

food and mood

The quarterly newsletter of the Food and Mood Project

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Autumn 2001

The promise of functional foods

By Amanda Geary



Could we soon see 'tranquilizer treats' or 'anti-psychotic snacks' for sale at the supermarket?

Well, probably not – yet – but already we can buy drinks 'designed to boost alertness' as well as cuisine that caters for more physical needs such as improved digestion or heart protection. Caffeine-containing carbonated beverages, yoghurts providing a daily dose of beneficial gut-boosting bacteria and spreads with cholesterol-lowering plant sterols are apparently enjoying healthy sales figures. Food manufacturers are continuing to tempt us with the promises of these 'functional foods', and our appetite for an enhanced eating experience may not yet be satisfied.

Caring for emotional and mental health with good food can take a certain amount of time and effort – trying out new and different ways of

eating, for instance, may mean you need to shop or prepare food differently as well. But the appeal of functional foods is that they can take the fuss out of health-conscious eating and provide health-promoting and apparently nutritious produce without all that effort. Healthy eating on a plate, literally? Perhaps.

Once upon a time it was possible to tell the difference between a recipe for biscuits and one for fish sauce

Blurring the boundaries

A functional food is defined as a food with health-promoting benefits and/or disease-preventing properties over and above its usual nutritional

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

FROM THE EDITOR

This issue marks the start of *Food and Mood's* second year of life and we continue to receive your praise and appreciation for this newsletter. As a not-for-profit organisation, the Food and Mood Project has managed to be self-sustaining without external funding due to the support of people like you – our newsletter readers. Thanks to all those who have voted with their cheque books and subscribed to the newsletter for another 12 months; those who haven't yet subscribed for year two – we need you as well!



Meanwhile, enjoy this issue ...
Amanda Geary
Food and Mood Project Founder

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Explore the relationship between what you eat and how you feel

value. Although there is evidence to support the health benefits offered by some food enhancements food labeling law is vague. According to the consumer magazine 'Which?', food companies don't have to provide evidence to back any health claims they make on the packaging before launching a product, nor do they have to test the products to ensure they contain the claimed amount of the active ingredient. Also, nutrients that previously were added in order to replace those lost in the processing of foods such as the flour in bread or grains in breakfast cereals may now be used to back up claims for the 'added value' of a functional food product.

Where GM foods have broken down genetic barriers between plant and animal species, functional foods are now blurring the boundaries between the ingredients lists. Once upon a time it was possible to tell the difference between a recipe for biscuits and one for fish sauce. Those days are drawing to a close, it would seem, with a functional foods philosophy that appears to want to remove the border that currently separates foods and medicines so that food-eating becomes medicine-taking as well.

Consumers may soon be tempted to abandon ideas of a healthy diet and to increase their omega 3 levels by eating more biscuits

Readers of *Food and Mood* are probably aware of the benefits of polyunsaturated omega-3 oils for improved emotional and mental health and may have taken steps to include some of the foods that contain them (see *Food and Mood* issue no. 3). Those who dislike fish can instead take a daily dose as easy-to-swallow fish oil capsules.

Consumers may soon, however, be tempted to abandon ideas of a healthy diet and to increase their omega 3 levels by eating more biscuits. Food manufacturers recognising the cardio-vascular health benefits of omega-3 oils are now developing food production techniques for the faint hearted by

adding odour-free fish oil to a range of bakery items.

In order to avoid offending consumers who want to have their cakes and cookies and eat them free from the taste of fish flavouring, the food technologists have been summoned to the kitchen. The method currently favoured is to micro-encapsulate the offending fish oil by coating droplets of the oil in milk protein powder. The taste and odour of fish will then remain locked away from the taste-buds until safely further down the digestive tract.



Food as medicine

Let food be your medicine was the advice of Hippocrates, the ancient Greek 'father of modern medicine'. However, this wise counsel now seems to be undergoing repackaging by food manufacturers wanting, instead, to add medicine to food. Recipes may soon seem bland if they don't contain a dash of 'nutraceuticals', or nutritional supplementation of some sort, in the ingredients list. Ultimately, eating may become more of a pharmaceutical rather than a nutritional event.

