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A YEAR OF CHANGE

2007 is to be a year of change in a variety of ways and none more so than the apparent increasing acceptance of the need to address environmental issues!

The year has already started well with the multiple retailers all seeking to present themselves as having sound green credentials in their retailing activity. However, as figures from Trucost, the provider of environmental data shows, the combined emissions from fuel, gas and

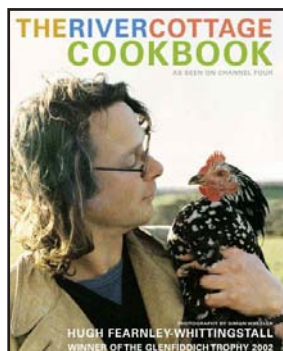
electricity of the big food retailers are only about one per cent of the UK's overall carbon dioxide emissions! Trucost estimates though that their supply chains and the production of the goods they sell are in fact 31 times greater than this figure. This is supported by the report from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs we have quoted before. Namely that in Britain's entire chain of food production and distribution, agriculture and food production account respectively for only eight per cent and 27% of energy used. The bulk is used by transport - 47%; vehicles transporting food account for one quarter of all long journeys in 2002! Air freight accounted for just one per cent of food miles but 11% of the carbon emissions!

There is also the argument that widespread organic farming would roughly halve the energy used in food production because it does not use chemical fertiliser. The manufacture of nitrogen fertiliser uses fossil fuels and is a huge source of carbon dioxide emissions in agriculture; then the nitrates produce nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas 300 times worse than carbon dioxide!



Local Food

The one easy step for all of us to take is to re-discover the benefits of locally produced foods, not only fruit and vegetables! Hence we will continue to seek out local suppliers, whenever possible buying direct from the producers as we already do with milk, bread and cakes as well as fruit and vegetables. So if you know anyone please do suggest they come in to talk about what they can offer? Which reminds us that one of the earliest exponents of eating local was Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and we still have some signed copies of his books!



Fairtrade

One other change we have noticed is that increasingly shoppers are not prepared to just accept what they are given by the food firms and the big retailers, believing that trade always had to be done on their terms.



Rather consumers are not powerless and demand something different - a way of doing business that is equitable and honest and does not rely on exploiting growers and producers. Increasing consumer access to Fairtrade products is probably the biggest single opportunity there is to assist in this. There are over 1,500 Fairtrade mark products available in the UK and whilst we cannot offer them all, you may have noticed we are adding them as we can

We will be providing various tastings and with special offers available during Fairtrade Fortnight from 26th February to 11th March.

And essential oils!

We are often asked about essential oils and how they may be used. In fact they can help relax, soothe and heal whatever your state of health.

Distilled from plants, shrubs, flowers, trees, roots, bushes and seeds, they oxygenate the body to help transport vital nutrients to our cells. Without oxygen, one cannot absorb nutrients properly; by helping in this essential oils can help us feel healthier.

They can soothe inflammation, act as an antiseptic, help dull pain and stimulate digestion. To obtain these benefits you can burn the oils, add them to hot baths or rub them onto the skin. Some you might try are:

- English Melissa or **lemon balm**, can treat shock if you apply a little diluted oil to the temples and pulse points of the wrist. It has strong anti-viral properties, so you can rub it on your skin to treat cold sores and herpes blisters.
- **Chamomile** can relieve stress and tension in the



mind and muscles. It can also help relieve stomach problems, eczema and mouth ulcers. Use it in an oil burner or vaporizer or as a massage oil to relieve skin complaints and stomach pains.

- **Clary Sage** helps recovery from illness and can relieve menstrual muscle cramps.

- **Citronella** boosts energy levels and can act as an insect repellent. Dilute and massage over exposed skin to stop bugs from biting. Or use citronella candles to keep hotel rooms insect-free.

- **Tea tree** oil is anti-bacterial. It can be useful in treating ailments like bronchitis and sinusitis as well as genito-urinary tract infections. It is so powerful, the Australian military issued tea tree oil in the first aid kits of soldiers during World War II to use as an antiseptic and fungicide.

For overall relief of stresses and strains, try this herbal bath:

Add three drops of lavender, one drop of geranium and one drop of mandarin to 5ml of grapeseed oil.

