

Weekend Choices

Reconsidering binge drinking and its (frequently ugly) effects



By Erin Teruya

For many college students, the weekend party is a ritual. We study all week long and look forward to the weekends to relax and have fun with friends. Yet for many, weekend parties end with vomiting, headaches, and blackouts.

According to polls conducted by the Gallup Organization, "no other U.S. population has a larger proportion of drinkers than college students." We are traditionally known for our raging keg parties and crazed drunkenness. The reality is that 96% of Greeks, 79% of those living in their own house or apartment, and 69% of those living in the residence halls, have consumed alcohol in the last month.

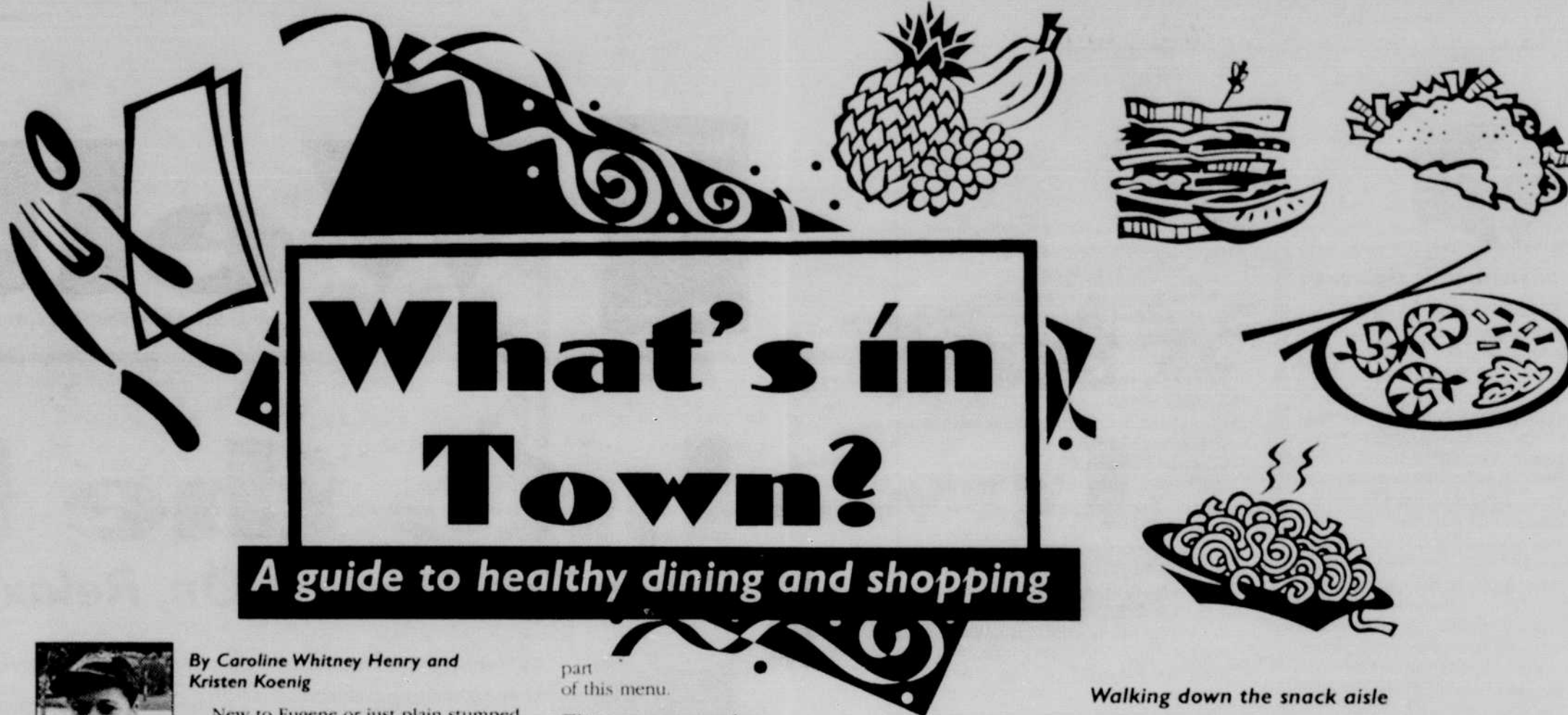
Alcohol is prevalent and accepted on college campuses because of the social context it is associated with. Drinking is in many cases the focus of parties. People passed out on the floor or throwing up outside on the lawn are commonplace scenes at college parties. Most students have developed an "immunity" to these scenes, yet few students realize the complete truth and the consequences associated with alcohol.

