

FOOD MAGAZINE

Campaigning for safer, healthier food for all

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Chew on this!

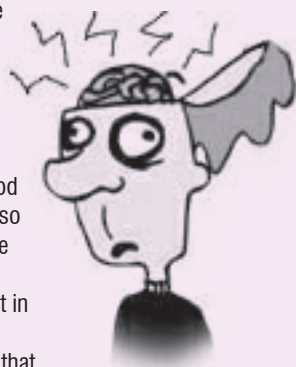
The Food Commission's new website Chewonthis.org.uk aims to give an inside view on modern food production.

The Food Commission has launched a new website aimed at schools following concern that books, posters and websites currently offered to children paint a complacent and rosy picture of food production and marketing. Much of the material is produced by the food industry itself, or by its front organisations such as the industry-funded British Nutrition Foundation, European Food Information Council and International Life Sciences Institute.

Using animation and cartoons to illustrate its points, the new website – available at www.chewonthis.org.uk – tackles four aspects of food: nutrition, labelling, marketing and ingredients, with links to good, independent sources of advice on healthy eating. Further sections are planned, looking at the environment, sustainable food production and animal welfare.

Through humorous approaches, and amazing facts, the website examines marketing that targets children with unhealthy foods. Additives and other non-food ingredients are also explored, as is the excessive use of fat, sugar and salt in so many of the processed foods that are familiar to children.

All of these issues are backed up with worksheets and teacher's notes. The material can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes under a 'creative commons' copyright.



- For more details, see pages 12 and 13
- The website is at: www.chewonthis.org.uk

School classes are fed a processed diet

For too long children have been taught about food and nutrition according to the whims of the food industry. The rot set in when the old Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave the industry-funded British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) a large grant to develop a teaching pack, which resulted in the widely distributed *'Food: A fact of life'*.

Last autumn, the BNF launched a similarly-themed website for schools, supported by producer organisations and individual companies (such as British Sugar, Kellogg's and Nestlé).

It contains lovely pictures and helpfully bland statements, such as *'All food comes from plants and animals'* that bear little resemblance to the foods children really eat (Diet Coke, anyone?) Recipe suggestions are for making 'sandwiches, smoothies, biscuits and scones'. Yet fatty and sugary food get only the helpful suggestion: *'We should try not to eat too many of the foods from the 5th group, foods containing fat and foods containing sugar'*.

Product development is taught in terms of the marvellous skills of the food technologist, the package designer, the taste panels and the need to keep food safe and hygienic. There is

no critique of additives or marketing, and no reference to pesticide problems or concerns over GM foods.

To counter the complacency and give children a chance to consider alternative views, the Food Commission has launched its new website and urges teachers, parents and children to make full use of it.



School children – a captive market for food companies!

Also in this issue

Nutrition, mental health and behaviour. The *Food Magazine* examines the research which suggests a healthy diet can do more than lead to a healthy body. See pages 14-15.

Are common additive cocktails toxic?

Research shows that combinations of common food additives could have a greater toxic effect in laboratory tests than the individual additives alone. See page 7.

TV ads to be hidden in programmes. Under new proposals from the EU the incidence of covert advertising, known as 'product placement', is set to boom. See page 16.

Terminator is back. 'Terminator' technology genetically modifies plants to produce only sterile seeds. This forces farmers to buy new seed each season and allows biotech companies' monopoly control over seeds. See page 6.



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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It's all in the mind?

Readers accustomed to the arguments linking food to health will be familiar with the facts on heart disease, obesity, cancer and the other familiar diet-related diseases. But what about the greatest chronic disease of them all – mental disorders? This Food Magazine turns out to be a litany of examples of how the food we consume is linked to behaviour and mental health. Food and mental health is now the focus of serious attention by researchers, health specialists and educationalists alike.

There are more than 450 million people with mental, neurological or behavioural problems throughout the world. In the UK, some 25% of people seeing their family doctor have some form of mental problem, of which depression is the most common (17%). Such problems cause nearly half of the population's total health burden measured in terms of years of life lived with ill health. And studies have shown that more than one in five children in European cities show mental or behavioural disorders.

Food is not seen as a determinant of mental health – it is not mentioned as an environmental determinant in the major World Health Report 2001 – and the usual assumption is that bad dietary habits are a result, not a cause of psychiatric problems. Certainly there is a cluster of lifestyle concerns: alcohol and tobacco use, poor diet and risk-taking activities are part of the mix, but is diet a possible contributor?

Gradually the early pioneers of such views, such as Professor Michael Crawford in the 1970s, have found their theories of brain physiology confirmed as research shows nutrition to be a key factor in neural cell development and function. Now a review by Sustain, in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation, has summarised the science and made a strong case for adding mental disorder to the list of diet-related diseases (see pages 11-15).

And it isn't just nutrition. As many parents have long suspected, additives have an influence on behaviour – and the combination of artificial colours and flavour-boosters appear to have particularly damaging effects on the growth of neural cells (see page 7).

And while we are talking of flavourings, food companies depend on them to ensure that their mass-produced gunk has the nose-and-tongue appeal needed to sell the product (see page 19), seeking to influence purchasing behaviour in their own right.

Isn't it time that we recognised the profound links between what we eat and how we feel and think? We could start using our brain power to ensure that children are given the best possible nutrition to feed their minds. And we could put more thought behind policies to ensure that the right foods are grown, and natural resources protected to ensure good brain nutrition for generations to come.

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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 undertaken? The Food Commission may be able to help you. Contact Kath on 020 7837 2250.

Cadbury king-sizes by a different name

The confectionery company Cadbury has proved that pledges worth no more than the paper (or packaging) that they're written on. Despite having announced in 2004 that it would eliminate 'king size' chocolate bars to do its bit to help cut the nation's calorie consumption, large-size Cadbury chocolate bars are back. And Cadbury's chocolate finger biscuits (manufactured under licence by Burtons Biscuits) now come in 'the biggest box ever!'

Cadbury proudly announced that 'Cadbury Schweppes in the UK was the first confectionery manufacturer to discontinue single-serve king size lines'. However, it pays to read this commitment very carefully. What is a single serve? A single pack? Or a single chunk of chocolate?

Regular Cadbury chocolate bars weigh 49g. In 2004, 'king-size' Cadbury milk chocolate bars weighed 85g. In 2005, Cadbury's answer to the 'king-size' problem was launched – new

75g chocolate bars. They are no longer described as 'king size', but '8 chunk'. In effect, Cadbury's has cut up our chocolate for us in order to be able to continue selling large-size bars and avoid the criticism associated with 'king-size' and 'super-size' products. The label says that cutting up the chocolate helps it 'last longer'.

Cadbury will also be increasing the size of their regular 200g bar to 250g. The packaging will emphasise that there is 'more to share' – or to put it another way – 'bigger portions for all'.

In 2004, Cadbury signed up to a *Manifesto for Food and Health*, published by the industry's Food and Drink Federation (FDF). The Manifesto contained seven pledges, including a commitment to controlling portion sizes. The manifesto was the industry's pre-emptive strike, ahead of publication of a public health white paper from government – a policy



Through large-size products, Cadbury demonstrates its commitment to 'portion control' with 'biggest ever' boxes of Cadbury Fingers and '8 chunk' Dairy Milk bars

paper that urged food companies to improve the nutritional value of their food, control portion sizes and curb marketing and promotion of unhealthy food. The government threatened that legislation would follow if the food industry did not take voluntary action to help improve public health.

A Cadbury spokesman said: 'It's down to all sections of society – the Government, the public, food manufacturers – to play their part. This is our contribution.' On the subject of king-size portions, the FDF's Martin Patterson said that the federation wanted to give a sign to consumers to eat in moderation.

In which case, what sort of sign should we understand by this enormous box of Cadbury chocolate finger biscuits? It is manufactured under licence from Cadbury by Burtons Biscuits, and described as 'the biggest box ever!' One of our researchers bought it in November 2005, in a branch of Somerfield supermarket.

In total, the box contains 128 biscuits for around £5. Is this a sign to eat in moderation? Does this product live up to an industry commitment ostensibly designed to help consumers control their calorie intake?

Oh, and next time you hear a manufacturer saying that packets are too small to carry full nutrition information, then consider this. The manufacturer has found room on the box to give us the information that 'if you placed each finger in this box end to end they would stretch for an astonishing 8.3 metres'.

By our own calculations, the surface area of this Cadbury's Fingers box is over 2,000cm², of which just 9.5cm² is devoted to partial nutrition information. Yet, funnily enough, there is no mention of either the sugar or saturated fat content of the 128 chocolate-covered biscuits that the box contains. Too little space? Or is there something they don't want us to know?



Junk food – new opportunities

At last the language appears to be changing.

Whereas food companies have spent 30 years or more telling us that people's diets are a result of their choices, and that they need to be educated to make the right choices, a new study – funded by Tate & Lyle – indicates that business is starting to admit to other possible causes of poor diets.*

Carried out in the USA, homeland of the concept of freedom of choice, the study shows that most Americans know what they should be eating but find it difficult to find the products that could help them.

The study also revealed that 90% of parents said they try to ensure their children have a nutritious, balanced diet, but that they find it difficult to find healthy products with 'child appeal'.

While consumers claim to check labels for fat and sugar content, they are not willing to compromise on taste, states the report. It urges food and beverage manufacturers to

reformulate their healthier options so that they are attractive and taste good, the report says.

"American consumers have a good understanding of what constitutes 'healthy eating' yet there is a disconnect between what they know and believe and what they actually do in terms of eating," said Harvey Chimoff, Tate & Lyle's marketing director. "There are significant opportunities for food and beverage manufacturers to make more healthful versions of their products. While these new options must be convenient and readily available for consumers across purchase locations, they must also be as tasty as regular products," he added.

Sadly, this probably means the same old American-style junk food, but using sucralose (Tate & Lyle's patented low-calorie sweetener) instead of sugar.

* See www.foodnavigator-usa.com 23 December 2005.

ASDA bows to pressure over fish supplies

Supermarket ASDA has promised to improve the sustainability of its fish supplies after coming lowest in a list of supermarkets rated for their fisheries policies.

In the last edition of the *Food Magazine*, we warned of the need to control and police our exploitation of fish stocks. Following this a survey by the environmental campaign group Greenpeace revealed which of the retailers were selling fish from endangered or 'at risk' sources. The survey highlighted ASDA as the 'worst of the bunch', with Marks & Spencer and Waitrose top of the scorecard due to their having implemented sustainable seafood policies.

Greenpeace campaigner Oliver Knowles commented that, 'ASDA did worse than we'd thought possible, and they fully deserve their bottom-drawer ranking. They stock at least 13 species of threatened fish and have no public policy on the sustainability of the fish they sell.' In response, ASDA (rather bizarrely) stated that 'Greenpeace tell consumers to stop eating fish and replace it with walnuts. Our customers don't want nut-fingers and chips for their tea.'

However, following rooftop demonstrations by Greenpeace activists and fishmongers at ASDA headquarters, the company changed its tune, and organised a hasty top-level meeting with the campaigners.

As we go to press ASDA have promised Greenpeace a review of their policies and an immediate withdrawal from sale of four species - ling, huss, skate and Dover sole.



Walnuts and chips? If ASDA doesn't stop stocking endangered fish there may not be any fish left to go with our chips.

Small shops suffer as supermarkets slug it out

Six years ago the Competition Commission investigated the dominance of the major supermarkets and concluded they were not abusing their market power. Then last year the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) reviewed the situation and in September 2005 decided there was still no need to refer the supermarkets to the Competition Commission.

However, the OFT is currently engaged in a six-month review of this decision, led by its Chief Executive John Fingleton. Fingleton has made clear that the duty of the OFT is to protect competition, and not to defend particular competitors, and apparently sees no problem with corporate giants crushing small shops. Whether it is 'fair' for supermarkets such as Tesco to compete with traditional corner shops is not a matter the OFT appears interested in.

While the OFT ponders its next move the All Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group, consisting of about 150 MPs, is due to produce a report entitled *The High Street Britain 2015*. The report, due out in late January or February, will warn that food wholesalers and independent newsagents are 'not expected to survive' more than 10 years because supermarkets will squeeze them out. The report (which was leaked earlier in January) argues that the buying power, low prices and convenience of supermarkets will trigger a 'collapse' in the retail supply chain by crushing the independent wholesalers who sell to small stores. The traditional corner shop, it warns, will disappear as a result. The owners of small shops already report that it can be cheaper for them to purchase goods for resale directly from supermarkets, rather than from independent wholesalers.

Jim Dowd, Labour MP and chair of the All Party group told *The Observer* "Supermarkets are slashing prices now but if their rivals are obliterated prices could soar again. We've seen a lot of evidence suggesting that's what would happen, and fair evidence it's already happened."

According to Friends of the Earth, some 2,000 independent stores such as butchers, bakers and convenience stores went out of business or became part of larger retail chains in the last year alone. Meanwhile Tesco, which takes £1 of every £3 spent on groceries in Britain, has already captured over 5% of the convenience stores' market.

Without government intervention the expansion of the supermarkets may well lead to the demise of independent retailers in Britain, destroying diversity and choice and siphoning millions of pounds of revenue away from local communities and into the deep pockets of the supermarkets.

