

The

FOOD MAGAZINE

Campaigning for safer, healthier food for all

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Food companies snare children in their webs

Makers of soft drinks, sweets and sugary cereals are designing websites to catch the attention of children barely six or seven years old.

Cheaper than TV advertising, and completely outside the control of the Advertising Standards Authority, commercial websites are enticing youngsters with games and prizes, and encouraging them to send in their names and addresses. Children may also be asked for email addresses for themselves and their friends. In return for this direct marketing information, the children receive points which get them small gifts, games, software or mobile phone ringtones.

Some websites require food products to be purchased beforehand, so that children can log onto the website with codes from the product wrappers, giving the children access to exclusive parts of the company's website. The companies pushing their products use these subtle and cleverly-designed websites to promote brands such as Nesquik, Frosties, Panda Pops, Chewits, Skittles and Kinder Surprise.

Children usually view these websites on their own or with their friends, and they are unlikely to be accompanied by a teacher or parent when they send their details to the food company.

Techniques such as these, that can entice children to make direct relationships with junk food promoters, would be severely criticised if it occurred on children's television or in children's comics.

That companies can do so freely on the internet says less about the open nature of the internet than it does about the appalling morality of the food companies, which clearly see no problem in undermining parental controls and encouraging unhealthy diets.

See our feature, pages 6-7



Kinder tell parents their website is 'backed by tests carried out by a team of psychologists on a representative sample of children of the relevant age brackets'. This may be reassuring to some, but it sounds kind of scary to us.

Needless to say, if children wish to play on the site they must use 'MAGICodes' which are only available by buying Kinder Egg chocolates.

Is this the saltiest pudding you can buy?

You may not expect to eat more salt in your dessert than in your main course, but processed puddings often need a flavour boost, and manufacturers happily add a pinch of salt to help. We went shopping and found many products containing a hefty one percent salt, and some that were even saltier still.

The M&S lemon sponge (pictured) provides 1.3 grams of salt in one portion -



that's about the amount you would get if you ate two bags of salt and vinegar crisps, and adds up to around a quarter of the maximum recommended for an adult's daily intake.

But this was not the saltiest pudding. We found one product that states

clearly on its label that

it contains over five grams of salt in a portion. To find out which pudding this was (it came from one of the major supermarket chains) turn to page eight.



The Food Magazine is published quarterly by The Food Commission, a national non-profit organisation campaigning for the right to safe, wholesome food. We rely entirely on our supporters, allowing us to be completely independent, taking no subsidy from the government, the food industry or advertising. We aim to provide independently researched information on the food we eat to ensure good quality food for all.

The Food Commission Research Charity aims to relieve ill health and advance public education through research, education and the promotion of better quality food.

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Can companies self-regulate?

Until last year, the Department of Health had resisted tackling the food industry on advertising, despite growing pressure from parents and health organisations. But this July it called industry to the negotiating table after a public consultation found *'overwhelming support for some restrictions on the marketing of unhealthy food and drinks to children'*.

The Food Commission is delighted to hear that the Department of Health has officially recognised that food promotion has an effect on food choices, and that it will adopt a broad definition of food promotion. But can the government's favoured approach – self regulation – really protect children? Indeed, where's the proof that this has ever worked? What could ever persuade an individual company to take the risk of curbing their marketing of unhealthy food unless they could be absolutely certain that a competitor wouldn't nip in with a promotion to children, stealing their share of the market? Without regulation to create a level playing field, how would responsible companies be rewarded? And how would a voluntary approach be monitored?

The problems of monitoring and evaluation seem arcane, but they would be central to the success of the self-regulatory approach. If we have no criteria for success (or failure), how can we ever say if something is working, and helping to improve diets? The facts and figures of advertising campaigns and their impact on sales are kept commercially secret. Unless all companies were required to release their marketing intelligence into the public domain, they will keep their secrets closely guarded.

The US food industry is putting up a vigorous defence against statutory controls and we can be sure that the UK food industry will take the same approach. They know that self-regulation equals self-preservation in terms of maintaining their sales for highly sugared, fatty or salty foods. A government-commissioned document recently published by the Swedish Institute for Public Health called for the consumption of snack foods, sweets, ice creams and cookies to be cut by one half. This is a clear message to industry: sales should be cut by 50% – something the industry just laughs at.

We don't believe the industry will self-regulate effectively. But how long will it take for the Department of Health and the European Commission to come to the same conclusion? And how long must we wait for some decent regulations to ensure that food marketers promote the same foods that the government tells us we should eat more of?

● **Grocery Manufacturers of America position statement: see www.gmbrands.com/news/docs/NewsRelease.cfm?DocID=1542&**

● **Swedish Institute of Public Health proposals to improve diets: see www.fhi.se/upload/ar2005/rapporter/healthydietaryhabitsphysicalactivitysummary0502.pdf**

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NEW! Sign up for emails

The Food Commission sends out occasional news and information by email. To receive such emails, please send your name to news@foodcomm.org.uk
We will not pass your name or email address to any other person or organisation.

Can the Food Commission help you?

● Are you planning non-commercial research that needs expert input on food and health?
● Do you need nutritional or product survey work to be undertaken?
The Food Commission may be able to help you. Contact Kath on 020 7837 2250.

Independent slammed for baby-milk ads

Campaigners fighting to protect infant health from baby-food marketing have criticised *The Independent* newspaper for running advertisements and advertorial from the baby-food company Milupa.

The campaign group Baby Milk Action told *The Independent* that they believed the advertisements contravened the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, which restricts companies from promoting breastmilk substitutes to mothers. UK legislation does not fully implement the International Code and companies regularly exploit its loopholes. Advertising of infant formula is permitted within the health care system to health professionals, while advertising of follow-on milks is permitted anywhere.

The Milupa advertisements appeared in *The Independent* in May and June this year. The first was headed, 'Why our milk is the very best alternative to breastmilk'. Baby Milk Action said that they believed the advertisement falsely implied equivalence between breastmilk and Milupa formulas.

The second advertisement promoted Milupa's follow-on milk, claiming that it contains beneficial prebiotic ingredients. Baby Milk Action points out that, 'Even though companies insist that they are not, follow-on milks clearly are breastmilk substitutes. They are just targeted at the older baby. They replace the liquid part of an infant's diet which should, after six months (and on into the second year if both mother and baby are happy about this) ideally be breastmilk.'

The Independent allowed further promotion by Milupa in the form of 'advertorial' – paid-for advertising space that appears in the body of the newspaper as if it were one of their articles. The Food Commission has long been critical of advertorial, since it blurs the line between marketing and information and can allow company claims and selective reporting to masquerade as properly researched journalism, without the opportunity for balance, questioning or criticism.

Milupa's advertorial, that appeared in *The Independent* in June quoted one mother as saying how 'enormously difficult' breastfeeding was and that she was 'blistered to buggery'. This was followed by references to swollen breasts, sore cracked nipples, sleepless nights and lack of support. The solution offered was, 'Don't be too hard on yourself: giving a bottle of good-quality infant formula – one which mimics the make-up of breastmilk as closely as possible – is the next best thing. And as long as you 'mix feed' – by giving breastmilk as well as formula – your baby will still be protected from many infections.'

Despite it being an explicit requirement of UK legislation, the advertorial failed to include information about the possible negative effect on breast-feeding of introducing partial bottle-feeding; the difficulty of reversing the decision not to breast-feed; and the health hazards of improper use of an infant formula.

Baby Milk Action has reported the case to trading standards but, thanks to *The Independent*, the damage has already been done.

● **Contact: Baby Milk Action, 34 Trumpington Street, Cambridge, CB2 1QY; tel: 01223 464420; web: www.babymilkaction.org**



Ignoring the law? Milupa promotes formula feeding in *The Independent*

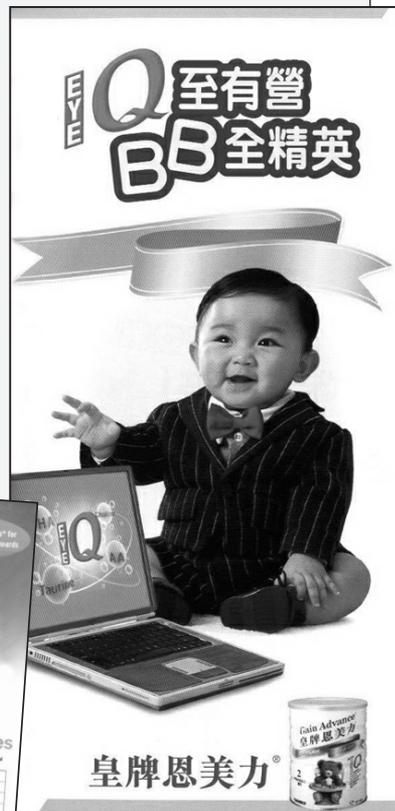
Formula companies exploit Asian markets

The campaign group IBFAN is calling for health claims on infant food products to be banned, following a survey of sophisticated marketing strategies being used by leading infant formula companies such as Abbott, Wyeth and Nestlé.

Abbott links its follow-on formula products with computer wizardry (see illustrations), while Wyeth claims a '7 point IQ advantage' for their Promil Gold product promoted in Singapore, and Nestlé tells mothers in China that 'raising an intelligent baby is no longer an impossible dream' if they use Nan 1 and Nan 2 formula.

These advertisements show that the companies hold the international Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes in complete contempt, and are rapidly exploiting the emerging markets of China and South East Asia. Proof, if ever we needed it, that voluntary codes will be ignored whenever a company see a chance to gain sales.

● **More information is available from IBFAN-ICDC, PO Box 19, 10700 Penang, Malaysia. Or email: ibfanpg@tm.net.my. Their report on infant food products is at: www.ibfan.org/english/pdfs/icdclclaims05.pdf**



Above: In this advert the infant formula manufacturer Abbott tells Hong Kong mothers that IQ ('Eye Q') comes in a tin of powder.



Left: Singapore parents are encouraged to believe that their babies' brain power will advance thanks to Similac.

MPs petition for better food for children

The Children's Food Bill has received the support of MP Mary Creaghy, the Member of Parliament for Wakefield, who will campaign during this parliament for its introduction into law. If enacted, the bill would provide legal protection for children by means of statutory nutrition-based standards for food provided to children at school, in meals and vending machines; a ban on junk food advertising to children, and a requirement on the government to promote healthy food and ensure that cooking and healthy food skills are reintroduced into schools.

The Children's Food Bill campaign now has 137 national supporting organisations, including the Food Commission, and 101 local supporting organisations, who will lend their weight to the parliamentary activities. The bill was previously supported by Debra Shipley MP, who unfortunately had to stand down from parliament in the previous session due to personal circumstances. Mary Creaghy MP opted to pick up the baton of the Children's Food Bill when she won the right to present a bill in a ballot that happens at the beginning of each new parliament.

A component of the Children's Food Bill campaign is a parliamentary petition (known as

an Early Day Motion – EDM) that MPs are urged to sign to show their support for the range of statutory measures designed to improve children's diets and future health. If readers of the *Food Magazine* wish to help promote the Children's Food Bill, either as individuals or organisations, please see the website:

www.childrensfoodbill.org.uk or contact Sustain.

One of the best and easiest ways to help the campaign is by encouraging your MP to sign up to EDM 378 'Children's Food' in support of the Children's Food Bill. The Food Commission has already written to all MPs asking them to do so.

