

## Consuming Thoughts

by

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Everyone who watches television sees the food advertisements, but are you aware of how much influence television food ads have in swaying American eating habits. Television commercials relay a picture of U.S. eating habits that would have you believe the typical American drinks lemonade made with lemons, sits down to a breakfast of cereal resembling tiny chocolate chip cookies, and eats daily at fast food restaurants.

But this picture isn't an accurate one—at least not yet. But it may become uncomfortably familiar as food producers continue to influence consumer buying habits through huge advertising expenditures.

The food marketing system spends more on national media advertising than any other industry, allocating a higher percentage of sales dollars to advertising than is returned in profits. And the largest advertisers may control so much prime television advertising time that they can effectively shut their competitors out of the market. The consumer's choices are not unlimited—they are limited by what is offered. People's buying decisions may be almost predetermined because of the giant companies in the food manufacturing industry.

The most advertised items are those with high profit margins—primarily highly-processed, prepared foods.

These are not necessarily the best foods we could eat from a nutritional standpoint. Fruits and vegetables, meats, fish, and dairy products account for about half of the consumer's food budget but less than 10 percent of food advertising dollars, and advertising expenditures for many other foods—like soft drinks, candy, and breakfast cereals—are all out

of proportion to their importance in the American diet. One reason for these disparities is that, with the exception of newspaper ads, which provide week-to-week price information, food advertising is primarily image creating rather than informative. These ads are creating a need that doesn't exist, for foods we might well do without.

Almost half of all media food advertising dollars is spent on television. And there is a particular concern for food advertising aimed at children. The average child 11 or under watches many hours of television a week, and sees many thousands of food commercials a year. The majority of those commercials are for foods, with breakfast cereals, primarily presweetened ones, candies, and other sweets the most advertised products. Television shows children what our society deems good to eat, and by implication what is not good.

Consumption of highly sugared foods between meals contributes to tooth decay and that, in addition; too many sweet things can keep more nutritious foods out of the diet.

Parents can, of course, reduce television influence on their children's eating habits and attitudes by commenting on programs and commercials and limiting or monitoring use of the television. But the airwaves are meant to serve the public. Advertising pays for the entertainment offered on television, and helps support other media, so many are reluctant to set restrictions on the industry for fear of losing revenue.

A smart shopper has their work cut out for them as they pick and choose nutritional foods for their family.

# Taste Of Pennsylvania Recipe Books Available

EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.) — Rep. Leroy Zimmerman (R-99) has available copies of a handy recipe book from the State Department of Agriculture called "A Taste of Pennsylvania," which highlights innovative uses for agricultural products produced in the state.

"A good cook is always looking for new recipes to try," said Zimmerman. "What better place to find them than in an official publication of the Agricultural Department. The booklet contains recommended recipes from the industry boards that promote the agricultural products we use every day, and some that maybe we should try."

The recipes included in the booklet are suggestions from respected statewide organizations like the Pennsylvania Beef Council, Pennsylvania Poultry Federation, Pennsylvania Association of Meat Producers, Pennsylvania Pork Producers Association, Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers Association, Pennsylvania Emu Farmers Association, Eastern Bison Association, American Mushroom Institute and Mushroom Council, Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association, Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program, Pennsylvania Apple Marketing Program, Pennsylvania Nut Growers Association,

Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program, Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs, Pennsylvania Farm-City Council and Penn's Agri-Women.

"Agriculture is Pennsylvania's number one industry, producing some of the best fruits, vegetables, legumes, mushrooms, meats, cheeses, milk products, breads, honey, snack foods, you name it, not just on the East Coast, but in the whole country," said Zimmerman.

Copies of the booklet are available in Zimmerman's office at 609 East Main Street, Box 59, Ephrata. The telephone number is (717) 733-4002.

## More Than One Way To Eat A Grape

KINGSVILLE, Ohio — There's more than one way to eat a Concord grape. You can suck out the juice, chew up the pulp, then spit out what's left of the pulp, seeds and skin. Or, simply, you can wolf it down whole.

