

A TERRIBLE TEN

Health Foods That Ain't

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IF IT'S SOLD IN A NATURAL FOODS STORE, IT MUST BE GOOD FOR YOU, RIGHT?

WRONG! Industrial food processing can destroy the nutritional value of any food, even an organically grown one. So which foods in the modern health food store are the biggest impostors?

Check it out...

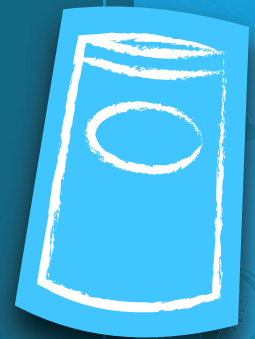


1. SALAD DRESSING

Since the main ingredient in salad dressing is oil, and since for all intents extra-virgin olive oil is the only healthful vegetable oil out there, you'd think salad dressings with this universally acclaimed health food would abound. But you'd be wrong. Virgin olive oil is p-r-i-c-e-y. Why would salad dressing producers go there when they can fill their bottles with cheap refined canola or soybean or safflower oil and call it a (profitable) day. Never mind that vegetable and seed oils (including "expeller pressed") are among the most heavily refined foods on the market. Never mind that they're heated to insane temperatures that destroy any nutritive value the oils started with. And never mind that such high heat creates dangerous peroxides, trans fats, and other poisons that must then be removed—though not completely—by more refining. Kind of kills the point of eating a salad, no?

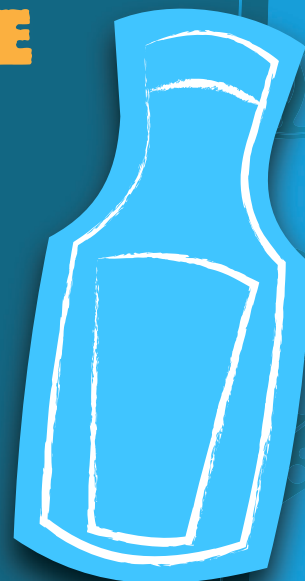
2. SWEETENED YOGURT

Sure, sweetened yogurt offers some benefits by way of its live bacterial cultures, but that boon is overwhelmed by its phenomenally high sugar content. Moreover, commercial yogurt is made from pasteurized milk, which lacks most of the nutrients found in fresh raw milk straight from the cow. The heat of pasteurization not only destroys numerous vitamins, it also denatures proteins such as lactase, the enzyme that helps digest milk's infamous sugar, lactose. (As many nutrition-minded doctors attest, people with lactose intolerance often have no problem digesting raw milk.) And, as Drs. Francis Pottenger Jr. and Royal Lee often noted back in the mid-twentieth century, pasteurization destroys a certain "anti-stiffness factor" in raw whole milk that helps prevent arthritis, a condition Dr. Lee referred to bluntly as a "cooked-food disease."



3. PASTEURIZED FRUIT JUICE

Fresh fruit juice, provided it's consumed in moderation, is a great source of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. But these benefits disappear once the juice has been pasteurized, which destroys the juice's heat-sensitive vitamins and enzymes and leaves behind essentially a big gulp of fructose. Among other things, fructose increases insulin resistance in the body and converts almost exclusively to fat in the liver. This makes it a prime suspect for our country's rising epidemics of diabetes *and* nonalcoholic fatty liver disease...and that's probably letting fructose off easy.

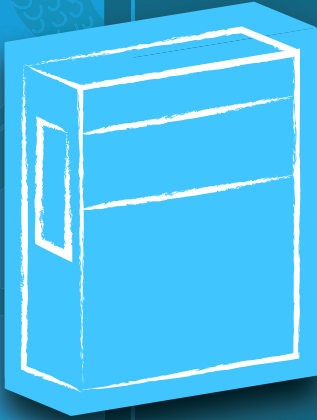


4. SOY MILK

Soy has been promoted as a health food ever since the FDA awarded it a health claim back in the late '90s vis-à-vis cardiovascular health. But since then, studies have almost universally failed to confirm the proposed benefits of soy with respect to heart disease or any other illness. In fact, the American Heart Association released a study in 2006 concluding that "earlier research indicating that soy protein has clinically important favorable effects as compared with other proteins [with respect to heart disease, cancer prevention, bone loss prevention, and menstrual irregularity] has not been confirmed." Moreover, animal studies testing specific isoflavones and other anti-nutrients in soy suggest that long-term consumption might actually disrupt thyroid function, menstruation, and hormone balance, among other things. With the jury still way out on this highly processed and highly marketed product, its reputation as a health food would seem to owe more to the economic might of its producers than to scientific evidence.



5. WHOLE-GRAIN BREAKFAST CEREALS



Forget about the dangers of gluten and the argument about whether humans were ever meant to eat grains at all. Breakfast cereals are essentially a combination of highly refined flours and sugar. This is the very combination believed to lie at the root of metabolic syndrome—that group of risk factors, so common in America today, that mark the coming of diabetes, heart disease, or stroke. Also, organic or not, whole grains contain loads of phytic acid, an anti-nutrient that binds minerals in the gastrointestinal tract so that they cannot be absorbed into the body. To top things off, many cereal makers add antioxidant vitamin fractions to the mix in a pointless attempt to preserve the delicate polyunsaturated fatty acids in the grains, which turn bad as soon as the seeds are cracked open back at the processing plant.