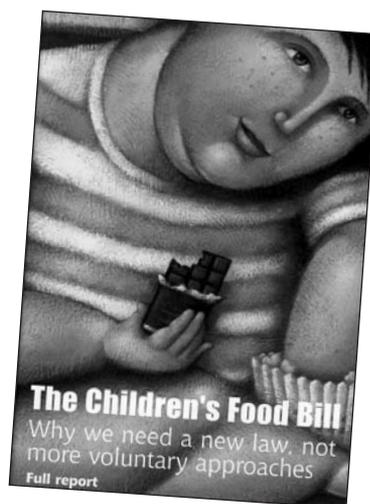
The Children's Food Bill campaign has also delivered a damning report to MPs, demonstrating that the government's favoured approach to the food industry of 'self regulation' is seriously flawed. Entitled *The Children's Food Bill: Why we need a new law, not more voluntary approaches*, the report illustrates the arguments with case studies of failures in 'self regulation',

***The Children's Food Bill – Why we need a new law, not more voluntary approaches* is published by Sustain and costs £25 (£10 to voluntary and public interest organisations).**

Tel: 020 7837 1228 or visit the Sustain website at www.sustainweb.org A summary of the report is available from: www.sustainweb.org/CFB_MpReport.pdf (3Mb file size).

including tobacco advertising, alcohol promotion, the marketing of breastmilk substitutes, pesticide and antibiotic use in farming, and control over supermarket power. As the report concludes, 'Surely our children deserve better?'

● **The Children's Food Bill is coordinated by Sustain, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.**



MPs support a flurry of food-related parliamentary petitions

The establishment of the new parliament was heralded by a small flurry of parliamentary petitions (EDMs) relating to food and health. These parliamentary petitions are used to generate interest among MPs, register support for issues that might otherwise not receive parliamentary attention, or support new legislation being put through by back-benchers. They can also form the focus for health campaigners, as encouraging MPs to sign the petitions can demonstrate that there is political will to tackle certain issues.

Of particular interest to *Food Magazine* readers is one EDM from David Taylor MP raising concerns about 'the role of the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) in advising the government on the food nutrition content of the national curriculum and health matters'. Whilst acknowledging that the BNF receives government funding, the EDM also points out that the BNF 'is a predominantly industry-supported charity whose members include

McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Northern Foods, Nutrasweet, Kraft, Cadbury-Schweppes, Kellogg's, Nestlé, Sainsbury's, Asda and Procter & Gamble.' David Taylor, and signatories to the EDM, are calling on the Government 'to clarify the BNF's relationship with the Food Standards Agency and its role in advising the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health on matters such as nutrition classes in schools and the course content of qualifications for school caterers'. We await the government's response with interest.

Alan Simpson MP, long-time campaigner on poverty issues, has tabled an EDM urging government to address the fact that according to Joseph Rowntree Foundation statistics, around four million UK citizens do not have reasonable access to a healthy diet and that one in seven people over 65 years are malnourished or at serious risk of malnourishment. Alan Simpson points out that a number of reasons 'such as inadequate income, lack of reasonable

access to shops or other outlets selling healthy food and inadequate information' may contribute to the problem, and suggests that local governments should be obliged to draw up local strategies to address the root causes of food poverty.

Of further interest to health campaigners, MP Mike Hancock has tabled an EDM urging the Food Standards Agency to support mandatory action to remove hydrogenated oils, and hence unnecessary trans fats, from processed foods, starting with school dinners. The FSA has long resisted legislation to help eliminate trans fats from the diet, stating weakly that consumers should simply avoid them, even though consumers do not have the information to do so since the majority of food companies do not declare the trans fat content on the label.

● **The full list of Early Day Motion (EDM) parliamentary petitions can be found at: <http://edmi.parliament.uk/edmi/>**

'Cows' call for GM-free feed

Campaign pressure is intensifying to ensure that large retailers maintain their support for GM-free animal feed, as Brazil says it will switch to GM soya.

Brazil's decision to allow Monsanto's Round Up Ready genetically modified (GM) soya to be grown threatens Europe's supply of GM-free animal feed commodities and, with 80% of Europe's soya imports used for animal feed, the animal feed market dictates what is grown.

In 2001 the major retailers instructed their suppliers to provide them with meat and dairy products from animals fed only with non-GM feedstuffs. Supermarkets have the power to protect a non-GM food supply if they insist on these terms – but these contracts continually come up for renewal and standards can slip. Brazil is a major soya exporter to Europe, and supermarkets must place their contracts for GM-free animal products before the next planting season in Brazil in the next two months.

In June protesters highlighted the need for non-GM fed animal feed with a week long extravaganza outside Sainsbury's head office in London. Members of the National Federation of Women's Institutes, Brazilian dancers, farmers and cows, politicians and children greeted Sainsbury's staff every morning and handed out a Daily Moosletter with



Bovine bover: Cattle call for non-GM soya feed outside Sainsbury's HQ.

information regarding the many concerns still remaining about GM.

Five Year Freeze becomes GM Freeze

Having successfully campaigned against the commercial growing of any GM crops in the UK, the Five Year Freeze is relaunching as the GM Freeze. The GM Freeze will continue to seek a moratorium on GM foods, the growing of GM crops, and GM patents.

● **Contact Carrie Stebbings, GM Freeze, tel: 020 7837 0642; fax: 020 7837 1141; email: enquiry@fiveyearfreeze.org**

Nominations sought for breastfeeding award

Nominations are sought by parents for the Julie Crawford Award for Breastfeeding Support, with a submission deadline of 14 September 2005.

Julie Crawford was a health visitor and a former director of the campaign organisation Baby Milk Action. She died in 2001, at the age of 42. She cared passionately about breastfeeding, was concerned about the extent of industry funding of education for health professionals, and was keen to push for legal action in defence of mother's rights to breastfeed. She called for 'articulate voices' to promote change for mothers and for health professionals.

Nominees for the award must be a practising health visitor who has made a significant contribution to (or has an ongoing impact on) breastfeeding support in the UK, at individual or policy level, and someone who has demonstrated an awareness and commitment to the protection and defence of breastfeeding, facilitating universal access to babyfeeding support free of commercial influence.

● **Nominations can be sent by 14 September to: Baby Milk Action, 34 Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1QY; email: prndall@babymilkaction.org**

Wal-Mart targets Eastern Europe

The world's biggest retailer, Wal-Mart, owner of Asda, is planning to expand its operations into Poland, Hungary and Russia.

In an interview with the *Financial Times*, Wal-Mart's chief executive Lee Scott said, 'It doesn't matter to us which of these will be first, we want all of them at some point.' He also revealed that the company has plans to expand its empire into India. 'It is such an exciting country with a growing middle class.'

Wal-Mart aims to achieve 30% sales growth outside the US and currently has an annual turnover of \$285.2 billion (£152.5 billion). If Wal-Mart were its own economy, it would rank 33rd in the world, between Ukraine and Colombia.

Irradiated noodles withdrawn from sale

Twenty noodle products were recalled from sale in June for containing irradiated ingredients without declaring their presence on the label.

Irradiation is the treatment of food or ingredients with high doses of ionising radiation to kill bacteria, mould and insects. Irradiation can also slow the ripening or sprouting process in fruits and vegetables. In certain foods, especially those containing fat, it can have undesired side effects such as creating toxic chemical residues and destroying beneficial vitamins.

G.Costa & Company Ltd (UK) imported the noodle products from the Nong Shim Company Ltd in Seoul, South Korea, where they were manufactured.

As well as failing to declare the irradiated ingredients on the label, the irradiation had not been carried out at an approved food irradiation facility, which is a strict legal requirement.

Control over food ingredients imported from countries such as Korea and China continues to pose a problem to food authorities seeking to trace products that have been illegally irradiated, or irradiated in unapproved facilities, through a complicated supply chain. In 2001, several food supplements containing illegally irradiated ingredients from the Far East were found on sale in Holland & Barrett and other health-food outlets.

Investigations at the time showed that irradiation was sometimes used to clean up products that had been in contact with soil (e.g. roots such as ginseng and ginger) or that were prone to insect infestation. Irradiation can be used to kill insects before roots and spices are processed, meaning that insect materials may be left in the product rather than removed.

● **For further information, contact: The Food Standards Agency's Novel Food Division; tel: 020 7276 8579**

Caught in the

Food companies are increasingly using websites to communicate directly with children. Dan Binfield looks at some of the methods they use.

Web sites are one of the best ways to reach children with a marketing message. In comparison to expensive TV advertising, they can be relatively cheap to create. And once they are posted on the internet, they can remain online for months without the repeat fees associated with broadcast advertising. They also have international appeal, with children logging on all over the world to receive information about global brands.

But perhaps the biggest benefit for food companies is that online marketing is subject to none of the voluntary codes of practice governed by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The ASA refuses to rule on complaints submitted in relation to websites. Yet, as our survey shows, food marketing websites targeted at children often use some of the most insidious and manipulative marketing techniques – including dubious health claims and marketing techniques that tell a child they will be more popular and attractive if they purchase certain sweets.

Children are likely to be viewing such websites when they are on their own or with

friends, without the guiding hand of a teacher or parent to help them unpick the marketing messages.

Such techniques would receive public censure were they to appear in the traditional media used for marketing communications. However, when they go online, children are subjected to the excesses of marketing techniques that the ASA (a voluntary body set up by the industry) is meant to control.

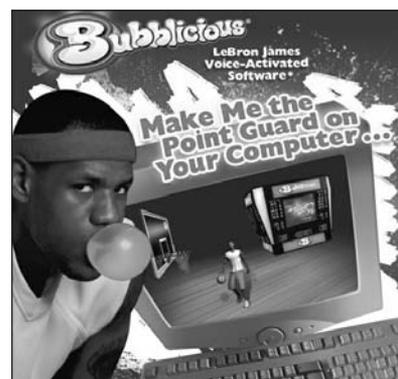
It will be no surprise to *Food Magazine* readers that such marketing is used in support of the least healthy foods. Our survey showed that many such websites are for foods such as sweets, lollies, sugared fizzy drinks, burgers and chips. These are all foods that contribute to the poor quality of children's diets.

On these pages we show just some of the common techniques used to advertise junky foods to children. More examples are shown online at the Children's Food Bill campaign website – the campaign is in support of new legislation to ensure that children are protected from junk food marketing, to improve the quality of food in school meals and vending machines, and to ensure that children receive food education that supports health and well-being.

● **Original research by Dan Binfield; additional research by Ian Tokelove. More examples of website food marketing techniques are shown on the Children's Food Bill campaign website: www.sustainweb.org/childrensfoodbill/**

Ensuring product purchases

Downloadable ring tones: Nine out of ten UK secondary school children own a mobile phone and many are tempted by the 'free' ring tones which can be downloaded from websites. However, the downloads frequently require a product purchase so that 'codes' can be obtained to activate the download.



Downloadable software: Children are also encouraged to purchase products in order to obtain a 'code' that can then be used to download software. For example, the Bubblicious bubble gum website offers downloadable voice-activated software in which a famous basketball star will 'obey' your spoken instructions and open programmes on your computer, but you need to go out and buy the product in order to get the access codes.

Extracting information from children

E-cards: Children are encouraged to send e-cards (electronic postcards) to their friends via email.

This is an almost ubiquitous feature of children's websites. The cards generally display images and logos of products and act as adverts. The e-cards invite the children who receive them to visit the website and join the website club or to play online games.

Surveys: Optional surveys are posted on many websites which extract the personal information of the user, such as



their name and address. Free samples or prizes may be offered as a reward.

Registration: Many websites require a child to register before being allowed into exclusive areas of the website, or before being allowed to collect exchangeable points. This process often requires the child to enter their email address and allows the website to be personalised in the child's name.

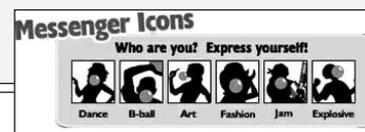
Whilst some websites require parental approval for this interaction, we have found it remarkably easy to 'cheat' these so-called security features, posing as an eight-year-old, who then continues to receive marketing messages by email.

Getting your message across to non-users of the website

E-cards: Electronic postcards that can be sent to friends (see left).

Recommendations: Users are encouraged to recommend the website to their friends. By telling a friend about the site, collectable points may be awarded to the user, who can then spend them within the website.

Buddy Icons: These are downloadable icons used on MSN Messenger (a widely used online chat service provided by Microsoft). The animated icons will appear on the screen of anyone who 'chats' to the user, subtly promoting the product in the process.



e net?



