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the

# Viva VINE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE VIVA VEGIE SOCIETY  
Edited by Pamela Teisler



## How Would You Like Your Poison? (in your chicken or in your beef?)

• • by Pamela Teisler • •

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE WHO MISSED the recent edition of WCBS-TV's "48 Hours," entitled, "Is Your Food Safe?" let's go to the "boning room" of Federal Beef Processors in Rapid City, South Dakota. By concealing a hidden camera on his body, an employee of the meat processing plant was able to obtain a videotape for "48 Hours" in the plant's boning room, the last stop before meat is packed and sent on to consumers.

It is interesting to know that Federal Beef went to court to prevent CBS from showing the videotape, and that the case went all the way to the Supreme Court which finally ruled, the very day of the broadcast, in CBS's favor.

The tape revealed the presence of hair and fecal matter on the head of a carcass. It also showed a worker sharpening his knife on the floor, later putting the same knife right back on the boning table; a sure way to spread deadly contamination.

Later, the tape showed workers taking dangerous shortcuts in cleaning up fluid that had broken out of an abscess from a piece of chuck beef. Workers violated USDA rules that would require the line to be stopped, an inspector to be brought in to supervise the cleanup, the entire table to be cleaned, and any meat in the vicinity to be discarded. In full view of the camera, we saw how a

plant with over 300 employees that processes an average of 50 cows per hour with only 4 USDA inspectors "keeps the line moving."

First, without calling a USDA inspector into the room to supervise, since one was not there at the time, employees went about their own version of abscess clean up. Instead of removing the meat that was in the vicinity, aside from the piece that had the abscess, none was discarded. Some pieces were only trimmed. Instead of the entire table being cleared and cleaned, only the portion of the table where the abscess broke open was removed. It was sprayed down with water in close proximity to cuts of meat that would soon be on their way to consumers. The worker, in effect sprayed abscess fluid on to good cuts of meat, meat that at this point was not legally sellable even for pet food. Moments later, we see the line starting up again — the entire scenario in gross violation to USDA regulations.

Later in the show, we find out that this processing plant is bad, but not unusual. CBS recorded the reactions of a Dr. Lester Freeland, a USDA veterinarian and critic of the U.S. inspection system, while he watched the footage. He said, "I can say from my experience of 9 years, and in talking to other food inspectors around the country, this probably goes on on a daily basis."

We also find in the program that Federal Beef Processing had been cited with 603 USDA violations in 1993 and that half of the violations were considered critical, posing a "direct threat to consumers." We also find that the plant supplies beef to the school lunch program.

Without a word about the concentrated money power of the meat and poultry industries that is at the root of why plants like Federal Beef are allowed to operate, nor without even a little acknowledgment of the suffering of the animals at the plant, CBS decided to go to the grocery store in search of E-coli 0157. The focus of the program from the beginning had been on children who died or nearly died from the deadly bacteria. Throughout the CBS program, various facts about E-coli were brought out. It was noted that E-coli is not detectable by inspectors by sight, smell or touch; that 3 in a thousand cows harbor the bacteria; that one hair can harbor millions of E-coli bacteria with, according to experts, as few as ten E-coli bacteria able to kill a child; that E-coli bacteria may originate from antibiotics in

feed; and that it manifests its deadly effects after someone eats a contaminated hamburger that is not fully cooked.

Out shopping, CBS bought 30 cuts of beef from 30 different grocery stores. They did not find any E-coli bacteria. But they did find a lot of the more common stuff.

CBS reported that 10 of their samples had Listeria and 1 was infected with Salmonella. It was noted that either of these bacteria can make you sick, and that "in a few circumstances," Listeria can kill you.

### Chicken

As the "48 Hours" program continued, chicken was the focus. We heard a food safety advocate Rodney Leonard, a former supervisor of U.S. Poultry inspection say, "I don't eat chicken anymore."

