commission,  
102 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3DA.



# NFA welcomes The Health of the Nation

**The National Food Alliance has welcomed the publication of the Government's Health of the Nation Green Paper as a public health initiative of the greatest importance. In its response summarised here, the NFA urges the Department of Health to maintain and develop this commitment to public health and preventive medicine.**

The Green Paper, which sets targets on health, has the potential to improve the quality of life of almost everybody in England. However, one message should shine through in the sections concerned with food, nutrition and public health, says the Alliance: the best diet for good health, the best diet for protection against many diseases, and the best diet to stay slim, are all the same diet. This clear positive message, derived from a consensus of expert reports worldwide, and now effectively endorsed by the 1991 COMA report, is vital in nutrition education.

The Alliance is calling for the targets in *The Health of the Nation* to be extended to include not only coronary heart disease, stroke and obesity, but also cancers of the breast and colon, diabetes, liver disease and tooth decay, identifying these as major diet-related diseases that can be prevented as well as treated.

On achieving these targets, the Alliance makes clear that health education is not enough. 'The Secretary of State rightly says there needs to be a proper balance between individual responsibility and government action,' says the Alliance response. 'But it needs to be recognised that the greatest burden of ill-health is suffered by those least able to help themselves, including people with low incomes and the unemployed, people who are chronically ill or disabled, and the elderly. Public health is by its nature a public responsibility, requiring action from public servants and funding with public money.'

To make healthy choices easy choices, intervention is also required. That means removing financial incentives that encourage the

growing, rearing, making and selling of less healthy food. One key area that the Alliance targets for reform is the Common Agricultural Policy and its subsidy system. In future this should be made to work for, rather than against, public health by encouraging the farming and food industries to produce and manufacture healthy foods.

The Alliance is also calling for the setting up of a new national agency — a Food Health and Safety Executive, including a National Nutrition Council, answerable to Parliament. With powers similar to those in other countries, these bodies should set and achieve targets for food, nutrition and public health policy — this would be more effective than the present split of responsibilities between different government departments.

The Alliance also wants to see more consumer-friendly targets, described in terms of food and not just nutrients. These targets should recommend that people need to eat more vegetables and fruit, more bread and cereal-based foods and less total fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt.

The Alliance welcomes the opportunity that the Green Paper gives for new thinking within Government and for forging new working partnerships between Government and organisations already working in the public interest, such as the National Food Alliance.

'The British system whereby public health policy is determined in secret by committee of experts appointed and monitored by government, has been discredited', says the Alliance submission. It recommends that the veil of secrecy should be lifted from Government

advisory committees and all other officially appointed bodies. Membership should be broadened to include full representation of professional, health, voluntary and consumer organisations.

A section on food eaten in institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons and the armed forces recommends the introduction of nutritional standards for all institutional catering.

The Green Paper's proposals on food safety are inadequate says the Alliance as no targets for improvement in the incidence of food-borne disease are proposed. Targets for the reduction of food poisoning should be set.

A healthier national diet can be achieved, says the Alliance response, but it will require a concerted national campaign involving health professions, industry, non-governmental organisations and the media. Clear messages about food, nutrition and public health are needed, and the government should give more support and endorsement to the work of non-governmental organisations, including members of the National Food Alliance.

## EAT WELL... LIVE WELL THE VEGETARIAN WAY

The Vegetarian Society and the National Food Alliance are jointly producing an attractive booklet that shows how to eat a healthy vegetarian diet. It will be published in July. For more information contact: Jane Brophy, The Vegetarian Society, Parkdale, Dunham Road, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA14 4QG.

■ The address of the Alliance is 102 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3DA  
Telephone: 071-935 2889  
Fax: 071-487 5692.

Organisations wishing to apply for membership of the Alliance should please write to the secretary, Jeanette Longfield, at the above address.

**This page has been contributed by the National Food Alliance**

## Aims and membership of the NFA

The National Food Alliance is an association of voluntary, professional, health, consumer and other organisations. Its purpose is to develop food and agriculture policy in order to benefit public health, the environment, trade, employment, the economy, and the common good, nationally and internationally.

