

FOOD

Nuked food issue grows

by Laurie McClain

This article is reprinted from Democracy At Work, the monthly newsletter of Workers Trust.

Several members have contacted us recently about publicizing the hot topic of food irradiation. Irradiation is the process of exposing food to gamma rays, electron beams or X-rays to retard spoilage and preserve appearance. Although present laws require irradiated foods to be clearly labeled, recent Congressional legislation and Federal Drug Administration regulation changes are designed to remove this requirement.

How does it work? Food is irradiated by exposure to gamma rays, electron beams, or X-rays. The food does not become radioactive, but a significant number of cells are altered. DNA, the blueprint for cell division found in all living cells, is damaged by radiation. The larger and more complex the organism, the more sensitive its DNA molecules. Thus, less radiation is required to retard cell growth in larger organisms. So only low doses of 100 kilorads or less are needed to kill insects and eliminate sprouting.

Why do it? Irradiated food can be made free from insects, viruses, bacteria and molds. In the US, irradiated food has been regularly eaten for years by those with a special need for sterilized food, such as astronauts and people with immune deficiencies. Twenty-four countries, including Israel, Japan, France and the Soviet Union, actively use irradiation on about 40 different food items.

So-called underdeveloped countries, with lack of refrigeration and uncertain transportation, find irradiation promising. Hunger could possibly be reduced, as currently about one-fourth of total food harvest is lost to pests and spoilage.

And of course, the big business of food production in this country would benefit greatly from the sale of food that rarely spoils or discolors. The nuclear power industry, of which the irradiation business is an integral part, would also grow and prosper.

What are the dangers? Irradiated food may offer hope to the world's hungry and the nation's business, but some questions about its nutritional value and long-term safety have been raised. Among them:

1. Nutrient loss. Some nutrients are adversely affected by irradiation, primarily vitamins A, C, E and the B vitamins.

2. Botulism danger. Meat subjected to low doses of radiation may appear harmless, while actu-

ally containing deadly botulism.

3. Long-term effectiveness. Bacteria and viruses can develop resistance to radiation just as insects can develop resistance to pesticides. Radiation also increases the rate of genetic mutations, which could lead to the development of new strains of pests.

4. Chemical changes. Radiation causes changes in food, producing new chemical substances called radiolytic products. Even small changes can affect flavor, texture and other characteristics.

5. Carcinogens. Several studies have found aflatoxins (cancer-causing chemicals created by molds) to grow more abundantly on irradiated foods. Irradiation is suggested as a replacement for the banned carcinogen EDB, but aflatoxins are 1000 times as carcinogenic as EDB.

6. Nuclear waste disposal. Cesium 137 and cobalt 60 are sources of gamma rays for irradiation. They are also by-products of nuclear power plants, and are currently posing disposal problems.

What can we do? For the average consumer, confused by conflicting stories about food irradiation's potential and safety, the overriding concern is the issue of labeling. Because of consumer hesitancy to accept irradiated food, the irradiation industry is lobbying to completely avoid consumer labeling. Irradiated food would only be labeled at the wholesale level to prevent double dosing.

The Reagan administration is on record in support of food irradiation. Legislation introduced this year in Congress by Rep. Sidney Morrison (R-Wa.) and Sen. Slade Gorton (R-Wa.), The Federal Food Irradiation Development and Control Act of 1985, would mandate the government to fund a promotional campaign on behalf of irradiation, and would forbid state and local governments from regulating food irradiation or its labeling independently.

But in Oregon, State Rep. Dave McTeague has introduced the nation's first state labeling bill. The ground-breaking bill, not yet out of committee, would have provided that all irradiated food sold in Oregon would contain the following label:

"Warning: This produce (food) has been radiated with radioactive isotopes for the purpose of preservation; the health effects are unknown."

To express your opinion, write: FDA, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 30857; your U.S. Representatives, Washington DC 20515; your U.S. Senators, Washington DC 20510; and your local state governments.

[Information gathered from Pro-vender Journal, 6/85, Nutrition Action, 6/85 and an article by Connie Wheeler for Citizens United for Food Safety, Seattle, WA.]

Oregon Wines Judged by National Experts



Nationally recognized wine connoisseurs joined Eugene's own wine expert Kevin Chambers to judge commercial wines at the annual State Fair Competition.

The is the seventh year wines have been entered competitively in the fair, and returning to the panel of judges for the third time was Andre Tchelistcheff, one of America's leading winemakers and consultants, who for 35 years managed the Beaulieu Winery in Napa Valley, California. Joining him were several New Yorkers: Eunice Fried, a writer for *Connoisseur* magazine; Harriet Lambeck, director of the wine and spirits program at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel; and Ray Wellington, the wine buyer for New York's Windows on the World Restaurant. In addition there were William Clifford, a columnist from the East Coast; Tony LaBarba of the American Wine and Importing Company in Dallas; and Eugene's Kevin Chambers.

The competition at the fair in Salem is regarded as one of the state's premiere wine events. The panel of judges spent nearly three days in seclusion, tasting and comparing the subtle—and not so subtle—differences among each of the 121 entries. An award from this distinguished committee is a prestigious honor to the participating winery, and eventually increases the awareness of that winery and its products. With the Oregon wine industry being one of the fastest growing industries in the state, recognition at the fair's competition is an important part of a winery's success.