### Calendar

•Sun., Feb. 27: "Sunday Night Fever" (potluck of **BIG APPLE VEGETARIANS** — B'lyn's newest vegetarian club), 6:30 p.m.; call 718/438-1523 for details. •Fri., Mar. 18 - Sun. Mar. 20: **ECO-VISIONS** (see back page), Radisson Plaza Hotel, Alexandria, VA., \$100 + accom.; call 202-296-2172. •Sundays, Mar. 20, Apr. 17, & May 15: **VEGAN SOCIETY OF QUEENS POTLUCK**, 2 p.m., Flushing, Queens; call Hubert at 718/263-7160 for details. •Sun., Mar. 20: **MEAT-OUT VEG. FOOD FEST** (see back page), 12 Noon - 4 p.m., 122 E. 83rd St. •Tues., Mar. 22: **BREAK BREAD ... FOR A CHANGE** (vegan potluck), 6:30 p.m., Greenpeace offices, 462 B'way @ Grand St, 6th Fl; call 718/797-4175.

Schedule to distribute *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian* in VivaVegie-style vegetarian street advocacy (call ahead, 212/966-2060, to confirm and to arrange meeting location):

•Sun., Apr. 3: **EASTER DAY PARADE**: 11 a.m., 50th St. & 5th Ave. •Sun., Apr. 17 - Sun., Apr 24: **EARTH WEEK** The VivaVegie Society will have its booth, as in years past. (The VivaVegie Society frequently goes out with its street advocacy on short notice. Call to learn of unscheduled events. 212/966-2060.)

I won't eat it. I won't allow it in my house."

Mr. Leonard described for "48 Hours" the modern chicken processing plant as an industry trapped by automation, and that this is what is producing a "dirty product," as he called it.

[Ed note: A society that is brainwashed to think that what is good for industry is good for society; and a society that is brainwashed to believe that the public should not and cannot stand in the way of technological breakthroughs no matter what, may also have something to do with why we have this "dirty" product.]

CBS did note that most chickens are confined indoors, and are given drugs to keep them healthy. It also noted that in many commercial flocks Salmonella can infect a bird through contaminated feed. It did not show, however, how birds by the tens of thousands live in today's egg or broiler sheds, which is of course where bacteria in chicken originates. Nor did it show slaughtering of birds or the moments before slaughter. It did show where cross contamination of bacteria can take place after slaughter.

To quote Mr. Leonard who was interviewed by CBS: "When those birds move to the slaughter plants, they're hung by their feet, killed, and they go into a defeathering process which is scalding. There's only a single scald; it's just enough to kind of loosen the follicles.

That's one of the first places in a plant where you're going to run into cross contamination. The next place you're going to run into problems is when the bird is degutted. That's done mechanically in practically all plants today. Unless you set those mechanical degutters correctly, you're going to break the intestines. When you break the intestines, you've got fecal matter in the body cavity; you've got fecal matter on the outside of the bird. Next point for cross contamination is in the cooling. In the United States the cooling is done in chill tanks. They dump the birds in this tank."

"And if contaminated birds end up in the water it's a nesting area for..." the CBS correspondent interrupted.

"That's the fecal soup," Leonard continued.

Off to the grocery store again we go with CBS. Thirty whole chickens were purchased of all types: national brands such as Purdue and Tyson, free range chickens, kosher chickens and no-brand chickens as well. CBS found 8 of the chickens with Salmonella bacteria, 12 with Listeria, as mentioned above, and 21 infected with campylobacter, a bacteria that, according to the CBS correspondent, makes 4 million Americans sick every year. The outcome of this random test? CBS found only 5 chickens free of bacteria, and no type of chicken they bought in this sample was clean. Not once, of course, did CBS mention vegetarianism to be a nearly sure way to avoid any of the bacterias mentioned.

The anecdote? CBS gives what amounted to a free advertisement for Vindicator, Inc., the Florida food irradiation plant that today irradiates chicken and tomatoes. Food irradiation, we heard in the program, kills all bacteria; this is true. And with, as CBS revealed, 30 million of us according to the government getting sick every year from what we eat, food irradiation may sound like a viable solution. CBS did not mention that food irradiation does not flush dead bacteria out of the product, however. Nor did it note that food irradiation does nothing to correct the

hideous conditions that creates most bacteria in the first place, namely the cruel overcrowding of farm animals in indoor confinement.