Promotional links

The latest *Star Wars* film shows how a popular film can be tied into a brand's website. At the Skittles sweets website (www.skittles.com) users who have purchased packets of sweets can be rewarded with *Star Wars* prizes, but only if they find a winning number in the packet. If they don't find a winning number, and still want to win, they need to buy more Skittles sweets.

Online games: An access code may be required to play online games. For example, the Kinder Egg website (www.kindersurprise.com) requires users to go out and buy a chocolate egg to obtain a Magicode which allows them to play online games and to download games and 'surprises'.

Each Magicode can only be used once, thus encouraging repeat purchases. An online 'safe' is also provided at this site so that users can store unused Magicodes. Users are promised a special surprise if they store five Magicodes (from five purchases) in the safe.

Promotional tie-ins. The website encourages viewers to send in product packets in exchange for merchandise. For example, children who visit the Smarties website (www.smarties.co.uk) can get football stickers in return for Smarties packets.

Games

Games are the mainstay of websites aimed at children. They make the website 'sticky' – extending the time a child spends at the site and increasing their exposure to the brand.

The games frequently involve the player collecting images of packets of the product to achieve high scores in order to access the next level of the game or to enter a prize draw. For example, the Nesquik website (www.nesquik.co.uk) has a game in which images of packets of Nesquik must be collected from a tree.

The Frosties website (mentioned in FM69, www.kelloggs.co.uk/frosties/games/tigercathlon) requires users to navigate cartoon athletes to pick up packets of Frosties cereal to boost their energy. Games on the Chewits (www.chewits.co.uk) & Jelly Belly (www.jellybelly-uk.com) websites involve guiding a character to eat as many sweets as possible to achieve a high score.

Exploiting a child's insecurities

Just like advertisements aimed at the adult market, children's brands are marketed to exploit their aspirations and fears. That's why rules for broadcast advertisements expressly discourage advertisers from saying that children can be more popular or sexy if they buy certain products. But online, anything goes.

The Bubblicious website, for instance (www.bubblicious.com), gives the impression

that bubble gum can improve the user's social life. Aimed at a young teenage audience the website uses animated life scenarios that suggest that Bubblicious can have a positive influence on pivotal situations. For example: Bubblicious is influential in a girl saying yes to a boy who asks her out on a date.



The Introductory animation to the Bubblicious website uses a cool musical soundtrack with an overlaid spoken dialogue to suggest that Bubblicious can help the user to B-different, B-brilliant, B-magnetic and B-ready.

We never realised that bubble gum could B-so powerful!

Unregulated health claims

Chupa Chups are a popular brand of lolly with a website packed with dubious information. The website (www.chupachupsgroup.com) brazenly encourages the user to purchase the lollies because they are 'good for you'. Not only are Chupa Chups described as 'a tasty way to give your brain a boost!' (because some contain glucose) but the website also claims that the vitamin C content can: prevent and treat the common cold; fight bacteria and viruses; help speed up the healing of cuts and grazes and help to maintain healthy blood vessels.

That's quite a series of health claims for a simple lolly, most of which would be banned from print or television advertising.



Encouraging repeat visits

Marketers use different methods to encourage children and other users to visit brand websites regularly. The Jelly Belly site (www.jellybelly-uk.com) provides a monthly prize of a hamper containing £150 worth of products. The same site also runs daily competitions in which 100 prizes are given away. We found one website (for American Chiclet sweets) where 100 mobile phone ringtones are given away each day.

The Bubblicious bubble gum website also encourages children to make return visits to check for new e-postcards. The Sour Patch sweets website (www.sourpatchkids.com) asks children to check back every month to see what product-related events will be taking place.

Other marketing methods

Direct advertising: Obvious really – almost all websites have a section devoted to advertising their range of products. Some also have a 'product locator' so you can find the nearest outlet selling the brand.

Show off your other adverts. Websites provide an excellent opportunity for marketers to repeat their TV, film and magazine adverts, often in downloadable form.

Screensavers and wallpapers. Users are encouraged to download promotional screensavers and wallpaper for their computers, ensuring everyday exposure to a brand.

Sound and vision: Children know what they like and marketers make sure they provide the goods. Websites are visually stimulating, colourful and lively, with animated sequences, dynamic sounds and music. Websites are often immersive and disorientating, providing a multi-layered experience with many different areas/worlds to explore.

● If you see any other websites which you think use manipulative techniques to target children please let us know at info@foodcomm.org.uk

● Survey conducted June 2005.

And for dessert, sponge, perhaps

We take a look at processed puddings and find the manufacturers are keen to boost the flavour with a dose of salt – as much as they put in crisps or bacon!

At a time when the Food Standards Agency is putting pressure on UK food companies to reduce the salt in their products, we went shopping in those regions the government forgot to examine – the desserts and puddings aisle. And we were surprised by what we found.

We expected the biscuits and cakes would have a pinch of salt – most biscuit recipes suggest adding salt to the mix – but we found several products to be just as salty as bread at over 1% salt.

And we certainly didn't expect to find one of them – Morrison's strawberry sponge – to be an incredible 5% salt. That's saltier than grilled bacon! Just one portion provides an entire day's maximum recommended amount for a healthy adult.

The food industry's love of lacing their products with flavour boosting ingredients – such as salt, monosodium glutamate, and

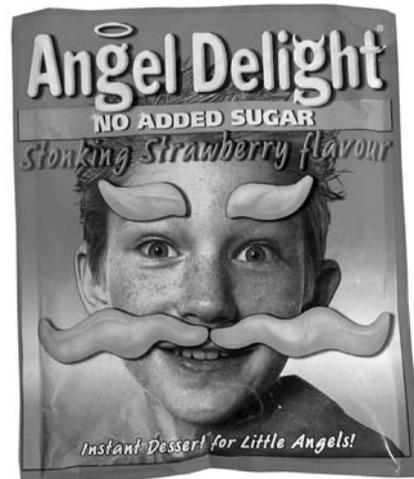
flavour additives – may serve to boost sales but adds nothing to the healthiness of our diets. All too often, salt is being used to encourage us to eat fatty (and in this case sugary) processed food products that we should be eating less of, and the effect is to lead us to eat a diet that is less healthy overall, to say nothing of the direct effects of salt in raising blood pressure (leading to increased risk of stroke and cardiovascular disease).

Used to increase the sales of processed foods, salt is a marketing tool that distorts consumer perception by tricking the taste buds. It manipulates consumer choice, largely subconsciously.

Perhaps the Food Standards Agency should ensure that unhealthy ingredients are no longer used as a marketing tool. If we wait for industry to clean up its act we will be waiting far too long.



2.2% salt in this regular 67g packet of Angel Delight, as sold. This provides half a gram of salt in each serving (assuming you share the pudding four ways).



3.5% salt in this 'No Added Sugar' 47g version, as sold. This product, like the regular version, provides half a gram of salt per serving (note that the product is 20g lighter because sugar has been replaced with artificial sweeteners)



There is 0.7% salt in this Golden Syrup sponge pudding, providing 0.9 grams salt in a single serving – more than a typical bag of crisps.



Over 1% salt in this sponge, and a single portion provides 1.3 grams. A typical bag of crisps provides 0.6-0.8 grams.



What is it about sponges? This strawberry flavoured version from Morrisons carries a whopping 5% salt, giving you between 5g and 6g in a single portion – an entire day's worth!

madam – a salty ?



Delicious Handmade Carrot Cake

Moist, spiced carrot cake crammed with juicy raisins, chopped walnuts and shredded coconut. Smothered with a thick layer of sweet and tangy cream cheese frosting. Heavenly and delicious. Created by food lovers exclusively for Boots

A carrot cake from Boots carrying 0.9% salt, and providing 0.7g salt in a portion. That's equivalent to the bag of crisps that you can have instead, as part of their 'Meal Deal'. So much for trying to avoid salty foods!



Delicious Triple Chocolate Cookie

An irresistible chocolate experience, a soft & chewy cookie studded with chunks of milk white & plain chocolate. Heavenly and delicious. Created by food lovers exclusively for Boots

Also from Boots comes this large cookie, offered as part of their 'Meal Deal'. It comes in at 1.3% salt, with 0.8g salt in a single portion.



OK, forget the dessert and settle for a hot drink instead. This Clipper organic, low fat product offers about 1.7% salt as sold, giving you half a gram of salt in every steaming mug.

Should we choose this healthier-looking cereal pot instead? Perhaps not at 2% salt, or a hefty 3.2g salt in a single serving. That's over half a woman's recommended maximum daily intake.



● Note: All salt information was calculated from sodium figures declared on product labels. Boots and M&S helpfully provide salt as well as sodium figures. The other manufacturers do not.

What is 'high salt'?

Just eat a couple of the desserts on this page and you could have had a third or even a half of the total recommended daily maximum salt for your age group.

Recommended maximum daily amounts for each age group

	as sodium	as salt
Children 1-3	0.8g	2g
Children 4-6	1.2g	3g
Children 7-10	2.0g	5g
Children 11+	2.4g	6g
Adult women	2.0g	5g*
Adult men	2.8g	7g*

From: *Salt & Health*, published by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, 2003

* Note: For simplicity, the recommended maximum for adults is often averaged to 6g of salt (2.4g sodium) per day.

All the products on this page are medium or high salt products.

According to the Food Standards Agency, a 'high salt' product is one with 0.5g or more of sodium per 100 grams of the product, and a 'low salt' product is one with 0.1g or less of sodium per 100 grams of the product. A medium salt product is one with between 0.1g and 0.5g sodium per 100g of the product.

Note that 1g sodium is equivalent to 2.5g salt.

The Food Standards Agency has produced a website which explains why too much salt can be bad for us. See www.salt.gov.uk

CASH (Consensus Action on Salt & Health) also has a useful website – see www.hyp.ac.uk/cash

Nutritionists help families have a healthy start

Food Commission nutritionists have been developing a nutrition programme with SureStart in north London, encouraging parents to cook fresh food for their families.

SureStart is a government initiative working with low-income parents with children under four years old, contributing to the health, education and emotional development of their families.

Starting in October 2004, the Food Commission has assisted Mildmay Surestart, in Islington, by providing healthy eating advice, weaning workshops and 'cook and eat' activities for parents and children.

Throughout, we have worked with parents to explore the taste and health benefits of fresh food. In the weaning workshops participants took part in taste tests of fresh foods compared to jarred foods, with an opportunity for discussion and swapping ideas. As a result, many parents report that they have gained the confidence to prepare fresh foods, and to enjoy cooking with their children.

Parents received a free bag of vegetables at the end of the course, funded by neighbouring Camden's 'five-a-day' programme and sourced from an organic vegetable box scheme called Growing Communities, which provides locally grown food. Linking to the box scheme has shown parents that organic fruit and vegetables can be an affordable option. Parents and children will also be visiting Growing Communities gardens later in the summer.

In May, our nutritionists ran sessions called 'cooking with kids'. The recipes were designed to be cheap, healthy and vegetarian, suitable for most ethnic groups. Involving the children in food preparation helped them to try new types of fruit and vegetables and to enjoy the process of cooking. The feedback from parents was very encouraging. As one participant said, 'I loved it when my child helped prepare the food, and how proud he felt.' Another reported, 'It was very good fun today working with the children. This is something that I would do at home.' Sessions

have also been run with local Somali, Turkish and Bengali communities, and work is developing to cover oral health in relation to dental care and tooth-friendly snacks and drinks.

● If you would like to develop a similar programme in your area, please get in touch. Contact Annie Seeley at: annie@foodcomm.org.uk



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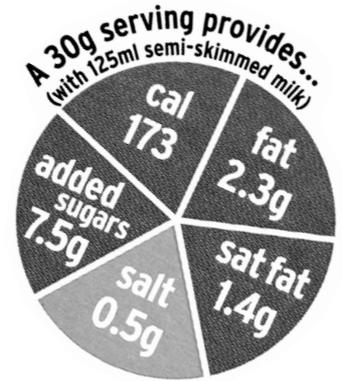
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CHECKOUT

It's more than 20 years since a senior government committee recommended clear and simple nutrition labelling. We still don't have it, and the government is proposing yet another voluntary labelling initiative. Will consumers ever get the information they need?