More than 90 percent of the state's commercial wineries participated in the competition, which is also open to amateur winemakers competing in separate categories. In the privacy of a special tasting room, a panel of judges use a 10-point scale to assess the entries. Judges never see the label of the bottle, so each wine stands on its own in competition. Winners are based on general appearance, aroma, flavor and balance. Wines receiving a cumulative average score between 8.5 and 10 (exceptional wines) earn gold medals. Wines scoring between 7 and 8.5 (very good) receive silver medals. Those between 5.5 and 7 (good) get bronze medals.

The coveted "Best of Show" award was presented to Sokol Blosser Winery, located near Dundee, for its 1983 pinot noir (Hyland), which won a gold medal in the vinifera (grape) division. The "Best of Show" wine in the fruit and berry category was a loganberry wine from Oak Knoll Winery, near Hillsboro. These two wines were selected as the two superior wines from all gold medal winners—a total of six.

There were 18 silver medals awarded; 41 bronze. Six wineries placed with every entry submitted: Adelsheim Vineyard, Newberg (a gold, a silver, two bronze); Ponzi Vineyards, Beaverton (three silver, one bronze); Shafer Vineyard Cellars, Forest Grove (four bronze); Wasson Bros.

Winery, Sandy (one silver, two bronze); Garden Valley Winery, Roseburg (three bronze); and Arterberry Winery, McMinnville (one bronze, one silver).

Oak Knoll Winery came away with four medals out of six entries—three bronze, a gold, and the "Best of Show" distinction.

A total of 36 wineries from all over the state entered the competition. Indicative of the current growth spurt in Oregon wineries is the fact that four new wineries have appeared since last year's competition. One of them, Veritas Vineyards near Wilsonville, is co-owned by John Howieson, last year's top amateur winner in the vinifera category.

The judging of the sixth annual Oregon State Fair amateur wine competition took place July 29. The judging is a private, almost top-secret affair. Proud owners of the 205 entries can be assured that their wine was given a careful and thoughtful evaluation in a remarkably sober atmosphere.

The amateur wines were judged by this qualified panel: Steve Carey, distributor of Oregon wines; Don Byard of Hidden Springs Winery; wine connoisseur Fred Miller; Marilyn Webb, Bethel Heights Winery; Bill Wrey, Honeywood Winery; Ann McCallum, Portland Wine Supply; and Rick Cushman, Chateau Benoit Winery.

After nearly 11 hours of discerning and comparing the qualities of each entry (clarity, acidity, bouquet, the list goes on), three of the judges and wine division superintendent Nathan Allen sat around and informally discussed the day's events. The three veteran judges remarked on the quality of this year's wines, and how the entries have improved in the last few years. They also noticed a trend toward a drier wine, even in the traditionally sweet berry wines.

The judges also agreed that competitions like this one affect the wine industry statewide. A day of sampling homemade wines from all of Oregon gives these experts another view of what people want in a wine—what they are thinking—"a wine philosophy," said one judge.

Spending a day with these wines will influence wineries' marketing and manufacturing, if even on a subtle level. "It has to," said another beer-sipping judge, "this is the experimental end of the industry."

All 326 entries of both the commercial and amateur competition will be on display in the Jackman-Long Building during the State Fair, Aug. 23-Sept. 2.

[This article was compiled from information provided by the Oregon State Fair.]

Lincoln Street Market
17th & Lincoln
344-1803
Bean of the month
Kenya
\$4.65 a pound
Open 9-11 daily

We're Open!
THE BARBICAN
Restaurant and Lounge
Fine food in a relaxed atmosphere
Come enjoy a fine meal at The Barbican and listen to the jazz sounds of the *Touch Trio* in the lounge Fri. and Sat. 9 p.m.-1 a.m.
5th Street Market/342-6060

GELATO!
THE DIFFERENCE IS IN YOUR EXPRESSION
MARCO'S
Gelato d'Italia
2495 Hilyard
683-1417

BRING SOMEONE YOU LOVE TO MAZZI'S
Mazzi's
ITALIAN FOOD
3377 E. AMAZON
687-2252

The Gold Conspiracy
Unique Gold & Silver Jewelry
"We have Eugene's largest selection of custom jewelry, all of which is made on the premises by Dave and Sandi. From ornate to clean & simple, all at affordable prices."
Stop by and Browse
Mon.-Fri. 10 am-5:30; Sat. 10-4 pm
17 W. 5th Ave.
343-8019
Willamette at 5th in the Lane Bldg.

◆ HOMEMADE SOUP AND BREAD ◆
KEYSTONE CAFE
◆ FIVE YEARS OF NOURISHING OUR COMMUNITY ◆
THIS WEEKEND'S DINNER SPECIAL:
Chicken Tostada
\$3.25
Breakfast and Lunch 7 am-2 pm daily
Dinner 5:30-9:30 pm Friday, Saturday & Sunday
395 West 5th ◆ 342-2075.