The most destructively fished (Marine Conservation Society grade 5 or equivalent) seafood species or groups sold by each UK supermarket

Supermarket	Seafood species or group	Total
ASDA	Cod (Atlantic), dogfish, Dover sole, haddock, hake (European), ling, lumpfish, marlin, monkfish, plaice, skate, swordfish, tuna	13
Co-op	Cod (Atlantic), dogfish, Dover sole, haddock, hake (European), halibut (Atlantic), monkfish, plaice, skate, tuna	10
Iceland	Cod (Atlantic), haddock, plaice, tuna	4
M&S	Arrow squid, Dover sole, monkfish, plaice, tuna	5
Safeway/Morrisons	Cod (Atlantic), conger, dogfish, Dover sole, haddock, halibut (Atlantic), grey mullet, monkfish, plaice, skate, snapper, swordfish, tuna	13
Sainsbury's	Cod (Atlantic), dogfish, Dover sole, haddock, lumpfish, marlin, monkfish, plaice, skate, snapper, swordfish, turbot, tuna	13
Somerfield	Cod (Atlantic), Dover sole, haddock, plaice, monkfish, skate, swordfish, tuna	8
Tesco	Cod (Atlantic), dogfish, Dover sole, eel, haddock, hake (European), lumpfish, monkfish, plaice, skate, tuna	11
Waitrose	Arrow squid, Dover sole, lumpfish, monkfish, New Zealand deep-sea cod, skate	6

NB: Tuna includes all species except skipjack

- For information about fish sustainability, see the MCS Fish Online website at www.fishonline.org
- To check which fish to avoid see www.fishonline.org/advice/avoid
- Fish that are considered by the MCS okay to eat are listed at www.fishonline.org/advice/eat

Table from: 'A recipe for disaster: Supermarkets' insatiable appetite for seafood', Greenpeace, 2005

Waitrose wins award for the welfare of pigs, poultry and fish

Waitrose has been named as Britain's most farm animal friendly supermarket for the second time in succession in Compassion in World Farming's 'Compassionate Supermarket of the Year' Awards.*

The retailer achieved 49.3 points out of a possible 60 following CIWF's exhaustive survey to monitor how well animals are reared, transported and slaughtered for the UK's leading supermarkets.

Waitrose was particularly praised by CIWF for its performance on the welfare of pigs, ducks, laying hens and farmed fish. But just five points separated Waitrose from two other supermarket chains:

- Marks & Spencer narrowly came second and won the award for 'Investment and Innovation in Farm Animal Welfare Research'
- Third placed supermarket was the Co-op, which was awarded the title of 'Most Improved Supermarket'

Poorer results were shown by ASDA, Sainsbury's, Somerfield and Tesco. CIWF said

that it believes Britain's supermarkets are making 'good progress' in many aspects of farm animal welfare, but the campaigning organisation was concerned that supermarkets still permit some concerning practices that leave farmed animals open to suffering:

- Most supermarkets allow chickens reared intensively for meat to be stocked at densities that exceed government guidelines – at 17 birds per square metre.
- Sainsbury's and Somerfield are still selling some own-label pig meat that is imported from stall systems which are banned on cruelty grounds in the UK.
- Despite a ban on routine tail-docking of piglets, 80% or more of the pig meat sold by all the supermarkets surveyed still comes from pigs that have been tail-docked.
- The majority of turkeys and ducks farmed for the major UK supermarkets are intensively reared.

* See: www.ciwf.org.uk or contact CIWF, Charles House, 5a Charles Street, Petersfield GU32 3EH

Wal-Mart 'wins' race to the bottom

With 52% of the 13,134 votes cast, Wal-Mart has won the 5th annual on-line Grinch of the Year election in the US, sponsored by the advocacy organisation Jobs with Justice.* Wal-Mart is the US retail giant that bought and now runs the ASDA supermarket chain in the UK.

Nominated by Wake-Up Wal-Mart,** the company is criticised for leading the global 'race to the bottom' and accused of boosting profits for its executives on the backs of its employees through low wages, insufficient healthcare and

discrimination. "With no end in sight for their continued poor treatment of workers, the communities they live in, and the environment, we suspect that they'll go for a third win next year," said Fred Azcarate, executive director of Jobs with Justice.

* Jobs with Justice is a US campaign for workers' rights. See: www.jwj.org

** See www.wakeupwalmart.com – the Wake-Up Wal-Mart group also sells a campaign DVD entitled 'The high cost of low prices'

Retail planning needed for health?

Studies on the links between economic deprivation and poor diets has recently focused on whether people living in low-income neighbourhoods have adequate access to shops selling healthy and affordable food.

Surveys of retailers in deprived areas have given mixed results: one research group found no significant trends across post codes in Glasgow between indicators of deprivation and the prevalence of out-of-home eateries, or fast food outlets alone, but they did find a close link between deprivation and proximity to McDonald's restaurants when taking Scotland as a whole – and the same applied in England.^{1,2}

A study in the US found a link between both ethnicity and socio-economic composition of neighbourhoods and the 'local food environment'.

They found minority and racially mixed neighbourhoods had more than twice as many small grocery stores as white neighbourhoods and half as many supermarkets.³ Low-income neighbourhoods had four times as many small grocery stores as the wealthiest neighbourhoods and half as many supermarkets.

In general, poorer areas and non-white areas also tended to have fewer fruit and vegetable outlets, bakeries, speciality stores, and natural food stores. Stores selling alcohol were more common in poorer than in richer areas.

¹ Macintyre S *et al.* *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act.* 2005 Oct 25;2:16.

² Cummins SC *et al.* *Am J Prev Med.* 2005 Nov;29(4):308-10.

³ Moore LV *et al.* *Am J Public Health.* (e) 2005 Dec 27.

Supermarkets rated for health

There are twice as many supermarket price promotions for fatty and sugary foods compared to healthier options of fruit and vegetables, according to a new league table published by the National Consumer Council (NCC) in November.

The NCC looked at over 2,000 supermarket price promotions, such as 'buy one, get one free' and 'multi-buy' offers and found the proportion of promotions for fruit and vegetables ranging from the lowest at 7% in Somerfield to a healthier 27% in Marks & Spencer. No supermarket hit the NCC's target of 33% – the percentage that it is recommended fruit and vegetables should make up in a balanced diet.



The NCC's report is an innovative piece of work designed to shed light on supermarket practices that affect health. It praises those supermarkets that support better health, and 'names and shames' the laggards. Points were awarded for reducing the salt content of standard own-brand foods, for giving good nutrition labelling and interpretation, for providing health advice to customers, for chucking snacks off the checkout, and for achieving a healthier balance of foods among its range of promotions.

The Co-op achieved first place in the NCC's Health Responsibility Index; and ASDA came a poor ninth. Tesco, with over 30% of the market, was described by NCC as 'not competitive on health'. The retail giant's in-store promotions were weighted towards unhealthy foods – with only 14% for fruit and vegetables compared to 35% for fatty and sugary foods, and its helpline 'was the least helpful of all'.

Research and surveys for the NCC's report were undertaken by Food Commission staff, who also helped the NCC to design the measuring system to compare the supermarkets.

The National Consumer Council's full report is available online, free of charge, at: www.ncc.org.uk/food/healthycompetition.pdf

Terminator is back

The overwhelmingly discredited 'Terminator' technology is being relaunched by biotech companies. Terminator technology, patented in the US in 1998, sterilises seeds in order to force farmers and gardeners to buy new seed each season. If permitted, it will only increase the biotech companies' monopoly control over seeds.

Terminator technology genetically modifies plants so they produce only sterile seeds. There is currently an international *de facto* moratorium on the testing and commercialisation of Terminator technology, agreed in 2000 by the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). If this moratorium gets overturned and Terminator is allowed, seed saving and food security will be threatened and GM contamination of our food is likely to increase.

To prevent this happening, development, farming and environment groups are campaigning to ensure that the UK and other governments do not allow the moratorium to be overturned at the CBD Conference taking place in Brazil in March this year.

In 2005, the Canadian Government initiated the attempt to overturn the moratorium. Their efforts will be built upon by other countries. Also in 2005, new patents for Terminator technology were granted in Europe and Canada, and applications have been submitted in China, Japan and Brazil.

The potential impacts of this technology still remain as clear as ever.

The main impact will be to prevent farmers and gardeners around the world saving their own seed. Almost 1½ billion farmers worldwide depend on saved seeds and have established exchange systems within their communities. This ensures seed security appropriate to local conditions and is, of course, a free resource.

Terminator technology will affect farmers' livelihoods, food security and the environment, and consumer choice will be further eroded as more GM crops are grown. The UK Government is now in the position where it needs to decide whether to put its efforts into supporting a continuance of the current *de facto* moratorium.

Readers who care about this issue can write to their MP asking them to sign the Early Day Motion 1300 'Terminator Technology'.

Letters can also be sent to: Margaret Beckett at Defra, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR, to ask the UK Government to oppose any attempt to lift the CBD *de facto* moratorium on Terminator technology, at the meeting in March 2006.

■ **You can get copies of a leaflet, with full information about the campaign and actions, including a model letter, at www.eco-matters.org. For more details, visit the International Ban Terminator website: www.banterminator.org**

Trans-fat labelling law

One of the advantages of the US public health system is that it responds to private enforcement, even if its public enforcement is all too shaky. A private prosecution of Kraft for lacing their Oreo cookies with hydrogenated oils containing trans-fats (see FM63) forced Kraft to reformulate.

Kraft would not have wanted to be the only biscuit-maker to remove the cheap, long-shelf life fats, and no doubt helped lobby the US Food and Drug Administration to change the law for all companies. The FDA in turn did not want to regulate but were persuaded by the court case and the 'consumer right to know' argument – and as a result, on January 1st this year, all foods in the US containing trans-fat should declare the amount on the label.

There are two footnotes to this story, however.* The first is that the labels can show zero trans-fats if the amount is less than 0.5g per serving, which can be achieved by defining a single biscuit (0.4g, say) as a serving,

whatever the common practice might be. The second is that the nutritional panel leaves a blank in the section about what your 'percentage daily value' should be. There were moves to put an asterisk and an explanation stating that trans-fat intake should be as low as possible, but the food industry would not accept this and the FDA capitulated.

Still, US consumers do have more information than we do in the UK. Under British and EU law there is no statutory requirement to declare the trans-fat content of products unless a claim has been made about them on the label. In practice some foods show the trans-fat content, but others do not. There also remains some confusion, because trans-fats should be included in the total fat declaration but not included in any of the usual sub-components (saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated) on the label.

* For details see: www.bantransfats.com

Danish government to compensate for GMO contamination

The Danish government has won approval for its proposal to offer farmers compensation if their crops are contaminated with genetically modified (GM) material from neighbouring farms.

The European Commission has authorised the use of government payments to assist farmers who can show that they have suffered economic loss as a result of GM crop contamination. Last year, Denmark approved a law on GM co-existence to take account of the different needs of organic, conventional and GM farmed crops.

Under the scheme, the government can approve compensation payments to farmers whose crops have been contaminated at levels above the 'adventitious' amounts permitted under EU law – 0.9% of the material. Below this level the product can be sold as non-GM. The rule applies to conventional and organic crops alike.

If compensation is paid, the government will then seek to recover the money from the farmer whose crop caused the contamination, taking the matter out of the hands of neighbouring farmers and, most probably, into the courts to become a struggle between the state and the farmer's insurance company.

University of Michigan bans Coca Cola

The University of Michigan has suspended sales of Coca-Cola products on its three campuses over allegations that the company permits human rights and environmental abuses abroad.

The suspension, which began on New Year's day, affects vending machines, residence halls, cafeterias and campus restaurants. Coke's contracts with the university were worth about \$1.4 million. The decision was prompted by a complaint from *Students Organizing for Labor and Economic Equality*, a student body which accused Coke of draining local groundwater in India and conspiring with paramilitary groups in Colombia to harass and harm union members.

The company has repeatedly denied the allegations, but the university, which has more than 50,000 students, decided not to renew its contracts when Coke said it was unable to cooperate in an investigation of circumstances in Colombia. The university and several other colleges had offered to fund the investigation. Several other colleges in the USA have reportedly stopped selling Coke products, citing events in Colombia among the reasons.

Meanwhile Coke has promised to sponsor the Olympic games for a further 12 years, continuing an unbroken run (sorry) since 1928.

Are common additive cocktails toxic?

Research to be formally published this spring shows that combinations of common food additives act synergistically and could have a greater toxic effect in laboratory tests than the individual additives alone.*

Tests on the food colouring Quinoline Yellow (E104) in combination with the widely used sweetener aspartame (E951), and the colouring Brilliant Blue (E133) in combination with the flavour-boosting additive monosodium glutamate (MSG) (E621), have shown that the combined effects can inhibit nerve cell growth, preventing proper neural signalling.

Much lower concentrations of these additives in combination were able to produce the same toxicity as high levels of the additives separately. The combination of aspartame and E104 was four times more potent than a simple addition would have expected, and the combination of MSG with E133 was seven times more potent.

The concentrations being tested were similar to those that would be found in the bloodstream of children consuming products with these additives, according to the research team.

In response to the news, the government Food Standards Agency and the industry Food and Drink Federation issued remarkably similar statements, saying that

the additives used in the study were all approved as safe by the European authorities. The Agency added that it was preparing to fund studies into the cocktail effect of combining additives.

In fact the colouring Brilliant Blue is banned in several EU countries, yet it is used in products available for sale in the UK. It can be found in confectionery, puddings, soft drinks and processed peas. Quinoline Yellow is banned in the US, Australia and Norway, but not in the UK. It is widely used in some types of confectionery, desserts and occasionally in smoked fish. Both

colourings are part of a group of food additives known as 'coal tar' dyes.

MSG (E621) is widely used in savoury foods such as soups, meat products and ready meals to boost flavour (including boosting added flavouring agents).

Aspartame is one of the commonest artificial sweeteners and is used in an estimated 6,000 food products, including soft drinks, desserts and yogurts, confectionery and chewing gum, and as a low calorie table-top sweetener. It is also widely used in pharmaceuticals.

* Lau K, *et al*, *ToxSci* advance publications (Oxford University Press) 13 Dec 2005.