The flipside

But excessive drinking does have a price. Alcohol is involved in the highest proportion of substance-related problems: injuries, property damage, unwanted pregnancies, STDs, sexual assault, and so forth. Many students have the conception that weekend binge drinking is relatively harmless. Results from a 1994 University of Oregon student survey concluded that 47% of students had done something they later regretted as a result of their alcohol use. Thirty percent of students had driven a car under the influence of alcohol or drugs. While a low level consumption of alcohol might not be extremely dangerous, alcohol consumption to intoxication is harmful to the drinker and possibly to others as well.

When abused, alcohol can cause much harm. Everyone knows that in extreme cases, alcohol can cause irreversible damage to the brain and the liver, and can even result in death. Yet even if you never pass out, alcohol can still be damaging to your body. Alcohol consumption can lead to memory lapses, ulcers, liver diseases, high blood pressure, heart failure, loss of muscle coordination, and sexual impotence.

College is all about choices. No one can determine when, where, or how much you drink. All of these are decisions that only you can make. Drinking responsibly and knowing the differences between the amount it takes to feel good and the amount it takes to make you throw up can make the weekend party much more enjoyable for yourself and your roommate.



What's in Town?

A guide to healthy dining and shopping



By Caroline Whitney Henry and Kristen Koenig

New to Eugene or just plain stumped on where to go to find food that's low or nonfat? Eugene, a city centered around health, fitness, and nutrition, has many options for both lowfat shopping and dining out.



If you're looking for a quick snack on campus, healthy choices are located right in the Erb Memorial Union (EMU). The Main Desk Store has a great selection of lowfat and fat free items such as fruit leather, energy bars, raisins, and fat free chips. The "Fishbowl" offers fat free soft pretzels, fat free muffins, bagels, fresh fruit, and frozen yogurt. Dying for a lowfat burrito from Taco Time? Your best bet would be the soft bean burrito (nix the cheese), or the more substantial veggie burrito (without the sour cream or guacamole).

Let's look at the sandwich shops surrounding campus: Sub Shop, Subway, and Big Town Hero. They all offer vegetarian selections, which are lower in fat than those containing meat. Sub Shop offers a turkey sandwich, which contains only 4% fat (when ordered without oil and cheese). And for desert, their nonfat frozen yogurt is a great way to curb a sweet tooth.

Big Town Hero offers several vegetarian selections. With any of these sandwiches, omitting certain items and/or substituting others can make a significant difference. For example, you can reduce fat by ordering sandwiches without oil, mayonnaise, cheese, avocado, or olives. All of these are high in fat content. Instead, ask for extra helpings of other vegetables and mustard instead of mayonnaise or oil. Choosing whole wheat bread will increase the fiber and cut down on fat even more.

Bubba's is another restaurant in close proximity. The heart-healthy options there may include a turkey breast sandwich on a whole wheat bun. Bubba's recently added a salmon burger to its menu, which is healthier than the burgers and cajun fries you might otherwise feel tempted to order. Veggie burgers and an array of salads are also a

part of this menu.

