

The Kansas City Food Circle

UPDATE

Fall, 2000

General Membership Meeting on Dec 3

Food Circle General Membership Meeting: Sunday, December 3. Please mark your calendar. The location is the Kansas City, Mo. South Public Library 201 E. 75th St. Starts 1:30 PM. We will watch a great new video put out by the University of Vermont on innovative ways to market organic food. Some of our producers should be there. We will be reviewing the past growing season and making suggestions for the next year. Feel free to join in. We will also talk about where to get local items during the winter, discuss the March 31, 2001 Farmers Exhibition, and how free range chickens are raised.

Winter Organic Farmers Market: Saturday, December 2 at the Barstow School 11511 State Line Road. Available will be greens and other greenhouse items, winter store items such as potatoes, garlic, onions, yams, dried flowers; Frozen meats, locally canned goods such as jam, salsa, pickles, baked goods and holiday gift items.

Here's a Juicy Nugget!

Federal investigators report that two poultry processing plants that supply chicken to school lunch programs in Texas and around the country were overwhelmed this year by diseased poultry, so much so that "USDA Condemned" barrels filled up and overflowed. On one day 90% of the chickens arriving at a plant were infected with a disease that leaves pus inside the carcass. Such birds are normally condemned. But investigators said that, under an experimental system where company workers instead of federal inspectors check for substandard poultry, some diseased poultry was being used to make chicken nuggets for school lunch programs. The head of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, however, said that food from such plants can be eaten with confidence. (Source: Austin American statesman 4-17-00)

In August this same USDA agency requested public comments on a proposal to sell diseased meat. Here's a comment sent in by a KC Food Circle member:

"To: USDA Food Inspection and Inspection Service Washington, D. C.

I presume your proposal to sell diseased meat is some kind of joke, so I'll play along. Irradiation of dead chicken has recently been approved. But we know that radiation shrinks tumors. Why don't you irradiate chickens while they are growing? That way, tumors will be reduced in size so inspectors won't see them. Also it may reduce pus, lymphomas and

intestinal parasites! Might even get three drumsticks per chicken that way! The American consumer can now look forward to irradiated cancers, pus, scabs etc secure in the knowledge that they won't keel over immediately.

All kidding aside, FSIS management must be out of their minds coming up with this kind of proposal when your credibility is already at an all time low. The USDA needs to completely rethink how they approach the food system. Why is there such a high rate of cancers and respiratory disease in the first place? I think I know. Do you? Did you ever consider how farm animals are bred and raised these days? Your pseudo-science won't cancel out a consumer's common sense. "

Study Backs Organic Food

A team of Danish scientists has confirmed that organically grown crops contain more nutrients than chemical crops. The University of Copenhagen study found that organically grown plants also had a higher concentration of vitamins and far more secondary metabolites, which are naturally occurring compounds that help protect plants from external attack. Some of these metabolites are thought to lower the risk of cancer and heart disease. (Source: BBC and Organic Consumers Assn.)

ABC 20/20 Report Against Organic Food Discredited

In February, John Stossel reported on ABC's 20/20 news program that organic food is not healthier than conventional food and is more likely to be contaminated by E. coli bacteria. He also stated that pesticide residues were not found on the conventional foods they had tested.

It turns out that the scientists retained by ABC had never tested produce for pesticide residues. Further they found residues on conventional poultry but not on organic poultry samples. This was not reported on the program. Despite having been challenged by the Environmental Working Group, an influential Washington D.C. environmental group, ABC repeated their inaccurate report on July 7, 2000. However, on August 11, ABC admitted they had erred and John Stossel made an apology on air.

The story doesn't end there. The New York Times describes Mr. Stossel as an "unabashed libertarian" who has argued that "greed is good for the economy, that environmentalists are 'scaremongers' with vastly overblown fears of global warming and pollution, and, even, that seat

belts in school buses are a waste of money." An ABC News executive defended him saying, "Though he avoids the traditional pose of objectivity, he bases his conclusions on hard reporting." Translated: "It's infotainment, stupid!"