## Members of the NFA include:

Action and Information on Sugars  
Baby Milk Action  
Caroline Walker Trust  
Children's Society  
Christian Aid  
Coronary Prevention Group  
Council for the Protection of Rural England  
Elm Farm Research  
Food Additives Campaign Team  
Food Commission  
GMB  
Green Alliance  
Guild of Food Writers  
McCarrison Society  
Maternity Alliance  
National Community Health Resource  
National Council for Voluntary Organisations  
National Farmers' Union  
National Federation of Consumer Groups  
National Federation of Women's Institutes  
National Forum for Coronary Heart Disease Prevention  
National Federation of City Farms  
OXFAM  
Parents for Safe Food  
Pesticides Trust  
Soil Association  
UK Federation of Home Economists  
Vegetarian Society  
Women's Farming Union  
World Cancer Research Fund

## Observers of the NFA include:

Common Ground  
Consumers' Association  
Consumers in the European Community Group  
Health Education Authority  
National Consumer Council

## Officers:

Professor Philip James (President)  
Geoffrey Cannon (Chairman)  
Jeanette Longfield (Secretary)  
Suzanne May (Treasurer)



# Can CAP be SAFELY reformed?

asks Hugh Raven, SAFE's Co-ordinator

The recent launch of the SAFE Alliance (see page 4) adds a new and timely voice to the debate on EC food and agriculture policy. Its creation at this critical stage in the GATT and CAP reform debates is no accident. With the EC's farming policy up for grabs, SAFE's members want to make sure that the grabbing is not done by the wrong interests.

The food scares of the late 1980s brought home to many the relationship between the inanimate 'oven-ready chicken' on the supermarket shelf and the two-legged feathered creature clucking in the broiler shed. The conditions in the shed came to be seen rightly, as a consumer issue: that was, after all, where the hen was collecting its hormones and antibiotic residues, as well as picking up its salmonella. The logic of this connection still seems lost on some of the more conventional consumer organisations. SAFE is trying to show that whether food prices, animal welfare, pesticide residues or genetic diversity are your concern, you have an intimate interest in our farming policy.

But how can our shared concern about the way that agribusiness has dominated food production be turned into more consumer-friendly agriculture policies? After years of paying farmers just for their crude quantities of output, is it possible to reward them for environmental- and consumer-friendly production?

The answer must be yes. SAFE is looking into how deeply-felt public concerns can be addressed as an integral part of the system of subsidies. Our principal in simple: if farmers are to continue to receive public financial support (which they need to stay in business), it is legitimate to ask that they farm in a way which addresses public concerns.

The European Commission's plans for reform of the CAP — the 'MacSharry proposals' — move some way in this direction. However, many of Britain's farms (which are very large in EC terms) will not be fully compensated for the price cuts which form the basis of these proposals. This has led to vociferous UK Government opposition.

Debate on the MacSharry proposals in the EC Council of Ministers has so far been characterised by shifting alliances of member states opposing the reforms. Most, however, recognise that some version of these plans will go through, since the status quo is not an option. With uncertainty over GATT, and an expected low-key Portuguese presidency of the Council of Ministers during the first six months of 1992, progress is not expected to be fast.

The UK General Election will intervene before the matter is settled. That will be quickly followed in July by the UK taking the presidency from the Portuguese. Mr Gummer is pinning his hopes on a gambler's treble: no (or minimal) progress on MacSharry under the Portuguese, a Conservative victory in the General Election, and his survival to deliver a CAP reform more palatable to Britain's larger farmers.

Whether or not Mr Gummer can collect on this accumulator, the CAP is unlikely to be reformed before July. Thereafter, Britain will have a crucial role. Which gives SAFE, its many member organisations, and, for that matter, everybody else with an interest in our food and countryside, opportunity to have their say on what they want. There's still everything to play for.

# Tesco launches 'caring' labels

Three new symbols are being launched by Tesco to encourage 'caring' shoppers, writes Robin Jenkins. Their new labels will feature products 'green, clean and lean'.

The 'Green Choice' logo is used on own-brand non-food items, ranging from toilet paper to toiletries



and focuses on reduced, recycled and re-usable packaging and the replacement of environmentally harmful materials.

