

A brief lesson on the economics of food

Adapted from Michael Pollan's book "The Omnivore's Dilemma"

Food is unlike most products because we can only eat so much of it. If music CDs are cheap, we can keep buying them until our homes are filled. Food is considered an economic rarity. If we produce too much food, the price plummets and farmers suffer. In an ideal system we produce just a little bit more food than needed and the extra food is stored in case of drought or famine. Currently, the US produces 500 more calories for each person everyday than they need. That is about 25% more calories than needed daily. This rise in food production is blamed for the rise in obesity and food related illness and with all this cheap extra food, corporations are working hard to get us to buy it.

So why so much extra food? The first reason...petroleum derived fertilizers. The earth's supply of nitrogen is finite and only can be naturally made by legumes like soybeans, alfalfa and by lightning. In 1900s European scientists realized that unless there was a way to artificially make nitrogen, the growth of human population would stop. Fritz Haber's invention of fixing nitrogen from petroleum is said to be the most important invention of the 20th century (2 of 5 humans on earth would not be alive without this invention). The second reason there is so much food, is that there is an abundance of really cheap corn; we consume so much of it, mostly indirectly by eating corn fed animals, that we rival Mexican corn consumption. The fertilizers make this a reality. Many farmers using petroleum-based fertilizers have stopped rotating crops and plant corn on marginal land, degrading soils, just to eke out a living. These days the price of corn is \$1 below the cost of production. Large manufacturers have helped to push the government to make policies that motivate farmers to overproduce so they can take

advantage of plummeting corn-prices. With this corn, manufacturers turn 4 cents of corn into a \$4 box of corn flakes, or cocoa puffs. Corn is also turned into fructose for soda pop, MSG and animal feed (75% of it goes to feeding chicken, pork and beef factory farms). With all this cheap corn, farmers suffer from low prices, and manufacturers get rich by figuring out how to make us eat more of it, buy more of it and pay more for it (food scientists are developing foods that we cannot digest called resistant starches). The results: obesity, food-related illness, disappearing farm incomes and environmental degradation.

What can you do? Simple....eat more whole foods (e.g.whole grains, vegetables)! Whole foods will keep blood sugar level stable and decrease appetite. Buying Whole foods also supports farmers who get a 20-30% more income from selling whole foods than from selling corn.

New Canada Food Guide serves up fresh healthy eating advice

Excerpt from CBC news

Health Canada has overhauled the Canada Food Guide to include more culturally diverse foods, information on trans fats, customized recommendations and exercise guidelines. The new food guide now recommends eating 7-8 servings of vegetables for woman and 8-10 serving for men each day. Take a look at the web-page for more information:

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html

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recipes

Cauliflower, White Bean, and Feta Salad

- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1 tsp minced fresh rosemary
- 2 TBS fresh lemon juice
- 1 TBS red wine vinegar
- 2 1/2 tsp finely grated lemon peel
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 med. head of cauliflower, trimmed, cut into small florets (about 3 cups)
- 1 can 15-ounce white beans drained
- 2 large heads of your favorite leafy greens trimmed, halved lengthwise, then thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 TBS chopped fresh chives
- 2 tsp chopped fresh parsley
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese (about 3 ounces)

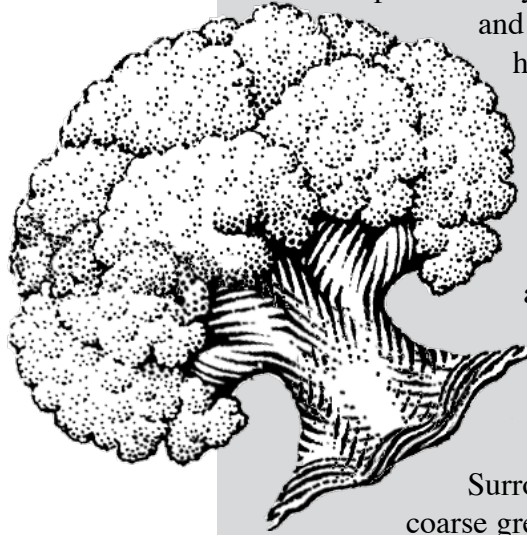
Combine oil and rosemary in small saucepan. Stir over medium heat just until fragrant, about 1 minute. Cool. Whisk lemon juice, vinegar, lemon peel, salt, and pepper in small bowl. Combine cauliflower, beans, endive, chives, parsley, and rosemary oil in medium bowl; toss. Mix in cheese. Add lemon juice mixture and toss to coat. Season salad with salt and pepper. Makes 6 servings. *from: Bon Appétit January 2007*

Cauliflower, Chard & Chicken Soup

- 2/3 cup chopped onion
- 1 tsp caraway seeds, crushed lightly
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 3 cups water
- 3 cups 1-inch cauliflower flowerets (about 1 small head)
- 1/2 cup orzo (rice-shaped pasta)
- 1 pound skinless boneless chicken breast, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 4 cups chopped red Swiss chard leaves, washed well and drained

In a 4-quart heavy saucepan cook onion and caraway seeds in oil over moderately low heat, stirring, until onion is softened. Add broth and water and bring to a boil. Stir in cauliflower and orzo and simmer, stirring occasionally, 7 minutes. Stir in chicken and Swiss chard and simmer until chicken is cooked through, about 3 minutes. Season soup with salt and pepper. Soup may be made 3 days ahead, cooled, uncovered, and chilled, covered. Makes about 8 cups, serving 4. *from: Gourmet December 1995*

featured this week: CAULIFLOWER



Cauliflower, a cruciferous vegetable, is in the same plant family as broccoli, kale, cabbage and collards. It has a compact head (called a “curd”), with an average size of six inches in diameter, composed of undeveloped flower buds. The flowers are attached to a central stalk. When broken apart into separate buds, cauliflower looks like a little tree, something that many kids are fascinated by.

Surrounding the curd are ribbed, coarse green leaves that protect it from sunlight, impeding the development of chlorophyll. While this process contributes to the white coloring of most of the varieties, cauliflower can also be found in light green and purple colors. Between these leaves and the florets are smaller, tender leaves that are edible.

Cauliflower traces its ancestry to the wild cabbage, a plant thought to have originated in ancient Asia Minor, which resembled kale or collards more than the vegetable that we now know it to be.

One cup of boiled cauliflower is an excellent source of vitamin C (91.5% of the DV), folate (13.6% of the DV), and dietary fiber (13.4% of the DV). That same amount of cauliflower also serves as a very good source of vitamin B5, vitamin B6, manganese and omega-3 fatty acids.

DELIVERIES

for the week of: Feb 27th
orders are due 5 pm Tues. Feb 20th

for the week of March 6th
orders are due 5pm Tues. Feb 27th

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(at temporary location)