Functional foods could add to the stress of deciding what's safe to eat

In the consumer trend that would appear to be the 'next organic foods', wheat- and dairy-free produce are being added daily to the product lists of several supermarkets. As a result, rising numbers of food-sensitive shoppers will have been wooed back from the health food shop. Laborious label reading and cautious consuming may have been put 'on the back burner'. But functional foods will change shopping behaviours once more. Omega-3 enriched biscuits, for example, may provide a healthier option for those wedded to their

regular sugary snack, but they may also tempt others back to the biscuit barrel. And, without adequate labelling as part of the package, these particular products could also present a serious health risk to the milk sensitive or fish-allergic shopper. They could add to, rather than reduce, the stress of deciding what's safe to eat.

Was it the chicken or the egg?

BSE and toxins in food have demonstrated how events higher up the food chain can influence the nature of what's on our plate. For example, the importance of eating food grown on selenium rich rather than selenium deplete soils has implications for mental health (see *Food and Mood* issue no. 2). And food sensitivity reactions can be triggered across the generation gap – as is the case of chickens and their eggs.

Those who react to eating eggs can find that a switch to a supply of eggs laid by chickens fed on a different feed can be enough to alleviate their symptoms. In these cases it would seem that it was the corn, the soya or perhaps additives added to the grain to brighten the colour of the egg yolk were, in fact, more to blame for the decline in health.

This relationship between chicken feed and egg quality is now being exploited by the functional food merchants. Omega-3 rich eggs come 'heartily recommended' from a food producer also offering to improve the heart health of its customers. And the reason the manufacturer of these eggs can make this claim is because it feeds its chickens linseeds – which, as health conscious vegetarians will know, is an excellent non-fish source of essential omega-3 fats. The beneficial oils in the linseeds eaten by the hen become incorporated into its eggs, where they are available to the consumer in concentrated amounts.

Vote with your purse

All of this is happening, of course, because many of us would seem to prefer to help ourselves to better health by popping a pill than changing our food-purchasing behaviours. The multi-million dollar nutritional supplement industry, who are only too

willing to supply this need, can vouch for that. Functional foods which can now combine our favourite food-eating and pill-popping activities would seem to promise so much – and for so little effort on our part. However, functional foods can also be misleading in their health claims, expensive and full of salt, sugar and saturated fat.

With the consumer vote on issues of food supply and production now apparently more powerful than the ballot box, what will the mood-conscious shopper choose to buy – omega-3 enhanced biscuits, fish oil capsules or fillet of mackerel?

The Mindful Shopper

When the trip to the supermarket becomes a dazed dash between trolley park and checkout, the decision about dinner will be, more likely, unconscious habit than mindful choice. To regain consciousness as a food consumer, every once-in-a-while try awarding yourself extra time for a leisurely stroll down the supermarket aisle.

When you do, why not see how many functional foods you can find? Remember, if you've ever eaten bread or a breakfast cereal, 'fortified with added vitamins', you have eaten what is now known as a 'functional food'. Be aware that many potential functional food 'ingredients' are already naturally present in the foods we eat – such as the phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables.

So, free from any added health claims, here's our beginner's guide to some functional foods already on the shelves:

- **Bread with added folic acid (folate)**
- **Breakfast cereals with added folic acid (folate)**
- **Carbonated drinks containing caffeine, taurine (an amino acid), herbs and vitamins**
- **Eggs with omega-3 oils**
- **Fermented milks or yoghurts with 'live' probiotic bacteria or 'prebiotics' such as the fructo-oligosaccharide inulin which 'feed' the 'friendly' gut bacteria**
- **Margarines enriched with plant sterols and stanols**
- **Soya products containing phyto-oestrogens such as the isoflavins which includes diadzein and genistein**

Food/supplement cupboard

TMG, DMG – or is it all the SAME?

Trimethylglycine (TMG), its close cousin dimethylglycine (DMG) and their relative S-adenosyl-methionine (SAME) are all similar substances within a chemical family known as 'methyl donors'. They are all brain nutrients responsible, in various ways, for our moods and mental health.

Research into their use as supplements is showing promising results for the treatment of depression and also the symptoms of autism, although they do need to be used with caution. Food and Mood has learned that Charlie, a four year old boy diagnosed with autism, spoke the word 'Mummy' clearly for the first time just two days after he'd started taking TMG. Charlie's mother is aware of the importance of a combined dietary and nutritional approach for autism but is convinced that the TMG is key to Charlie's continuing progress.