Waiting for clear labels? Don't hold your breath!



The Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) urged government action on nutrition labelling in 1984, recommending that the fat content of food should be declared as a matter of course. Over two decades have passed, yet even this most simple of recommendations has not been enacted, despite endless rounds of consultation, government meetings, committees, European discussions, campaigning and media attention.

Some pre-packed foods still do not carry fat information, loose foods rarely carry information, and most take-away and restaurant food declares no nutrition information at all. So if anyone asks how long it will take to get clear, at-a-glance information about the healthiness of food, designed in one simple format that everyone can learn and understand, our answer would have to be: *Don't hold your breath.*

Nutrition labelling is generally voluntary, since only foods that make health or nutrition claims on their labels are obliged to declare their nutrient content.

Although many manufacturers and all supermarkets do provide some nutrition information, the format prescribed in law is highly technical – relying, for instance, on

people's ability to do maths to work out the salt content of foods from a sodium figure that must be multiplied by 2.5 and then by the portion size to reveal how much salt is consumed. They also rely on a sophisticated understanding of nutrients, to work out what numbers mean in the context of the diet.

In 1985, the Food Commission (then the London Food Commission) successfully demonstrated a straightforward star-rating

system to identify and label menu items that were 'high' or 'low' in certain nutrients that affect health. The Coronary Prevention Group continued this work and promoted, in

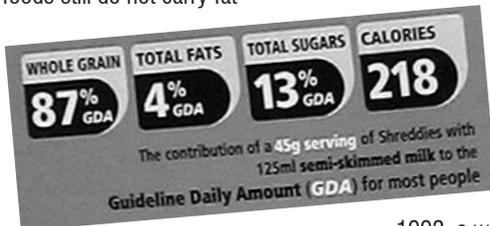
1992, a workable and scientifically based four-category banding scheme suitable for food labelling. Only the Co-op supermarket adopted such an approach for pre-packed food, and still give this information in their nutrition panels. In 2004, the Co-op extended this work by undertaking a pilot project demonstrating that interpretive labelling can affect people's choices, with customers choosing, for instance, less salty pasta sauce.

Tesco flirted with a similar food labelling scheme in 2004, but dropped it after we showed that some of their Healthy Living range would have to carry a red warning. Now Sainsbury's

has launched its own version in 2005, on a few own-brand products.

From its launch in 2000, the government's Food Standards Agency has skirted around the issue of nutrition labelling, preferring to spend time on the technical small-print detail of labels rather than bold initiatives to help consumers improve their health. It took until 2004 for the Food Standards Agency to pick up the reins of interpretive nutrition labelling. Its *Action plan on food promotions and children's diets* recommended to government a single UK-wide signposting scheme for food products, 'to make it easier for consumer to make healthier choices'. This became a government commitment in the Department of Health's *Choosing Health* white paper, published autumn 2004.

The food industry has predictably dug its heels in – the last thing they want is for 'eat less' labels to be put on their food products. 'The *'traffic light' approach leads to artificial segregation of foods by attacking staples of our diet such as meat and dairy products,*' protests Kevin Hawkins, director general of the British Retail Consortium – the industry body that represents supermarkets. 'Such wrong thinking has no scientific underpinning and could lead to serious unforeseen consequences for individuals such as a dangerous fall in their iron or calcium intake. It could also lead to an increase in eating disorders.'



Continued on pages 12-14

GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNTS (GDAs)	PER 30g SERVING WITHOUT MILK	Percentage of GDA				GDA
		25%	50%	75%	100%	
CALORIES	111					2000
FAT	0.2g					70g
SAT. FAT	0.05g					20g
SALT	0.45g					6g
TOTAL SUGARS	11g					100g
FIBRE	0.6g					24g
CALCIUM	136mg					800mg
IRON	2.4mg					14mg

SEE SIDE OF PACK FOR DETAILS

Nutrition labels a confuse

Continued from previous page

Martin Paterson, deputy director of the Food & Drink Federation (FDF), the food manufacturers' umbrella body, said, 'Simplistic schemes which categorise products into good and bad could seriously mislead consumers.'

'The traffic light system wouldn't work,' adds Christine Fisk, also of the FDF. 'A product like cheese, for example, which has a high fat and salt content would be red, but cheese can be a vital part of a healthy diet. If 'traffic light' labelling were adopted, it could mean some consumers actually become less healthy.'

Consumer research has demonstrated to the FSA that most people want better food information, especially interpretive information displayed on the front of the pack, making comparison between products quick and easy. The FSA's research found two approaches most promising. One was a single traffic light, combining the main nutrients into a single measure and might be depicted as red, amber or green. The other was a multiple traffic light showing separate information for the total fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt content. The research also confirmed that most people don't like having to do mathematical calculations such as those required for number-based systems like the industry's 'Guideline Daily Amounts'.

At the end of 2004, the Department of Health told food manufacturers that it wanted to see a single UK-wide signposting scheme for food products, to make it easier for consumers to make healthier choices.

What was the industry's response? Within a few months, international food companies Kellogg's and Nestlé chose to ignore government research into the format that most consumers would find useful, and muscled into the scene with their own front-of-pack nutrition labelling.

This is surely a spoiling tactic to ward off the probability that some of their products would be labelled under government proposals as 'high sugar' or 'high salt'. They are based on an industry-promoted 'Guideline Daily Amount' (GDA) system, drawn up by the industry-funded body, the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD).

The language confuses shoppers by mixing maximum recommended levels (e.g. for salt or saturated fat) with minimum recommended levels (e.g. for fibre). Food Standards Agency research has already shown that consumers would prefer clear front-of-pack information that would tell them if a product is healthy or not, and allow them to make comparisons between products easily. But, as we show here, the recent industry initiatives can only be designed to confuse.



Heinz

Heinz describes salt in what we believe to be a confusing way. On this can of beans, the label says, 'A serving contains 1.7g of an adult's recommended daily salt intake of 6g'. We think that this gives the impression that 6g is a target to be achieved, rather than an upper level that is well above what is actually needed.

We do hope the FSA stands firm, but we are also well aware that they will not make such labelling a legal requirement. In the age of 'nannyphobic' Blair, any action will be voluntary. So it's likely we will be here two decades from now, complaining about the lack of easy-to-read nutrition information on food. Which is a shame, because we (and the government) have better things to do with our time.

Nestlé

Nestlé's contribution to labelling confusion is this new front-of-pack panel, appearing on products such as Shreddies, Cheerios, Nesquik and Cookie Crisp breakfast cereals.

We could unpick this label for hours, but here are just a couple of examples of what we believe to be confusing. Nestlé uses the industry's 'Guideline Daily Amounts' (GDAs). On a Shreddies pack, a smiling Miriam Stoppard explains: 'I find the best way to think of GDAs is as a tool to help you make sure you get enough of the nutrients you need every day.' Sorry, Miriam, the Institute of Grocery Distribution explicitly says that 'GDAs are not targets for individuals but are guidelines which provide consumers with additional information which they can use to gain an improved



understanding of their daily consumption of Calories, fat and saturates'.

Also, note that IGD makes no mention of whole grain, and yet Nestlé tell us that a serving of the cereal contributes 87% of the 'whole grain GDA'. To our knowledge, there is no GDA for whole grain, nor for fibre and iron which are also described in GDA terminology on the side of the pack. We could go on...



GDA - Guideline Daily Amounts for women*

45g serving with 125ml semi-skimmed milk provides	% of GDA	Total GDA
Calories	218	2000
Total Fats	2.9 g	70 g
Salt	0.6 g	6 g
Total Sugars	12.9 g	100 g
Fibre	4.4 g	24 g
Whole Grain	41.9 g	48 g
Iron	3.6 mg	14 mg

"I find the best way to think of GDAs is as a tool to help you make sure you get enough of the essential nutrients you need every day. So the table tells you how much of your GDAs a serving of this cereal is giving you as part of a healthy balanced diet."

Miriam Stoppard
Miriam Stoppard

* In general active men will have higher requirements, whilst young children will have lower.

are designed to

Kellogg's

New front-of-pack nutrition labelling from Kellogg's uses a bar chart to represent GDAs as daily targets – again, out of line with the definition of GDAs. To the regular list of GDAs, Kellogg's adds fibre, calcium, iron, sugar and salt, none of which are currently covered by IGD's scheme (although some recommendations for salt and sugar GDAs were published for consultation by the IGD in April 2005).

The case of salt is especially interesting, as Kellogg's states that 6g is the Guideline Daily Amount for consumption by 'the majority of people'.

In fact, 4g is the figure put forward by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) as the daily amount needed by the vast

majority of adults to maintain health (the Reference Nutrient Intake, deemed adequate for 97.5% of adults). We think the Kellogg's label portrays 6g of salt as a desirable upper goal to be achieved every day.

In any case, aren't Frosties a children's brand? The only advice that Kellogg's gives on this point is that 'GDAs are based on official recommendations; active men will have higher requirements and younger children typically lower'. Younger? Younger than what? Lower? How much lower? Again, we could go on...



GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNTS (GDAs)	PER 30g SERVING WITHOUT MILK	25%	50%	75%	100%	GDA
Calories	111					2000
FAT	0.2g					70g
SAT. FAT	0.05g					20g
SALT	0.45g					6g
TOTAL SUGARS	11g					100g
FIBRE	0.6g					24g
CALCIUM	136mg					800mg
IRON	2.4mg					14mg

Sainsbury's

New front-of-pack nutrition information from Sainsbury's bears some relation to the Food Standards Agency's proposed 'traffic light' system. In comparison to the efforts from Nestlé and Kellogg's, we think it's not too bad.

But it still has confusing aspects. For instance, Sainsbury's

Reduced Sugar Frosted Flakes sports a green for sugar, fat and added sugars, but it is a product that contains 'a lot' of sugar according to official Food Standards Agency definitions.

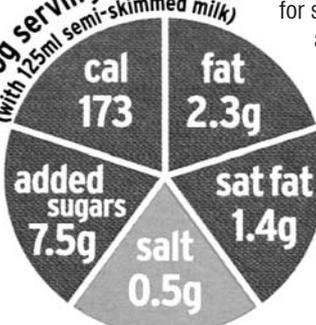
Also, if this is a scheme designed to help people compare products, then you might expect Sainsbury's to put the information on its regular products as well.

But if you were to look in the same top right-hand corner of a box of regular Sainsbury's frosted flakes, you would find an offer for a free trip to Legoland!



Sainsbury's is happy to put nutrition labelling on this reduced sugar cereal, but stick to the special offers on their regular version.

A 30g serving provides...
(with 125ml semi-skimmed milk)



To sort out labelling, bring in the professionals!

If past experience is anything to go by, we can expect months, probably years, of back-and-forth arguments about nutrition labelling between government and industry.

However, one government department has gone ahead and simply enacted traffic light categorisation of food products, without any of this endless fuss. Their 190,000 staff haven't died of cheese deficiency, nor do they seem paralysed with confusion over what food to choose, as food industry bosses foretell.

The nutrition information that accompanies this organisation's traffic light system is straightforward, and they are unafraid to tell their staff which foods are 'high' in fat, salt and sugar and which foods are better choices, knowing that this is useful information to enable people to choose a healthy diet.

Which is this progressive government department, concerned with the health of their staff? The Department of Health? The Department for Education? The Department of Trade and Industry? The Food Standards Agency? No. It's the Ministry of Defence, in advice to members of the armed forces, published in 2002 by its Expert Panel on Armed Forces Feeding. And we applaud them for it.

The army, navy and airforce receive the information that the food industry don't want us to know – that some foods are high in fat, salt or sugar and should be eaten sparingly.



