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Beatle's wife offers food line

Karen R. Pederson
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

SEATTLE — Thirty years ago, Paul McCartney had the world at his feet. Today, his wife, Linda McCartney, is using the former Beatle's popularity to get the world to hear her message: "Go Veggie—Stop Eating Meat."

For some time, McCartney has been selling the public on the vegetarian lifestyle. In recent years, she followed this up with ways to make the change more palatable for dedicated meat eaters. First came her best-selling cookbook, *Linda McCartney's Home Cooking*. (Arcade Publishing, 1990) and now, her new line of meatless frozen entrees, "Linda McCartney's Home Style Cooking," is due to hit the Eugene market by the end of this month.

At a news conference last Wednesday in Seattle, McCartney introduced her new line of meatless entrees. McCartney's style of vegetarian cooking incorporates the use of meat analogs (substitutes), so meat eaters do not need to give up their favorite meals.

The entrees are manufactured and distributed by Fairmont Foods of Minnesota Inc. The company also produces other food lines, including Weight Watcher's.

McCartney said she had reservations about aligning herself with a firm that also markets meat products. "It's hard," she said, "but the only way to change that company is to say, here's a better option." Fairmont Foods is currently building a plant strictly for manufacturing meatless products.

But the question remains, is the market for meatless foods growing substantially? The general population is responding to increasing health and environmental concerns, the answer seems to be yes. The number one reason people are choosing a vegetarian diet is to improve their health, said Kristen Olmos, a University health educator.

McCartney's meatless entrees, mainly pasta dishes, have been attacked for having a high fat and sodium content. In comparison with entrees marketed as "Light" or "Healthy," McCart-



Linda and Paul McCartney made a quick stop in Seattle to introduce Linda's new line of meatless frozen entrees.

ney's Spaghetti Milano has 17 grams of fat per serving. "Light" entrees generally have less than 10 grams of fat.

McCartney's meals, however, are not being marketed as low-fat or low-sodium products. When McCartney's spaghetti is compared with Stouffer's Spaghetti with Meat Sauce, the two similar products are almost identical in total caloric and protein content. Although the meatless product is slightly higher in total fat content, the percentage of saturated fat is significantly lower (15% of the recommended daily allowance as opposed to 22.5% for the entree with meat).

"We are concerned with total fat in the diet, but it is saturated fat that is implicated in the various disease processes," Olmos said of the meatless products. She referred to studies showing a correlation between levels of fat in the diet and coronary disease. "You want to build a diet on fruits, vegetables and grain. So if you add to McCartney's Spaghetti Milano a nice salad with a low or nonfat dressing and a vegetable as well, then that is going to bring the total calorie level up, and by doing that you'll be bringing the total percentage of fat in that meal down."

Olmos said the adoption of meat substitutes into the diet

(such as the wheat protein in McCartney's entrees) has been shown to lower an individual's cholesterol level over a period of time.

Yet, Olmos cautions anyone on a sodium-restricted diet to avoid the meatless entrees, just as they should avoid most frozen foods. The nature of frozen meals necessitates the use of large amounts of sodium for flavor. (McCartney's Spaghetti Milano contains 490 mg sodium; Stouffer's Spaghetti with Meat Sauce, 760 mg.)

"People think vegetarian food is boring and bland...this is really like home cooking," said McCartney during Wednesday's news conference. McCartney said she refused to give up taste in exchange for lowering fat and sodium content in her meals.

"If you cut out fat and salt, you throw away taste," said Larry McGuire, CEO of Fairmont Foods.

Paul McCartney made a surprise appearance midway through the conference. Making his entrance through a door in the back of the room, McCartney posed as a reporter, grabbed a microphone and asked, "What does your husband think of it?"

Answering his own question, he said, "It's great stuff." Later he said, "It's not the healthiest product on the market, but it tastes better than all the others."

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