Unfortunately the cost of these substances reflects their 'cutting edge' status as nutritional supplements. Capsule, powder and liquid forms are available and they also can come combined with folic acid and vitamin B12 'helper nutrients'. The latest prices quoted by the Nutri Centre in London are as follows:

TMG 175mg 250 caps £18.35
 DMG 125mg 250 caps £36.70
 SAME 200mg 100 caps £99.95

The Nutri Centre has a comprehensive mail order supplement service and can be contacted on 0207 436 5122 or visit www.nutricentre.com. Remember that *Food and Mood* subscribers are entitled to a 20% discount on Nutri Centre products.

- Onions and garlic contain methyl donors and TMG can be found in broccoli, spinach and shellfish. Much of the commercially produced TMG is produced from sugar beet.

Good mood food

Mind the snack

Feeling stressed? Can't stand the heat in the kitchen? Need to nibble on something quickly to stop your blood sugar plunging you into a state of confusion, irritability or depression? Many of the ingredients in the Mind Meal can be enjoyed instantly as well as being combined into a tasty and nutritious dinner (see *Food and Mood* issue no.1). So, for a feel good snack, kit yourself out with any of the foods from the Mind Meal shopping list:

- A handful of pumpkin and/or sunflower seeds
- Dried apricots (select the unsulphured variety to avoid the possibility of the sulphur dioxide (E220) preservative triggering an asthma attack or destroying valuable vitamins. (Ref: Secret Ingredients by P Cox & P Brusseau).
- Oat cakes (eat with the dried apricots for an instant DIY 'flapjack' taste or spread with nut 'butter' such as almond or cashew nut butters).
- An apple (a low GI or slow energy releasing fruit that keeps you going for longer).
- A banana (can be mucous-forming but also contains some ready-made mood-boosting serotonin).
- A handful of nuts (the walnuts used in the Mind Meal contain some good mood omega-3 fatty acids or you could choose brazil nuts or almonds to benefit from their anti-depressant minerals selenium and magnesium).

Fiesta of food and fun

Hoping to raise awareness of mental health issues and the importance of good food for emotional and mental wellbeing, a food and mood stall seemed the obvious way for a mental health charity to take part in a local food 'fiesta'. Mandy Williamson of Exeter and East Devon Mind reports on the surprises and successes of an eventful day...

The aim of the Exeter 'Food Fiesta' was to have a fun day offering local food producers a chance to show off their wares to Festival goers. And five local charities were given the chance to have a fund-raising stall at the event.

Our plans in advance were rather grand: an Italian style alfresco dining table with loads of samples of good mood food and a variety of fundraising games. We ended up making it simpler to manage and more appropriate for an English rather than an Italian summer! (Our plans had been put together in the optimistic springtime!).

Only one person said they didn't like the food, everyone else gobbled it

up and stayed chatting and collecting information. The good mood herbs sold well, as did leaflets. However I hadn't realised how mean people can be about Raffle Tickets.

We had a brilliant raffle. I'd asked local shops for discounts rather than donations, as I wanted specific types of prizes (popcorn makers, aroma relaxation bags, water filters etc). The main prize was all the ingredients of the Mind Meal, donated by Sainsburys. But tickets didn't sell particularly well and we only just broke even. However, as a publicity stunt it was effective and it did draw people to the stall. Book sales were not too impressive on the day but a week later they sold like hot cakes at the Health Authority Conference.

At one point the stall was blown by a sudden gale and needed salvaging by our chairman, Harry Temple, an expert sailor who did all the labouring on the day.

One of the best things was that it was such a positive and attractive



Loads of people really enjoyed the Mind Meal, especially toddlers and babies – which astonished me, as I didn't think pesto and mackerel would appeal particularly

message we were selling, and it offered an opportunity for people to get and share information about mental health in a happy and empowering way. It was fun being the most interesting and busiest stall – being a mental health charity we are not used to people so openly approaching our stands. Brilliant!

Mandy Williamson, Co-ordinator, Mind in Exeter and East Devon

The Food and Mood Stall



Free food: dishes from the Mind Meal and good mood snacks from The Food and Mood Handbook

Interactive display: people were invited to add their own 'blocks' or 'leaves' to our 'Blocks to Better Eating' brick wall and 'Tree of Solutions' inspired by The Food and Mood Handbook

Free information such as the 'Caffeine Quiz' from the Handbook and 'Did you know?' food facts from the website plus a sale of Good Mood Herbs, books and newsletters.