CBS did note that many people are opposed to food irradiation (The VivaVegie Society can be counted among these), but of course it did not mention that food irradiation is what the government has decided should be done with spent nuclear waste; nor that fuel rods used to irradiate food need to periodically be recharged which requires the transport of nuclear material. Hello nuclear accidents, CBS...

The issues discussed above are of direct concern to The VivaVegie Society. The "48 Hours" program also covered the issue of illegal pesticides which are exported to foreign countries where they are not illegal. These pesticides, the program showed, later return to the U.S. on fruits and vegetables that the U.S. imports.

Despite some important omissions as mentioned above, the program "Is Your Food Safe?" was very revealing and educational. For a copy of the video, call 1-800-338-4847. For a transcript, call 1-800-777-TEXT.

To receive a copy of *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian* send \$1 and a self addressed stamped envelope to The VivaVegie Society, Prince Street Sta., P.O. Box 294, New York, NY 10012. Additional copies may be obtained (no SASE necessary after 2 copies) for 50¢ ea. (60¢ ea., foreign or retail). And to pass out to friends: \$20 for 50 copies (\$30, foreign or retail); and \$35 for 100 copies (\$50, foreign or retail).

And for \$5/yr. (\$7, foreign), receive 5 issues of *The VivaVine* (the newsletter of The VivaVegie Society), and a membership card plus a complimentary copy of *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian*. Checks can be made payable to: The VivaVegie Society.

### Is Your Food Cruel?

Dear "48 Hours":

I highly commend "48 Hours" for what it went through to expose Federal Beef Processors on its last program, "Is Your Food Safe?" Even though I was very dismayed by the exposure the program also gave to food irradiation as an anecdote to deadly bacteria in food, all in all, the more people know about the conditions of meat processing in this country the better.

Your next exposé, I'd like to suggest, should be a look inside a shed of battery hens or broiler chickens, still living, packed in by the tens of thousands in facilities the size of aircraft hangars.

If your audience were able to see this, no one would be unsure about the origin of bacteria in food, especially if "48 Hours" would also reveal the actual extent of antibiotics used on the animals — antibiotics that would not be necessary if it wasn't for the death camp conditions inside the sheds.

I must also point out that though your program centered on an industry that in the United States affects 7 billion living creatures a year there was not a word spoken from the standpoint of cruelty. Though this was not, albeit, the focus of the show, I think it behooves anyone attempting to tackle any aspect of animal agriculture to at the very least hint at the specifically moral disgrace that today's factory farming represents in our country. We got no such hint from "48 Hours" last week.

Many Americans care deeply about the issues of animal rights or at least animal welfare. You might be surprised at how many. And surely many more people would share these concerns if there was more exposure of the extent of the animal suffering in our factory farms.

Get a camera behind the closed doors of a typical factory farm today and entitle your next show, "Is Your Food Cruel?"

— Sincerely Pamela Teisler, The VivaVegie Society  
c: Henry Spira, Animal Rights International  
Karen Davis, United Poultry Concerns

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# grapevine

letters from readers



Dear Friends: Enclosed is my membership fee to The VivaVegie Society so I will receive *The VivaVine*. I'm anxious to see more responses from those Senators and Congresspeople to which you sent your *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian*.

— Sincerely, WS, Camden, SC

[Ed. Note: It should be known that early in November The VivaVegie Society sent every U.S. Senator and Congressperson (540 total) a copy of the 101 Reasons . . . along with detailed references and a signed, personalized, laser generated cover letter. Following are excerpts from letters from 2 representatives that have come in since the last installment. Senator Diane Feinstein of California also since sent a letter, but as it was so non-committal and non-specific, it was not worth printing. Since November, a total of only 9 responses have come back to The VivaVegie Society. It may be interesting to note that not one letter has mentioned by name the V-word yet. Shall we assume that even the mere acknowledgment of the vegetarian dietary lifestyle is politically dangerous?]

