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TRANS-FAT: YOUR BODY THINKS IT'S SATURATED

by Dawn B. Olcott

Information on nutrition and health selected from a variety of publications for your enjoyment and edification.

The September 1996 Nutrition Action Health Letter ran a comprehensive article on trans-fat entitled "Trans: The Phantom Fat." Trans-fat has the same affect on our blood vessels as saturated fat. It is created when oils or shortening are hydro-genated. This process makes oil more solid and adds to shelf life, so it is a useful process for the food industry. On food labels trans-fat is included in the "total fat" category, but it's not listed in the breakdown description of fats, so it is easy to miss. Because it's not listed on food labels as either a saturated, unsaturated, or monounsaturated fat, and due to its effect on the body, Nutrition Action refers to trans-fat as a "secret killer."

In a number of clinical trials, trans-fat raised blood cholesterol about as high as saturated fat did. Current regulations state that products can contain trans-fat and have a "no-cholesterol" or "low-cholesterol" claim on the packaging. For example, mar-garines containing trans-fat can make claims like "70 percent less saturated fat than butter," but are not required to print the percentage of trans-fat on the label. The Center for Science in the Public Interest, which publishes Nutrition Action, has petitioned the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to require that trans-fat be included in the "saturated fat" percentage on food labels, not just included in the "total fat" percentage. This way consumers can make an informed choice about how much total "artery-clogging-type" fat they want to

purchase.

One of the ways to avoid trans-fat is to avoid hydrogenated oils; however, there are many degrees of hydrogenation. Items slightly hydrogenated may not be too bad, but there is no way to tell the degree of hydrogenation by reading the label. Restaurant food can be deceptive as well. A restaurant can claim their french fries are cooked in cholesterol-free 100% vegetable oil, yet they can cook them in partially-hydrogenated vegetable shorten-ing (as opposed to unhydro-genated oil). According to the Nutrition Action article, some of these fries are worse than potatoes cooked in beef tallow.

Meanwhile, until the labeling laws change, here is how to avoid trans-fat:

- Read food labels. Look for foods that contain no "vegetable shorten-ing" or "partially hydrogenated" oil.
- The less fat, the less trans-fat. Buy lower fat margarines, chips, crackers, pastries, and other pro-cessed foods. Avoid deep-fried foods.
- Use olive or canola oil instead of butter, margarine, or shortening whenever possible.
- If you use margarine, buy tubs rather than sticks. To cut fat and calories, get "light," "low-fat," or "fat-free" brands.
- Be aware that, foods that are labeled "cholesterol-free," "low-cholesterol," "low-saturated-fat," or "made with vegetable oil" aren't necessarily low in trans-fat.

Reprinted from *Sound Bites*, Harvest Times November, 1996. Dawn Olcott is the former Education Director at Harvest.

Co-op Calendar

WINTER 2009

These FREE events are held in the Community Room, Harvest Cambridge store unless otherwise specified.

MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 7 PM HARVEST BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 1-5 PM JAPANESE ANIMATION, RATED PG

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 14 MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY!

➔ **ALL HARVEST CO-OP MEMBERS RECEIVE
10% DISCOUNT ALL DAY!**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 6-8 PM A GREENER HOME: NATURAL PRODUCTS FOR HOME AND BODY

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 6-8 PM BREAKING FREE FROM OBESITY

Harvest Co-op Market encourages exploration of a variety of approaches to food, nutrition, and health in our classes. However, inclusion in our class offerings does not imply endorsement by the Co-op.



HARVEST CO-OP'S

HARVEST TIMES

A publication for members and shoppers at Harvest Co-op Markets

THE AFFORDABLE LIFE

By Jennifer Reisch, *Sevananda Natural Foods Co-op; Atlanta, GA*

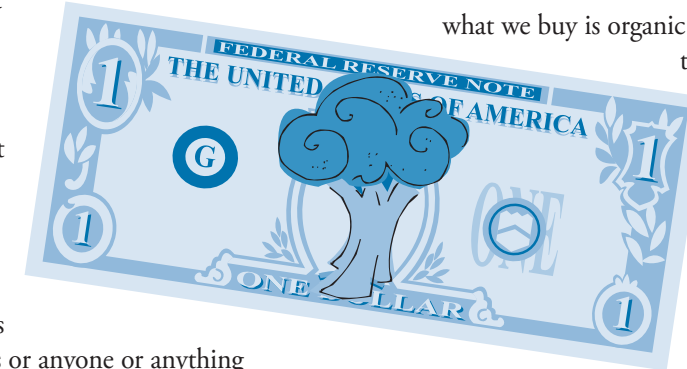
One of the most common complaints people make about our store (Sevananda Natural Foods Co-op; Atlanta, GA) is that it is too expensive. Sometimes folks complain that the same product is available for less at another store; other times complaints focus on the premium price for organic produce or additive-free convenience foods. These complaints stem from a focus on obtaining an affordable meal, rather than an affordable life. We live in a society that loves – nay, worships – money, and promotes consumption now and on the cheap with little consideration for its less

immediate effects on us or anyone or anything else. We buy the "happy meal," down the calories, toss the toy, and don't think about the chest pain and \$25,000 coronary bypass surgery a few decades down the road, or even the person preparing our meal. Will the food cost savings balance out the surgery costs? More importantly, did the food purchase move us personally, culturally, globally closer to our desired life?

