

New Categories For World Beef Expo

MADISON, Wis. — To emphasize beef's variety and versatility, new categories for the 1994 World Beef Expo Cookoff were recently announced by the Wisconsin CattleWomen, coordinators of the event.

The new categories allow different types of beef meals to be emphasized. They also allow less expensive cuts of beef, like

ground beef and round steak, to compete with higher value items such as tenderloin and ribeye steaks. The five new categories are: (1) Round (utilizing steaks and roasts); (2) Chuck or Brisket; (3) Ground Beef; (4) Sirloin or Tenderloin (includes loin, ribeye, sirloin and tenderloin); and (5) Beef Soups or Beef Stews (using any cut of beef).

One finalist will be chosen from each category, who is eligible to compete in the finalist program on April 14, 1994. The World Beef Expo Cookoff is held during World Beef Expo, April 14-17, at

the Dane County Exposition Center, Madison, Wisconsin.

Entry deadline for the World Beef Expo Cookoff is January 15, 1994. Entry information can be obtained by writing: World Beef Expo Cookoff Entry Information, c/o Shirley Raisbeck, 8053 Old Potosi Road, Lancaster, WI, 53813. The World Beef Expo Cookoff offers \$5,800 in cash awards and is open to anyone 18 years of age or older with a non-professional status. All recipes must be able to be prepared indoors.

Springs; forestry, Kevin Green, Gettysburg; gardening, Wade Black, Aspers; horse, Shawna Ford, New Oxford; leadership, Sadie Bucher, New Oxford; poultry, Tim Shetter, Gettysburg; public speaking, Zeb Eckert, Gettysburg; recreation, Beth Plank, Gettysburg; safety, Adam Sachs, Fairfield; sheep, Heidi Miller, New Oxford; and wood science, Brad Black, Aspers.

The Seeing Eye Puppy program recognized Sophia Yelovich, Orrtanna, and Amber Day, Littlestown for their outstanding devotion to the seeing eye puppy program.

The McSherrystown 4-H Club served refreshments after the award presentations.



Holiday Craft Workshop

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Muddy Run Information Center invites you to decorate for the holidays by participating in a Holiday Craft Workshop, December 11, from 1:00-3:30 pm. Participants can choose from a variety of crafts suitable for children and adults to make and take home with them. The workshop is free to all participants, a small fee may be

required for certain crafts payable at the door. Refreshments will be available and reservations are not necessary. Participants can drop in anytime between 1:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

For additional information please contact the Muddy Run Information Center at (717) 284-2538.

Organic Food — Is It Safer?

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Since the Alar scare of 1989, pesticides and other modern farming practices have been increasingly scrutinized as possible food safety hazards. Many consumers have begun to mistrust the agricultural industry and doubt the wholesomeness of their foods. Surveys have shown that consumers believe the presence of pesticide residues is the main health threat associated with fresh fruits and vegetables, and that irradiation creates more apprehension than the salmonella it eradicates. In response to these fears, many consumers are demanding more organic foods at their markets.

The main difference between organic and conventional production methods is that organic foods are produced without the use of man-made fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators and technologies such as antibiotics and irradiation. Conventional farming and ranching often integrate these technologies to improve food production. Both organic and conventional producers, however, use many standard methods such as crop rotation, minimum tillage and improved animal husbandry practices.

"Most organic food consumers are concerned about possible health risks associated with conventional production. Unfortunately, they don't realize that the greatest health hazard in food is microorganisms. Viruses, bacteria and molds are the primary causes of food poisoning," said Mark Bennett, director of programs for the Ag Council.

Unlike theoretical risks associated with pesticides, genetic engineering and irradiation, the dangers from microorganisms are significant.

According to the American Cancer Society, there are no documented cases of cancer caused by ingesting pesticide residues. Microorganisms, on the other hand, are responsible for nearly six million cases of foodborne illnesses and over 9,000 deaths in the United States each year. The annual health costs of foodborne illness are staggering, estimated at \$4.9 billion.

The sources of these pathogenic microorganisms vary as greatly as the illnesses they cause. Salmonella, for example, resides in animal waste, and though it occurs rarely it can cause serious problems when the waste accidentally contaminates food. Such contamination can occur when animals are slaughtered or when populations of rodents infest a crop field. Improper food handling can also lead to contamination of fresh fruits and vegetables by these animal bacteria. Other bacteria live naturally in soil and water and can survive for years, contaminating vegetables grown in such areas.

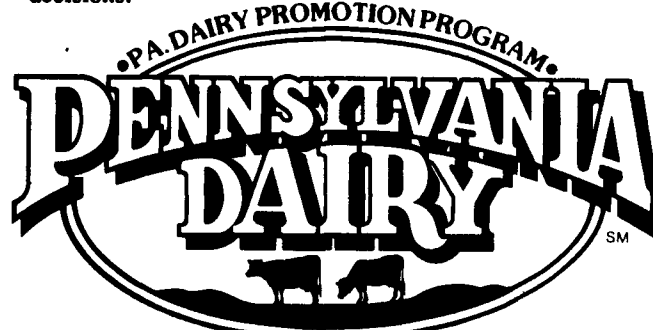
Some microorganisms are not dangerous by themselves. Rather, they produce toxic by-products in humans which can cause serious illness and death. Complications from E. coli, such as the recent outbreak in the Northwest, are a result of toxins, not the bacteria itself. Molds can contaminate vegetables with mycotoxins, especially potent toxins, and can induce vegetables to create toxins of their own that contaminate far below the surface.