Things to remember

Always remember that you can turn almost any dish into a low fat meal. Here are some tips:

1. Pass on the cheese and mayonnaise. They will add substantial fat calories to any dish.
2. Avoid anything fried or deep fried.
3. When eating Asian food, stick to stir fry and ask to have it prepared in water instead of oil.
4. If you can't live without salad dressing, sour cream, or other fatty toppings, ask for them on the side. This way you can monitor how much fat goes into your food.

Lowfat grocery shopping

If you're looking to set out on a major shopping trip, there are top quality health food stores within walking or biking distance from campus. Oasis, located on 24th and Willamette, offers a wide selection of natural and organic foods as well as a full service meat department, deli, and its own bakery. Just a few blocks east, at 24th and Hilyard, Sundance Natural Foods has been one of the premier places to hunt for lowfat and healthy foods. Sundance also offers an extensive food bar that includes lowfat vegetarian salads and soups to name a few. Pocketbook beware! Both Sundance and Oasis have higher prices than Safeway or Albertsons because they are substantially smaller in size and focus on providing the highest quality and pesticide-free food. In the more immediate campus neighborhood, New Frontier East, on 19th and Agate, also offers healthy food.

Healthy shopping at supermarkets

In general, most supermarkets have made efforts to offer healthier and lowfat convenience items. For example, Safeway now stocks "Healthy Choice" which provides low-fat cereals, deli meals, soups, and fat free cheeses.

Walking down the snack aisle

Fat free items have become a major marketing feature. Some advertisements can be misleading, however. Make sure you check serving-size information, servings per container, and other nutritional facts besides fat, such as simple sugars, preservatives, and sodium. Many times when fat is reduced, sodium and sugar are increased. It does become difficult to decide which items to incorporate in one's diet, especially when labels such as lowfat and fat free don't pop out at you.

With the informative brochures available in their produce section, Safeway reminds us of the need for 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily. A partial listing of nutritional information of some fruits and vegetables is included in Safeway's brochure. Another publication by Dole, which can be found in the produce section, gives some tips for keeping salads healthy, lowfat, and more interesting.

Understanding the basics

Since food items aren't always labeled as lowfat or fat free, it becomes important to realize what types of foods are naturally high or low in fat. With this understanding, you can incorporate any food into your diet. The Health Ed Room at the Student Health Center has a plenty of information on dietary fats. Rice, for example, does not contain any fat. Just add vegetables (steamed, not stir-fried) and possibly some chicken to your rice, and you created a low-fat meal.

Though it may seem difficult to locate healthy options when dining out or when shopping for groceries, all it takes is basic nutritional understanding. Ask if you're unsure how a restaurant prepares your order or about the food you are about to buy. After all, you are what you eat.

If you have any questions concerning nutrition issues, feel free to stop by the Student Health Center and check out the resources at the Health Ed Room. You can also make an appointment with a peer health educator (346-4456) or Kristen Olmos, the Health Center's Nutritionist (346-2770).

Hiking 101



By Jeff Conant

It's Spring, the sun is shining, and it is time to be outside. "Wouldn't it be great," you say to yourself, "to go for a hike?" So an hour later, you and the rest of Eugene are on top of Spencer's Butte, enjoying the view. Weather being what is here in Oregon, the wind picks up and it rains for an hour. You're wet and miserable, and your wonderful hike has been ruined. It does not have to be that way, though. With some planning, knowledge of what to expect, and a few equipment basics, things can work out just fine.

Before you put on your boots and go, think about what kind of terrain you will be covering and the extremes you can expect with the weather. You also need to decide where you want to go, and if you are physically ready for that particular hike. Often it's better to scale back your plans so you don't overextend yourself. You can get information on trails at the Outdoor Program (OP) here on campus, the U.S. Forest Service, a guidebook (there are many available at the OP), or of course from your friends. When you leave, you should leave a copy of your plans with a friend, give him or her directions such as "I should be back tonight, but if I am not back by nine tomorrow morning, call the Sheriff." That way, if you get lost or injured, you know that someone will come looking for you.