Hartley's jelly contains aspartame (E951) and quinoline yellow (E104) – just the combination found to inhibit nerve cell growth. Smarties have both the colourings E104 and E133, as do Starburst Joosters. E104 is found in Jelly Babies, Pastilles and Gummi Pizza. E133 can be found in mint Aero as well as processed peas. New research raises questions about the health effects of eating such everyday products in combination.

Aspartame – new evidence of harm

Research from the Italian Cancer Research Centre has cast new doubts on the safety of the artificial sweetener aspartame.* Female rats consuming 20mg per kg bodyweight showed a significant increase in the chance of suffering lymphomas and leukaemia. Female rats consuming just 4mg per kg showed a slightly raised level of these diseases.

People who eat low-calorie or sugar-free products typically consume 2mg or 3mg per kg bodyweight, and the European Acceptable Daily Intake level is 50mg per kg bodyweight (in the US it is 40mg per kg).

Previous studies had suggested that aspartame may lead to brain tumours. The new study found evidence of sparse malignant tumours in the brains of several of the male and female rats being fed aspartame, but not in any of the control animals. However, in previous research some control animals had shown brain tumours spontaneously and the researchers could not attribute the disease directly to aspartame. There was no evidence of increased tumours among the animals given the highest doses of aspartame.

In both rodents and humans, aspartame is metabolised in the gut into three constituents: aspartic acid, phenylalanine and methanol. Methanol in turn is metabolised into formaldehyde and then to formic acid. The research team showed that methanol added to rats' drinking water increased the incidence of lymphomas and leukaemia in female rats, and formaldehyde also had this effect. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has also declared that the evidence linking formaldehyde to leukaemia in humans is strong, although not conclusive.

Despite these findings, the Food Standards Agency appears unwilling to act. It has the legal authority to do so, and should immediately refer the evidence for urgent assessment by the Committee on Toxicity and the Committee on Carcinogenicity. As a precaution it should consider issuing a warning to consumers of the possible dangers and require warning labels on products containing aspartame – just as the US required on products containing saccharine.

* Soffritti M *et al*, *Eur J Oncol* 2005; 10(2).

Maternity Alliance closes

We are sad to report that the campaigning and educational organisation Maternity Alliance has closed, after more than a quarter-century of activity, in December 2005. The Alliance had been at the forefront of the struggle for better nutrition for pregnant women, infants and children as part of their broader brief to champion maternity rights.

The Food Commission is proud to have worked with the Alliance, from the influential *Poverty in Pregnancy* report in 1984, *Poor Expectations* in 1995, to the widely-acclaimed *Good Enough to Eat? The diet of pregnant teenagers* in 2003.

The work of the Maternity Alliance helped to keep maternal nutrition on the national agenda, highlighting the inequalities in diet and health still experienced in the 21st century. We are also grateful for Maternity Alliance's contribution to our 2001 Children's Nutrition Action Plan, which set us on track to run several groundbreaking health campaigns, such as the Parents Jury, Chuck Snacks off the Checkout, and the new ChewOnThis website (see pages 12-13).

Obesity hits over 30% of adults aged 60

Obesity rates are climbing for all adults, with those aged between 55 and 64 most at risk.

The latest survey of adults, in the *Health Survey for England 2004*,¹ shows yet another increase in the obesity rates for both men and women, with 23% of the adult population now sporting a BMI above 30 kg/m².

BMI is a standard measure of overweight and obesity, calculated by dividing a person's weight (in kg) by his or her height (in meters) squared.

The survey reveals the most vulnerable age for excess weight is between 55 and 64, when obesity affects 30% of men and 32% of women. Only a decade earlier the figures were far lower (see graphs comparing 1993 and

2004) yet even then they were considered a serious problem (see 'Obesity - a decade of missed targets', right). The figures also suggest that the UK is catching up with the US, where 40% of adults aged 55-64 are obese.

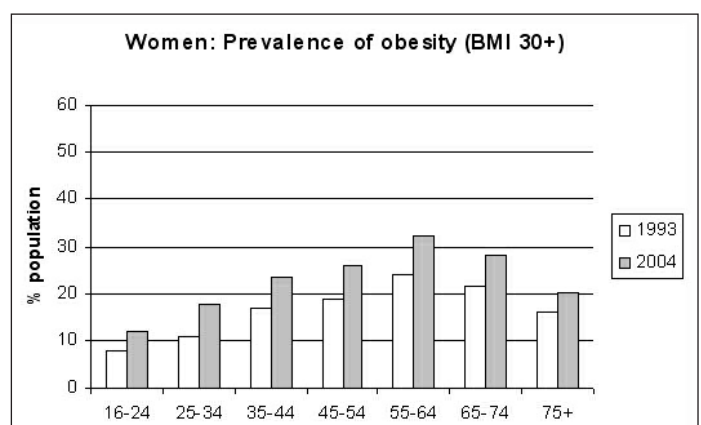
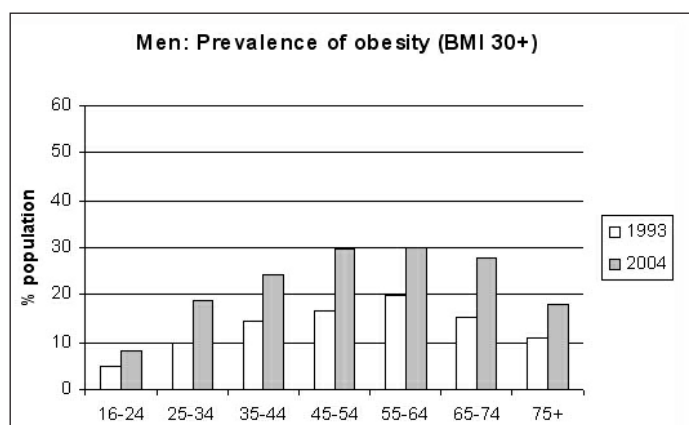
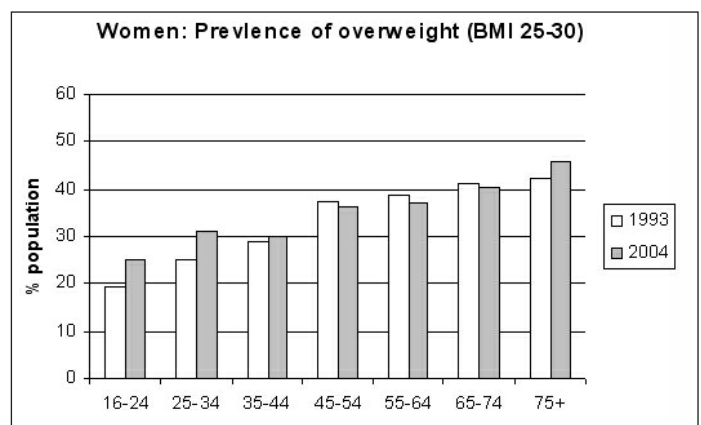
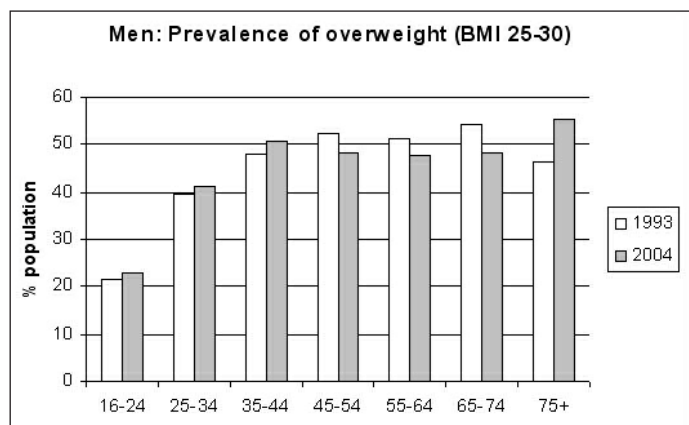
The latest survey also shows that while obesity rates have been climbing steadily, the proportion of the population who are moderately overweight (with a BMI between 25 and 30 kg/m²) has remained remarkably stable. The only population group showing an increase in the proportion being overweight are younger adults, aged 16-44. Older adults are, if anything, now less likely to be moderately overweight.

Data for the incidence of children being overweight or obese in the latest survey has not been released yet, but the data for average BMI shows a continuing rise for both boys and girls, giving a gain over the decade of nearly one BMI unit (1 kg/m²) averaged across all ages.

Obesity – a decade of missed targets

In 1992 the UK Department of Health launched a major campaign to tackle chronic illness under the title *The Health of the Nation* with targets for reduction in cardiovascular disease, cancers, mental illness, HIV-AIDS and accidents. Obesity was listed as one of the indicators for cardiovascular disease and the document proposed a target to reduce the proportion of obese men in the population from 7% in 1986-87 to 6% in 2005, and obese women from 12% in 1986-87 to 8% in 2005.²

The paper was poorly timed in respect of the obesity targets, for within a few months a new survey (*The Health Survey for England 1993*) showed that obesity prevalence rates were moving dramatically in the other direction, with male obesity rates above 13% and women's obesity rates above 16%.



Nutritionally equivalent to fruit? You decide

Although the *Health of the Nation* campaign made some progress towards several other targets, it made no progress on obesity. An expert panel reviewed the strategy in 1998³ and criticised it on several grounds:

- It was not seen as a priority, with issues such as reducing hospital waiting lists and budgeting taking precedence.
- The policy was regarded as a Department of Health initiative that lacked cross-departmental commitment and ownership.
- At local level it was perceived primarily as part of the health service agenda – so was not taken up by local authorities or social services.
- Future public health strategies should be based on integrated central leadership and committed local ownership. Support needs to come from the highest level.

These comments were issued shortly after the 1997 change of government and were welcomed as heralding a new approach to public health. Sadly, as the latest results show, 'support from the highest level' has yet to materialise.

¹ Health Survey for England 2004. The Stationery Office 2005. See <http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/PublishedSurvey/HealthSurveyForEngland/HealthSurveyResults/fs/en>

² Public Health White Paper: *The Health of the Nation*. HMSO: London, 1992. For a summary of target achievement, see National Audit Office, *The Health of the Nation: A progress report 1996*, NAO, London 1996 (a press statement on this is available at <http://www.nao.org.uk/pn/9596656.htm>).

³ *The Health of the Nation: A policy assessed* The Stationery Office: London, 1998. A summary of this review is reported in Mayor S, *Health of the Nation deemed a failure*. BMJ 1998;317:1034 (available at <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/317/7165/1034>).

The manufacturer of 'fruit10ergy' prebiotic fruit bars, Fruit Bowl, claims that the product 'counts as one of the recommended 5 a day', and that it is an 'aid to healthy digestion'. On the front of the pack Fruit Bowl claims that the product is 'nutritionally equivalent to a portion of fruit'.

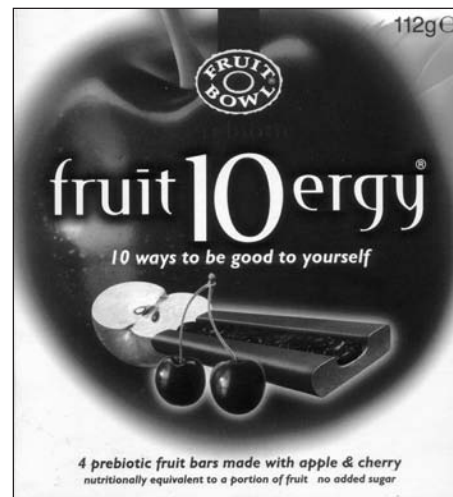
That's quite a claim, and it raised more than one sceptical eyebrow around the Food Commission office.

We've received many enquiries from parents and others, asking about the '5 a day' claims associated with such products. So here are the figures (see table below).

Of course, fruit bars contain concentrated juice and much less water than fresh fruit, hence they concentrate calories and sugars into a much smaller space. But can a product that contains around seven times as many calories and seven times as much sugar as fruit fairly be described as 'nutritionally equivalent'?

Indeed, sugars in fruit are known as 'intrinsic' because they are still trapped in the cells of the fruit, whereas sugars in fruit juice ingredients in such products are likely to be extrinsic – released from the cells by processing, and therefore more damaging to teeth.

The glycaemic index (GI) of foods containing processed sugars is also different from fruit containing intrinsic sugars. As an illustration, apples and cherries have a GI in the low 20s,



whilst processing them to create apple juice or cherry juice raises their GI into the 40s (pure glucose has a GI of 100).

'Fruit10ergy' bars contain 18 ingredients, including dehydrated fruit, juices and oligofructose prebiotic, along with added maltodextrin, rice starch, vegetable oil, flavouring, milk protein and preservative. (The list is not dissimilar to popular products such as Kellogg's 'Real Fruit Winders'.) On grounds of both nutrition and ingredients, we believe, the direct 'equivalence' claim looks rather thin.

Nutrition information (per 100g)

	Apple & cherry prebiotic 'fruit10ergy' bar	Apple	Cherry
Energy	329 kcalories	47 kcalories	48 kcalories
Protein	1.4g	0.4g	0.9g
Carbohydrate	74g	11.8g	11.5g
of which sugars	37.4g	11.8g	11.5g
Fat	3.0g	0.1g	0.1g
of which saturates	1.4g	Trace	Trace
Fibre	13g	Approx 2g*	Approx 1.5*
Sodium	0.28g	0.003g	0.001g
Vitamin C	55mg	3mg to 20mg	11mg

* depending on method of analysis



'Chew On This' is the Food Commission's new website, intended to educate secondary school pupils about modern food, nutrition, marketing and health. For more information see pages 12-13 or visit www.chewonthis.org.uk

We always welcome feedback on what we do, so if you have any comments or suggestions, do let us know. Email: chew@foodcomm.org.uk or write to us at: The Food Commission, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.

