

Fast food provides a Faustian experience

Fast food often allures slim pockets and tight schedules, despite dietary drawbacks

Travis Willse
Copy Editor

Gluttony earned sinners a dreary afterlife of "rain, eternal, cursed, cold and falling heavy" in Dante's "Inferno." Yet with a Big Mac and Super Size fries together pushing 1,100 calories and 59 grams of fat, fast food outlets across America probably won't start pushing good culinary behavior anytime soon.

Even if those numbers are bad, America is asking for it. According to Eric Schlosser's Upton Sinclair-esque exposé "Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal," fast food sales in America topped \$107 billion in 2000. That's \$384 per person, up from \$133 in 1970, adjusting for inflation. If America needs a defining vice, fast food is a better candidate than ever before.

Posters and leaflets at the restaurants detail the usually sub-par and often detrimental nutritive value of everything from Grande Meals down

to ketchup packets. What about their love affair with the Golden Arches and the Home of the Whopper, then, is compelling enough to eclipse Americans' sense of long-term self-preservation?

Answers vary, but sophomore Taco Bell patron Roy Hobbs knows a few.

"I know it's not healthy, but it tastes good," Hobbs said. "You spend a relatively low amount of money."

Budget constraints and convenience can make fast food especially appealing to the collegiate wallet.

"I'm just as poor as the next kid," Lane Community College freshman Devin Whitaker said. "It's mostly cost."

It's not all economics for Whitaker, though. He said he's "a sucker for Whoppers," and Burger King's reintroduction of the 99-cent Whopper definitely improved his fast food experience.

Harvey & Price Co. employee Jason Harvey, who visits the Franklin Boulevard Burger King at least once a day, said it's about getting a quick, convenient meal.

Fast food is probably most con-

venient for those who work in the industry and can eat on-site, and often apply employee discounts to already cheap eats. LCC freshman Michelle McCarthy, who works at the EMU Subway, is one of America's 3.5 million fast food workers. She eats at Subway every day she works.

"I don't really enjoy eating it on my off days," she said.

Fast food — even at Subway, which advertises some healthier fare than many other chains — can "definitely be a vice" for some people, McCarthy said.

Junior Nathan Roholt credits culinary engineering for some of the appeal.

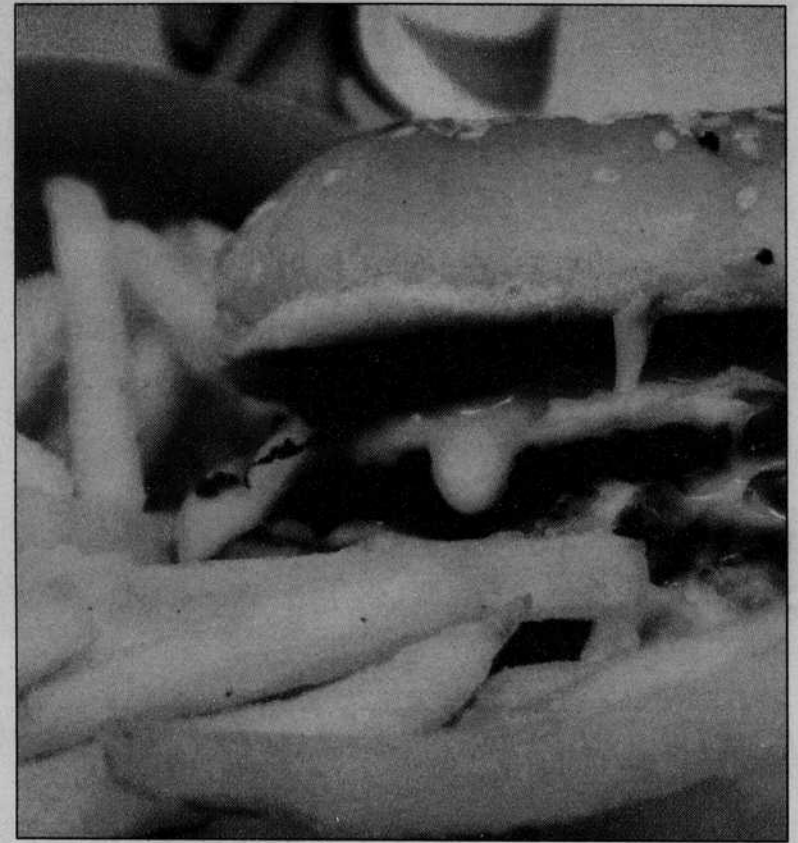
"It's designed to have that kind of rich, fatty taste to it — the food equivalent of nicotine," Roholt explained.

McCarthy said that fast food can be "comfort food," drawing on psychological associations forged in childhood.

"McDonald's was kind of like that for me: 'You were good, so we're going to McDonald's,' or 'You weren't good, so we're not going to McDonald's,'" she said.

Whatever the reasons, the dietary value — or lack thereof — doesn't diminish fast food's popularity. And if the numbers are any indication, its place in America's patchwork of vices will be secure for a long time, no matter how bad it is.