The 'Healthy Eating Choice' is used for own-brand food items deemed high in fibre or low (or reduced) sugar, salt or fat.

The third initiative is called 'Nature's Choice' a loosely defined mixture of semi-organic and animal-friendlier products. The idea behind these symbols is to be welcomed, but one major shortcoming was revealed at the launch.

Tesco has made its three initiatives mutually exclusive. Customers have to decide whether they are going to be 'lean', 'clean' or 'green' because each product is marketed in only one of the three categories.

A semi-skimmed organic milk could be both 'lean' and 'clean', but is only labelled as 'clean', maybe to justify the price mark-up.

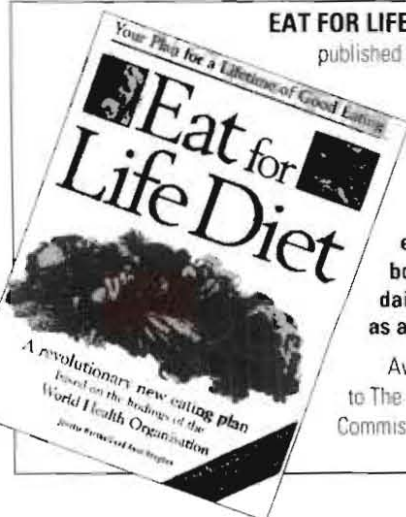
It might be a step towards recognising our concerns, but well over 90 per cent of the shelving in the average Tesco store is still devoted to products that are of dubious or negative value to health, harm the environment, are grossly overpackaged and do not get recycled.



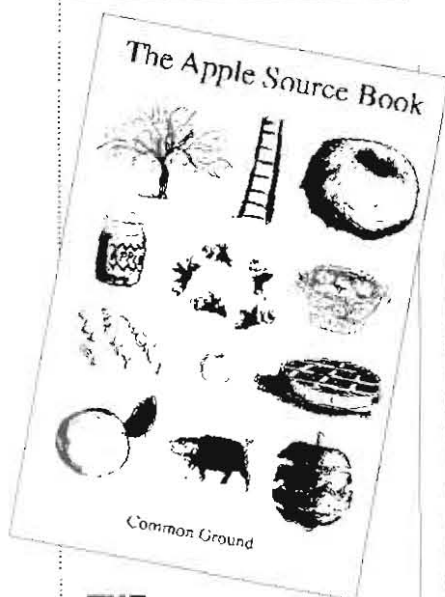
**EAT FOR LIFE DIET**, by Jeanette Marshall and Anne Heughan, published by Vermilion, £8.99

Whether you want to lose weight or just to eat a healthy diet, the answer comes out much the same: follow the World Health Organisation's recommendations. And if, like most of us, you want them interpreted into everyday language, with an extensive set of menus to try, then you will need a book like this one. And if you want the UK's latest daily vitamin and mineral recommendations thrown in as an appendix, then this is definitely the book you want!

Available from bookshops or send a cheque for £10 (payable to The Food Commission) to Publications Dept, The Food Commission, 102 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3DA.







## THE APPLE SOURCE BOOK

A small, precise, thorough book containing a fascinating blend of facts, recipes and anecdotes from a variety of well-known writers. Beautifully printed on 100% recycled paper, it is highly recommended. Available from Common Ground, 45 Shelton Street, London WC2H 9HJ, price £4.95 SW

## AN END TO HUNGER

Solon L Barraclough  
Zed Books/UNRISD, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9BU  
£12.95 pb, 1991, ISBN 0862329930

A book to decode, this one, and I'm only part way through doing that. But I am convinced that it has a lot to say from a mature, experienced perspective.

The author left the FAO to head a small UN think-tank, the UN Research Institute for Social Development, where they speak a language all their own. Chapter 1 is entitled Degenerative Growth in Bi-Modal Agrarian Structures. This actually refers to profoundly significant processes: degenerative growth is a situation where a region is getting richer and more economically developed but a large portion of its population is getting poorer. Bi-modal means that two forms of agriculture exist in one area which differ in the size of farms, the markets they serve and the socio-political position of the cultivators that control them.