Meat and dairy: where have the minerals gone?

We continue our series looking at the effect of modern farming on the quality of our food.

In this magazine a year ago we highlighted the loss of essential minerals – calcium, magnesium iron etc – from our fruit and vegetable supply.

The figures made alarming reading. Comparing the mineral levels in the 1930s with those in the 1980s showed that modern fruits and vegetables were typically depleted in minerals by 20%. The fact that modern fruit and vegetables contained more water could only explain some of the losses. Intensive farming on exhausted land was likely to be the major cause of the decline in the nutritional quality of the food, along with the selection of varieties for qualities other than nutrition.

Now researcher David Thomas has analysed data on meat and dairy foods, comparing their levels in the 1930s (published by McCance & Widdowson in 1940) with the most recent government tables, published in 2002. Once again, the figures make alarming reading.

As we show on this page, the mineral content of popular meats and milk products has fallen significantly. Looking at 15 different meat items, Thomas found the iron content to have fallen on average 47%, with some products showing a fall as high as 80%. The iron content of milk had dropped by over 60% while for cream and eight different cheeses the iron loss was over 50%.

The calcium loss from milk was only slight, but from cheeses it averaged over 15% – and in high-value Parmesan cheese the loss was an extraordinary 70%, implying a considerable dilution of the original highly concentrated recipe for this cheese, or some other significant shift in ingredients to account for this change.

Copper and magnesium, essential for enzyme functioning, also showed losses in meat products (typically 10% fall for magnesium and 60% fall for copper) and dairy foods (typically 25% fall for magnesium and an extraordinary 90% fall in copper).

Should we worry?

We live longer than ever, and we have access to abundant food supplies, so are these changes in nutrients any reason to be concerned?

We believe so. Minerals and trace elements play a major role in our physical and psychological well being. The recent changes in dietary habits towards highly processed foods we are likely to be over-fed yet malnourished in terms of these micronutrients. Medical science may help keep us alive longer, but we are not necessarily healthier, nor happier. As Thomas concludes, 'minerals are what we are made of (to quote the Bible: "ashes to ashes, dust to dust") and it would be very difficult to underestimate their importance as a catalyst for developing and maintaining good health'.

The recent National Diet and Nutrition Survey of adults showed that young women, particularly, were likely to have diets seriously deficient in essential minerals. Up to 8% were

below the Lower Reference Nutrient Intake (LRNI) for calcium, 20-22 percent were below the LRNI for magnesium, and 40% were below the LRNI for iron. LRNI is the amount of a nutrient that is enough for only the small number of people who have low requirements (about 2.5% of the population). The majority need more.

These women were the key age group for childbearing, and so, to continue the biblical analogy, the sins of our agricultural practices may yet be visited many-fold upon the next generation.

* D Thomas *Commentary on tables showing changes in mineral composition*. Unpublished. David Thomas works as a researcher and nutrition adviser and mineral supplement supplier. Contact him by email: david.mri@btconnect.com



"Frankly, Mr Thomas, I'm not happy with my iron levels either."

Table 1. Changes in mineral composition of milk 1940-2002 Values in milligrams

	1940	2002	change
Sodium	50	43	down 14%
Potassium	160	155	down 3%
Phosphorus	95	93	down 2%
Magnesium	14	11	down 21%
Calcium	120	118	down 2%
Iron	0.08	0.03	down 62%
Copper	0.02	>0.01	all gone

Sources: McCance and Widdowson 1940; McCance and Widdowson 6th edition 2002.

Table 2. Selected foods showing 1940s mineral levels (per 100g) and amount lost by 2002

Values in milligrams							
	Magnesium	change	Calcium	change	Iron	change	
Cheddar	46.9	down 38%	810	down 9%	0.57	down 47%	
Stilton	27.2	down 45%	362	down 10%	0.46	down 57%	
Parmesan	49.6	down 70%	1220	down 70%	0.3	all gone	
Beef rump steak	24.8	down 7%	5.2	down 4%	6	down 55%	
Corned beef	29	down 48%	12.8	down 45%	9.8	down 76%	
Streaky bacon	25.1	down 16%	52.3	down 87%	3.2	down 78%	
Chicken meat roast	23	no change	24.5	down 31%	2.6	down 69%	
Turkey	28.2	down 4%	38.3	down 71%	3.8	down 79%	

Festive food – but what have they done to it?



Mary Whiting, author and cookery tutor, looks at commercial products and asks; are we getting what we expect?

Once upon a time, Britain had a superb cuisine – but it was long ago. According to Colin Spencer's *British Food* Henry VIII was partly to blame, but it was the industrial revolution that finally ended its glory. A few great dishes remain, but you'd never know it from most of the commercial versions on offer. Here are two examples from last Christmas and one for next Pancake Day.

I have used Alan Davidson's *The Oxford Companion to Food*, OUP 1999, for the most reliable descriptions of traditional recipes.

Christmas pudding

Christmas pudding as we know it dates from the 19th century and is a mixture of dried fruit, candied peel, breadcrumbs, suet, brown sugar, eggs, citrus fruit, carrot and/or apple, almonds, spices and alcohol – or should be. Try this alternative:



Tesco Christmas Classic Pudding with Cider and Sherry:

Sultanas (30%)
(with vegetable oil),
sugar, cider (12%),

breadcrumbs (wheat flour, wholemeal flour, water, salt, yeast, raising agent, ammonium hydrogen carbonate) hydrogenated vegetable oil, water, candied citrus peel (4%), (sugar, orange peel, lemon peel, glucose-fructose syrup, salt, preservative: sulphur di-oxide), raisins (4%) with vegetable oil, wheatflour, molasses, malt extract, sherry (0.5%), salt, mixed spice, ground bitter almonds, lemon juice, orange peel, lemon peel.

It claims to be 'classic' but has no currants, no egg, no apple, no carrot, no orange juice, and hydrogenated vegetable oil instead (I suppose) of suet.

The boasted-of sherry is a miniscule 0.5%, less than the amount of added water. Water?! There's actually more water than either candied peel, raisins or almonds! It should taste sweet though – the second largest ingredient is sugar.

Christmas cake

And what about Christmas cake? Traditionally, a rich, heavy cake made with butter, sugar, flour, spices, raised with beaten egg and baking powder, with up to half the weight of the finished cake being dried fruit, usually raisins, currants, sultanas, and, usually, candied peel and glacé cherries. Almonds and alcohol can be added. The cake is brushed with melted apricot jam, and then covered with marzipan and icing.

Marzipan, nowadays, consists of ground almonds, sugar and egg, although older recipes included alcohol, lemon juice and orange flower water. Icing is made with icing sugar and egg white.

But here's **Beverley Manor's Christmas cake made for Iceland**: a 'Rich fruit cake topped with almond flavour paste and soft icing'. Somehow it doesn't tempt me. How about you? Take a deep breath now:



Ingredients: Sultanas (35%) (with cottonseed oil, preservative: sulphur dioxide), sugar, almond flavour paste (11%) (sugar, ground apricot kernels, glucose syrup, water, vegetable oil and hydrogenated vegetable oil, humectant: vegetable glycerine, invert sugar syrup, preservative: potassium sorbate, gelling agent: xanthum gum, colour: lutein), vegetable margarine (palm oil & hydrogenated palm oil, rapeseed oil & hydrogenated rapeseed oil, water, salt), whole egg, wheat flour, glucose syrup, humectant: vegetable glycerine, glacé citrus peel (1%), (glucose-fructose syrup, orange peel, lemon peel, sugar, salt, citric acid), apricot spread (glucose-fructose syrup, apricots, sugar, gelling agent (pectin), citric acid, acidity regulator: sodium citrates),

vegetable shortening (palm oil & hydrogenated palm oil, rapeseed oil and hydrogenated rapeseed oil, emulsifier: mono- and diglycerides of fatty acids), malt extract (from barley), modified maize starch, skimmed cows milk powder, baking powder (disodium diphosphate, sodium hydrogen carbonate,

calcium carbonate, wheat flour), dried egg white, stabiliser (tragacanth), flavourings, invert sugar syrup.

Thanks, but I'll carry on making my own!

Pancakes – in a packet

Pancake Day (Shrove Tuesday) is on February 28th this year. If you fancy a traditional feast before Lent you have a choice – you can treat yourself using the classical three components of flour, milk and eggs, or you can try **Ma Raeburn's** version, which contains: Water, wheat flour, skimmed milk, sugar, vegetable oil, egg, milk solids, rye flour, modified starch, leavening agents: E500ii, E341i, E575, salt, thickener: E407, E410, emulsifiers: E371, flavourings. Pancake-flippin' heck! That's an awful lot of extra ingredients!



Chew on th

'Chew On This' is a new website produced by the Food Commission to encourage school children to ask questions about the food they eat.

Designed for 11-14 year olds (Key Stage 3), our Chewonthis.org.uk website uses animation and cartoons to show the realities of modern food production and the effect that food can have on our health. The website focuses on four main areas, examples of which are shown on these pages.

The first section looks at fat, salt and sugar and explains why we find these nutrients so tasty and easy to eat. Fat and sugar provide energy to keep our bodies going, whilst salt provides us with the mineral sodium, which is essential to many of the processes that keep our bodies functioning. In the modern environment these nutrients are easily and cheaply available. But over-consumption can seriously damage our health, so the website explains why we need to keep an eye on just how much fat, salt and sugar we eat.

The second section examines food labels and asks 'Can you believe what you read?' Food labels have to provide certain information by law, and the site explains how to use this information to work out just how healthy, or unhealthy, your favourite foods may be. Then there is the question of what isn't mentioned on the label – such as the use of pesticides, the distance the food may have travelled and the addition of water to meat.

Within this section we also look at how fruit imagery can be used to imply both taste and health benefits, although actual fruit content may be extremely low. The use of a wide range of logos is also examined, with plenty of real examples. Pupils are encouraged to question the validity of logos that indicate potential benefits such as 'extra energy', 'heart health' and 'reduced fat'.

The third section asks 'Who's messing with my mind?' and looks at the tricks that food companies use to persuade people to choose their products. Various marketing methods are described, including the

targeting of very young children; sponsorship and advertising within schools; the encouragement of pester power and impulse purchasing; the use of professional footballers to promote food and drink brands; the use of character licensing and the increased prevalence of marketing via email and the internet.

In the fourth section we ask 'What's all this weird stuff in my food?' and explain just what goes into modern food and drink products. Many added ingredients have no nutritional benefit and may in fact encourage us to eat less healthily. The use of flavourings and

colourings is examined, as is the commonplace use of water as a bulking agent in meat and fish products and juice drinks. Pupils can contrast historical examples of food adulteration with modern, legalised adulteration processes.

The website includes a wide range of downloadable activity sheets for use within classrooms and an extensive list of educational resources available elsewhere on the internet. Access to the website is completely free.

■ To visit the Chew On This website go to: www.chewonthis.org.uk

Sugar on the website

Sugar gives you energy

Sugary foods provide lots of energy in a form that our bodies can quickly use. We need energy to live and breathe and even to sleep.

Sugar has four Calories of energy in every gram – about 20 Calories in a teaspoon of sugar. Protein and complex carbohydrates also contain four Calories of energy in every gram, and fat contains nine Calories. But our bodies take longer to digest these, so the energy takes longer to get to us.

It's easy to consume more energy than we need because sugar is added to so many foods and drinks.

When your body has more sugar than it needs for energy it begins to convert the sugar into body fat and stores it. So if you don't do enough exercise, and keep on eating lots of sugar, your body could become bigger and bigger.

Mmmm, sugar tastes good!

Have you ever wondered why you like the taste of sweet things? What's so special about sugary foods and drinks?

Seeking energy, our bodies were designed to recognise and love sweet tastes. This made sense when the only sweet things around were

seasonal fruit and vegetables and perhaps some wild honey.

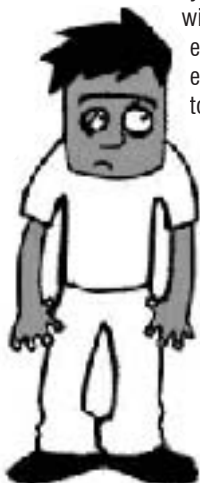
But today, sugary foods are available everywhere. You're probably only a few hundred metres from a shop selling sweet foods right now, in the form of sweets, chocolate and drinks. They're not very expensive and they're everywhere. This is why it's so easy to eat too much sugar.

Stop! Don't feed the bacteria

Sorry. Bad news. If you eat a lot of sugar, especially in the form of frequent sugary snacks and drinks, you're likely to end up with holes in your teeth.

All of us have bacteria in our mouths which love to feast on the sugary snacks and drinks which pass by our teeth. As they feed, the bacteria give out chemicals that dissolve the white coating on teeth.

Brushing your teeth twice a day can help to sweep the bacteria away. And cutting back on sugary snacks and drinks can starve them into submission.



is!

Lunch boxes

Is it really suitable for lunchboxes?

There are over seven million school pupils in England – in nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools. According to a recent survey, most of them (6.6 million) don't eat school meals. Instead, they bring in packed lunches or buy lunch outside school.

Now get this. The average school year is 190 days. Multiply 6.6 million pupils by 190 school days, and you can work out that about 1,254,000,000 (1,254 million, or 1.2 billion) packed lunches are eaten at school every year. And that's just in England!

A company that can get its food or drink product into those lunchboxes is going to make a great deal of money. That's why so many snacks and drinks are labelled as 'ideal for lunchboxes' or 'suitable for lunchboxes'.

Unfortunately, many of the products are designed to be occasional 'treats' rather than foods to be eaten every day. They are often high in salt, fat or sugar.