Bronchitis and Vitamin C

In a new review of bronchitis studies, researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University report that antibiotics are prescribed to about 70 percent of bronchitis patients and most of those cases are unresponsive to antibiotic therapy as they are likely to be suffering from viral bronchitis.

Rather as bronchitis is an inflammation of the larger airways that lead to the lungs it may be better to take a large dose of vitamin C, the absolute minimum being 1,000 mg three times/day, and preferably a loading dose of 3,000-5,000 mg with 1,000-2,000 mg/hour more like it for the aggressive types. If bronchitis tends to be chronic, vitamin A (not beta-carotene) and zinc should be added to help protect mucosal surfaces that may be chronically nutrient-deficient. Some practitioners suggest adding Alpha Lipoic Acid (ALA), as it is the best antioxidant that can reach fat-soluble spaces, along with NAC (N-Acetyl Cysteine), which is known to be good for lung tissue to keep bronchitis from possibly progressing into something worse.

Do talk to your doctor before taking any of these supplements.



Magnesium for Strength!

A recent study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition shows that one of the keys to a healthy, independent old age is a single, simple nutrient: magnesium.



Unfortunately though, most of us are not getting enough of it and the results can be devastating to your health. Not only is magnesium a critical part of some basic body functions like energy metabolism, but that it also helps keep your muscles strong.

Researchers at the University of Palermo in Italy set out to investigate the connection between magnesium deficiency and loss of muscle mass, a condition known as sarcopenia that is common in older people. Their research found a strong link between magnesium levels and muscle strength: Those with higher levels had stronger handgrips, more power in their lower legs, and were able to extend their knees and ankles with more force. Typically between 200 and 600 milligrams of magnesium per day is recommended for most people. Foods high in magnesium include leafy green vegetables, whole grains, bananas, apricots, meat, beans, and nuts.

A Garlic a Day!

You may have watched a recent BBC television programme in which Fiona Bruce extolled the virtues of eating four cloves of



garlic a day! Whilst the aim was to help several men with erectile dysfunction, the latest research findings from a large Italian study suggest that a high intake of garlic and onions can significantly reduce the risk of a wide-range of cancers.

The results are based on dietary data from an integrated network of Italian and Swiss case-control studies. Almost 10,000 people with colorectal, ovarian, prostate, breast, renal cell, oesophageal, oral cavity and pharynx cancer, and about 15,000 healthy controls were studied. The research adds to a growing body of science looking at the potential health benefits of allium vegetables, especially onion and garlic, which have been linked to a reduced risk of certain cancers.

Recently, the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition, following 521,457 subjects in ten European countries, reported that a diet rich in garlic and onions could protect against stomach cancer. An increase in the intake of onions and garlic of 10 grams per day was associated with a 30 per cent reduction in the risk of intestinal gastric cancer.



The researchers report that both onion and garlic were associated with significant reductions in the risk of all the cancers studied, with garlic in particular linked to a large risk reduction. The very latest research suggests some watercress could also be added!

Indeed, people with a 'high' intake of garlic had an associated risk reduction of 84 per cent for cancer of the oral cavity and pharynx, 88 per cent for oesophageal cancer, 56 per cent for colorectal cancer, 83 per cent for laryngeal cancer, 25 per cent for breast cancer, 73 per cent for ovarian cancer, 71 per cent for prostate cancer, and 38 per cent for renal cell cancer, compared to people with the lowest garlic intake.

Of Chalk and Women!

The November 2006 issue of the International Journal of Cancer carried a report on the most recent research into the benefit of calcium. Researchers reviewed the dietary habits of more than 73,000 women whose average age was about 55 and when dietary data was compared to medical records, researchers determined that women who had the highest intake of calcium reduced their colorectal cancer risk by 40 percent compared to women with the lowest intake.



Calcium-rich foods include salmon, cabbage, kale, and yellow, green, or waxed beans.

This recent study complements one previously reported by the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. They had carried out a study of subjects diagnosed with colorectal polyps. Divided into two groups, participants received either a 1,200 mg daily supplement of calcium carbonate, or a placebo. The researchers found that while calcium supplements appeared to provide some protection against the development of polyps, the supplements proved most effective against advanced polyps. The lead author of the study, Dr. John A. Baron told Health Day News that calcium may help lower the risk of advanced polyps by as much as 45 percent. Following up the initial study they found that the protective effects of the calcium supplements appeared to continue for at least five years after the supplementation was discontinued. During those five years, polyp risk was reduced by more than 40 percent, and the risk of all colon cancers was reduced by 35 percent.