There follows 250 pages packed

with case histories that underpin the author's main proposition: greater popular participation is needed in the food system if we are to ensure global food security.

His concluding paragraph is refreshingly easy to comprehend. He writes: 'future historians may lump together present-day capitalist and socialist systems as interesting minor variants of the same mode of production.' He calls for governments of all colours to adopt 'more sustainable and equitable development strategies' and to show 'greater respect for basic human rights and democratic participation'. Never let it be said that food is not a political issue. TL

## WORKING IN HOTEL AND CATERING

Roy C Wood  
Routledge, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE  
1992, £10.99 pb, ISBN 015047838

This is a detailed review of labour in the hotel and restaurant trade, largely from a sociological perspective.

With several hundred references it examines trends and changing relations in catering, with a key section analysing the relevance of Braverman's de-skilling theories (concluding that reality is more complex). The book's focus is the commercial 'hospitality' sector of catering, with few references to hospital services, only one to school meals, and — surprisingly — only one reference to fast food and none to the 'conveyor belt' methods pioneered by the likes of McDonalds.

Roy Wood also raises questions about the extent to which management exploits workers by requiring low skill, seasonal employment and flexible hours, and how much the business actually attracts people who want mobility and transient social relations.

It concludes that there may be widespread malaise in the catering industry but this is common to low paid industries. What makes it unusual is the degree to which the workforce comes into close public contact with customers in a master-servant role.

TL

## DIGESTING THE FOOD AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Ben Fine and Judith Wright  
Discussion paper in economics, Birkbeck College, 7/15 Gresse Street, London W1P 1PA  
1991, no charge.

Ben Fine and his colleagues can produce excellent work but I don't rate this as the best. This booklet seeks to show that our food choices and our extent of knowledge about nutrition are based on subtle and complex influences. Nothing new in that. It suggests that the availability of a food is itself information, at least in so far as one can try the food for oneself. OK so far.

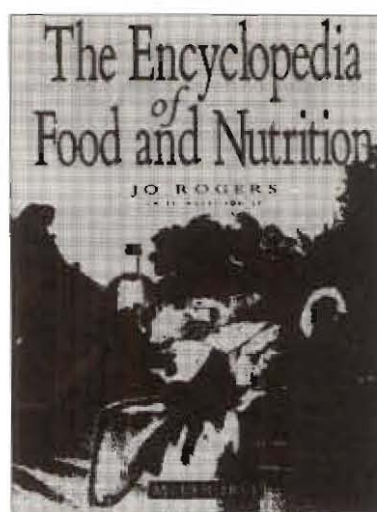
The paper seeks to show the limits of government thinking and the hypocrisy of industry spokespeople who claim that the market dictates what people want and deny they have any role in influencing that market. All good stuff, but none of it very startling for a *Food Magazine* reader. In fact there is nothing I found in this document which struck me as new and interesting, and quite a lot that seemed poorly, er, digested! The style of writing is difficult and the double-spaced typewriter design is shoddy. To redeem it, there is one good section in which food campaigners are credited with a useful democratic role — one which should not be falsely categorised as extremist.

TL

## THE COMPOSITION OF FOODS

The 5th edition of McCance is published at £29.95 in paperback from RSC, Turpin Transactions, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Herts SG6 1HN (ISBN 085186391).

It doesn't have the detail of the individual supplements (eg no differentiation of sugars) and it lacks the amino acid and fatty acid tables of the 4th edition, but it is still an essential reference work.

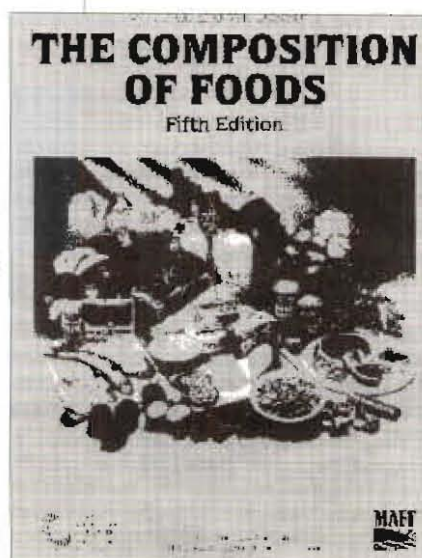


## THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FOOD AND NUTRITION

An Australian import, this is an alternative to McCance, and what it loses in detail (typically only a dozen nutrients per item) it makes up for in range: such Aussie staples as snake meat, sapsago cheese, hyacinth bean, ginko nut are analysed.