If you want the occasional treat, that's okay, but if you want to eat good food, then don't fall for 'quick-fix' products that claim to be ideal for lunchboxes. Get creative and make your own fresh sandwiches! All you need is bread and the fillings or spreads of your choice. If you want, you can cram in some extra fingers of cheese. Yogurt makes a tasty and nutritious dessert. And if you want something sweet to finish off, try fresh or dried fruit.



Some examples of food adulteration

Food cheats watered down milk

If you're a cheat, an easy way to make money is to add water to food – because water is very cheap. The trick is: the cheats still charge the same price as for proper food!

This Victorian cartoon shows that people were worried about cheats adding water to milk. If you drink milk that is watered down, you miss out on lots of good things, like calcium and vitamins.

That's why there are laws to stop people adding water to nutritious milk.



These days, food law officers (trading standards officers) test milk to find out if water has been added, or other ingredients that can make watery milk look more thick and creamy.

Are those real pips in your raspberry jam?

Jam recipes are controlled by some of the strictest food laws in the world. But why does the government bother? It's only jam!

But in the past, some very dodgy things were put into jam. Instead of expensive raspberries and strawberries, some jam-makers simply put sugary water into the jars, and added starch to make it gooey. The jam-makers added colouring and flavouring, and some even added bits of wood as fake pips, to make it seem as if real raspberries had been used to make the jam!

See: www.chewonthis.org.uk

Badvert

What a cheesy deal!

'You think this pot is full of cheesy dip and breadsticks?' says the laughing cow. 'Ho ho ho, wait till you take the cover off!' A label down the side of the pack advises customers to 'Dip to here', with an arrow halfway down the pack. Removing the outer packaging reveals that you can ONLY dip to halfway down the pack. The plastic inner container holding the cheesy dip stops right there. The pack may look tall and full, but in fact you would be partially paying

for thin air. Sadly, the nutrition information is also full of holes, with no declaration on either the saturated fat or salt content of the product.

The manufacturer also asserts that 100g of the product can provide you with 28.5% of your recommended daily allowance (RDA) of calcium. However, since the pot contains only 70g of food, this would presumably bring the calcium level down to less than 20% of the RDA for the amount consumed.



The not very Big Cheez Dipper – a snack full of holes!

Nutrition, mental health

A healthy diet can do more than lead to a healthy body. Courtney Van De Weyner reports on the latest research linking nutrition to behaviour and mental health.

Recent years have seen the popular media awash with stories of the effect of food on mental health and behaviour. Mostly focusing on essential fatty acids, articles have promised that certain foods (and more often, food supplements) can improve your child's behaviour, lift your depression or halt your cognitive decline. The reason for these articles has been a growing number of research studies looking at the link between diet and brain. With the growing interest in food and the nation's diet, a press-release detailing the results of a new trial linking food and the brain can now lead to a wave of press attention – and then often a run on the fish counter or the supplement shelves.

There have always been anecdotes about how particular foods affect the brain. Whether it is grandmotherly advice about fish being 'brain food' or parents swearing that their child's tantrums only appear after they eat a tube of Smarties, there is a general level of intuitive acceptance that what we eat affects how we feel.

As can be seen by the media reports, however, these anecdotes are increasingly being backed up by more scientific evidence. This is not a particularly new area; many research scientists have been working over many years exploring how certain nutrients affect the brain. Indeed, some of the first were the very scientists involved in discovering and defining vitamins – often, the very first symptom of a vitamin deficiency is a psychological one.

Hundreds of studies linking diet to mental health and behaviour have been published in peer-reviewed medical journals. The studies have ranged widely in subject matter and method – from comparing the intake of a certain food in a country with the prevalence of a mental illness, to measuring the level of certain nutrients in the bodies of patients. Many of the studies have tested patients' responses to dietary changes in randomised controlled trials, considered to be the 'gold standard' for authoritative clinical evidence.

For the past eighteen months, Sustain – in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation – has been collating this published evidence that shows how what we eat affects how we feel and behave. The outcome of this work has been two reports – one produced by Sustain for the food and farming policy sector and one produced by the Mental Health Foundation for the mental health sector.

The reports detail how food appears to affect the brain throughout the lifecycle, beginning with pre-conception, continuing through foetal development, childhood and adolescence, adulthood and into old age. They also explore the evidence linking diet to four specific mental illnesses – attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, depression, schizophrenia and Alzheimer's disease.

The research is then considered in the context of a rapidly changing (in terms of human evolution) food system, highlighting such issues as the nutritional quality of processed food, the change in animal fat composition and the decline in fruit and vegetable consumption. The reports ask the obvious question – if there is a link between diet and mental health and the recent and continuing rise in mental health problems, could changes in the food system be partly to blame?

It is vital to emphasise that the reports do not seek to suggest that poor diets are a causal factor in all mental health problems, behavioural disorders or mood fluctuations. However, our review of the evidence does suggest that nutrition is a highly plausible and important contributory factor in both the cause and treatment of such conditions. And, although it would be a mistake to overplay the role of food, it would clearly be a mistake to dismiss its contribution.

Unfortunately, it is often dismissed. Any instinct that food might play a role in mental wellbeing does not normally translate into any acknowledgement of the role of diet in mental health or behaviour by 'official' sources – be



Studies have found significant correlations between what a population eats and the level of depression it suffers. However, despite reports in the popular press, there is no clinical evidence that popping fish oils or multivitamin pills will cure depression.

The controlled trials so far have mostly tested nutrients as add-on treatments to traditional antidepressant drugs. Here the evidence is firmer – improved levels of nutrients may help the antidepressants work better. Further research into why this is so is necessary.

that government departments or most health professionals. For mental health patients, diet is rarely, if ever, an issue in their treatment – whether that is a depressed individual seeking initial help from their GP or a hospital inpatient receiving treatment for schizophrenia. Parents of children with behavioural problems experience this most acutely – any suggestion by them that diet may be one culprit in their child's poor behaviour is more often than not dismissed out of hand.

What has been perhaps the most interesting, but hardly the most surprising, outcome of this work has been the realisation that the varieties of nutrients that appear to have a positive effect on brain health are the same nutrients that are known to have benefits for physical health. These include: minerals such as zinc, magnesium and iron; vitamins such as folate, a range of B-vitamins, and anti-oxidant vitamins such as C and E; and the polyunsaturated acids, particularly a good balance of the essential fatty acids.

Health and behaviour

At the same time, the nutrients or foods that are seemingly implicated as having a negative effect on brain, and thus mental, health are also the same as those known to be poor for physical health – e.g., too much saturated fat and sugar.

The obvious conclusion is that a generally healthy diet, the same diet necessary for a healthy body – one high in fruits and vegetables, with a wide variety of whole grains, nuts, seeds and legumes and occasional oily fish, lean meat and dairy products – is the same diet necessary for a healthy mind.

Unfortunately, this is not the message that tends to come out of the press reports of new studies or trials. Some of the more promising studies have been touted in the national media as 'proving' that, for example, fish oils (which contain the omega-3 fatty acid) will improve a child's reading ability or will alleviate an individual's depression. Of course, no one study proves anything. Also, because trials must be controlled for a single, or a group, of particular nutrients, they are often tested in isolation. But, of course, no one eats nutrients in isolation – they eat food.

Moreover, because it is difficult and sometimes impossible to use food in trials (due to the requirement that the person being studied, and sometimes even the person doing the study, must not know what is being tested), it is often necessary to rely on food supplements. This can give the misleading impression that simply eating food isn't sufficient; in order to receive the benefit detailed in the trial one must purchase and consume (usually expensive) food supplements – an impression all too happily exploited by the supplement companies. (One argument put forward is that the amount of nutrients required can not be reasonably met by food consumption, thus requiring the nutrient in pill or capsule form.)

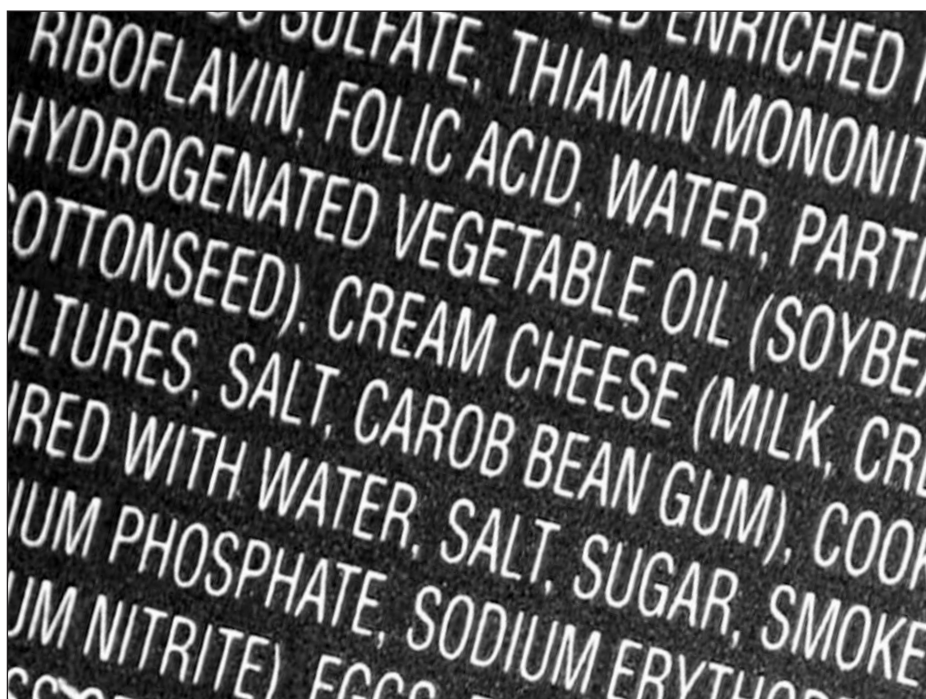
Of course, there is still a great deal of research that needs to be done. Many issues need investigation, including:

- The specific nutrients necessary for good foetal brain growth. Apart from prescribing a generally healthy diet, there is no real research into the nutrients needed during a woman's pregnancy to ensure proper brain development.
- The relationship between children's diets and academic attainment and behaviour in the classroom. Although there is a great deal of anecdotal information, there are still large gaps in the research.

- The role of sugar in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Studies have been completed which appear to exonerate sugar, but these have often been criticised for design flaws. For example, some trials only lasted one to two days and included very small numbers of children. Larger and longer trials are needed.
- The impact of a better diet – as opposed to increased supplementation – on anti-social behaviour.
- Why, if long-chain omega-3 fatty acids (which can only be ingested by eating animals) appear so important for brain and other physical health, vegetarians don't appear to suffer higher rates of mental illness and are generally considered healthier than meat eaters.
- Whether a person experiencing dementia or Alzheimer's disease could slow or halt the decline through better diet – again, there is anecdotal evidence of this, but it hasn't been backed up by any formal research.

These issues represent just a selection of a long list of unanswered questions about the role of diet in mental health. It is clear that a great deal more research must be done. However, it would be a mistake to discount the evidence that already exists – after all, acceptance of causal factors in diet-related health is a gradual process. It is only surprisingly recently that diet was recognised as a factor in coronary heart disease, and only then after many years of research and campaigning.

■ **Courtney Van De Weyner is the Food and Mental Health Project Officer at Sustain. She is the author of *Changing Diets, Changing Minds: How food affects mental well being and behaviour*. Copies are available from Sustain for £10.00 (Sustain, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. Tel: 020 7837 2250) or can be downloaded free of charge from www.sustainweb.org/pub_down.asp**



Humans are now eating a diet which would be unrecognisable to our prehistoric ancestors, even though our nutritional requirements are much the same. We have moved progressively away from healthy whole foods such as leafy vegetables, wholegrains, fruit and lean meat, towards a diet rich in fats, salt and sugar and low in essential micronutrients.

Epidemiologists have clearly linked this change of diet with rising rates of coronary heart disease, some cancers, and a wide range of conditions linked to obesity, such as diabetes. However, much less research, so far, has examined what this same diet might be doing to our minds, as well as our bodies.

TV ads to be hidden in programmes

Anyone noticing the odd reference to food products during TV shows have not seen anything yet. Under new proposals from the EU such covert advertising, known as 'product placement', is set to boom.

The European Commission has completed its drafting of the new regulations to replace the *Television Without Frontiers* directive. According to the industry itself, 'the proposed text is, to a great extent, in line with the views defended by the advertising industry'.¹ In particular it authorises the use of product placement across the EU. It also assumes the continued role of self-regulation whereby the industry sets its own rules and promises itself that it will abide by them.

The draft Directive maintains the country-of-origin rules, whereby only one Member State – the one where the head office of the broadcaster is established – has jurisdiction over a media service provider. Thus Sweden cannot prevent advertising to children being beamed in from British satellites run by UK (or US) companies, even though such advertising is banned in the local media.

The draft claims that self-regulation can 'play an important role in delivering a high level of consumer protection in all audiovisual media service' and extends the meaning of such services to include any audiovisual material delivered through any media, including internet broadband and third-generation mobile phones. Media Commissioner Viviane Reding said that 'effective self-regulation is a necessary complement to legislative rules', and the pursuance of public policy objectives 'must be achieved by encouraging the industry to act responsibly'. She even pointed out that the increasing sense of responsibility of the industry could eventually lead to deregulation in the field of advertising.²

Further proposals include the abolition on the current daily limits for advertising and tele-shopping, but limits hourly advertising levels to an average of 12 minutes. Films can be interrupted with ad breaks every 40 minutes and children's programmes and news every 20 minutes. The draft also proposes to limit the introduction of lucrative 'isolated spot commercials' to sports fixtures only – for example, screening these only during natural breaks such as the taking of a corner kick.

Product placement is likely to be a major sticking point with consumer groups. The proposals state that programme sponsors must be identified at the start of the programme, and

that placements should not directly encourage the purchase of the products being placed in the programme. Tobacco products are banned as are medical treatments available only on prescription.