We have in the past noted that sources of calcium are always accompanied by magnesium, so when supplementing with calcium, magnesium supplements should be taken as well. The ideal calcium to magnesium ratio is 2:1 - i.e. you need twice as much calcium as magnesium. Milk's ratio is 10:1, while cheese is 28:1. Relying on dairy products for calcium is likely to lead to magnesium deficiency and imbalance. Seeds, nuts and crunchy vegetables like kale, cabbage, carrots and cauliflower give us both these minerals and others, more in line with our needs.

Ah ...fresh chemicals!

Many household products contain solvents called volatile organic compounds (VOCs). And in this case the word "organic" does not imply a health benefit - far from it.

Two typical VOCs, used in many commercial air fresheners, are benzene - a carcinogen that has been linked to leukaemia - and xylene - a toxic petroleum byproduct that has been associated with headaches and cognitive impairment.

In 2003, researchers at the University of Bristol reported on the effects of VOCs on mothers and infants enrolled in a large, ongoing study known as Children of the 90s. More than 10,000 mothers in this study responded to questionnaires regarding the use of products known to raise VOC levels. The questionnaires also gathered information about known symptoms of VOC exposure. The Bristol team reported these findings:

- In homes where air fresheners were used daily, mothers averaged nearly 10 percent more frequent headaches than mothers in homes where air fresheners were used once a week or less
- In the "daily" homes, mothers had more than 25 percent higher risk of depression compared to mothers in the "once a week" homes
- In the "daily" homes, infants were 32 percent more likely to suffer from diarrhoea
- Infants in the "daily" homes had significantly more earaches than infants in "once a week" homes.

In their published study in the Archives of Environmental Health, the researchers noted that the daily use of air fresheners and other aerosol products created a gradual accumulation of VOCs. And while the study focused on mothers and infants, the researchers believe that VOCs may cause similar reactions for anyone who spends a significant amount of time at home, such as retirees.

In a press release from the University of Bristol, the lead author of the study, Dr. Alexandra Farrow, noted that until further research is done on air fresheners and aerosols it would be wise to limit the use of these products. There are natural alternatives such as Citrus Magic which use citric acid as a base and so dispense with VOCs.

Another study published in Environmental Health Perspectives analysed the effects on lung function of a widely used VOC known as 1,4-dichlorobenzene (1,4-DCB). The researchers noted that poor pulmonary



function from 1,4-DCB exposure is a risk factor for heart disease and lung cancer and could present particular dangers for patients with asthma and other lung conditions. Air fresheners, toilet bowl deodorants and mothballs are the products most likely to contain 1,4-DCB.

In the conclusion to the study, researchers wrote: "This common exposure may have long-term adverse effects on respiratory health."

Snippets

Builder's tea - studies have shown that drinking black tea is good for the heart and helps the arteries to expand, so improving the body's blood flow. But a study published in the European Heart Journal has indicated that the benefits diminish when milk is added. A team of German researchers compared the effects on arteries of drinking black tea, tea with skimmed milk and plain, hot water. It was found that caseins - proteins in milk - blocked the powerful effects of catechins, flavonoids in tea that help to protect the arteries and keep cardiovascular disease at bay.

Turn up the volume - according to the research findings from a recent study from the Netherlands, supplements of folic acid (800 micrograms per day) may prevent age-related hearing loss in older men and women. Folate is found in foods such as green leafy vegetables, chick peas and lentils, and an overwhelming body of evidence has linked folate deficiency in early pregnancy to increased risk of neural tube defects most commonly spina bifida and anencephaly in infants.

Two apples a day - a study published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease found that animals fed moderate amounts of concentrated apple juice fared better on tests of memory. In humans, a comparable amount of apple juice would mean drinking approximately two eight-ounce glasses of apple juice a day or eating two to three apples daily.

The researchers determined that mice fed the juice had an increase in the production of an essential brain neurotransmitter called acetylcholine. The role this neurotransmitter plays in the brain is of interest to scientists studying ways to combat memory loss during the ageing process. It drops as we age but for those who suffer from Alzheimer's disease the declines are even more substantial.