Regular massages, high quality vitamins, organic foods, and locally grown and produced goods all cost money; lots more up front than seeing your primary care physician once a year and consuming the petrochemical alternatives. Paying extra by investing in high quality products can be an important step on the road to the affordable life, however. Avoiding carcinogens, eating healthy fats, getting enough exercise and surrounding yourself with caring supportive social groups can let you live longer, drastically reduce your health care costs and

greatly improve your quality of life—another one of those things that money can't buy after the fact. The vast majority of Americans die from diseases that are preventable through lifestyle choices.

For a long time my family struggled with reconciling our desire to buy organic food with how much money was in our checking account. We started gradually. We set some rules. If organic was more than twice the cost of petrochemical we usually didn't buy it. Over time we have increased our commitment and now almost all of what we buy is organic or locally grown. We view



these purchases as investments for our health, the health of the planet, and the type of community we want to live in.

For most of us, life is complicated. We have lots of choices to make every day. Many people spend money every single day, and

most of us eat at least three times a day. Most of us don't have much control over the amount of money that comes into our lives. We all have some degree of control over where that money goes, however. Elections occur every time we exchange a hard-earned dollar for something. Each "cha-ching" is a vote. Our spending patterns ripple out across the economy, making some products and services profitable for their providers and others not.

If you need to feed your family on \$10 a week, getting in enough calories and necessary vitamins and minerals is probably going to be more important than whether or not the food is organically grown. For most of us, however, buying food to nourish us today and in the future is an option.

WINTER, 2009

VOL 10, NO. 1

If you'd like to have this newsletter emailed to you, contact cdurkin@harvest.coop

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Printed On Recycled Paper

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EAT WELL & TIGHTEN YOUR BELT:

Leave Your Measuring Cups Behind and Take Back Your Kitchen!

By Jean Johnson

The economy is lurking outside our doors like the big bad wolf. We want fresh ideas on thrift, yet we hope to maintain an enjoyable quality of life. It can happen. We can eat exceedingly well and tighten our belts. All it takes is lightening up and having some fun in the kitchen.

We've identified the problem with SAD, the standard American diet. These days, most know that shopping the perimeter of the grocery is a healthier, more affordable way to fill the larder than schlepping into the inner aisles for things in crinkly packages. Many more are hip to the local, seasonal buzz that has centered the delicious revolution in one's own eco-region, if not one's own backyard. Yet, we keep consuming more ready to eat food than our health and wealth can stand. Why?

Culinary history suggests formal recipes have put too fine a point on cooking. At the end of a long day, few of us are in the mood for doing the equivalent of a small chemistry experiment when all we want is dinner.

Besides, following rote directions from elite authorities in your own kitchen isn't all it's cracked up to be. Here they got to have all the fun of creating the recipes, and we're pretty much relegated to being technicians. Putting on your reading glasses to make dinner? What's wrong with this picture?

Americans only got measuring cups in the early 1900s, and everyday cooks around the world today still go with the

flow. Back in the 1950s when renowned British foodie, Elizabeth David studied Mediterranean food, the Italians welcomed her into their kitchens, but they took little interest in quantities or measurements. According to David's official biographer, Artemis Cooper, "David marked a jug out in both imperial and metric measurements, and on occasions 'I stood over the cooks and simply forced them to show me what they meant by a handful.'"

The late food and wine critic who loved France so much he moved there, Richard Olney, did the same thing, but with clear reservations. In his introduction to Lulu's Provençal Table, published in 1994, Olney writes that imprisoning the art of cooking in chilly formulas is like robbing a bird of flight. Still his book is filled with the measurements and precise step by step instructions we've come to associated with official recipes.

The point is, of course, that we'd probably cook more great tasting, healthy, affordable food if we left our measuring cups behind. For example, here's an approach to Roasted Parsnips and Carrots:

French fry lovers will almost always give a plate of roasted parsnips and carrots fresh from the over a big nod of approval.

Slice parsnips and carrots on the diagonal. Shine them up with some good oil. Rub with paprika, coarse salt, and cracked pepper. Roast on a tray in a medium oven, turning the roots after fifteen minutes so each side gets golden brown.