"Self-regulation is what's made this company great!"

In a concession to consumers, the proposals state that product placement should not occur in children's programmes or during news or documentaries.

However, the RTL Group, Europe's largest TV conglomerate, wants to push the boundaries even further. RTL chief executive Gerhard Zeiler stated: "We are truly disappointed. We think they have missed an opportunity really to modernise

advertising rules in a fast-moving environment with new technologies and competition." RTL has lobbied loudly for greater 'flexibility' with commercials, arguing that the restriction of advertising during news broadcasts and children's shows might threaten funds for programme-making in those sectors.³

Meanwhile, in another branch of the European Commission responsible for health, a Platform on Obesity⁴ (an ongoing series of meetings between Commission officials, consumer groups and the food industry) discussed the need to limit the marketing of unhealthy foods. While food companies and the Commission were keen to develop a programme of advertising of healthier food products, consumer groups expressed strong reservations on the effectiveness of such schemes, and were also deeply critical of self-regulatory methods for ensuring industry compliance with advertising controls.

¹ International Advertising Association, *Briefing from Brussels 31*, November 2005.

² International Advertising Association, *Briefing from Brussels 30*, September 2005.

³ Financial Times Online 2 Jan 2006; WARC 2 Jan 2006.

⁴ For details of the European Platform on Obesity, see: http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/platform/platform_en.htm

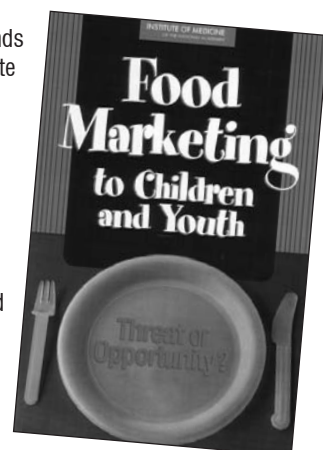
TV advertising and child obesity

A new report, *Food Marketing to Children and Youth*, was published in draft format at the end of 2005 by the Institute of Medicine, sponsored by the prestigious US National Academy of Sciences and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The draft document agrees that there is a strong evidence base showing the influence of advertising, especially TV advertising, on food choices of children up to age 12, with a lack of evidence on older children; it also states that there is strong evidence that exposure to TV advertising is associated with child obesity in children of all ages from two years upwards, although the report accepts that this does not prove causality.

Sadly, but perhaps not surprisingly under the present US administration, the report falls short of calling for legislation or even a Marketing

Code, but recommends companies to promote more healthful products, and for government to work with companies to create a social marketing program directed at parents and other carers, and to generate more school materials for promoting children's health.



■ Institute of Medicine, Committee on Food Marketing and the Diets of Children and Youth, National Academies Press, Washington, 2006. ISBN 0-309-10089-5. www.nap.edu

Companies promise miraculous hangover cures

What wonderfully alarming reassurance will greet you if you buy a pack of non-prescription RU-21 pills. It is billed as 'a safe and effective dietary supplement for consumers of alcohol'. It contains 'no wheat, yeast, binders, preservatives, granulators or disintegrators'. Disintegrators? They certainly sound like something to be avoided! We were sent this product by a reader from Worcester, who bought the product in a branch of the high-street pharmacy Boots (see Letters, FM71), and decided to dig a little deeper.

The label may claim that this product (a cocktail of additives and sugar: Monosodium glutamate, Succinic acid, Fumaric acid, Vitamin C and Glucose (Dextrose)) is 'effective', but nowhere on the pack does the company explain the supposed benefits of consuming the pills.

It emerges that products such as RU-21 and the most popular brand, Russia Party, were allegedly launched after research conducted by the Russian Academy of Sciences, ordered by the KGB (so the Russia Party website claims). The website of the UK distributor of Russia Party, called Amber Health, says that: *'The FSB (the new Russian security agency) say that had nothing to do with it. But then, they are spies, and spies do tend to say they had nothing to do with anything. More authoritatively, Professor Maevsky who was central to the research says talk of the KGB involvement is a fairy story.'*

We sniffed more than a hint of Cinderella's fairy godmother about this one, and took a look at the website published by the American manufacturer of RU-21, Spirit Sciences. Amidst a host of health-related claims for the product, stating that consumption of the pills can reduce the effects of hangovers, comes the following statement: *'To enhance any health benefits of moderate alcohol consumption, many people choose to take RU-21 so they can enjoy the positive benefits of alcohol consumption while protecting their bodies from any toxic effects.'*

The makers of a product called Alcohol Killer are even more forthright with their claims, describing their pills as *'a refreshing new energy drink with the amazing property of reducing the harmful effects of alcohol on your body'*. Not

only that, these pills can apparently *'make hangovers a thing of the past'*, *'protect and regenerate your liver'*, *'detox your body'* and *'boost your immune system'*, *'benefit the cardio-vascular system'* and *'help with digestive problems'*.

Astonishingly, Alcohol Killer is also (we stress: according to the manufacturer) *'ideal to take with medication'* and *'can be enjoyed by anyone over three years of age, including pregnant women and diabetics'*. Pregnant women?! Three-year-olds?! Why would they need to be encouraged to consume a product explicitly promoted as supplement to mitigate the effects of alcohol, and called *Alcohol Killer*?

Once again, the manufacturer looks to Eastern Europe for verification of its dubious claims: not the KGB this time, but a small study taking place over two

days in

Slovakia, measuring the decrease in alcohol in the blood over a period of one hour. The Alcohol Killer website shows that one of the subjects was given 12 cans of beer. We were relieved to find a small 'Warning and Moral Stance' page on the same website that urges readers to remember that 'Alcohol Killer is not a licence to drink and drive'.

However, we are also very concerned that such a caveat takes up such a minor part of the site when other prominent claims include: *'If you drink Alcohol Killer when you're drunk you'll soon start to sober up. You'll feel more aware and more in control of your thoughts and actions.'*



Snickers pie

Professional chefs know only too well that customers often put taste before health when ordering dishes in restaurants. Salt, sugar and fats are used in copious quantities to ensure that diners get their taste buds well and truly tickled. But what should we make of this Snickers-based recipe from the ubiquitous restaurateur and chef Antony Worrall Thompson, published online at the BBC's website?

We've calculated that a single slice of this calorific pudding will provide over 1,250 calories from sugar and fat alone – a serving equivalent to around 22 teaspoons of fat and 11 teaspoons of sugar. We love a decent dessert as much as anyone, but surely this has to be one of the most unhealthy recipes ever published?!

Snickers pie

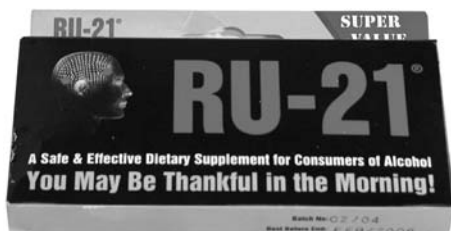
Serves four

Ingredients

1 packet puff pastry
140g/5oz mascarpone
110g/4oz soft cheese
50g/2oz caster sugar
3 eggs and 5 Snickers bars, chopped roughly

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/400/F/Gas 6.
2. Roll pastry to 3-4mm thick and use to line a 20cm/8in fluted tart tin.
3. Beat the mascarpone, soft cheese and sugar together in a large bowl, until smooth.
4. Beat in eggs, one at a time.
5. Add the Snickers bars and fold in.
6. Pour into a lined tart tin, and spread to the edges.
7. Place in the oven for 10 minutes, then lower to 180C/350F/Gas 4 for a further 25 minutes until golden and set. Allow to cool before serving.



Can you find a less healthy dessert recipe published in recent years? If you can, send it in to The Editor, The Food Magazine, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.

The senders of the 'worst' five recipes received will receive a free copy of Eric Schlosser's excellent *Fast Food Nation* – the bestselling expose of the fast food industry.

Legal, decent, honest and true?

The activities of the advertising industry raise many important questions for nutrition and health. Here we report on activities and rulings of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in recent months.

X Milupa ruled 'not healthier' than meat

In November, a complaint was upheld against Milupa, which manufactures formula milk under the brand name Aptamil. The objection was against a poster for formula milk that featured two children's highchairs with fitted trays displaying food. One had two rump steaks with the caption 'Two steaks will help give your toddler their daily iron.' The other highchair had a bottle of Aptamil formula milk with the caption 'Our milk is another way to support their physical development'. More text stated: 'Milupa Aptamil Growing Up Milk. Giving your toddler a head start,' and 'There are many sources of iron. Milupa Aptamil Growing Up Milk is designed to be part of a toddler's diet.'

The complainant, a doctor, said they believed the main reason for iron deficiency in children under five years old was over-reliance on milk and insufficient solid food. They said that encouraging parents to give children formula milk instead of food was therefore both misleading and irresponsible. The Advertising

Standards Authority (ASA) agreed with the doctor and said that by featuring rump steaks in the advert, Milupa had implied that Aptamil was a replacement for food (rather than just a replacement for cow's milk) and could

'irresponsibly discourage appropriate weaning onto iron-rich food'. The Authority ruled that Milupa had breached advertising codes of practice on social responsibility and truthfulness. They asked Milupa to ensure that in future, the company will make clear that Aptamil was simply a suggested replacement for cow's milk, not for solid food.

X ASA offers prize for selling soft drinks

We were also intrigued to read this month that the ASA has launched an award scheme 'for students able to demonstrate a keen understanding of its work'.

GCSE-level students and higher-education students can compete for awards of £150 for supplying a critique of ASA adjudications where complaints had been raised 'that ads presented harmful or socially irresponsible messages to children'.

However, if they don't feel like working on a worthy project to serve the public good, then a far less public-spirited option is also available. Students can also enter for the prizes by 'creating a multimedia advertising campaign for a soft drink targeted at young people'.

Recommended reading for this project includes links from the ASA's award webpage that encourage young applicants to consider: branding; budgets; targeting customers in supermarkets; local, national and international advertising; use of websites; PR; exhibitions; investigating media circulation figures, paying for

editorial space so that magazine articles will focus just on your brand in a positive light; targeting different age groups; and getting value for money.

Is there any mention of special considerations when promoting soft drinks to children? Of course not. And is there any mention of nutrition? Don't be silly. After all, the ASA has no remit to ensure that positive nutritional messages are supported in advertising; their main focus is to ensure that rogue advertisers don't muck up industry's chance of maintaining a free and self-regulated market for advertising, including advertising unhealthy foods to children.

Why not take part in the award yourself? If you're in higher education, entries should be between 500 and 1,000 words, with a deadline of 1st February 2006. Write to: Debra Quantrill, ASA, Mid City Place, 71 High Holborn, London WC1V 6QT; email: events@asa.org.uk. For details, see the website: www.asa.org.uk

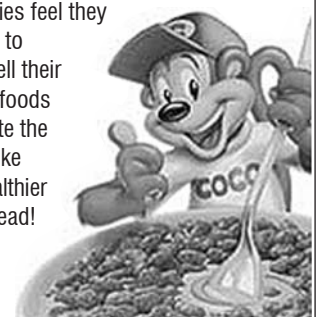
X Are Coco Pops healthy?

Whilst the complaint was not upheld, we also report on an amusing spat between Kellogg's, the ASA and the National Consumer Council. Many food manufacturers (notably McDonald's and Kellogg's) have recently sought to mitigate criticisms of their sugary and fatty products by producing advertisements that also promote the 'physical exercise' message to children.

A recent TV ad for Kellogg's Coco Pops Coco Rocks, for example, featured cartoon jungle animals whose game of football was interrupted by falling chocolate meteors: 'A chocolatey surprise for me and you!' On-screen text said 'Run around, have fun and eat a balanced diet'. The National Consumer Council objected to the advertisement, saying that they believed the text 'Run around, have fun and eat a balanced diet' gave a misleading impression of the nutritional benefits of the cereal.

Kellogg's pointed out that the on-screen text appeared at the same time as the cartoon characters were pictured sitting down to a breakfast of fresh fruit, fruit juice and whole-meal breads. Kellogg's clearly recognises that good nutrition comes from good food that doesn't need to be laced with sugar.

It's amazing what twists and turns some food companies feel they have to make to continue to sell their 'treat' sugary foods rather than bite the bullet and make genuinely healthier products instead!



What's on the menu today, mum?



Oily treatment for health claims

X Pride Oils plc were censured by the ASA for a series of television advertisements for vegetable and sunflower oils. In one, a graphic of an oily heart made of oil appeared with the text 'No cholesterol', and a voiceover said 'Pride Vegetable Oils celebrating healthy days.' Another ad showed members of a family running, skipping and working out on a step machine. The voiceover said 'Pride Sunflower Oil gives you cholesterol free health, adds exotic taste to every delicacy and makes you feel light.'

The ASA considered that the claims implied that Pride Oils' vegetable and sunflower oils had health benefits. Because no substantiation was submitted in support of the claims, it concluded that the ads were in breach of advertising codes on evidence and accuracy, and were therefore misleading. The ASA also reminded the two TV channels that had broadcast the advertisements that 'It is the responsibility of the broadcasters themselves to ensure the advertising they transmit complies with both the spirit and the letter of the Code.'

Flavourings conjure up 'Mediterranean Magic'

Marketing from the ingredients company Belmay opens with a poetic and inspiring flourish, reminding us of the rich and diverse benefits of good food and the Mediterranean diet: *'It is now widely accepted that the Mediterranean cuisine is arguably the most health enriching in the world. Greek cuisine, for example, has four secrets: fresh, local ingredients, judicious use of herbs and spices, olive oil and basic goodness and simplicity. In addition, the rich diversity of locally available ingredients has made Italian recipes famous like no other in the world and the*

wonderful fruits and herbs grown throughout this region complete a picture of naturalness and wellbeing.'