When deciding what to take into the woods, think of the following categories: 1) finding your way; 2) food and drink; 3) protection from the elements; 4) emergencies. For getting in and out of the woods, nothing works better than a map and compass, combined with the ability to use them. A small flashlight for after dark can be very helpful, too. Food and water is a necessity as well. Always take more than you believe you'll need, enough for those extra few hours in the woods. It is very important to protect yourself from rain, wind, the cold, and from the sun. Dress appropriately for the season and take extra layers, something besides cotton. The weather, especially at higher elevations, can and does change very rapidly, usually getting colder and wetter. People do die of hypothermia in the summer here in Lane County.

Shelter is another important item. You can use a tube tent, a tarp, or a reusable emergency blanket. A fair amount of cord to secure your shelter goes along with it. Be prepared to make a fire to keep yourself warm, so take some fire starter, and windproof, waterproof matches. Take rain gear with head to toe coverage. The sun, often your friend, can also fry your skin, so bring along some sunscreen and sunglasses. Insect repellent can also be a major relief.

You should always be prepared for emergencies. Bring a First Aid Kit for cuts or blisters. Complete First Aid kits are available at the Student Health Center Pharmacy for \$12.25. Also, a whistle is much more effective than yelling, should you require assistance. And finally, everyone's favorite friend, a knife.

Now, if you know how to use these three or four pounds of equipment, you should be just fine. If you don't, then check out the Wilderness Survival class in the Outdoor Pursuits program, or Backcountry Survival from Eugene Parks and Recreation. Meanwhile, be aware of hypothermia. If you do get lost, sit tight and use that whistle. Please follow the etiquette of the area you are using (group size limitations, dog restrictions, plus fire and area restrictions). And don't forget your trash. This will help preserve the area for us all.

For more information, call these numbers:

U of O Outdoor Pursuits Program

U of O Outdoor Program 346-4365

U.S. Forest Service 465-6521

Eugene Parks and Recreation Outdoor Program 687-5329

Decaffeinated Finals



By Megan Foster

Finals and caffeine, it seems, go hand in hand here in Eugene. For many, staying up late and trying to crank out that paper is tied to large doses of caffeine. Caffeine is the most well known stimulant and is the most commonly used drug in the world today. The Journal of Community Health (1994) found that caffeine is consumed daily by over 80% of the U.S. adult population in the form of coffee, tea, or soft drinks. A recent survey showed that caffeine is used by over 85% of the students

at the U of O every day. And during finals week coffee consumption increases by approximately 10%.

Caffeine stimulates the central nervous system and produces a variety of effects on the body. It can speed up your resting heart rate, increase stomach acid, and speed up the rate that your resting body burns energy. The use of caffeine tends to produce a pattern of subjective effects that vary as a function of dose. Low doses in the range of 20-200 mg generally produce mild positive effects such as feelings of well-being, increased alertness and energy. But higher doses in the range of 200-800 mg can result in nervousness and anxiety, especially in those who are not used to caffeine. The dose of a regular coffee or tea consumer averages at 200 mg of caffeine per day.

Several studies indicate that intense use of caffeine causes adverse effects on health. For those who are not used to caffeine, however, caffeine can cause the heart to race. But moderate amounts will raise your blood pres-

sure only slightly and does not pose a serious threat to the heart. Within recent studies, caffeine's link to cancer of the pancreas has not been positively correlated. However, caffeine is a risk when consumed during pregnancy. At least three studies have found a link between caffeine and infertility (Yale, 1990).

When used in excess, caffeine can be harmful. It acts powerfully upon the body and mind. If used within reason, caffeine should pose no serious risk. So stay away from these five shots of espresso a day. After all, organizing your time might be the key to lowering stress during finals week. You might just want to hit these books a couple of days early.

You can obtain more information on coffee and caffeine at the Student Health Center (Health Education Room). Or give us a call at 346-4456.