It includes over 1700 foods from many cultures using over 1200 colour photographs. Each entry gives details about the food's origin and history, lists alternative names, and gives practical information about buying and storage, preparation and use, processing methods and the range of varieties available.

A snip at £25 hardback from Merehurst, 9 Trinity Centre, Park Farm, Wellingborough NN8 3ZB (ISBN 1853911690).





# Ten cheers for Columbus

**The New World explorers brought back a lot more than potatoes to European kitchens. Tim Lobstein looks at ten modern foods that started as novelties from across the Atlantic.**

French fries dipped in tomato ketchup isn't just another example of American fast food culture ripping off the *pommes frites* and *sauce tomate* of haute cuisine. Both products were essentially American in origin — both potato and tomato plants were first discovered and cultivated for human food on the other side of the Atlantic.

The South American rubber tree, *Hevea brasiliensis*, was to have a major impact on the industrial world in the 19th century. But another type of latex was to find its way from the Americas into our food supply — and it's this which starts our celebration of 500 years of post-Columbian cuisine.

## 1 Bubble Gum

The basis of all chewing and bubble gums is a soft, slightly rubbery-textured gum which does not dissolve in the mouth. Its origin is chicle, a latex from the sapodilla tree of Southern America. The word *chichitl* means saliva in the Aztec language — and is presumably the reply the Spanish got when they asked the locals what on earth they had in their mouths.

## 2 Chocolate-fudge sundae

Two of the all-time most popular flavours — chocolate and vanilla — are discoveries from the New World. The Cacao tree was well-known to the Aztecs who liked to drink an infusion of the dried roasted beans which they called *xocolatl*. Small amounts of caffeine and another stimulant, theobromine, are present in chocolate.

The Aztecs found the taste rather bitter, and tried adding various spices, of which a favourite came from the seed pods of a local flower, a climbing orchid. The pods are a delicately curved shape and were called *vanilla* or little vagina by the newly-arrived Spaniards.

## 3 Custard's last stand

True custard is, of course, a blend of eggs and milk, but good old British legalised adulteration allows a mix of cornflour and colouring to call itself custard powder.

The main ingredient, cornflour, is made from

maize. Sweetcorn and most other varieties of maize are also known as Indian Corn, and Columbus found over 200 cultivated varieties. He himself was partial to the Cuban sort 'boiled, roasted or ground into flour'. The value of maize as a cheap and easily grown staple food was not lost on the arriving conquistadors.

As a food fit for peasants and slaves, maize has spread through much of the sub-tropical world, developing its own language and cuisine — tacos, tortillas, hominy, cornbread, mealie-meal.

## 4 Guacamole

Tomatoes, of course, are one New World ingredient used in this rich Mexican dish, but so too is another South American fruit, the avocado. The word comes from the Aztec *Ahuacuahatl* which literally translates to testicle, though it is not known whether this relates to the food's stimulating properties, the appearance of the fruit on the tree or the size of an Aztec's personal attributes.

## 5 Coca-Cola

As the name implies this product admits to two ingredients, both derived from plants. The Coca is from an extract of leaves of the coca shrub, a South American native, and is of course the origin of cocaine. The practice of adding this ingredient has, however, been abandoned since 1903. Cola comes from the African cola nut.

In fact the two active ingredients in cola drinks today are neither of these substances but instead are sugar (about ten per cent by weight, or the equivalent of more than twelve sugar lumps in a standard can) and caffeine. A can of coke is equivalent to about a cup of instant coffee, but new varieties have been test marketed in America with 'all the sugar and twice the caffeine'. And for the ultra health conscience you can try 'clear coke' a regular coke without the colouring!