However, whilst the glossy brochure in which this text appears is replete with pictures of 'naturalness and wellbeing', in the form of Mediterranean fruits, Belmay

does not in fact promote any of the foods or ingredients that it so praises. Indeed no, for Belmay is a flavourings manufacturer. It proudly boasts that it has *'embraced these diversities of culture, colour and cuisine to create a truly memorable portfolio of Mediterranean style flavours. Tastes that cater for today's consumers who want to capture the essence of this region and feel healthier and happier.'* In this bit of puffery, 'feel' is probably the operative word.

The Food Commission has long argued that additives can undermine good nutrition. They are used to replace real nutritious ingredients, or to enhance foods with low levels of such ingredients, and can fool the senses into believing that we are eating better food than we really are. They can also be used to give cosmetic appeal to unhealthy ingredients. Our calculations in 2001 (FM55) showed that *'in more than 70% of cases*

Flavourings aren't just used in food and drink. This US advert (above) shows Kool Smooth Fusion cigarettes – flavoured to be 'inviting and surprising' and promising to 'entice you with its sweet indulgence'.

the foods that use additives are the foods that encourage poor diets'.

The market for flavourings is highly profitable. Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation*, reports that in America alone, the flavourings industry is worth \$1.4 billion. The concentration of flavourings in a food can be as low as 0.2 parts per billion and still have a significant effect on the taste of the product. As Schlosser comments, *'The flavour of a processed food often costs less than its packaging.'*

Anecdotally, we hear stories of food producers approached by additive manufacturers saying that ingredients costs can be cut if only the food producer would consider skimping on real ingredients and adding a few chemical ones instead. We generally hear about this practice from organic food producers who are outraged by the implication that they might deliberately denude the nutritional quality of the food.

However, Belmay's brochure encourages less scrupulous manufacturers to use flavourings to conjure up the impression of healthy fruit ingredients. Belmay describes pomegranate, for example as an *'increasingly popular fruit with its origins in Persia which has been cultivated around the Mediterranean for centuries. The edible pulp and seeds are an excellent source of vitamin C and have a wonderful tangy taste'*. Belmay's suggestion? Use the company's Perfect Pomegranate flavouring to create an 'authentic' Mediterranean taste.

With flavourings used explicitly as one of the tools in a broad marketing portfolio, it is especially



At first glance a glossy sales brochure for Belmay's 'Mediterranean Magic' range of flavourings looks more like an exotic holiday brochure.

concerning to learn of the growing market in the US for flavoured cigarettes. A 2005 report from the American Lung Association states that *'Now that the use of cartoon characters to sell cigarettes has been prohibited, major tobacco companies have devised a new way to target our children: selling cigarettes and tobacco products in assorted candy flavours.'* The medical organisation reports that the cigarette manufacturer R. J. Reynolds launched a pineapple and coconut-flavoured cigarette called 'Kauai Kolada' in 2004 and has an line of flavoured cigarettes called Camel Exotic Blends.

Manufacturer Brown & Williamson also introduced flavoured versions of its Kool menthol cigarette in 2004 with names like 'Caribbean Chill' and 'Mintrigue', with imagery of rap singers and dancers that make them particularly appealing to the youth market.

The statistics speak for themselves. When a cross-section of people were asked if they had tried flavoured cigarettes in the past month, nearly 40% of those who said yes were in the 17 to 19 age group. For an industry that loses 438,000 customers in the US each year to death from tobacco-related illness, tobacco companies must constantly seek new markets. It appears that flavourings are the latest in its arsenal of marketing techniques.

Badvert

A colourful mystery

What a shame we can't show you this product in glorious Technicolor. This chickpea candy, a Turkish speciality sold in north London, is the most amazing shade of bright green. The product is also available in what can only be described as day-glo pink.

The source of such amazing vibrant colours? We can't tell you. The ingredients list

shows only chickpeas, flour, sugar and salt. This labelling is not very helpful for people who want to avoid colouring additives, and is probably illegal, unless the manufacturer Memo has found some magical way of turning flour bright green (or pink).

If you would like to see a colour snapshot of the green variety sign up for our email newsletter at www.foodcomm.org.uk





What the doctor reads

The latest research from the medical journals

Vegetable cleaning reduces nutrients

Evidence has emerged that the processes used in disinfecting vegetables from bacterial contamination may also reduce the nutritional value of the products. Four disinfection technologies were studied, using either hydrogen peroxide, free chlorine, gaseous ozone or liquid ozone.

Results indicated that these commonly-used technologies may result in significant loss of beneficial biothiols (a range of active compounds including amino acids and enzymes, some of which have anti-oxidant and anti-free radical functions) in vegetables.

For example, 48-54% of biothiols were destroyed by free chlorine and gaseous and liquid ozone under typical conditions. As much as 70% of biothiols were lost when spinach was treated with hydrogen peroxide. In red pepper, up to 71% of the biothiol glutathione was oxidised by the disinfectants.

The authors call for better methods for reducing bacterial contamination while minimising loss of the beneficial biothiols.

Oiang Z et al. *J Agric Food Chem.* 2005 Dec 14;53(25):9830-40.

Low birth weight increases taste for salt

Birth weight and salt intake are both risk factors for raised blood pressure. A new study in the US suggests that a low birth weight is

associated with a preference for salty foods, and this continues through infancy.

Using different strengths of salty water at age two months, measuring acceptability and quantity consumed showed a greater salt preference among the lower birth weight babies. The differences were less marked at age six months, but at age three and four years, using food preference choices, the taste for salty food returned among the same children.

It is possible that the link between low birth weight and subsequent health outcomes may be through the family's dietary choices and preferences, the authors suggest.

Stein LJ et al. *Eur J Clin Nutr.*(e) 2005 Nov 23.

Kids' cookbooks need revising

A study of cookbooks aimed at children over the last 150 years has suggested that they have not kept pace with modern understanding of nutrition and health.

Over that period, the science of nutrition has grown from a focus on nitrogen as a precursor to protein, to one on multiple nutrients and their interrelationships. Foods in the market have diversified in number and form, and so have adult books on food and cookery, but children have not been so well served.

The author argues that, with children's early food choices influencing both their growth and health, factors impacting their food choices need to receive more attention.

Hertzler AA. *Nutr Rev.* 2005 Oct;63(10):347-51.

TV ads push sugary foods

A study by a team of dentists of the content of advertising during children's TV in the UK has found that the large majority of food advertisements are for products that encourage unhealthy diets.

On average, 24 adverts were shown per broadcast hour, which accounted for 16% of the total schedule time. Of these, 35% related to food or drink products, of which the large majority (over 95%) promoted products that were deemed potentially damaging to teeth.

The most frequently promoted food or drink products included breakfast cereals with added sugar (26%), confectionery (24%) and non-carbonated soft drinks (18%).

The authors state their concern that, despite the industry codes of practice, so many products that can damage dental health are being promoted directly to children.

Rodd HD, Patel V. *Br Dent J.* 2005 Dec 10;199:710-2.

Food poverty linked to psychological factors

Household food insecurity is likely to be highest among families with a low income, but a new survey in the US, focusing on households with pregnant women, has revealed additional risk factors associated with not having enough to eat.

The number of days without enough food, or days when it was necessary to borrow money to get food, were linked to a mother-to-be's lower income status, lower education status and non-white ethnic status, as has been shown in other studies.

After controlling for these factors, the measures of food insecurity were linked to indicators of perceived stress, trait anxiety, depressive symptoms, and to a 'locus of control attributed to chance' (i.e. feelings that circumstances were determined by external factors rather than by choices).

Whilst the authors note that the direction of causality was not determined in this study, it clearly raises questions about emotional status and food security.

Laraia BA et al *J Nutr.* 2006 Jan;136(1):177-82.

Cooked shrimp carry resistant bacteria

Antibiotic resistance has become a significant threat to animal and human health, especially as resistance can be transferred between bacteria, and antibiotic-resistant pathogens may not respond to antibiotic treatments.

In an effort to find out more about the spread of such bacteria, shellfish (shrimp) imported from four different countries of origin and on sale in US grocery stores were analysed for resistance to ten different common antibiotics.

Of 1,500 bacterial colonies found, consisting of 162 different species, 42% had acquired resistance to one or more

antibiotics. Most of the bacterial species had one or more colony that was resistant to antibiotics, and these included many that are dangerous to human health: *E coli*, *Enterococcus*., *Salmonella*, *Shigella flexneri*, *Staphylococcus* and *Vibrio*.

The food products were described as ready-to-eat and sold with instructions only to thaw the product before serving, which, the researchers note, may result in consumer exposure to antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Duran GM, Marshall DL. *J Food Prot.* 2005 Nov;68(11):2395-401.



books

Sugar: The grass that changed the world

Sanjida O'Connell. Virgin Books Ltd
www.virgin.com/books £8.99

When Sanjida O'Connell describes herself as 'wedded to a sugar family' she means it. Several of her relatives worked for the UK's largest sugar manufacturer, Tate & Lyle, and this enabled her access to both the company's library and key

members of staff. Whilst such resources have doubtlessly enriched this publication, O'Connell has thankfully maintained a healthy independence and does not hesitate to explore the links between sugar and disease.

There have already been numerous books and reports written about sugar (many of which

are listed in the bibliography) but

this is a useful anthology and a good introduction to sugar from a UK perspective, being both easy to read and rich in information. One interesting

fact is that early 19th Century sugar beet farmers, when faced with an onslaught of cheap sugar from the Colonies, promoted their sugar as 'slave-free' – an early, if self-serving, example of ethical trade.

O'Connell covers almost every aspect of sugar production, explaining the cultivation of beet and cane; international trade; the crop's role in the development of the slave trade; political lobbying and subsidies; sugar surpluses and sugar dumping; the marketing of sugar and the white stuff's effect on both the environment and our own health. All in all this is a well-rounded and recommended read.

The Whole Hog

Exploring the extraordinary potential of pigs

Lyall Watson. Profile Books
www.profilebooks.com £8.99

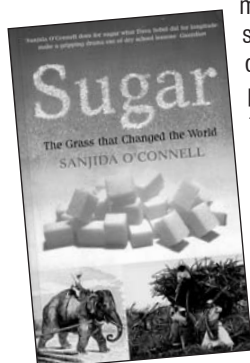
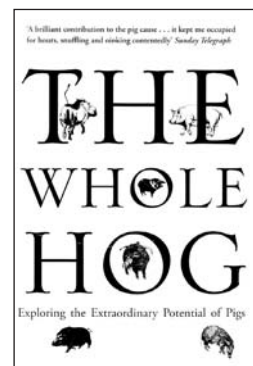
Recently published in paperback this is an engaging and comprehensive survey of pigs which fully refutes their ill-deserved reputation as 'dirty swine'. The author Lyall Watson brings an affectionate eye to his subject, examining the importance of the pig throughout human history and proposing that the pig may even have been the earliest domesticated animal.

This fascinating book focuses not just on the familiar, domesticated pig but on its feral cousins – such as the Forest Hogs, the White-lipped Pecaries and the Sulawesi Warty Pigs – animals

that continue to thrive wherever the jungle is too thick, or the land too arid, for human interference to have seriously affected their numbers.

Pigs are innately intelligent and curious creatures, which (if given the opportunity) take an active interest in their environment. Watson explains their complex yet amiable social orders, and paints a vivid picture of each species in its native environment. When it comes to the domestic pig, Watson catalogues its numerous varieties and heritage. He examines the pig's importance as a food source throughout human history, its cultural significance, and more recently the role of the pig in modern biomedical research. Attempts have even been made to train pigs for use in military roles such as tracking and mine detection, but it seems they make poor soldiers, being too easily distracted and insubordinate to be of any real use.

This is a thoroughly refreshing, enjoyable and original work that deserves a wide readership. Over 10,000 years have elapsed since our ancestors first decided that these widespread, intelligent and (let's admit it) tasty creatures were worth domesticating. It's about time we understood a little bit more about them.



Fighting an Old Battle in a New World

How IBFAN Monitors the Baby Food Market

A Allain, Development Dialogue, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2005. For copies, email ibfanpg@tm.net.my or fax +60-4-8907291.

Not since the ground-breaking book *Rules for Radicals* documented strategies for guerrilla warfare against arrogant corporations have we come across a book so clear and valuable in its guidance to modern campaigners for health and justice.

Based on the 25-year history of the struggle to prevent abuse of children's nutrition through the promotion of breastmilk substitutes, the book documents the tactics and targets used by both the defenders of children's rights and the corporations intent on promoting their manufactured products.

The problems of modern food supplies are nicely encapsulated in that struggle. The need to protect traditional, healthy practices from external commercial contamination, the need to promote local, sustainable food supplies from hungry corporations intent on opening markets, the need to put nutrition ahead of profit, are all

reflected perfectly in the battle for the control of infant feeding.

Allain documents the steps taken to have a code of marketing accepted, first by the World Health Organization and then by national governments, against the fierce and well-funded lobbying by the baby milk companies. She shows the need to keep commercial organisations at arm's length at all stages – no matter how much they may bleat about 'partnerships' and 'mutual interests' – and she has a particularly ferocious view on the use of the term 'civil society' for removing the distinction between business and public interests.

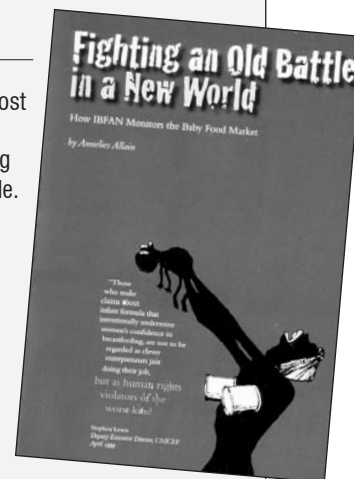
These themes are developed in the analysis of BINGOs – Business Interest Non-Governmental Organisation – which have sprung up to join PINGOs (Public Interest NGOs) in lobbying for the attention of policy-makers, and which do their best to undermine public health advocacy.