6. LOW-FAT MILK

This really should be low-fat anything. We've already discussed the perils of pasteurization—which, by the way, go for organic milk just as they do for conventional—but now let's talk about fat. In spite of nearly four decades of government propaganda, fat has *still* not been linked scientifically to heart disease (well, except for synthetic trans fats—big surprise there). And lost in this grand snow job has been the fact that fat is where we get *fat-soluble* vitamins (A, D, E, K) as well as essential fatty acids—critical nutrients that are absurdly deficient in the modern diet. Back in the 1930s, Dr. Weston Price traveled around the world to study isolated populations who suffered virtually no heart attacks nor any of the other modern diseases we think of as “natural” today, such as cancer, diabetes, stroke, obesity, and so on. From the mostly meat-eating Eskimos of Alaska to the agricultural tribes of the African plains, their diets varied considerably. Yet regardless of which traditional diet he studied, Dr. Price found that the amount of fat-soluble vitamins was about *ten times* higher than in the typical modern diet of mostly processed foods. So not only is there no reason to ban natural fats from your diet, but you're quite likely damaging yourself if you do.



7. AGAVE

Did the agave marketers sit down with the soy people one weekend and hammer out a plan to hoodwink the public Silk style? Seriously, how does a sweetener with a typically 70-percent fructose content and effectively no clinical data to its name suddenly become a healthful alternative to sugar? Behold the power of food marketing. Here's what we know about agave: It's been produced in Mexico for centuries but most assuredly not in the way it's manufactured now. Its current industrial processing involves high heat and synthetic chemical catalysts, though we don't know which ones for sure because the agave producers are not required to reveal their processing methods, and most have not volunteered this information. Like high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), agave contains a mixture of sucrose and fructose, but whereas HFCS is only 55 percent fructose, agave is typically 70 percent and as much as 90 percent fructose. And, as mentioned, very few clinical trials have been conducted to test the effects of agave on our health, making us one giant guinea-pig colony. But hey, it's got a low glycemic index!

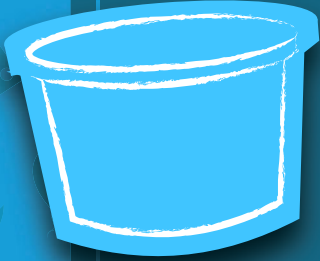


8. ORGANIC FROZEN DINNERS

A few years ago scientists made some noise by reporting that BPA, a common additive in plastics, appears to be dangerous at levels much lower than previously believed. Since BPA levels are particularly high in polycarbonate plastic, people started tossing their baby bottles and Nalgene containers in an attempt to avoid the dastardly chemical. We've got news. BPA is in almost all plastics. In fact, several studies in the past few years have found BPA leaching from plastics that specifically claim to be BPA-free. But this isn't even the big point here. Plastics are loaded with so many freaky chemical additives that it's just a matter of time before the next nasty, formerly-declared-safe compound is discovered. The truth is there's no such thing as a nutritionally safe plastic. On the other hand, plastics are lightweight, don't shatter like glass does, and require considerably less fuel to transport than metal containers. Arguably, they're a necessary poison. But that doesn't mean the poisons they contain have to concentrate in your body. The three things that most induce leaching of chemicals from a plastic food container are heat, the presence of liquid or fat in the food, and a long contact time of the food with the container. Think about that the next time you fire up them Amy's enchiladas.



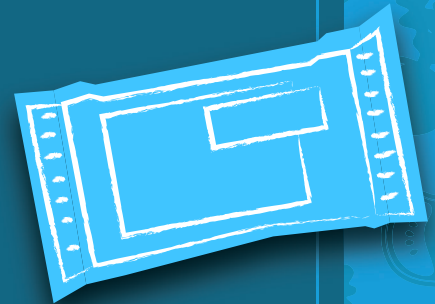
9. BUTTER-LIKE SPREADS



Wow, margarine without those wretched trans-fatty hydrogenated oils. Sounds great until you realize these Frankenbutters are simply refined seed and soy oils blended with palm oil—and you know how we feel about processed oils. All this processing gimmickry came about so that people could avoid eating a bona fide health food, butter. Chuck this stuff and buy yourself some organic butter or, better yet, raw butter from a local farm. You'll be doing yourself and a farmer a favor.

10. ENERGY BARS

The granddaddy of garbage “health” foods. The ode to fake nutrition and devitalized food. The golden goose of the manufacturing and processing industries. It’s the energy bar, a seeming experiment to combine all the worst elements of the modern food supply under a single wrapper. Soy isolate, sugar, synthetic vitamins, various creepy “natural” food fractions, and the occasional refined grain. If there’s a better way to jack the chemistry of your body, it’s surely not as convenient.



References

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