Dear Ms. Teisler: . . . Under President Clinton's [health care reform] plan, preventive health care will be a focus of the basic benefits package offered to every American. The President's proposal will cover nutritional counseling as a part of preventive care service. . . As the debate continues, I will keep your thoughts on expanding coverage of nutritional services in mind.

— Sincerely, Senator Frank R. Lautenberg, NJ

Dear Ms. Teisler: Thank you for sending me a copy of your issue paper on approaches to health care reform. It addresses key issues with which Congress will be struggling in the upcoming debate and will prove a valuable resource as we evaluate different options and compromises. I appreciate the effort you devoted to developing the analysis and recommendations.

— Sincerely, Rep. Jim McDermott, 7th Dist., State of Washington

Dear Pam: While reading your last newsletter, it occurred to me that the driving force for change in our society is money. I believe that health insurance companies, corporations, Congress, health care providers, etc., should be encouraged to pass along savings in costs to those who take special interest and care of their health and the environment; and conversely, pass along higher costs to those who refuse to educate themselves and change from an animal based diet. Insurance companies have seen the benefit of insuring non-smokers and non-drinkers at lower rates for quite some time, and are beginning look more to coverage for preventive health care.

Unfortunately, money talks — especially in Congress. The likelihood of influencing anyone in Congress, when going up against a rich and powerful meat and dairy industry (which also receives government subsidies) is pretty dismal. Perhaps some lobbying in the private sector, and "hitting people in the pocket-book" would bring about the most change.

— Sincerely, Cynthia Nelson, Salt Lake City, UT

Dear Pamela: I ask your *VivaVine* readers to help HIV patients avoid deadly nutrition advice from the Gay Men's Health Crisis

(GMHC). In a recent GMHC newsletter patients were exhorted to double their meat intake and to be sure to eat meat first at every meal. GMHC's nutrition counselors offer the same advice directly to their clients. EEK! Your readers may protest by writing to: Editor, The Volunteer, GMHC Communications Dept., 129 W. 28th St., New York, NY 10011.

At the same time, your readers can support The Whole Foods Project, a vegetarian relief effort (of sorts) for HIV patients as well as other immune deficient people here in New York City. Never will the people *here* tell immune deficient people to double up on their meat. I spoke with the program coordinator Patrick Donnelly.

"We provide health-supportive and strictly vegetarian meals for people with life-challenging illnesses, of which 80 percent are HIV positive. We teach patients to care for themselves, offering nutrition education as well as counseling. We counsel whole grains, legumes, vegetables and fruits, because these are the foods that support the immune system.

"Nutrition is integrated into a comprehensive program of well-being, including stress management, vitamin and herbal therapy, and emotional issues counseling. Clients very often tell us that they feel much better on our program. They have easier digestion and more energy, they tell us. I often notice them becoming visibly more animated.

"The scientific foundation of the program is the work of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and its director Dr. Neal Barnard, who is a member of our advisory committee. Another member of the committee is Dr. John Kaiser, a San Francisco doctor who recently wrote *Immune Power*, published by St. Martin's Press.

"We provided 18,000 meals in 1993. Some clients were fed for free. But we have just run out of money, and we have suspended the food service for a couple months. We plan to raise money at two benefit events this Spring. We need volunteers for the benefits. We also especially need grant writers. Eventually we hope to start a food co-op and a take-out service."

People interested in volunteering should call Patrick Donnelly at 212/420-1828. Donations may be made out to the Tides Foundation — Whole Foods Project. Send to: Patrick Donnelly, Whole Foods Project, 115 E. 23rd St, New York, NY 10010. Thanks, Pamela.

— A fellow veg-evangelist, Jean Thaler, Brooklyn, NY

Dear VivaVegie Society: Please send me your pamphlet *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian*. I've been meaning to write my own for years. When someone demands (in a semi-hostile way) to know why you are a vegetarian, how do you quickly, politely and accurately convey information that has been acquired over years, and spans topics as diverse as ethics, economics, health and environment?