Above all, the book provides the clearest lesson that needs to be carried forward in the present climate: voluntary codes and self-regulation by industry do not work. The Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes is 25 years old in May 2006, and the latest list of Code

violators includes most of the major companies marketing baby milks worldwide.

Even national regulation does not work if it is not vigorously enforced. And enforcement requires monitoring: something that PINGOs, and especially IBFAN – the International Baby Food Action Network – have been doing courageously and enthusiastically for the last quarter-century.

Regulations and their enforcement are not 'nannyist' and should not be watered down or removed: laws and regulations are an essential public asset, they are protective of the weak and provide justice and defend rights. The Code of Marketing protecting newborn infants' nutrition is a classic case in point. As a Deputy Director of UNICEF states: companies that break the Code of Marketing should not be regarded as 'clever entrepreneurs doing their job' but as 'human rights violators of the worst kind'.



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

Not good for infants!

I'm appalled by the marketing for these biscuits for infants, and enclose the packaging. I can assure you that I did not feed the biscuits to my baby. They're labelled as 'a tasty introduction to healthy eating', but I cannot agree. They're also described as an 'energy rich' infant food. No wonder! The second, third and fourth ingredients are all different types of sugar, making the biscuits 25% sugar in total. Yet they have the cheek to say that the biscuits are 'nutritionally formulated', and suggest that parents send packs of these biscuits with their child to crèche or play-school.

The label even suggests that parents 'offer Liga Original straight from the packet as a nutritious between-meal snack'. I bought these in Belfast. I don't know if these products are available on the mainland, as they are made in Dublin. But no wonder Northern Ireland's pre-school children have some of the worst teeth problems in Britain, if this is the sort of advice parents are receiving!

Lynn Reece, nutritionist, Belfast



Eds: The state of young children's teeth in Northern Ireland has been of concern for many years. In 2001, the Boost Better Breaks initiative worked with 80% of primary schools and pre-school groups in Northern Ireland, in partnership with dietitians, health promotion officers, teachers and school meal advisors, to ensure that only milk and fruit were offered at breaktimes. But this kind of initiative needs to be maintained and supported with consistent messages.

This manufacturer, Liga foods, contradicts the useful work of schools and playgroups with its own version of health advice to parents. We have written to Liga Foods to complain.

Well done, National Trust

Some time ago, I contacted you regarding the lack of suitable juice drinks for small children at National Trust properties – I mentioned Anglesey Abbey and the Giant's Causeway. Apart from expensive bottled juices (quite large), the only cartons were of Ribena. Lobbying locally at the Abbey didn't help so I sent copies of your *Food Magazine* information to Head Office.

Imagine my delight when this week no Ribena was being stocked, but small cartons of Fairtrade juice! Keep up the good work!

Mrs Paddy James, Bottisham, Cambridgeshire

US aims for nine a day

Over Christmas, I visited family in America, where I saw promotions for the 'Eat 5 to 9 a Day' programme. They say men should aim to eat nine portions of fruit and vegetables a day, and women seven portions. The promotions are brightly coloured and positive, and full of pictures of fruit and veg – all very attractive.

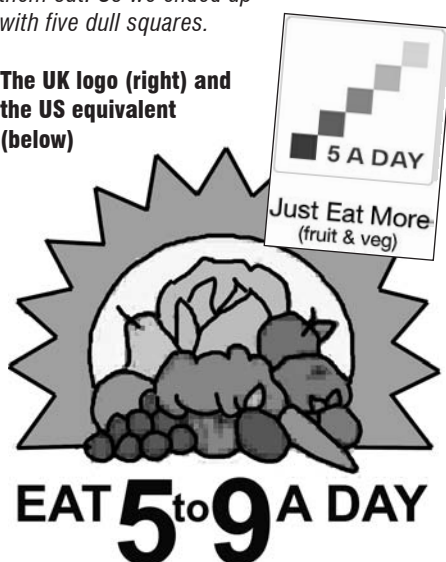
When I came back to Britain, what did I see but a dreary black and white Department of Health logo on a juice carton?

Why can't we get it right? Young people will never pick up this message unless it's really attractive!

Laura Stein, West London

Eds: We agree that the UK's '5 a day' logo is rather dull. The US version, shown below, is much better – it is bright, cheerful and attractive. Word has it that our national '5 a day' logo suffered death by consultation. Makers of canned and frozen products argued that pictures of fresh fruit and veg unfairly left them out. So we ended up with five dull squares.

The UK logo (right) and the US equivalent (below)



Nestlé responds

The launch of Nescafe Partners' Blend is Nestlé's latest initiative is a long-term commitment (spanning 30 years) to develop sustainable agricultural practices in order to help alleviate hardship and poverty among small coffee farmers. It's a shame that a small minority of campaigners, who claim to want positive change, are not able to recognise the progress this represents and the fact that the product will make a genuine improvement to the livelihoods of 3,500 of some of the smallest farmers in El Salvador and Ethiopia. The fact that the product has received independent Fairtrade certification is testament to this. Turning to the allegations within your article, Nestlé was equally shocked when it heard of the murders of a former Nestlé-Cirolac employee in Columbia and a former Nestlé employee in the Philippines. These acts of violence are unfortunately not isolated incidents. We are concerned to preserve the safety of our employees and are co-operating fully with the authorities to preserve this. We categorically reject accusations that the company is involved in violence against its own workers. As regards the US lawsuit, we believe this to be without merit and will vigorously defend ourselves against the accusations.

Hilary Parsons, Head of Corporate Affairs, Nestlé UK Ltd.

Eds: Let's hope that Nestlé, as one of the leading coffee buyers, will now make further 'positive change' to the 25 million other coffee producers around the world, most of whom are small farmers desperately in need of a fair price for their produce. And let's hope it doesn't take another 30 years.

Dairy disgruntlement

As a dairy farmer, you make me out to be some kind of factory farmer continually pushing their cows to the absolute limit. Modern dairy farmers would actually hope that the average Holstein/Friesian cow would give about 8,000 litres of milk per lactation throughout her lifetime. This may be twice (or more) as much as in the 1950s, but this is because we don't milk Shorthorn cattle commercially any more as they give a significantly lower yield than today's black and white cows. As for a farmer having a sharp eye for a cow that's past her best, you can't have it both ways. Either pay more for your produce as a consumer or accept that farmers have to make hard decisions. When only being paid 17p/litre, we can't afford to run a retirement home for our cows, much as we would like to.

Do you not think that this is always the way milk has been produced? We aren't doing things

any differently to pre-war practices regarding getting cows pregnant again after calving. The only real difference is that a bull would have run with the cows and caught them in their first 21 day cycle in the 1940s, whereas today we artificially inseminate.

Talking about infants being especially vulnerable is just scaremongering. No doubt you are well aware that the benefits of dairy consumption in the under 5s far outweigh the minuscule worries you describe in the article. Young children need milk to grow bodies that are strong and healthy and any gullible parent reading this article could well conclude that non-dairy products would be more suitable and therefore leave their child open to a whole host of skeletal problems later in life.

Mrs Sarah Weatherald, 'Disgruntled Dairy Farmer', Leyburn, North Yorkshire

Note: We also received a letter and commentary on scientific evidence from the Dairy Council.

Why the extra pennies?

I do object to having to pay more for healthier food – sometimes significantly more. Why do food companies do it? I live on my own and buy small portions of vegetables in cans. This helps me make sure I have vegetables in, as I can't always get out to shop for fresh. I prefer to buy those without added salt, as it is not a necessary addition and I have problems with blood pressure. Green Giant sweetcorn is one of the brands I get – I was pleased to see that it comes in a special value pack; three small cans for £1.23. So why is it that I can't buy three small cans of the salt-free variety? If I choose the healthier kind, there is no value pack on offer, I have to buy three separate cans, and it costs £1.41. This may not seem like much, but on a pension it all adds up.

Mrs J Callenbrook, Teignmouth, Devon



Eds: The extra cost isn't the only thing that adds up. Each discounted can of sweetcorn contains around 0.6g of sodium, equivalent to 1.5g of salt, whereas the more expensive 'no added salt' variety contains only a trace.

We checked in several supermarkets and found the less healthy variety routinely discounted. We did not find any special offers for the 'no added salt' variety. The Food Commission has written to Green Giant, asking them why they promote salty food in this way, especially when they also promote the salty variety as part of the 'five a day' message. We have also asked them to consider offering discounted packs of the healthier product.

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Nestlé fills MPs' troughs

As health workers in Africa know well, HIV-positive women can transmit the disease to their infants during pregnancy, during birth and during breastfeeding – with breastmilk responsible for about a quarter of mother-to-infant transmissions.

Wary that the benefits of breastfeeding could be undermined, UNICEF advises health professionals to recommend replacement feeding only when mothers are confirmed HIV positive and when artificial feeding is affordable, feasible, acceptable, sustainable, and safe – and that otherwise breastmilk is the preferred option. It adds that the Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes should be strictly adhered to.

Why, then, does MP Tom Levitt, Parliamentary Private Secretary to Hilary Benn, the Secretary of State for International Development, write in his local Glossop Advertiser that *'with the present situation with AIDS there are now more mothers who cannot*

breastfeed... there is more of a need for powdered milk' and add, for good measure, 'Nestlé's bad reputation was gained 30 years ago and is no longer justified'.

This casual attitude to the facts surely has no relation to Nestlé being a major employer in Levitt's constituency – through its Buxton Water brand?

And has nothing to do with Levitt's free ticket to Wimbledon last summer, courtesy of Nestlé?

Meanwhile, Nestlé paid for a week's jolly jaunt to South Africa for Tory MPs Anne McIntosh and Julie Kirkbride, and Labour MPs Nick Brown, Doug Henderson and government whip Frank Roy, at a time when parliament was sitting. Well, it was winter here and a pleasant 70°F in Cape Town...

* Programme Recommendations for the Prevention Of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV, Rutenberg et al, UNICEF, 2003.

Trust the Chief Exec?

We are sorry to report to readers that is now too late to apply for the handsomely salaried role of Chief Executive of the School Food Trust – the application deadline was 19th January. The salary on offer is £85,000 per annum, including two months' paid leave.

The trust was set up by government *'to drive forward and support the transformation in school food to meet new nutritional standards'* and to *'increase demand (from children and parents) for healthy meals'*. An ambitious and admirable task – we wish the candidates well. There should certainly be some interesting competition for the post; the recruitment agency hired to find the magnificently remunerated new Chief Exec (Saxton Bampfylde Hever plc) lists among its corporate clients: ASDA, Sainsbury's and Pepsi.

Irradiated toast

Magnetic Design, a Cambridge-based company, has come up with a novel way to stop toast burning. They've taken the radioactive sensor out of a smoke detector and placed it in a toaster.

Inside the sensor a small electrical current flows through an airborne path of ions, emitted by a pellet of radioactive americium-241. The ions attach themselves to the carbon particles produced as the toast browns and reduce the strength of the electrical current, allowing the sensor to detect when your toast is browned to perfection.

The Department of Trade and Industry has given the go ahead for the toaster as it complies with Defra guidance on the use of ionising radiation in 'smoke and fire detectors and other safety instruments'. However, as the toaster is a novel product it must still pass risk assessment and prototype testing before being allowed onto the market.

Living with Hydrogenated Fat



How lovely that Boots should produce a box of pills entitled 'Living with Pollution'. From a quick poll around the office, it seems people might prefer 'Living without Pollution' and 'Living without paying for pills to alleviate the symptoms of Environmental Destruction'. However, we think that Boots may mean their product title quite literally. The tenth ingredient in a list of thirty ingredients for this product is hydrogenated fat – a dietary pollutant in its own right. There is more hydrogenated fat in this product than many of the beneficial nutrients that Boots claims will 'help protect you from free radicals'.

Siemens predicts flashing packs

As if cartoon characters on food packaging weren't enough to tempt toddlers into nagging for unhealthy food, animated packaging is the latest idea from product designers at the electronics company Siemens. The company predicts that by 2008, wafer-thin digital flat screens will flash and blink graphics at customers direct from product packaging.

The company says they could be used for moving advertisements, special offers or

nutrition information (presumably of the '85% fat free' variety). The marketing press reported the idea as 'something big that could change forever the way in which disposable packaging carries advertising and informational messages'.

However, a more disturbing comment came from Siemens engineer Axel Gerlt, who said, *'When kids see flashing pictures on cereal boxes, we don't expect them to just ask for the product, but to say, "I want it."*

The Milkybars are on us!

Regular readers may remember our feature on toys and books aimed at children, incorporating imagery from branded food products into the games and stories. In one offer, families could save up tokens from Nestlé Milkybars. With four tokens, you could receive a picture book called 'Milkybar Kid to the Rescue', with your child's name inserted as a hero in the story. We couldn't resist.

We had four tokens at the ready – but who to choose as our storybook hero? Well, none other than our admired friend Patti Rundall, who runs the Nestlé boycott in the UK. Patti is now the proud recipient of a children's story featuring both herself and a hell of a lot of milkybars.

Meanwhile we will take a leaf out of Nestlé's book (if you'll pardon the pun) and use the *Food Magazine* for another little message. Are you sitting comfortably, children?

Patti Rundall's website says: *'Nestlé is the target of a boycott in 20 countries because it aggressively markets baby foods, breaking*

World Health Assembly marketing requirements and contributing to the death and suffering of infants around the world.'

Now, isn't that an educational read!