Stop

These foods should only be eaten in small quantities. Foods in this group include butter and margarine, mayonnaise and oily salad dressings, biscuits, cakes, puddings, ice cream, chocolate, sweets, crisps, sugar, sweetened drinks, and takeaway food, such as chips, fish in batter, fried chicken, takeaway burgers, pasties and meat pies. **Foods in this group should be thought of as TREATS!**

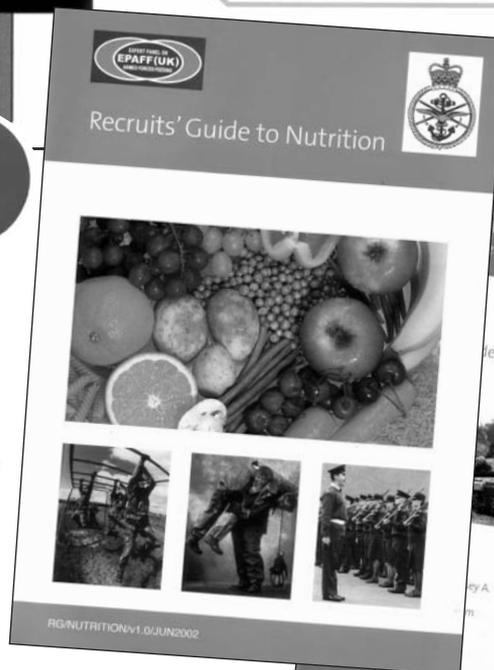
Think!

This group includes meat (beef, pork, bacon, lamb), poultry (chicken, turkey), fish (fresh, frozen and canned), fish products (fish fingers, fish cakes), offal (liver, kidney), eggs, nuts and nut products, tofu and other meat substitutes. **You need these foods in your diet, but not in large amounts.**

Go!

Foods containing CARBOHYDRATE provide you with energy. They include bread, unsweetened breakfast cereals, rice, pasta, noodles and potatoes. Fruit and vegetables (fresh, frozen and canned) and salad, beans and lentils should also be eaten frequently. They provide you with vitamins and minerals to keep you strong, healthy and fit. **Your diet should be based on foods in this group.**

Nutrition information from the Ministry of Defence



How low can they go?

After our exposé of added water in processed meat products (see FM69) we dig a little deeper and find out what the law says about minimum meat levels.

Manufacturers are not entirely free to serve you a glass of water and call it a meat pie. Certain products (meat pies included) have 'reserved descriptions' which are protected by legislation. The regulations ensure a minimum meat content in what the Food Standards Agency (FSA) describes as 'the most important and widely-consumed meat products'. Burgers, corned meat, luncheon meat, meat pies and sausages are all covered by this legislation.

But while this legislation does give some protection to the shopper, a quick look at our table shows that the meat content of some products can still be surprisingly low.

Furthermore, there are many ready-to-eat meat products that are not covered by this legislation. Cooked products such as ham, fried chicken,

chicken roll, turkey ham, turkey breast and chicken breast have no legally set minimum meat content. For example, turkey roll from Bernard Matthews (pictured) might look like a 100% meat product, but close examination of the (very) small print on the back of the packet reveals that it is only 45% meat. The can of chicken curry pictured below is barely 15% meat.

Cooked meats are regarded by many shoppers as a quick and convenient mainstay, to be used in snacks, sandwiches and main meals. We are currently spending an estimated £1.2bn on cooked meats each year (more than twice our expenditure on sausages, and vastly more than our expenditure on corned beef) so it is hard to see why these products should be exempt from a 'reserved description' and a minimum meat content.

Most shoppers would assume that ready-to-eat meats are 100% cooked meat, with perhaps a little seasoning and an added preservative to prevent spoilage. They don't expect to purchase something that contains more water and cheap bulking agents than actual meat.



Pure magic: This Princess Dreams Turkey Roll from Bernard Matthews is carefully formulated to look like slices of cooked meat. However, with a meat content of only 46% we think it might be better described as 'Water, starch and gel with added meat'



These canned burger products sneak beneath the labelling regulations by adding gravy and onion. The 'burgers' have a stated meat content of 36% 'mechanically separated' pork, while the 'hamburgers' appear to be 34% pork (the label isn't clear).

Both of these fall well short of the 67% meat content you can expect under the regulations, were it not for the extra gravy. And even if they were illegal, the maximum fine would be only £5,000.

Meat content by law

Reserved product description	Made from meat or cured meat from pigs only	Made from meat or cured meat from birds and/or rabbits	Made from meat or cured meat from other species / mixtures of meat
Burger / hamburger (i)	67%	55%	62%
Economy burger	50%	41%	47%
Chopped 'meat' or 'cured meat'	75%	62%	70%
Corned meat (ii)	120%	120%	120%
Luncheon meat	67%	55%	62%
Meat pie or pudding (ii) (iii)	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
Pastry or sausage roll (iii)	6%	6%	6%
Pork sausage	42%	--	--
Sausage	32%	26%	30%

(i) Where the name 'hamburger' is used, the meat used in the preparation of the food must be beef, pork or a mixture of both.

(ii) If a 'meat and vegetable' pie or 'meat and potato' pie for example – then down to 7%, and as low as 6% if the 'other non-meat related ingredient' precedes the meat in the name of the product.

(iii) Based on uncooked weight of ingredients

Meat Products Regulations 2003



Sainsbury's chicken slurry? The ingredients list reads: 'Water, chicken (17%) (chicken, water, modified maize starch, salt), vegetables...' etc.

Legal, decent, honest and true?



The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) now has responsibility for adjudicating on complaints for broadcast as well as print advertising. Its latest rulings have far-reaching significance for food advertisers.

X Atkins fails the 'healthy' test

Two complaints were upheld against Atkins Nutritionals Inc, the company that promotes the low-carbohydrate Atkins Diet in the UK. In a press advertisement the company proclaimed 'Enjoy a healthier lifestyle!' However, the advertising Code of Practice specifically requires diet plans to be shown as part of a nutritionally well-balanced range of foods, including carbohydrates, in line with government advice. In addition, the ASA considered that the short-term nature of evidence supplied by the advertisers did not support the long-term claim being made. It noted that one of the scientific studies had taken place over 22 months; three had taken place over a year and the rest had taken place over a few weeks or months. Several of the studies reported that longer assessments were necessary before conclusions could be drawn about the plan and long-term general health benefits, so the ASA concluded that the term 'a healthier lifestyle' was inappropriate and told the advertisers not to repeat the claim.

X Ribena Toothkind withdrawn

After a long-running battle over health claims for Ribena Toothkind, manufacturer Glaxo has withdrawn the product and replaced it with 'Ribena Really Light', a low-calorie 'no added sugar' product. At the end of the 1990s, the advocacy group Action & Information on Sugars (AIS) responded to the launch of Ribena Toothkind by having the product tested. The product replaced Baby Ribena, which received damaging publicity in the 1980s for causing tooth decay in very young children. Tests on Ribena Toothkind proved that the product could also cause tooth decay and

AIS made a successful complaint to the ASA. This was followed by a lengthy legal battle which resulted in Glaxo having to amend their claims.

On hearing that Ribena Toothkind has now been withdrawn, Jack Winkler, formerly chair of AIS told us: 'This is a total change of strategy, a different product for different consumers with different claims.' He said: 'It is now a diet liquid for weight-conscious women aged 18-30, no longer a children's drink. Some claims for oral health are still there, but down-played. Overstating the benefits of Ribena was an ethical and commercial error, for which Glaxo paid heavily.'

Jack Winkler points out that this case was the third time Glaxo had made the same mistake with the same brand. In 1994, 'sugarfree' Ribena actually contained sugar. In 1995, Ribena Juice & Fibre oversold its power to lower cholesterol.

The withdrawal of Ribena Toothkind comes at a symbolic time, as the EU debates a new Nutrition and Health Claims regulation designed to curb false claims by legal means rather than relying on voluntary action governed by industry bodies such as the ASA.

X Pizza not so traditional

We don't usually report local cases, but an interesting ruling against Castle Pizza of London criticised the company for having a logo showing a chef removing a cooked pizza from a traditional pizza kiln. Small print along the edge of the photo stated 'Important Notice: This is just a logo and we don't do traditional pizza'.

However, the ASA ruled that the picture was still inherently misleading, and the disclaimer was not prominent enough.

We think this is interesting because there are so many companies that show pictorial representations of food preparation and animal welfare that may very well be misleading – with or without disclaimers. Keep an eye out for them.

If you see photos or logos in promotional material that you think are misleading, send us a copy and if we think you have a good case, we will submit a complaint on your behalf.

X Yakult no good for periods

The manufacturer of Yakult probiotic yogurt drink claimed in a magazine advert aimed at young women that 'During your period, you're more prone to an upset tummy. Did you know that friendly bacteria could help?' Yakult claimed that the consumption of their product resulted in an increase in 'faecal moisture content' in healthy individuals and showed beneficial effects on patients with chronic constipation. A letter from an academic physician who acts as a consultant for Yakult asserted that menstrual bowel syndrome in healthy women was well documented and he had personally advised sufferers to try probiotics to alleviate the symptoms. However, the ASA was concerned that the advertisers had sent no evidence to explain the cause of menstrual bowel syndrome, nor studies to prove their product successfully treated this syndrome in otherwise healthy women. It advised the advertisers not to repeat the claim unless they held substantiation to prove it.

X 'Disgusting' Fanta Z spitting

Coca-Cola (trading as Fanta Z) was chastised by the ASA after the authority received 272 complaints about a television commercial showing a young couple spitting out Fanta Light (a low-calorie drink) in favour of Fanta Z (a similar low-calorie brand from the same company). Several parents and teachers reported that children had been found spitting out drinks, mimicking the advert. The Broadcast Advertising Clearance Centre said it regarded the advertisement as 'fairly mild and harmless' and that the spitting 'was conducted in an amusingly polite and restrained manner'. However, in its ruling the ASA said that they were 'concerned that young children would see the actions as fun and easy to copy' and advised Coca-Cola that they should restrict the advertisement to after the 9pm watershed to reduce the likelihood of small children seeing it.

? Parents' KFC and Pot Noodle complaints rejected

A mammoth 620 complaints about a series of Pot Noodle TV adverts were rejected by the ASA. The adverts from Unilever showed a man with a large bulge in his trousers (later



revealed as a brass horn) with several variations on the theme of sexual innuendo, with the man declaring 'I've got the Pot Noodle horn. It's big, it's brassy, and I'm going to blow it.' Whilst the ASA acknowledged that the word 'horn' was intended to refer to sexual arousal, the Authority did not uphold the complaints.

A record 1,671 complaints were received by the ASA relating to a TV advert for KFC Zinger Crunch Salad featuring three women working in a call centre. They literally sang the praises of the salad, with their mouths full. At the end of the advertisement one of the women answered the phone singing 'Hello, emergency helpline'. All 1,671 complainants said the advert encouraged bad manners amongst children. Most said the advert was nauseating to watch and 41 said their children had copied it. The ASA asserted that 'As teaching good table manners is an ongoing process needing frequent reminders at meal times, we did not agree that the advertisement would have a detrimental effect.' They rejected the complaints. However, KFC was criticised by the ASA for an advertisement for its Mini Chicken

Fillet Burger. The advert showed a close-up of the burger, which complainants believed to be bigger than the real thing. After purchasing three Mini Fillet Burgers from a KFC restaurant in central London, ASA officers agreed that 'There was a difference in the size and presentation to the advertised product'; that 'the bun shown in the advertisement was significantly thicker than the burgers we purchased', and 'that there was more filling and the lettuce was a different type'.

The Broadcast Advertising Clearance Centre, which had approved the advertisement for broadcast, protested that the woman in the advert holding the product 'may have just had small hands', but the ASA over-ruled them.

X 'Nuts' to Holland & Barratt price claims!

Two complaints were upheld against a TV advert for the health-food store Holland & Barratt claiming that there was 'up to 50% off fruit, nuts, seeds and snacks', shown during a commercial break of the nutrition programme *You Are What You Eat*. The ASA said that it had received no

evidence from Holland & Barratt 'that 10% were discounted by the stated 50% as required by the Department of Trade & Industry (DTI) Code of Practice on Price Indications', and upheld the complaint. The ASA also censured the advertiser for including the name of the programme during which it was aired. This is specifically disallowed by the advertising code of practice, to avoid viewers being misled into thinking the advertiser is associated with the programme.

