

EAT BEAT

by Martha Wagner

In the early Seventies, a Berkeley social worker turned agricultural researcher wrote *Diet for a Small Planet*, the first cookbook to popularize vegetarian eating in America. In this best-selling book and on the cross-country speaking tours which followed, Frances Moore Lappe talked about the politics of our food choices.

In the health-conscious Eighties, millions of Americans have made major changes in their diet to feel and look better. We've become so concerned with what we do and don't eat—whether it's organic, natural, preservative-free, low-fat, low-salt or whatever—that few see the larger picture that Lappe first focused attention on: worrisome trends in U.S. and world food production, and the impact of our own personal food choices.

Food is inextricably linked to environmental, human relationship and human survival issues, in the view of Joan Dye Gussow, chair of nutrition education at Teachers College/Columbia University in New York City. She visited Eugene last week to speak at a forum on food supply safety sponsored by Tilth.

Gussow wears a turquoise button urging: "Think Globally, Act Locally." At a talk on "Women, Power and Food" before the conference, she told her audience that she set out to change the world when she went back to school in nutrition at age 40. Gussow is as committed as ever today. She is the author of such books as *The Feeding Web: Issues in Nutritional Ecology* (1978) and *Food as a Human Right* (1984). She is a member of the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academy of Sciences.

One of the major problems in the world today, according to Gussow, is that people everywhere are dependent on others to grow their food. Although the U.S. is thought of as the world bread basket, it's also the largest importer of food. The many luxury items produced for U.S. consumption overseas not only take land out of local food production, they cause serious ecological problems. One example: consumers' taste for hearts of palm is resulting in the decimation of Brazil's national forests by poachers.

Gussow thinks people need to reacquaint themselves with food production—see where food comes from, buy and ask for local products, put in a garden. "It's a joke, but one with some truth in it, the idea that food is produced in the back rooms of supermarkets."

Gussow, her husband and two sons grow much of what they eat. They can and freeze every fall. How do they find the time? "We spend less time making choices at the supermarket."

The author-educator has little enthusiasm for convenience products. She doesn't believe what she says is a common assumption: that women hate to cook. She's found no evidence to support the idea that women are spending less time in food-related activities. "We're spending 1/2 hour less per day cooking than in 1929, but we spend that time in shopping and home management."

Gussow freely admits that many of her professional colleagues consider her to be anti-progress. She, in turn, believes they need to examine new technology more carefully and question more. "I don't have the answers, but I think we need radical solutions. . . . Nature will eventually force us to change our ways, if we don't give us being powerless consumers."

Frances Moore Lappe, the woman responsible for raising American consciousness on food issues, will speak at the University of Oregon on April 22, as part of Earth Week.

Convenience products are not the only way to speed up cooking. Simple cookbooks are a good alternative. Elsie Horn Williams, an 84-year-old Eugene woman, wrote *Cookbook for Seniors and Singles* to offer single-serving recipes to people like herself who don't want to spend much time cooking. The small book (35 pages) with large type has a low-fat, low-sugar and salt-free focus. It sells for \$2.50 at the Literary Lion or for \$3.50 by mail order from Pacific House Books, 65 W. 26th, Eugene, OR 97405. Williams, author of *A Pictorial History of the Bend Country*, published in 1983, plans a series of small cookbooks.

Are you ready for Yodolo? The new fruit-based creamy frozen dessert is similar to what some vita-mix owners have made for years by blending, then chilling bananas and other fruit. Yodolo is a new Northwest product—from Washington State—gaining popularity from Japan to New York. It has no sugar, no dairy products, no fat and no preservatives. Flavors include orange, grape, apple, peach and wildberry. You can try Yodolo at Prince Puckler's, Gantsy's, Yogurt Delite and Sahalie Natural Foods.

No readers wrote to point out my error in the last Eat Beat column, but bagels did not originate in New York. Their exact origins are unknown but they were eaten in Poland as early as 1610 and were not then regarded as a Jewish food. Until recent times, bagels were hard and always made of white flour. No raisins, sesame seeds, cinnamon, whole wheat, just plain.

Bagel purists insist on cream cheese as the proper topping, or cream cheese and lox for special occasions. West Coast bagel bakers have taken more liberty with bagel ingredients and toppings. The favorite topping of Humble Bagel's Gary Katz is cream cheese and thin-sliced artichoke hearts. Cream cheese with strawberry jam and a sprinkle of cashew nuts is the number one choice of Linda Hadlock, co-owner of the new Bagel Bakery.

Bagels should never be eaten alone. So said Molly Goldberg, the character created by the actress Gertrude Berg. "In order for the true taste to come out you need your family. One to cut the bagels, one to toast them, one to put on the cream cheese and lox, one to put them on the table and one to supervise."

Families are not needed to assist in eating the new tasty new cinnamon buns made by Sunny Days, local bakers of sourdough and other whole wheat breads. The walnut, cinnamon and sugar topped buns are sold individually in jars at most local natural foods stores.

Please drop us a line about new restaurant finds, food events, new products, etc. Send us questions, too, and we'll try to help you out. Write to Eat Beat, c/o What's Happening, P.O. Box 259, Eugene, OR 97440.

Graphic from "From the Soil to Your Table" food safety forum.

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