

The Kansas City Food Circle

UPDATE

Spring, 2006

Get the Word Out about Farmers' Exhibitions

We are presenting two events again this year. The first will be **Saturday, April 1, 2006**, 9am to 3pm in the gymnasium of the Shawnee Civic Center, and the second will be **Saturday, April 8**, at St. Pius X High School on the north side of Kansas City. These are the same locations as last year. We need help getting the word out to pump attendance. While we welcome people back from prior years, the main purpose of our Farmers Exhibition has always been to attract new people to the joys of eating locally grown organic fruits and veggies and free range meats. Please find enclosed a couple of fliers for you to hand out to new prospects. If you need more, call the Food Circle hotline, 816-374-5899.

Both events are free and open to the public. Co-sponsors so far are the Sierra Club, The Food Circles Networking Project -Missouri Extension, the Kansas City Greens, Faces of Food, The Green Sanctuary Committee of All Souls UU Church, Kansas City Wellness Magazine, the Peace & Justice Office of the St. Joseph/KC Diocese, St. Patrick's Parish, Order of the Precious Blood, Growing Growers Project, Bridging the Gap, KKFI and eKC.

Also Free Workshop: Heritage Foods in the Heartland: 9:30 AM to 12 noon at the Shawnee - westside event only. The first speaker will be **Todd Wickstrom**, co-founder of Heritage Foods, USA which is dedicated to helping farmers market artisan foods and preserve traditional breed farm animals. Next will be **Dan May**, Organic Way Farm of Milo, Mo. and **Cody Hogan**, Chef de Cuisine at Lidia's Kansas City who will talk about the joys of heirloom tomatoes and greens. Last but not least is Nancy **Vogelsberg-Busch**, of Bossies Best, a producer of certified organic beef from Home, Kansas. Nancy will discuss her farming style that nourishes the soil and the soul.

Admission is free. The first 75 people who attend the workshop will receive a free heirloom tomato plant.

Food Plants Absorb Antibiotics

Antibiotics are added to the feed of confined farm animals to speed their growth, and some is excreted in their wastes. Now greenhouse studies on corn, green onions and cabbage have showed that all three absorbed chlortetracycline, an antibiotic commonly used in animal factories. Concentrations were 2-17 parts per billion but increased with increasing amounts in the manure. The study pointed out risks to human health in consuming plants grown in soils fertilized with antibiotic laden manure. The risk would be higher for people who are allergic to antibiotics, and there is the risk of enhanced antibiotic resistance.

Source: **Journal of Environmental Quality**, Oct. 2005. On Jan. 1, 2006 Europe banned the use of antibiotics used as growth promoters in feed for farm animals. The use of antibiotics throughout the EU is now restricted to only legitimate veterinary purposes.

Animal Health Effects Found from GM Crops

Australian scientists have abandoned a decade long genetically engineered crop project after learning the peas modified to resist insects caused inflammation in the lung tissues of mice. The study suggested this was an allergic type of reaction. The findings were published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*. In another, preliminary study a Russian scientist found pregnant rats fed a diet of genetically altered soy gave birth to offspring that were at first underweight and then died. This was more than five times the number that would have been expected to die from natural causes. The researcher is a leading scientist at the Institute of Higher Nervous Activity and Neurophysiology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. If these results are confirmed, it will be big news given the widespread use of GM soy in the US. Source: Acres USA, Jan. '06. Greenpeace and Gene Watch UK have set up a website called the GM Contamination Register to follow developments like these.

See www.gmcontaminationregister.org

Meat: Better red than fresh?

Have you been in a "normal" supermarket meat section lately? Many of the fresh conventional meats now have this bizarre-looking, almost eerie red color to them, very different from the way I remember conventional meat looking in the past. I suspect the meat industry had come up with some additive or process they thought would make meat look more "appealing," though I thought it just looked freakish.

I've recently learned through news reports that, since 2004, the FDA has been allowing meat companies to pump carbon monoxide into what they call "modified atmosphere packaging" in order to keep meat looking redder—and therefore "fresher"—for a longer period of time.

The Consumer Federation of America (www.consumerfed.org) and Safe Tables Our Priority (www.safetables.org) have filed complaints arguing that this practice misleads eaters by giving them the impression that the meat is fresher than it actually is, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has dismissed their complaints. According to one story, the FDA has argued that color is not an effective way to tell whether meat is fresh or safe from foodborne disease, so companies will be allowed to continue to enhance redness with carbon monoxide. Apparently, the FDA thinks we need to take the meat home and smell it for freshness.

That's the federal government for you. Not only can we not expect them to do what is necessary to ensure the food supply is truly safe and nourishing, we can't even get them to put a stop to practices which it seems to me are clearly intended to deceive eaters about the quality of the food they buy.

If you're interested in more information, there's a website set up to deal specifically with this issue at www.co-meat.com. I ask you to pass this information on to any of your friends and family who you think would be interested. I'm convinced one of the best ways to move people toward eating the kind of food we promote is to explain just how the conventional food industry treats its customers. -- John Kurmann

School Wellness Policies

This month I went with several fellow Kansas City Food Circle members to the Healthy Foods Healthy Farms conference at Kansas State University. Along with being treated to great local food at lunch, we heard some excellent talks about health and children. Speaker after speaker talked about how the percentage of overweight children in schools has gone from about 5 percent in the 70s to 16 percent today. These statistics demonstrate the concerns many have with the current US food system.

The Federal government is addressing this as a part of the *Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004*. School districts are required as a part of the law to prepare Wellness Policies. These policies are to address food, exercise and nutrition education in the school.

Development of the plan requires the input and participation of parents and students. We hope that you are aware of this important program and have a chance to participate. They are required to be completed by this July, so there's still time! We'd love to hear what your school district is doing.

Food Industry Influences on Obesity and Health

The keynote speaker for the conference was the well-respected nutritionist, Marion Nestle. She talked of both the formidable force of corporate food marketing (\$36 billion/yr) and the inroads that several dedicated chefs are having by introducing fresh, local food into schools.

Some interesting points that she made include the fact that children today are "taught" that they don't eat adult food, but specialty food made just for them—Sponge Bob Square Pants blue mac & cheese, or Lunchables. At an early age they can be asking for these foods by name.

The looseness of how companies label their products can just as easily confound adults. She showed many amusing and disturbing examples of this; from a box of cereal that proclaimed in large print you could lose 10 pounds (and in small print that it required substituting cereal for two meals) to soft drinks with the American Diabetes Association seal of approval (because the ADA said they'll take money anywhere they can get it).

She also talked about people like Chef BoBo at the Calhoun School in Manhattan, a man whose lifelong ambition has been to feed children. His first step in changing the lunch program was to eliminate hamburgers and pizza, and substitute a one meat, one vegetable entrée menu. By having plenty of tasting cups for the kids, he's been able to keep them satisfied and happy.

Chef Jorge Leon Collazo has a much more daunting task, as the first executive chef of the New York City schools. He has revamped the menus, lowering fat, sugar, and salt in recipes; substituted whole grain breads, pastas, and cereals for the white stuff; and eliminated some products containing artery-clogging trans fats. He has added more fresh fruit and salad bars, as one of his key focuses is to promote greater consumption of plant-based foods.

While we don't have any children here on the farm to feed, we are glad that we can provide you with fresh produce—good for kids and adults both.

--Tom Ruggieri

KC Food Circle Web site:

www.KCFoodCircle.org

KC Food Circle Hot Line Number:

816-374-5899

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