## 6 Gin & Tonic

Juniper berries, the essential ingredient that gave gin its name, have been picked in Europe for thousands of years. But the unique bitter character of the tonic owes its origins to the New World, and specifically to quinine, derived from the bark of the chinchona tree.

Newly arrived Jesuits saw Amazonian Indians boiling up an infusion, and found it helped to treat scarlet fever, smallpox and malaria. It was originally added to water and served as a medicinal tonic — hence its name. It took British colonialists to demonstrate how much more palatable it was with a dash of alcohol.

## 7 Goulash

Where would Hungarian cuisine be without the discovery of paprika? To be fair it was a rather different variety of capsicum that Chanca, the ship's doctor with Columbus, described. But the whole great family of sweet peppers and chillies is derived from varieties which have been known to Americans for over 2000 years.

Within a hundred years of Columbus' voyage capsicums were growing over much of central Europe and the Balkans. A hundred years later still and the Portuguese were cultivating them throughout much of the Indies and South East Asia.

## 8 Peanut butter

Virtually a staple food of many children here and in the USA, peanut butter is something you love or loathe. South Americans have eaten peanuts for thousands of years — some were even found in tombs dating back to 950 BC.

Peanuts are not a real nut, botanically, but several other real nuts evolved in the New World to become popular in the Old: cashew nuts, Pecan nuts and, of course, Brazil nuts — a crop which encourages the preservation of tropical rainforests.

## 9 Trail mix

This is really an excuse to list an assortment of New World treats which we now take for granted — sunflower seeds, for example, and pumpkin seeds; perhaps not the Californian raisin, but certainly the pineapple, the guava and the papaya (pawpaw).

## 10 Turkey burgers

Burgers — the flattened meatball that you could eat in a sandwich — were thought by Americans (or at least by a clever American marketing agency) to have a reputable history in the German city of Hamburg. There is little to support this notion, but the hamburger and its many progeny (including the Hindu version, the lamburger) now circle the globe.

Thanks largely to the US Army and the contracts they issued for supplying their forces with home-style food, we can now buy identical double-whoppers with melted cheese in over 25,000 outlets around the world, with five new stores being opened every day.

It wasn't the burger but the much-exploited North American turkey I meant to describe here. They are now bred to be so obese that they can no longer mate with each other and have to be inseminated artificially. But that's another story, one we can't hold Columbus responsible for.

Additional research by Hereward Hill



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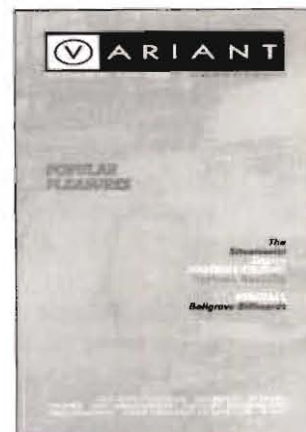
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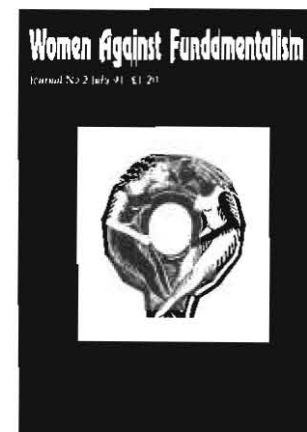
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## Global coke deals

You could be forgiven for thinking that the Olympic Games represent society's highest ideals: but the 1992 Games also offer the world's largest advertising arena.

Coca Cola is the oldest and biggest Olympic sponsor. Rumour has it they are planning to spend at least \$100 million on sponsorship and other promotional deals for this year's Games. Coke likes to think that the Olympics provide the perfect embodiment of the phrase 'world class' and knows that the commercial benefits are incalculable.

The soft drinks company is just one of many big name Olympic sponsors which include Mars, Philips, Seiko, Kodak and Visa. 'The whole thing is moving towards a one-stop shopping concept', says Coke's sponsorship consultant Bob Cohn.

And where, you might ask, are the 1996 Olympic Games to be held? Why, in Atlanta Georgia, Coca Cola's world head-quarters.

And you thought the Olympics were about sport and fair play?