X Dodgy claims concentrate the mind

A complaint was made against Belvoir Fruit Farms by rival Bottlegreen Drinks Co. Two advertisements in trade magazines claimed that Belvoir Crush drinks were a mix of 'whole crushed fruit (not concentrate)' and water. Bottlegreen pointed out that the products contained 7% added grape juice from concentrate, as a sweetening ingredient, so the complaint was upheld.

Belvoir apologised and said that they would not repeat the claim.

Complaints submitted....

Perfect for little nippers?

The Food Commission has submitted a complaint to the ASA about this extraordinary advertisement that appeared in *Your Family* magazine. A small child's hand is shown about to pick up a Cheerio cereal piece with the phrase 'Good eating habits are easy to pick up'. The advert also claims 'Because Cheerios are made from 4 healthy whole grains – corn, oats, rice and wheat, they're the perfect choice for growing families. And because they're the right shape and size for little hands and mouths they're perfect for little nippers too. There's a whole lot of good in those little O's.'



What the advert fails to say is that there's also a whole lot of sugar and salt in those little O's – the cereal contains 'a lot' of each of these components, judging

by Food Standards Agency guidelines. We would like to remind the advertiser, Nestlé, that bad eating habits are also easy to pick up!

Super milk!

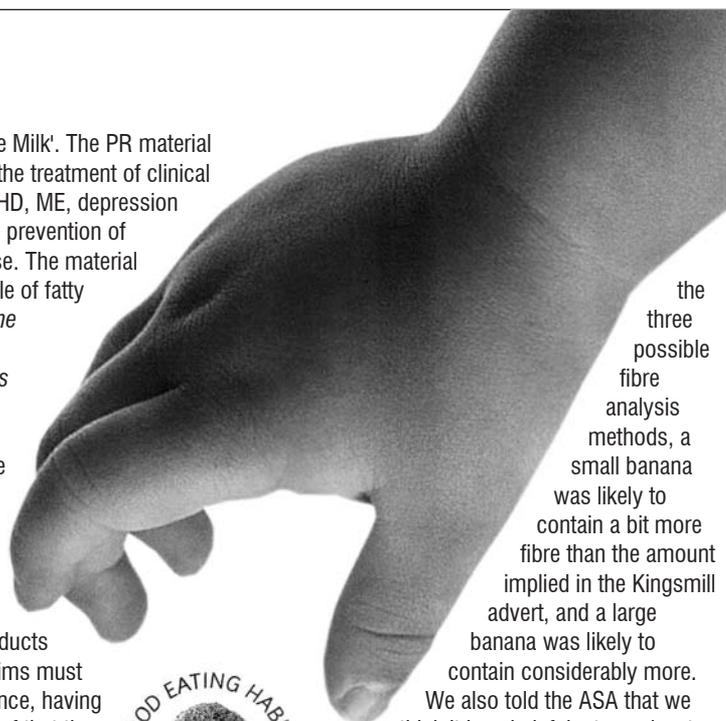
At the end of June, we received information from Beattie Communications, a PR agency acting on behalf of the supermarket Marks & Spencer, boasting of the supposed benefits of omega-3 essential fatty acids added to a new

brand of 'Super Whole Milk'. The PR material linked the product to the treatment of clinical diseases such as ADHD, ME, depression and dementia and the prevention of cardiovascular disease. The material also discussed the role of fatty acid deficiencies in 'the genesis of modern degenerative diseases including arthritis, cancer, heart attack and stroke.' Whilst we share their concern about dietary deficiencies, we wrote to the PR agency reminding them that by law, products making medicinal claims must hold a medicines licence, having submitted clinical proof that the product can deliver on the claimed medical benefits.

One month on, and the agency has not replied. We have now forwarded our file to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

Wonder bread!

An advertisement and new packaging for Kingsmill 'Wonder White' bread drew our attention due to their claim that two slices of the product contain 'twice the fibre of a banana'. Quite apart from the fact that bananas vary in size a great deal, we calculated that by any of



GOOD EATING HABITS ARE EASY TO PICK UP

the three possible fibre analysis methods, a small banana was likely to contain a bit more fibre than the amount implied in the Kingsmill advert, and a large banana was likely to contain considerably more.

We also told the ASA that we think it is unhelpful, at very least, for food companies to make such a comparison with healthy fruit or vegetables when there is no well-funded commercial coordinating body to defend fruit and vegetables from such denigration or unfair competitive practice.

We have also complained about what we believe are medicinal claims in an 'advertising feature' for Lindt chocolate, that appeared in BBC Good Food magazine, claiming that eating Lindt chocolate can help prevent heart disease. We will let you know how our complaints progress.

Fat and malnourished?

Obese children may not be eating enough – at least in terms of essential vitamins and minerals. Tim Lobstein reports

It may sound incredible, but overweight children may not be getting enough to eat. It is clear such children are getting plenty of calories – indeed they are probably getting more than they need. But many may also be going short of the vitamins and trace elements that are essential for good health.

In the USA, welfare benefits are available for families who enrol in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) programme which includes food stamps and nutrition advice. Children in this programme have been shown to be more often overweight than children in the USA in general. These WIC-enrolled children are also likely to be deficient in vitamins and trace minerals, and the two problems – excess weight and poor levels of

essential micro-nutrients – seem to go together. One survey of overweight children in the WIC programme found the vast majority (88.9%) had nutrition risks, such as poor intake of specific nutrients and low iron levels in their blood. Of these overweight WIC children, nearly 80% had multiple nutrition risks, while less than 50% of normal weight children in the program had multiple risks.⁽ⁱ⁾

In the UK, the most recent representative survey of children's food consumption was published in 1997. At that time some 20% of school children were overweight (the figure is nearer 30% now).

The survey found that a remarkably high proportion of children in their last years in primary school (aged 7-10) were not getting enough trace minerals such as iron, zinc or magnesium – essential for bodily growth, tissue repair and ensuring a healthy immune system. For example over 70% of boys in that age group were getting less than the recommended levels of zinc, as were over 80% of the girls.

In the first few years of secondary school even more children were failing to get the

recommended amounts. As Table 1 shows, over 80% of boys and virtually all girls were failing to get the amounts of zinc that ensure good health.

The recommended amounts are the ones deemed adequate for most of the population. Below these amounts, some people will not be getting enough, and there is a threshold below which it is estimated that virtually every member of the population will not be getting what they need. These minimum levels (called Lower Reference Nutrient Intakes) indicate serious problems in the diet, and should be found only rarely in schoolchildren, yet girls in secondary schools are frequently failing to get even these small amounts of essential nutrients, and their diets can be deemed as severely deficient.

As Table 2 shows, as many as 50% of girls were severely deficient in iron, and even more were severely deficient in magnesium.

These poor levels of nutrient intake appear to be exacerbated among the heaviest children. Taking data from the same survey, we have compared the average nutrient intakes for normal weight and for obese children. The results, given in Table 3, indicate that the average normal-weight child has an intake of nutrients between 3% and 7% higher than the average obese child.

It should be noted that some of the obese children may have been trying to restrict their dietary intakes and these children would suffer a loss of nutrients along with the cut in calories. The average energy (kcalorie) intake of obese children in the survey was about 8% below that reported for normal weight children.

If fatter children are trying to restrict their food intake this makes it even more important that the food they do allow themselves to eat contains all the nutrients they need for growth and long-term health.

Yet all the evidence suggests this is not what they are getting. Instead, these overweight children may be the most malnourished of their generation.

(i) Food and Nutrition Service, US Department of Agriculture (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/WIC/FILES/overweight.htm>) accessed March 2005.

(ii) National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS): Young people aged 4 to 18 years, TSO, 2000.



But mum, if I don't eat an extra bowl of sugar frosted chocolate krispies where will I get my vitamins from?!

Table 1: Proportion of UK schoolchildren falling below recommended levels of mineral intake (Intakes below Lower Reference Nutrient Intake)

	7-10 years		11-14 years	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Iron	40%	59%	61%	98%
Calcium	19%	29%	79%	79%
Magnesium	56%	75%	86%	97%
Potassium	43%	47%	88%	97%
Zinc	73%	83%	84%	97%
Copper	33%	49%	35%	60%
Iodine	24%	39%	37%	61%

Source: NDNS (ii)

Table 2: Proportion of older UK girls with severely deficient intakes of minerals (Intakes below Lower Reference Nutrient Intake)

	Girls	
	11-14 years	15-18 years
Iron	45%	50%
Calcium	24%	19%
Magnesium	51%	53%
Potassium	19%	38%
Zinc	37%	10%
Iodine	13%	10%

Source: NDNS (ii)

Table 3: Average daily intake of specified nutrients in obese and non-obese children in the UK

	Normal weight	Obese
Iron mg	9.32	8.90
Calcium mg	720	671
Magnesium mg	194	186
Potassium g	2.18	2.04
Zinc mg	6.29	6.26
Iodine mcg	146	140
Carotene mg	1.39	1.19
Vitamin C mg	74.8	60.3
n-3 polyunsaturates mg	1637	1424

Source: NDNS (ii) analysed by The Food Commission

Advertisements match children's diets: is it a coincidence?

The national survey of children's diets was undertaken in 1996-1997. At the same time, the campaigning group Consumers International undertook a survey of TV advertising in several European countries along with Australia and the USA. In 2000 Sustain carried out a similar survey, published under the title *TV Dinners*.

Below we show the top types of food being advertised on commercial children's television channels in the UK (children's TV sampled between 4pm and 6pm on weekday evenings, and on Saturday mornings). The commonest adverts were for confectionery, cakes and biscuits and sweetened breakfast cereals.

Top types of food advertised on children's television

	Consumers International survey 1997	Sustain survey 2000
Confectionery	28%	18%
Cakes and biscuits	--	19%
Breakfast cereals	16%	12%
Ready meals	15%	15%
Fast food restaurants	12%	7%
Sauces and spreads	9%	20%
Sausages, burgers etc	7%	--
Hot drinks	4%	--
Soft drinks	--	4%
Dairy foods	--	5%
Other	8%	1%

Source: Consumers International, 1996 Sustain, 2000

Now look at the top ten sources of calories in children's diets, accounting for nearly three-quarters of all their intake (table top right).

Is it a coincidence that so many of the foods children were eating were also the foods being so heavily advertised on children's TV?

We don't think it is a coincidence – and the food industry would agree. But the industry would argue that they are following children's tastes, trying to get them to switch brands within categories, rather than attempting to lead children's tastes and encourage them to switch from other types of food to the ones they are advertising.

Top sources of food calories, children aged 7-14

	Calories provided
Milk, milk products	10-12%
Biscuits, cakes, pastries	10-12%
Bread	10-11%
Confectionery	8-10%
Sausages, burgers etc	8-9%
Breakfast cereals	5-7%
Potato chips	5-7%
Savoury snacks	5-6%
Soft drinks	4%

Source: NDNS, 2000

We believe that intensive advertising will lead to both brand and category switching, and that people eat more of the same type of products as a result. This was also the conclusion of the Hastings Report to the Food Standards Agency last year. And in other contexts the industry itself acknowledges this effect – for example the Cocoa and Chocolate industry suggest that advertising and promotion have affected the overall increase in sales of chocolate: *'The growth [in chocolate sales] has been attributed to strong brands, constant innovation and an increase in impulse snacking by consumers. Advertising and promotion [are] crucial in maintaining these factors.'* The International Cocoa Organization (2000) www.icco.org

● The Consumers International survey was entitled *A Spoonful of Sugar* and is available from www.consumersinternational.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=89854 (click on the food link)

● Sustain's 2000 survey *TV Dinners* is available from Sustain for £7.50. Sustain, 94 White Lion St, London N1 9PF





What the doctor reads

The latest research from the medical journals

Low fat and high veg lower cholesterol

A low fat diet, especially one that reduces the intake of saturated fats, is known to lower blood cholesterol levels, especially the levels of low-density lipoprotein ('bad') cholesterol, by about 5%. But combining this with a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans can double the effect, reducing cholesterol and LDL cholesterol by around 10%. 'It's not enough to steer clear of saturated fat,' the authors commented. They suggested that doctors treating patients with high cholesterol should give dietary programmes a shot, as these could protect from other diseases, too.