Reporters Win BGH Lawsuit against FOX TV

Two investigative reporters, were assigned to cover the use of the synthetic bovine growth hormone (BGH) injected by farmers into cows to produce more milk. Fox TV canceled the story and fired the award winning reporters. They sued, alleging that Fox succumbed to pressure from hormone maker, Monsanto. After a five week trial, A Florida state court jury unanimously determined that Fox "acted intentionally and deliberately to falsify or distort the plaintiffs' news reporting on BGH." In that decision the jury also found that one of the reporter's threat to blow the whistle to the FCC was the sole reason for the termination, and the jury awarded her \$425,000 in damages. The reporters have not been offered full time work by the mainstream media since this incident. (Source: website www.foxBGHSuit.com.)

Trade Uber Alles!

In July the Clinton Administration appointed a former Monsanto lobbyist to represent U.S. consumers on a transatlantic committee set up to avoid a trade war with Europe over genetically engineered foods. Carol Tucker Foreman, called a Capitol insider by the San Francisco Chronicle, recently took over food issues for the Consumer Federation of America after 18 years as a lobbyist. As a lobbyist, Ms Foreman had helped win FDA approval for Monsanto's bovine growth hormone, a genetically engineered chemical that stimulates milk production. Previously as a USDA official she relaxed poultry inspection rules. An Arkansas native, her brother is Jim Guy Tucker, the former Arkansas Governor and Whitewater figure.

The Other Bland Meat

The New York Times Food section ran a lengthy article recently on heirloom pork producers. Kelly Biensen, a fifth generation hog farmer, and his wife Nina give their Berkshire pigs lots of room to move about and use no drugs or hormones. They sell mainly to clubs and restaurants in central Iowa. He explained why factory pork tastes so bland. Factory pigs are always confined and bred so lean they can't stand the cold outdoors. Then there's porcine stress syndrome caused by a gene common in breeds used for factory farming. It makes the animals more efficient users of feed but produces a pale, soft meat that loses much of its moisture while cooking.

The Times reports that chefs across the country are seeking alternatives to factory pork, and finding them. The Pryzants, in Pennsylvania feed their pigs, in part, chopped fresh apples and "watch their pampered porkers running around in happy circles every morning." Perhaps an exaggeration, but the underlying lesson here is that industrial pork producers are selling what they want to produce instead of giving consumers what they want to eat. Aside from all the pollution and cruelty, this is why corporate hog factories are doomed ... kind of un-American, you know ... not giving consumers what they want!

Eating is a Moral Act

The National Catholic Rural Life Conference has initiated a campaign to educate church members and the general public on the ethics of eating. According to their flyer the NCRIC brings together the church, care for creation and care for community. Their new literature is outstanding and can be obtained by calling 515-270-2634 or check online at <http://www.ncrlc.com>. Executive Director, Brother David Andrews is one of the most important national leaders in the fight to preserve rural communities and stop factory farms.

All Your Eggs in One Basket

In September, a tornado destroyed an egg factory in Ohio containing one million hens in twelve 600 foot by 50 foot buildings. That's right, one million! The factory was a total loss and the hens were trapped inside. The company decided to remove and gas the hens, then render them into, you guessed it, pet and livestock feed. The disaster occurred on Wednesday, Sept 20. Six days later only 150,000 of the hens had been put out of their misery. Two thousand were given away to the public, mostly to a sanctuary for farm animals. A poultry expert said the chickens could live as long as 20 days without food and water. I hope some corporate bean counters read this story (Source: Toledo Blade).

McDonalds Gets the Drift.

The McDonalds restaurant chain sent letters in August to the corporations that supply the company 1.5 billion eggs per year outlining strict new regulations for confining hens. The guidelines require 50% more space for each caged hen, ban the controversial practice of withholding food and water to increase egg production (molting), and require the phase-out of the cruel practice of "de-beaking." The move was prompted by increasing pressure from animal rights activists and growing concern among scientists that current methods may increase the spread of disease to humans. While some activists applauded the move, they noted that birds will still not be able to fully stretch their wings or perform many basic bird behaviors. The European Union has already banned such practices as forced molting and has required a phasing out of all chicken caging by the year 2112. (Source: Washington Post.)

CSAs a Bargain!

This summer a member of the Food Circle Coordinating Committee conducted a survey comparing the cost of her CSA produce subscription service to a similar bundle at the Wild Oats and Hen House markets. Her weekly CSA bag cost about \$13.00. She priced produce at the two supermarkets according to the most comparable quality and variety.

The results: Week of June 9th Wild Oats \$24.10 and Hen House \$21.30; week of June 23rd Wild Oats \$23.97 and Hen House \$17.63.

For a copy of the details call the Food Circle Hotline
816-374-5899