Children discover these methods and more at the Grape Research Branch in Ashtabula County. The 25-acre facility, an outlying branch of Ohio State University's Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, hosts an estimated 600 visitors a year, most of them students. They walk the vineyards, taste the grapes and take home samples of freshly squeezed juice.

"The kids get a lot of senses excited," said Greg Johns, branch manager. "The tastes, the sights,

the smell of the ripening grapes. The parents I run into say their kids talk all about it."

Including how to chomp a Concord. It's not like eating a Thompson Seedless.

"A lot of kids don't have a clue that grapes are grown in Ohio," Johns said. "They've never eaten a Concord grape. It's one of the things I bring up: How do you eat it? It's got seeds, the slip skin (the skin comes off like a bag), the insides are gooey and juicy, and between myself, the kids and the teachers, we talk about the different ways we've learned to eat them: whether you suck the juice out and spit the slimy part on the ground or eat the whole thing or what."

Concord is the most widely

grown grape in Ohio. It's used mainly for jelly and juice. But its acreage has fallen because of low prices: \$250 a ton versus \$2,000 a ton for Pinot noir. Some Concord vines have been abandoned or have been replaced by higher-value wine grapes.

That's mostly the case at the Kingsville branch, where ConCORDS serve as teaching tools but aren't used much for research.

Wine grapes, instead, are the focus. Studies look at pest, weed and disease control, the effects of compost, and the performance of a wide range of cultivars, clones, rootstocks, spacings and training systems. The grapes, picked in fall, are trucked to OARDC's Wooster campus, where they're analyzed and made into wine.

Why focus on wine grapes? Demand. Only about 30 percent of Ohio grapes are used for wine production, and Ohio wine makers, who import about half of what they need, are eager for more.

"Grape growers and wine makers in Ohio are different than any other fruit growers," Johns said. "There doesn't seem to be the competition, the keeping of secrets, that I've seen among growers of other commodities. You can be starting a vineyard and a winery right next door to another vineyard and winery, and (the owners) will be helping you all along the way. They'll loan you their tractors and their sprayers, and they'll tell you how they did something.

Johns and colleagues respond in kind. They conduct research, tell what they learn, and save grape growers the cost and risk of doing the experiments themselves. Articles, bulletins and newsletters are published. Educational events are held.

For more information on projects and tours at the branch, contact Johns at (440) 224-0273 or johns.1@osu.edu.

## African Violet Show, Plant Sale

MORRISTOWN, N.J. — The Tristate African Violet Council will present its annual African Violet Show and Plant Sale, Say "I Do" to Violets on Saturday, Nov. 3 from 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 4 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum, 53 East Hanover Avenue, Morristown,

N.J. Admission is free.

The show will include educational displays, hospitality, and information from the African Violet Society of America. A sale table will include blooming and unusual varieties of African violets.

For more information, contact the show Chairman Dale Jasaitis at (609) 298-7333.

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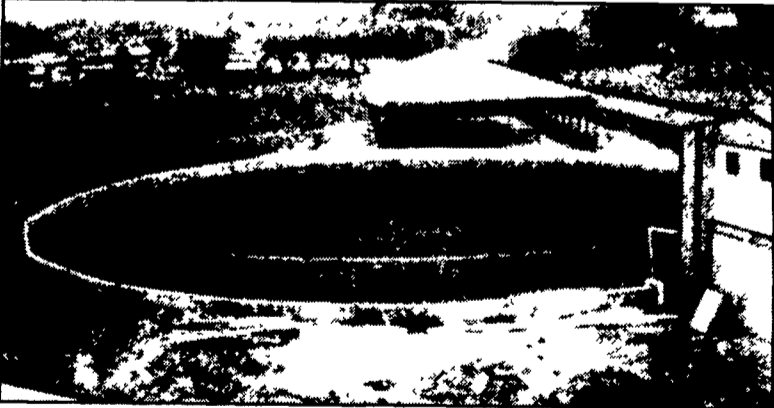
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