Parsnip peelings are tougher than carrot, and depending on how thick you slice your pieces can be too much chew for some. Experimenting, doing one root with the peel and another without is one way to find out what you think. (Remembering that many nutrients lie just below the skin might make you more predisposed to give the peelings a serious chance.)

In other words, simple everyday cooking just isn't that difficult and the food you'll turn out will be right up there with Garrison Keillor's Powdermilk Biscuits—the ones "that give shy persons the strength to get up and do what needs to be done." That's what cooks in the world's great ethnic traditions know. That's what our ancestors knew. And that's what we can rediscover ourselves.

Jean Johnson is the author of Cooking Beyond Measure: How to Eat Well without Formal Recipes where Roasted Parsnips and Carrots among other taste treats can be found. She has a doctorate in cultural history and lives in Portland, Oregon where she reads, writes, cooks, gardens, and bikes.



SUGGESTION BOOK

Q.) I heard us mentioned in an interview on WBUR with someone who makes wine right here in JP— Good publicity!

A.) Thanks – That was an interview with our old friend Rudy Canale, owner and proprietor of Twenty First Century Foods, who makes the Cantina Bostonia wine that we sell at both stores. If that name sound familiar to long-time members, that's because Rudy also makes the great local tofu we sell packaged and in bulk. I called Rudy after the interview to ask for more wine, because it has been flying off the shelves since the broadcast. For a 2004 article on Rudy and his tofu products, go to: <http://harvestcoop.com/oldSite/pages/updates/times/2004/june04.html>

Q.) Please tape a pen to the One Minute Activist again. We'll get more signatures and then the customers won't have to hassle the front desk for a pen (which they sometimes don't have)

A.) We did again, and a few days later it was gone again. Sorry. We'll keep trying!

Q.) Learn how to make an Italian Sub.

A.) Being a natural foods store, we tend to do things a little differently. Please let the deli clerk know what you want, so you can have it your way (uh oh, I'm gonna get in trouble for that!)

Q.) I want my friends to be Harvest members. I know why I am a member, but what is the best – and easiest - way to explain membership to them?

A.) Great question. You care about the community. You care about healthy food for you and the planet. You want to support a locally owned business. Your reasons are the best ones.

Here's a membership blurb. Memorize it – there will be a test. (OK, I'll make it pass/fail) "Joining Harvest is easy – It just takes a \$200 refundable investment, (yes, you get it back when you leave) payable all at once, or \$25 a year. Besides being member of a locally owned community organization here to serve you, you get a 10% discount once a month on Member Appreciation Day, a patronage rebate based on what the co-op makes and what you spend, member only specials, coupons, and more" Besides memorizing that, you should all carry member brochures around with you – available at a Harvest Co-op near you.

Q.) Where do I go to sign up for the farmer's vegetables I saw distributed during the summer outside Harvest?

A.) That beautiful local organic direct-from-the-farm produce comes from Red Fire Farm. You can sign up for the 2009 CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) by going to <http://www.redfirefarm.com/CSA/join.html>. I had a farm share this year, and it was lots of fun – and lots of great veggies! We host Red Fire Farm for three distributions – Wednesday and Friday in Cambridge, and Wednesday in Jamaica Plain. For other organic farm CSA's, go to the Northeast Organic Farmers website at <http://www.nofamass.org/programs/csa/csa.php>

AFFORDABLE LIFE

Continued from page 1

Knowing what you want is an important first step in planning your affordable life. Do you want to live a long and healthy life? Do you want to quit your job? Send your kids to college? Eat at fabulous restaurants every meal? Own your own home? Get out of debt? Do you want to support a strong local economy? Get more sleep? The economic and lifestyle choices we make can affect all of these things and more.

One big way to cut back on your grocery bill while buying organic or local is to cook your own food. As I wheel grocery carts filled with my weekly groceries to my car, people sometimes comment that they can't believe I can afford to shop at Sev or wish they could afford too. When I ask how much they spend on groceries they

always—without exception—spend more than I do. This is not because I always search out the very best deals, use every coupon available, or eat only rice and beans. It's because I cook, and most people don't. Two things that make cooking easier are a well stocked pantry and menu planning. Shopping the bulk food section helps keep costs down, too.

The affordable life looks different for each of us because we all want different things and have different skills. We all need to make practical, ethical, meaningful choices within our value systems that move us closer to the life we want.

Almost everyone reading this newsletter can make some economic choices for their future payback. Recognize the power of your pocketbook to affect your life for years to come and the life of the planet.

TO YOUR HEALTH

WHY? READ THE LABEL!

MADE FRESH DAILY

HARVEST TIMES

WINTER

2009

VOLUME 10, NO. 1

Published by
Harvest Co-op Markets

Editor
Chris Durkin
*Director of Membership and
Community Relations*

Printer
Red Sun Press, Boston
a worker-owned co-operative