## Cola wars

Coca Cola's Arch rivals, Pepsi scored an unprecedented propaganda success last year when Gulf War pictures showed Stormin' Norman Schwarzkopf negotiating an Iraqi surrender from behind a can of Diet Pepsi. Hey, there's an idea those sponsorship boys could get working on...

## Nice work 1

It always helps to have a friend in high places. Even better if he comes to work for you.

We hear that MAFF's Chief Scientist, Dr Mike Knowles, has taken up a lucrative offer from Coca Cola Europe to become Head of Regulatory Affairs.

## Nice work 2

After years of pretending that nutrition was really a matter for the Department of Health, MAFF suddenly announced they were planning to sink £1.65m on a research programme on antioxidant nutrients such as vitamins A, C and E.

Which ministry official will be overseeing this programme? The ministry was a little coy about this — it seems they don't really work like that these days. They've brought someone in on loan. An academic? Ah, no, says the ministry, not exactly. Who, then, will be in charge of all this money, if not a civil servant or a university boffin? Er, well, says the ministry, we've got this chap, Dr David Richardson. Works for Nestlé.



## Cadbury's hot air

With Easter on the way, Cadbury's are sending a hot-air balloon, looking like a giant Cadbury's Cream Egg on a tour of schools. Its purpose is, of course, purely 'educational', as the crew will speak to pupils and give demonstration on the physical principals behind flight ... pull the other one it's got Cadbury's cream eggs on it!

## Free school meals from McDonalds

The best and brightest children in Woodall School, Herts, will not just get a pat on the back from their headteacher, Ray Randall, but an extra special gift courtesy of Ronald McDonald.

It's free burgers for diligent pupils. Children who achieve their classroom goals are rewarded with a voucher for free McDonald's food. Hertfordshire Education Authority have shown great interest in extending the scheme, as a way of raising school standards! Herts now has barely one in three secondary school children taking school meals, the rest being encouraged to bring their own ... or possibly go to the fast food store?

## Hunters for the hungry

'Second harvest' schemes, offering food which is often past it's sell-by date to the poor are commonplace in the USA. Latest philanthropic support has come from 'Hunters for the Hungry' — a pro-gun lobby seeking justification for its hunting practices by passing on its spoils to soup kitchens.

## Ribena give away

What image does Christmas conjure up? Why, Ribena, of course. In the run up to Christmas, Ribena employed promotional agency LGM to offer 500 Junior and Middle Schools two free cases of Ribena with Ribenaberry balloons and posters for use at their Christmas parties.

And what does summer conjure up? Yes, generous Ribena will also be sending a second package to 2000 — yes two thousand — schools in June for use at summer fetes.

LGM's slogan is 'Intelligent Sales Promotion' — but how intelligent is it to encourage young children to consume a product with fifteen sugar lumps in each carton?

## Up the GONGO

A GONGO is a third world acronym for government-owned non-government organisation. One example is the National Consumer Council — the official government-funded consumer organisation. Its Chair, appointed by government, is currently Lady Judith Wilcox, a sea food trader.

Stung by accusations of being industry-friendly during the food scandals of 1988-90, MAFF set up its Consumer Panel. Meetings are chaired by a Minister and MAFF publishes the Panel's minutes — and compulsive reading they are too. MAFF wanted 'ordinary consumers' and turned to the consumer GONGOs such as the Consumer Councils for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Consumers in the European Community Group, plus the non-GONGO Consumers' Association.

In addition, but not so well-known, are regular meetings which take place between Mr Gummer and the Chairs of selected GONGOs, as well as groups such as the Women's Institutes, the National Housewives Association and now the National Food Alliance. This arrangement is an opportunity to 'air views'. It has no formal decision-making status in the Ministry and despite a commitment to more openness, no minutes of these meetings are publicly circulated, unlike those for the Consumer Panel.

## Safe sex

Compared with turkeys of twenty years ago, genetic selection has led to such broad-breasted beasts that the males (stags) can no longer mount the females, and reproduction now relies on artificial insemination. Two or three times a week the stags are milked of their semen by having their vent areas manipulated by a team of poultry workers until the semen is ejected. Then the females are caught and held upside down while a tube is inserted and a worker blows down it.