If organic farming completely replaced modern farming technologies, consumers would not be any safer. For example, irradiation is a promising technology that has proven effective in drastically reducing the number of microorganisms, while still leaving food unchanged. Without this technology and others, consumers could be exposed to greater risks from increased microorganisms which are far more dangerous.

"This is not to say food is inherently dangerous," said Bennett. "Rather, it is to show how insignificant the health risks of pesticides, irradiation and other food production technology are when compared to the risks of naturally occurring microbes and toxins. Newer technologies enable producers to provide a first line of defense, with consumers and food handlers being the last," he continued.

The good news is that these natural risks can be managed. Proper food handling can virtually eliminate all microorganisms that slip by farmers or occur after the product leaves the farm. Pesticide residues on fresh produce, usually well below tolerance levels set by the Environmental Protection Agency, can be almost entirely removed with thorough washing. Irradiation and integrated pest management as well as other technologies provide promise for even safer food in the future.

The bottom line is that the decision to purchase organically produce food should not be based on safety. "This is one of the messages our FoodWatch spokespeople are taking to the consumer," stated Mark Bennett. "Through education, we hope consumers will make informed purchase decisions."



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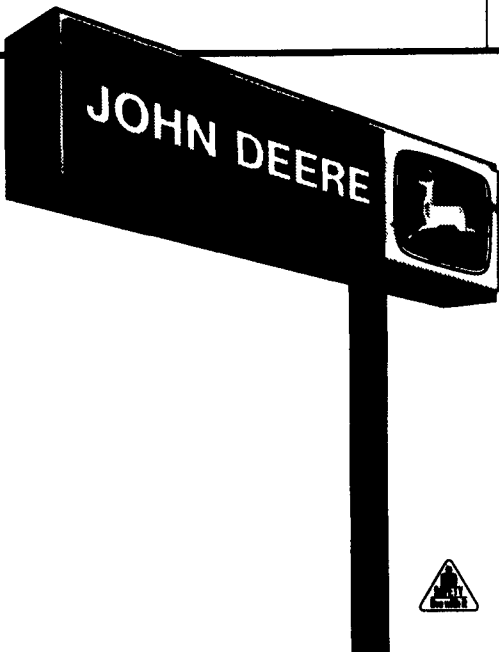
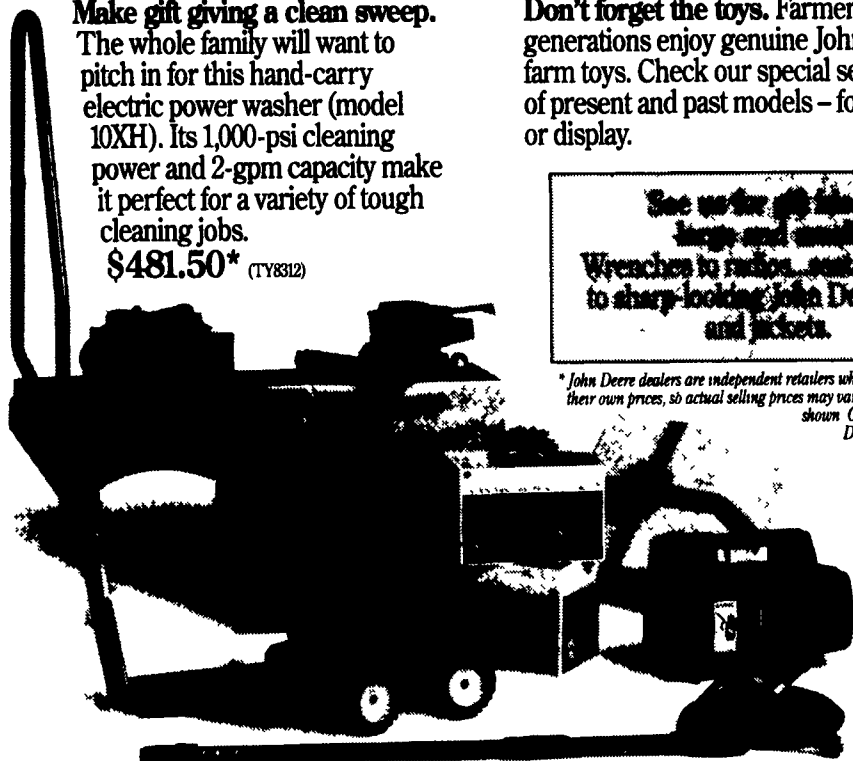
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