Although well-informed, I am unfortunately not very articulate on demand. I usually end up stuttering some jumbled explanation, or worse, say I prefer not to talk about it! So, maybe your pamphlet is my solution. Thanks!

— Sincerely, AF, Pikesville, MD

**MARCH 20: THE GREAT AMERICAN MEAT-OUT.** If you were at the last New York Vegetarian Society vegetarian food festival October 1st to mark World Vegetarian Day, you know you won't want to miss a repeat of the event. Then, 500 people were in attendance seeking to find out more about vegetarianism and to visit the 15 vegetarian and health oriented vendors who set up booths. The New York Vegetarian Society again plans to sponsor the exposition. This time they're marking The Great American Meat-Out. The event takes place from Noon to 4 p.m. at The Metropolitan Club, 122 E. 83rd St., Cost is \$3.50 at the door or \$2 in advance. Call 212/535-9385 for more information. Be there!

**MARCH 18 - MARCH 21: ECO-VISIONS.** Friends of Animals is sponsoring a conference by women in Washington D.C. It will be a weekend of discussion and dialogue about the important relationship between women, ecology, animals,

and the future of the Earth. Only women will be on the roster of speakers, but men are free to attend.

The conference will take place at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Alexandria, VA. In a location convenient to downtown Washington, DC the Radisson Plaza offers a rustic setting adjacent to nature trails, parks and ponds. Panels and round-table discussions will include such topics as feminism and animal rights, vegetarianism and the future of the Earth, and women in law working for animals.

Featured speakers include: Priscilla Feral, Carol Adams, Betsy Todd, Anne Earle, Karen Davis, Greta Gaard, and Josephine Donovan as well as many more. A few celebrities have also been invited; and vendors will have booths.

Register in advance for \$100; at the door, pay \$125. Four meals are included in the price. Accommodations are additional. Call 202-296-2172 for additional information and/or to help with promotion.

### So, what is The VivaVegie Society?

The VivaVegie Society takes vegetarian advocacy to the streets. VivaVegie advocates confront Mr. and Ms. Pedestrian to get the facts out about their healthful, ethical and environmentally conscious vegetarian diet.

Advocates assemble where there is plenty of pedestrian traffic. They come equipped with brightly-colored T-shirts with vegetarian messages, and plenty of fact-filled information. Founder Pamela Teisler wears the outfit shown on the reverse side of this newsletter. The mission? To distribute, for donation, the flyer, *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian*, written by Pamela Teisler and inspired by John Robbins' book, *Diet for a New America*. The VivaVegie Society has been, and will be in the future, involved with various projects such as **World Vegetarian Day** and **The Great American Meat Out**. Donations can be sent to the address below.

### Learn vegan nutrition through correspondence study

THE ASSOCIATION OF VEGETARIAN DIETITIANS and Nutrition Educators (VEGEDINE) is now offering a home-study course in basic vegetarian/vegan nutrition, under the instruction of George Eisman.

The course covers each of the categories of nutrients relevant to human nutrition, identifies which vegetarian foods these nutrients are found, and shows the relationship between diet and chronic disease risk. The course is designed to be simple enough for the lay person to follow, but challenging enough for the health professional to use to refresh and refine her/his expertise.

Upon successful completion of this 18-unit course, the student will receive a Certificate of Educational Achievement in Vegetarian Nutrition from VEGEDINE. Cost for the course, which includes materials, is \$118, payable, if necessary, by installment. A course book, alone, without the benefit of course instruction costs only \$ 18.95.

The instructor, George Eisman, has taught nutrition courses at the college level since 1980 and regularly lectures at the North American Vegetarian Society's annual vegetarian "Summerfest" conference.

For more information, send an SASE to George Eisman, VEGEDINE Course, 3835 Rt. 414, Burdett, NY 14818.

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### Subscribe to THE VIVAVINE

For \$5./yr., (\$7./yr., foreign) receive 5 bi-monthly issues (no Jul./Aug. issue) plus a complimentary copy of *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian* and your very own personal membership card to The VivaVegie Society.

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