● Gardner CD, et al. 2005, *Ann Intern Med.* 142, 725-33.

Plants protect from stroke damage

A diet rich in fruit and vegetables may help to limit the brain damage caused by a stroke or other neurological disorders. Rats fed diets rich in blueberries, spinach or the algae known as spirulina were shown to suffer less cell loss and improved memory recovery after a stroke. Similar diets have been shown to lessen age-related decline in memory and the ability to learn new tasks in animals.

The authors acknowledge that the specific components of the diets may not be easily converted into a pill. As one author noted 'Whole foods contain multiple nutrients, so there are many different ways these diets could be protecting the brain. From a scientific perspective it's a package deal.'

● Bickford P, et al. 2005, *Exp Neurol.* 193, 75-84.

Gut flora contain hundreds of new species

The types and proportions of different bacteria that inhabit the healthy human gut can vary between individuals as much as fingerprints, according to a study which identified nearly 400 different bacterial species among just three people. Nearly two thirds of the species were novel, with no genetic close neighbours on the existing database of known bacterial gene sequences. The samples were taken from six sites within the large intestine, and the

researchers believe that many more species would be seen at other sites.

The variation between individuals was dramatic, the study reported, and may be useful for forensic medicine: the pattern of flora is not only unique to a person but could indicate where that person had travelled, what diet they ate and any antibiotics they were using

● Eckburg PB, et al. 2005, *Science* 308, 1635-8.

Sweet drinks lead to obesity in pre-schoolers

Pre-school children who are already overweight are likely to become obese if they drink sweet drinks, including fruit juices with no added sugars, according to a US study of over 10,000 children monitored for a year. Intriguingly, normal weight children who also drank sweet drinks showed only a small, insignificant weight gain. The researchers point out that as little as one drink a day raised the risk of weight gain. They noted that new guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends whole fruit as being healthier than fruit juice.

● Welsh JA, et al. 2005, *Pediatrics.* 115, e223-9.

Vitamin E supplements raise heart risks

Patients who took vitamin E supplements for seven years showed no reduction in their risk of contracting cancer or cardiovascular disease, and some showed an increased risk of heart

failure. Dietary data have suggested that diets rich in vitamin E may be protective against these diseases, but long-term supplementation with a daily dose of 400 IU (international units) has not shown the beneficial effects that were expected, a study of nearly 4,000 people aged over 55 found.

An editorial accompanying the research paper warns of making assumptions about extracting a single active ingredient from what has been shown to be a protective dietary pattern.

● Lonn E, et al. 2005, *JAMA.* 293, 1338-1347.

Hot veg oils produce toxins

Heating vegetable oils that are rich in polyunsaturates for periods as short as half-an-hour can lead to the formation of a family of toxins related to hydroxyl-trans-nonenal (HNE), a compound that is highly reactive with proteins, nucleic acids such as DNA and RNA, and other bio-active molecules.

HNE is formed from the oxidation of linoleic acid, an omega-6 fatty acid found in many vegetable oils. The toxin has been linked to degenerative diseases including Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, Huntington's, liver disease, stroke and atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).

The latest research underlines the hazards of re-using oils for frying, especially in catering and fast food outlets, as the toxin builds up with each heating and cooling cycle.

Switching from animal fats to vegetable oils may be a step towards healthier diets, but deep frying still has its hazards.

● Csallany AS, et al. American Oil Chemists Society congress, Salt Lake City, 4 May 2005.

Lose weight with a big salad

Eating a large portion of foods with low energy-density, such as salad or vegetables without rich sauces, reduces the total amount of energy eaten at a meal, researchers at Pennsylvania State University have shown. 42 women were asked to select a salad and eat it before being allowed access to a pasta course, in which they could take what they wanted. Compared with women who were not given salad first, the amount of pasta was reduced in proportion to the amount of salad eaten beforehand, with the

total calorie intake for the whole meal being reduced by eating more salad.

However, if the salad contained an energy-rich sauce, the total calorie intake of the meal was higher than skipping the salad course. The researchers recommend eating salads for a first course as a strategy for losing weight, and taking care not to add too much dressing.

● Rolls BJ, et al. 2004, *J Am Diet Assoc.* 104, 1570-1576.



Diet for a Dead Planet: How the food industry is killing us



CD Cook, The New Press
(www.thenewpress.com) ISBN
1-56584-864-0, £14.99
hardback.

Every so often an investigative journalist, with accredited prowess in exposing political intrigue, corporate greed, injustice or poverty, stumbles upon the scandals of our

food supply and writes a book about them. Californian Chris Cook's is the latest.

Being American West Coast, the style is chatty, a little breathless with short sentences and informalities, and littered with clever cross-heads and chapter titles. It's a readable formula that works well in newspaper columns but can exhaust the reader of a 300-page book. And perhaps because it is American, there is barely a single mention of anything happening outside the USA.

The disadvantage of a generalist coming into a specialist field is that they start by telling us the obvious as if they had discovered it for the first time. The advantage is that, for many readers, these re-discoveries are actually helpful in reminding us of the drivers of political machinery and the underpinning of the market. Take this paragraph on added value:

Nearly everything in the supermarket outside the produce aisle has, as economists put it, 'added value'. Usually that 'value' adds up to a long list of undecipherable chemicals and

'flavors', processed in one or more factories, and a lot of packaging. Then there's all that hidden 'value' that's 'added' by a host of intermediaries, such as grain elevators, wholesalers and long distance distributors who stand between the producers and the consumers of food. This 'value' is actually added cost to the consumer – and profit to the intermediaries. Every time value is added off the farm, both farmers and consumers lose a little bit more money and control in the marketplace – and farmers' role in the food web gets smaller and smaller, their prospects for survival dimmer. Call it value subtracted.

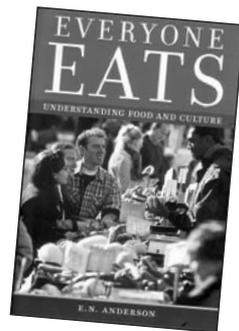
Nothing new there, but it is nicely put. And so we move on: through problems consumers face in their food supply and onto the corporatisation of farming and capitalisation of food production, and thence to government policies on farm subsidies.

Acknowledging that this is a gloomy scenario, the book ends with an uplift entitled *The Good News: A Menu for Change*. In this section Cook brings to his aid the usual list of heroes – the organic movement, vegetable boxes and farmers' markets, the environmental movement and anti-GM campaigns, Fair Trade and anti-corporatism. He adds another movement he calls 'community food security' a term used by a US-based Community Food Security Coalition *'bringing together anti-hunger, environmental, and sustainable-farming advocates'* and advocating local, small-scale urban and peri-urban food production as a more sustainable alternative to food banks and other charitable food distribution schemes which distribute *'mostly processed, non-organic food made by large corporations'*. He cites a *'veritable cornucopia'* of urban gardening projects producing *'fresh nutritious food for public housing residents'*.

The corporations may not be quaking in their boots quite yet, but these initiatives may represent the counter-culture of the future. The alternative, he asserts, is the death of the planet.

Everyone Eats. Understanding food and culture

EN Anderson, New York
University Press
(www.nyupress.org), ISBN 0-
8147-0496-4, \$20.



American again, but a scholarly style and hardly any references to America. Indeed the book opens with a Zen riddle ('Everyone eats rice, yet no one knows why') and although acknowledging the philosophical dimension, it moves swiftly on to discuss anthropology, with examples from around the world: Why do we eat the foods we eat? What affects our taste in food? How do we make choices?

Well, actually, it doesn't really ask this last question because it doesn't really explore the commercial side of food marketing and the creation of world markets for commodity producers, shippers and the larger food manufacturers.

It's a work of great breadth and interesting detail (how they made beer in ancient Mesopotamia; which insects are eaten in Mexico). But it lacks depth, looking too fondly at history and culture and too little at contemporary influences that undermine tradition and replace specific foods with processed, globalised brands. However, the author does recognise the pressing problems of hunger and the inequities of trade. When Anderson ventures into politics, in his last chapter (Feeding the World), he plumps for a formula which combines increasing productivity with better environmental protection, a nod in favour of genetic engineering but a strident call to end corporate *'oppression and exploitation'* and for a time when *'ordinary people take over'* and will *'unleash the forces that can save us all'*. If only!

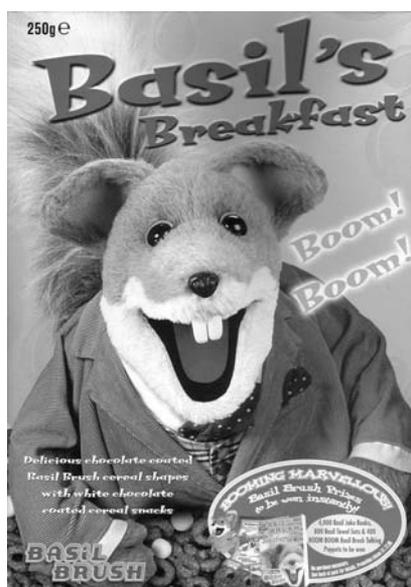
Basil's Boom Boom Breakfast cereal

Occasionally, the marketing for a children's product becomes so dominant that it can be hard to remember that it is in fact a food that ought to have two primary purposes – to taste good, and to provide nutrition.

Health Care Products Ltd and Entertainment Rights plc have dismissed such considerations with a typically brash *'Boom! Boom!'*

This cereal packet is dominated by Basil Brush imagery and jokes; the picture on the front shows barely a glimpse of the food that the packet contains. The cereal itself is scattered with fox-shaped chocolate cereal pieces and 'white chocolate-coated cereal snacks'.

Move over, food. Everything must be entertainment, games, treats and 'fun'. At risk of sounding like a participant in the TV show *Grumpy Old Men*, it makes you wonder how millions of children in the past ever agreed to let a morsel pass their lips.



At least one adult in six admits that they eat 'less than one portion of fruit or vegetables per day' while three-quarters of adults eat 'less than three portions'. These figures come from one of the 200 or so graphs and tables of



fascinating facts in this excellent annual publication from the British Heart Foundation (www.bhf.org.uk). Can be downloaded as a free PDF file from www.heartstats.org

feedback

letters from our readers



We welcome letters from all of our readers but we do sometimes have to shorten

them so that we can include as many as possible (our apologies to the authors). You can write to The Editor, The Food Magazine, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF or email to letters@foodcomm.org.uk

Don't spoil popcorn!

Home-made popcorn is a firm favourite in my family, because it makes the kids laugh so much when they're anticipating the pop and then it suddenly hits the lid of the pan. That's why my four-year-old son begged for this popcorn in the shop, but it was a sore disappointment. How did they manage to get so much sugar into it? I

couldn't bear to eat it, and he made a fowl face when he tasted it. I'm sure, even when we do add sugar at home, it wouldn't end up as being more than the corn, as in this product. And why add colouring? We never need it! It annoys me that popcorn, which can be a decent snack, is messed about with in this way. And they have the cheek to say that 'it contains natural ingredients, so it's got to be good!' Not in my book, it isn't!

**Lisa Martin,
Hartlepool**



Containing more sugar and glucose syrup than corn, this 'Crunchy Butter Popcorn' appears to be over 60% sugar! 'Only natural ingredients' says the front of the pack.

Bagel update

About a year ago, a reader sent in a photo of the Bagel Factory – a take-away bagel sandwich outlet in the main hall of Paddington railway station. She said that she thought the terms 'low in fat' and 'low salt' were misleading, since she guessed that only the bagels themselves were low in fat and salt, and not the bagels with fillings, as bought and consumed.

We took up her case, and have been having an ever more bemusing correspondence with the Advertising Standards Authority. The ASA has said for instance, that they are of the opinion that 'most consumers would understand that these statements refer only to the bagel and not to the fillings'.