"The 'Stupid American' philosophy is that we have to be addicted to



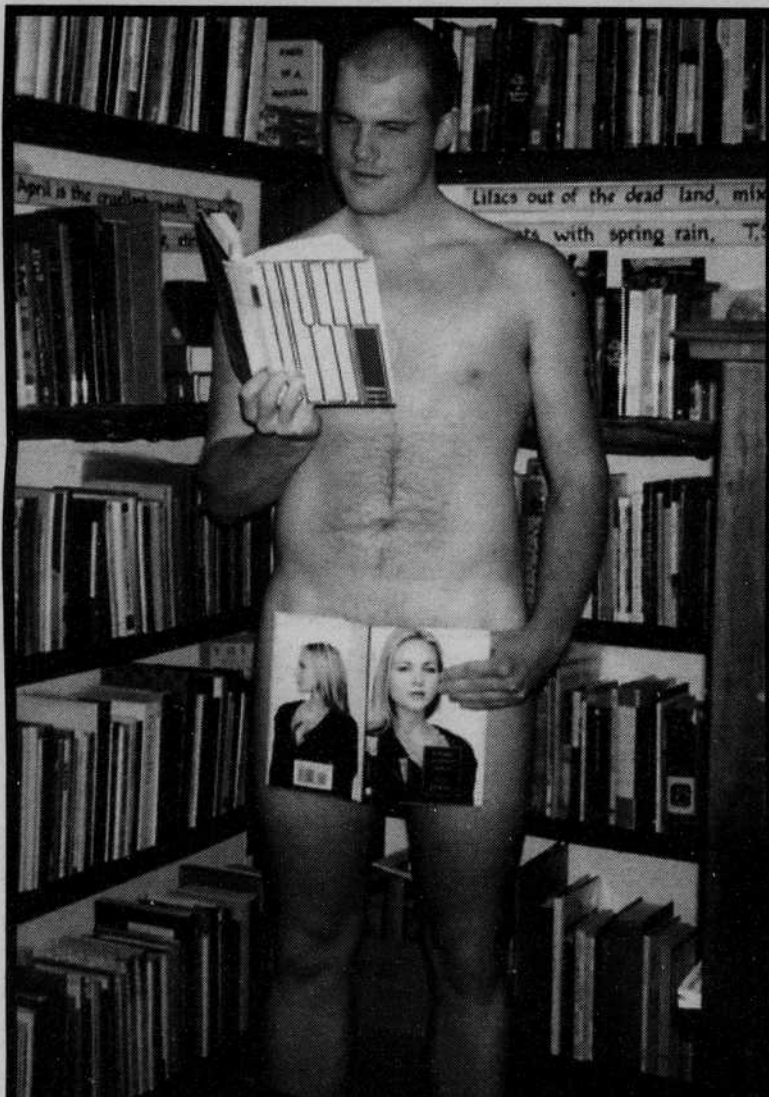
Adam Amato Emerald

Although many people realize the pitfalls of eating too much fast food, the risks often do not outweigh the benefits of convenience and low cost.

something," Whitaker said. "Some people like the Backstreet Boys, some people like to smoke cigarettes, some prefer the crack cocaine —

other people prefer the Whopper."

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Strip

continued from page 3B

Warren said although he thinks pornography is disgusting as well, it doesn't mean the sex industry is going to go away.

"Some people will always have lower standards of entertainment and will see this kind of thing as entertaining," he said. "It's just not high moral or ethical behavior. These guys don't respect the girls for who they are — they're just an object of lust and entertainment."

That objectification often can turn ugly. Twenty-year-old Sara, who preferred to use only her first name, said she's seen her share of shady scenes. Before moving to Eugene in December, she worked in a club in Los Angeles, and before that she was in Las Vegas, where her friend was working.

"It's a scary world out there," she said. "It does open women up sexually, because it's a very sexual job." But, she said, it's the financial benefits that are most enticing.

"In one night, you could easily make \$500 or \$600, as opposed to

working for weeks to make that much," Sara said. "But some women take it too far, which isn't OK."

She said she has seen people do things outside the bar for extra money, where there's "no security, no protection."

Many people say that while sexual culture isn't harmful, objectification culture creates a haven for violence against women as objects. Sophomore Austin Shaw-Phillips said this is one of the primary arguments for decriminalizing some parts of the sex industry, namely prostitution and the adult film business.

"If women's sexuality weren't so taboo, the sex industry itself wouldn't be so taboo," he said. "And if sex workers had rights, they could protect themselves legally."

He added strip clubs are only a problem insofar as they foster objectification culture — if the woman is merely an outlet for sexual release, she is not a subject or a person.

"I'm not against women working in the sex industry," he said. "I'm just against the exploitation of women by men in the sex industry."

Senior Angelica, who also preferred to use only her first name, agreed.

"If women's sexuality weren't so taboo, the sex industry itself wouldn't be so taboo. And if sex workers had rights, they could protect themselves legally."

Austin Shaw-Phillips
sophomore

"Porn is positive in a lot of ways — people need to be more open with sexuality and not feel like it's a bad thing," she said. "But if we want all of it to be more positive, we need to stop the objectification. It's about placing the same value on women that we place on men in this society."

"Sexuality is one of the few powers women have over men," she said. "It's sad to see women give up their sexuality, to men, for money."

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