

Foods We Eat...



"Cholesterol-Free," "Organic," "All Natural," "Lite" — these are just a few of the catchy words which food manufacturers use to grab our attention. You the consumer need to be aware that what you see is not always what you get. Be aware that the laws regulating food labels are confusing and often times outright deceptive.

Serving size is one deceptive practice. This is purely based on how the manufacturer chooses to define it. Many people look at the calories listed on the side of a box of cereal and assume that constitutes one bowl of cereal. In actuality, the listed "one ounce" serving is only one third of the

amount the average person consumes. If the consumer is unaware of this, they may actually be packing in more calories, fat, etc. than they are aware of. Worse yet, some food manufacturers simply decrease the serving size and market the food as "reduced calorie!"

Keep your eye out for flashy packages where the word "diet" is emphasized. A manufacturer's interpretation of "diet" is anyone's guess since the FDA has no specific regulations surrounding this. "Low Calorie" means that the product can have no more than forty calories per serving. This is where you need to examine the serving size — it might be shockingly small. When a food is marketed as "reduced calorie" it must have only 1/3 the calories of its non-diet counterpart. For example, reduced versus regular Ranch Salad dressing. This is also where a bread can be sold as "reduced calorie" when actually it is only sliced thinner.

The terms "light" or "lite" are only FDA regulated when applied to poultry or meats in general. When the product is meat, it must contain 25% less fat, sodium or cholesterol than its non-lite counterpart. This means that all of the ice creams, yogurts, cookies, etc., with the eye-catching light word could be just as high in fat as a standard product. For example, "light" cream cheese has been whipped so the texture is lighter. "Lite" corn oil generally refers to a lighter color — and light soup usually refers to less sodium.

Another concern with food labeling is cholesterol. Watch out for "no cholesterol" on the product label. Since cholesterol is found only in foods of animal origin, any plant product such

as vegetable oil is inherently cholesterol-free — so marketing it as such is a way to entice the buyer. Furthermore, the manufacturers are not required to tell you that many of these products contain highly saturated oils such as palm oil and coconut oil which may be just as harmful for your cardiovascular health as animal fats. These high fat oils show up in processed foods such as muffins, cookies and cakes. This also goes for the 100% vegetable shortening which is portrayed as being "sooooo healthy!" Since vegetable oil is liquid by origin, vegetable shortening has to be hydrogenated or hardened making a once unsaturated oil 30% saturated fat.

If you are lured by the sugar free label, be aware that although these foods can not contain sugar, there is no control over the use of sugar-alcohols such as sorbitol, xylitol and mannitol. Although sugar is probably not the leading source of calories, there is still a form of sugar present hidden under the guise of sugar alcohol.

Manufacturers are aware of the demand for lower fat, cholesterol and sugar. This has forced them to market what we want to see and to disguise what we don't. Be aware of the labels on foods — they may be more euphemism than fact!

Dana Hiatt



FROM THE HIP

INSIDE

Improving Your Diet Convenience at a Price Did You Know? and much more....

Are you groggy? Having difficulty concentrating? Feeling irritable and just kind of "blah?"

It could be that your diet is burning you out. A Peer Health Counselor can help you assess what your current diet is and provide information in making changes for the better. Call 346-4456 or stop by the Health Education Center in the Student Health Center for an appointment.

Hey all you radicals out there!

Food is a hot area for activism-deceptive advertising, food labeling, purity and food preservatives are all areas for concern in the 1990s. The Student Health Center Health Education Library has subscriptions to progressive newsletters discussing what's going on with our food. Stop by and check out some of our resources. M-F 10-4 on the first floor of the Student Health Center.

Tired of playing the weighting game?

Talk to a Peer Health Nutrition Counselor and learn about the New Science of Weight Control—we don't control our weight—we manage it. It's not so much how much you eat as what you eat. Learn about food choices and lifestyle habits for a lifetime of good health and slim eating! Call 346-4456 for an appointment—FREE!

Are you reading this newsletter and wondering how you can get involved in the Wellness and Health Promotion at the University of Oregon?

Do you enjoy learning about health-related issues? Do you enjoy enhancing your leadership skills? Do you enjoy a healthy lifestyle? Stop by the Health Education Center and talk to our staff and consider becoming a Peer Health Advisor: 3 Credits, HEP 410G, P/NP, you must apply to register.