Over the past few months, a Food Commission staff member has made five rail

trips via Paddington station. Each time, she went to the Bagel Factory stall, bought a bagel with a filling likely to contain fat and/or salt and asked a member of staff if the bagel sandwich was low in fat and salt. On all five occasions, none of the staff – usually three on duty at a time – knew whether the filled bagel was low in either salt or fat. Our surveyor then asked whether the 'low in fat', 'low salt' claim applied to either plain bagels or filled bagels, or to both (referring to the claim on the side of the outlet which is still there, prominently and permanently displayed). On one occasion, the staff said they didn't know that the claim was displayed, and could provide no further information. On three occasions, the staff had a discussion between themselves, came to conflicting conclusions, but finally admitted that they didn't know. And on one occasion, a staff member asserted confidently that the claims



meant that all of the bagels, whether filled or unfilled, are low in fat and salt.

So if their own staff don't understand the claims, what hope for consumers? We will be telling our surveyor's story to the ASA to challenge their assumptions.

A spoonful of E104 makes the medicine go down

I am writing to enquire if you are aware of the acceptable levels of food colouring used in medicines. My daughter has been prescribed Amoxicillin anti-biotics with E104 (quinoline yellow). The colour is extremely bright and a completely unnecessary addition. To say I am horrified is an understatement.

Karen Adams, by email

The use of food additives in medicine is controlled by specific European legislation which does allow the use of the synthetic 'coal tar' dye E104. You are quite right that it is an unnecessary addition, but it is legally permitted. Tell the manufacturer what you think – they do pay attention to customer feedback – and send us a copy of the correspondence.

A great night in?

Blockbuster seems to think that the best way to watch a film is while stuffing your face with high calorie confectionery and soft drinks. I am astonished at the quantities of junk food on offer in my local Blockbuster video store.

Amongst the DVDs and videos are huge piles of crisps, chocolates, soft drinks and toffee popcorn – it looked like a supermarket.

There are plenty of calorific foods on special offer as well, such as two big bars of chocolate for just £2 – the perfect way to 'complete the great night in'. I attach a photo for your magazine.

**Lorna Taylor,
by email**

Representatives of the food industry frequently argue that the increasing incidence of

obesity is not due to their products but due to lack of exercise. Here the two combine perfectly, with leading brand names such as Coca-Cola and Cadbury's targeting their calorific products directly at people whose energy expenditure over the next few hours will be at the 'hard to detect' end of the scale.



A confused shopper attempts to spot the DVD section amongst all the junk food in Blockbuster

feedback

letters from our readers

Spot the difference

My husband and I bought sandwiches on the train, and were surprised at the big calorie difference between the two products, even though the protein, fat and carbohydrate contents are exactly the same per pack. Does the cheese sandwich have some kind of amazingly calorific chutney?! Also, although I have a basic understanding of nutrition and maths, I can't explain why the two products would have the same amount of fat per pack, but very different amounts of fat per 100g. They are from the same company, and seemed to weigh about the same at the time, although we were too peckish to save the contents to weigh at home! Can you shed any light?

Margaret Stazie, Aberystwyth

The nutrition labels declare that there are 118 more kcalories in the cheese sandwich than in the chicken sandwich. Using our tables of nutrition we've tried various calculations, and suggest that the manufacturer may have simply

made a mistake in the amount of fat per pack for the cheese sandwich. The difference of 118 kcalories would be accounted for by about 13g of fat (9 kcalories per gram).

The energy figures are probably correct and, judging by the amount you need to multiply each of the 'per 100g' figures for the cheese sandwich (a factor of approximately 1.84) to get the 'per pack' figures, the fat figure per 100g has not been multiplied in this way. If it were, it would be about 19.7g of fat in total. Not only would this account for the missing 118 kcalories, it would also mean that your choice of sandwich is rather less healthy than you might have thought!

However, by applying the same logic to the figures for the chicken sandwiches (multiplying the 'per 100g' figures by a factor of 1.97), none of the protein, carbohydrate or fat 'per pack' figures seem to agree with those for 'per 100g'. We'll send our calculations to the manufacturer, Food Partners, and see if they can explain.

Cheese Ploughman's		
	per 100g	per pack
Energy	945 kJ	1739 kJ
	225 kcal	414 kcal
Protein	10.5g	14.9g
Carbohydrate	21.8g	39.4g
Fat	10.7g	5.8g

Chicken Crème Fraiche		
	per 100g	per pack
Energy	631 kJ	1243 kJ
	150 kcal	296 kcal
Protein	12.1g	14.9g
Carbohydrate	17.7g	39.4g
Fat	3.5g	5.8g

Obeying the very small letter of the law

In 2003, new fruit juice labelling regulations were introduced 'to assist consumers by requiring a clearer distinction between juice obtained directly from fruit and that obtained by the reconstitution of concentrate'. 'In future,' assured the Food Standards Agency, 'the wording 'from concentrate' will be an integral part of the product name, thus drawing the attention of consumers more readily to the method of production'.

We invite you to draw your consumer attention to the label of Sunmagic 'pure 100% orange juice' and test the ease of visibility of its product description.

See that tiny smudgy blur in the picture (on the real label less than 1mm high)? Reach for your specs! It is the declaration 'made from concentrated orange juice', written sideways along the label. Why

This is shown at the actual size:

made from concentrated orange juice



would a company choose to put a declaration in such extraordinarily small type? Hardly for the purpose of 'drawing the attention of the consumers more readily to the method of production'.

We think the answer may lie in the fact that pure, unconcentrated juices are more attractive to consumers and can command a premium price.

Wasteful wrappers

We've been supporters of the Food Commission for 16 years – ever since we read 'Children's Food' and learned, amongst other revelations, that an 'economy beef burger' could be legitimately 40% pork fat. The family turned vegetarian soon afterwards ...

I was concerned to notice that our last copy of the *Food Magazine* was sent in a plastic wrapper. I guess you are using these because they reduce your internal costs. If so, then I urge you to consider carefully the wider costs to us all of making wrappers from plastic, using them once and then burying or burning them, since I'm not aware of a local authority in the UK collecting them for recycling. Mine certainly doesn't.

A philosophy of make-and-use-once-and-throw-away no longer benefits us economically, socially or environmentally. The climate is changing. If we are to stop this, then we have to be dramatically more energy and resource efficient – now.

I understand Royal Mail now offers a service for distributing catalogues, magazines etc. using no wrapper at all. Would you consider using it? Perhaps your overall internal costs would be the same or less and we should still get the same or even a better service. There would certainly be less wasted energy and resources.

**David Crawford
Dorking, Surrey**

Thanks for your letter David. We've discussed this issue many times ourselves and are continuing to look into possible solutions. The magazine does need some kind of wrapper, both for protection and to hold any inserts. Polywrap is, as you point out, cheap, and currently saves us around £200 each year in mailing costs. That might not seem like much but please remember we operate on very tight funding and cannot easily afford such costs.

There are environmental concerns about both polywrap and paper manufacturing so a switch to relatively expensive paper envelopes isn't necessarily the best move. We are looking into the possibility of using biodegradable or partially recycled polywrap or using recycled envelopes (although the cost has so far been prohibitive, and there are also concerns about whether the biodegradable plastic is made from GM corn starch). If any of our readers knows which is genuinely the most eco-friendly option, or has further suggestions, we'd love to hear from you.





Independent women 'sell out'

Since 2002, pop singer Beyoncé has been known as the 'Pepsi spokesperson', helping to market Pepsi to young people. She took over this role from Britney Spears, who sang the delightful ditty 'The Joy of Pepsi' in her TV commercials. Over the years, the Pepsi spokesperson role has also been fulfilled by Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson.

'I'm thrilled to be joining so many talented entertainers who have created memorable Pepsi moments over the years,' gushed Beyoncé (in the middle of this picture). 'Many of them have inspired me, and I'd love to do the same for the next generation of artists out there.'



The pop band that Beyoncé belongs to is called Destiny's Child – glamorous, sexy and above all... thin. They are famed for their song 'Independent Women', and this year had a sell-out tour of the same name. Independent? Hm. 'Sell-out' may be the rather more apt description.

One of our nutritionists went to see Destiny's Child play at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham. She reports that for the final song of the show, giant screens displayed a familiar set of golden arches to a captive audience of mainly tween and teenage girls. Destiny's Child ended the show with a rendition of the McDonald's advertising song: 'I'm lovin' it'.

Pop! Problems solved!

Our wonderful cartoonist Ben Nash often satirises the ludicrous claims made by the advertising industry for food and drink products. But this time, Dr Pepper has done the job for us. Their soft drink can sports a cartoon flash declaring 'Solves all your problems!' It's clearly tongue-in-cheek, but it does rather reflect the claims that advertisers would love to be able to make. Just for fun, we retaliate with our own tongue-in-cheek suggestion for a new label for sugary drinks – 'Dissolves all your teeth!'



Parliamentary spat over catering rules

Conservative MP James Paice has put forward a parliamentary petition calling for other MPs to register their concern over the use of taxpayers' money *'to buy food which has been produced using methods that would be illegal in the UK'*. He also *'calls on the Government to ensure that all publicly procured food meets the Little Red Tractor standard'*.

An acerbic addendum to this petition was placed by Labour MP David Taylor, encouraging signatories to the petition to add their *'regrets'* for *'the actions of the former Conservative Government, whose compulsory competitive tendering legislation prevented local education authorities and others from procurement based on such considerations'*.

Tomato flan

Our office phone rings...

'Hello, Food Commission, can I help?'

'Yes. Hello. I'm calling from Prolexis, and I would like to invite you to a scientific meeting to discuss our new product. As you may know, tomato consumption is linked to lower cardiovascular disease in Mediterranean countries and therefore tomatoes are a cardioprotective food. We are offering a new functional food product – scientific research has shown that our patented tomato extract has significant anti-platelet effects, comparable to that of aspirin, and we would like to meet with you and share our data about the potential benefits of our food products.'

'It sounds to us like a specialist medical product. Who are you aiming at?'

'We believe anyone over the age of 40 who is considering taking aspirin on a regular basis would benefit.'

'And you say that it is as good as aspirin. But is it as good as ordinary tomatoes?'

'Well our trials show that it is as good as aspirin at platelet reduction...'

'But can you tell me if this product is better than eating normal tomatoes? Why should anyone buy your product instead of a tomato?'

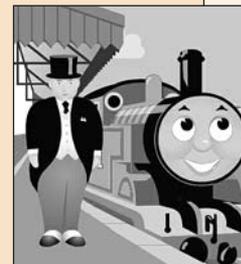
Momentary pause. *'Well, er, we believe this product will appeal to people who don't normally eat tomatoes, and it can provide all the benefit of an aspirin, and...'* And so on.

Our thanks to Prolexis plc for their sales call.



DoH hires Fat Controller

We extend a welcome to Tabitha Jay – new programme manager for obesity at the Department of Health. Ms Jay was previously employed as Director of Policy at the Strategic Rail Authority.



We can't resist the conclusion that, given her history, her new role at the Department of Health makes her the Fat Controller.

It's *'All change, please'* at the Food & Drink Federation as well. Taking over as Director General of the voice of the food industry is Melanie Leech, formerly executive director of the Association of Police Authorities. That will add an interesting spin next time someone in the food industry accuses the Food Commission of being the Food Police.

Meanwhile, another job change sees Dr Samantha Stear joining the English Institute of Sport as National Lead for Nutrition. Where did Samantha work before? She was Science Director at the industry's Sugar Bureau.

So that's a pint of Lucozade Sport all round. Cheers!

They cut the kid, but not the calories!

Last summer, we criticised these barbeque biscuits from Marks & Spencer, which contain an astonishing 247 kcalories per biscuit.

They are one quarter fat and over 40% sugar. Yet M&S seemed to think them suitable for children and showed a young child on the label, licking her chocolate-covered lips.

This year, the biscuits show no reductions in calories, fat or sugar. But it seems that M&S did take our criticism to heart, because the picture of the child has gone, replaced with a flash saying 'NEW'. Shame they couldn't make the product healthier at the same time!