Raffle: all the ingredients for the Mind Meal plus other goodies



As a mental health charity we are not used to people approaching our stands so openly

Stress affects eating behaviour

Rachel Manser, psychology student at the University of Sussex, has examined some of the scientific evidence for the depression-relieving benefits of the Mind Meal's ingredients and shares her conclusions with *Food and Mood*.

'The inclusion of omega-3 fatty acids in the recipe seems very promising. Unfortunately most of the studies in this area only measure the effects of short-term dietary manipulations. It would be useful to test the longer-term effects of the nutrients in the 'Mind Meal'. This would allow examination of any more permanent alleviations of depressed mood that this very cheap and promising therapy may yield' concluded Rachel.

That people are less likely to eat properly when suffering with stress has been confirmed by recent scientific research⁽¹⁾. This means that, for some people, even eating easy meals such as the Mind Meal can be too difficult during stressful times.

'The existence of such a relationship between stress and subsequent food choice may pose a significant problem for the use of dietary manipulations in people with depression' commented Rachel, who then suggested 'perhaps a 'Mind Snack' would be a more appropriate idea than a 'Mind Meal?'. (Good idea – please see *Good Mood Food*, this issue – Ed)

- The mental health charity Mind in conjunction with the Food and Mood Project recently launched the 'Mind Meal' (for full details please see *Food and Mood* issue no. 1 or www.foodandmood.org). The Meal's nutritional basis is a combination of scientific research and reports from clinicians and others who are investigating the food-mood relationship.

(1) Oliver, G & Wardle, J (1999) Perceived effects of stress on food choice. *Physiology and Behaviour* 66: 511-515.

Free fish oils from the Institute of Psychiatry

Dr Frangou's team at the Institute of Psychiatry, London is recruiting volunteers with a diagnosis of manic depression who are willing to take fish oil capsules to see if the supplement can stabilize mood and reduce depression. The fish oils will be taken in conjunction with any other medication and volunteers will need to take the capsules for 12 weeks and to be interviewed on how they feel. A contribution to travel expenses is offered and fish oils can be provided free of charge after the study. Recruitment onto the programme is on-going throughout the year. If you or anyone you know is interested in taking part, please ring 0207 848 0425.

Information from *Pendulum*, the journal of the Manic Depression Fellowship

What's Worked for You?

- Do you have experience of mental distress and/or of using mental health services?
- Have you tried a nutritional or dietary approach to managing or improving your emotional or mental health?
- Would you like the opportunity to reflect on this process in a private and confidential interview with Amanda Geary?

Your experiences can be a valuable guide to others who are interested in exploring the food-mood connection. This University-based research project aims to discover the shared themes and important issues relating to the nutritional approach to mental health care and to produce recommendations to guide individuals interested in self-help as well as carers and professionals working in the mental health services. If you think you might be interested in taking part then please contact Amanda at the Food and Mood Project on 01273 478108, write or email amanda.geary@foodandmood.org.

Banish the bran

I have read with great interest an article in the New Zealand Herald about your book the Food and Mood Handbook.

To say the content of this article has struck a chord would be the understatement. Quite by accident I stumbled across the notion that wheat – and thus gluten – could be a cause of extreme tiredness. Over a twelve month period I have relieved my diet of most gluten products and the difference in my general health is profoundly good. I once remember, back in England about 10 years ago, having severe bowel release problems and a well meaning doctor said 'eat more bran'. This I did, but the adverse consequences I suspect you can guess. There is a definite relationship between wheat germ, as well as some other cereals, and CFS [Chronic Fatigue Syndrome].

Far from being subtle, for some people the areas of diet the article pin-points can be devastating. I am more and more convinced the so-called healthy Kiwi diet topped off with mountains of white bread and lakes of milk are for many party to severe depression and consequently mental illness. This is becoming a part of my concern as a counsellor when dealing with clients.

Your book is on my shopping list, and, I urge your organisation to distribute in this country. This is important stuff. Did you know this country has the highest quota of teenage depression – and the consequences – in the Western World?

GRAHAM BRADRETH WILLS,
AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

Those who wish to continue adding bran to their breakfast cereals but are concerned to avoid wheat can substitute oat bran or rice bran instead – Ed.

**Write a letter that is printed and receive an extra issue on your newsletter subscription!
Deadline for next issue: 31 October 2001.**

Wheat-free, gluten-free or grain-free?

by Michael Franklin

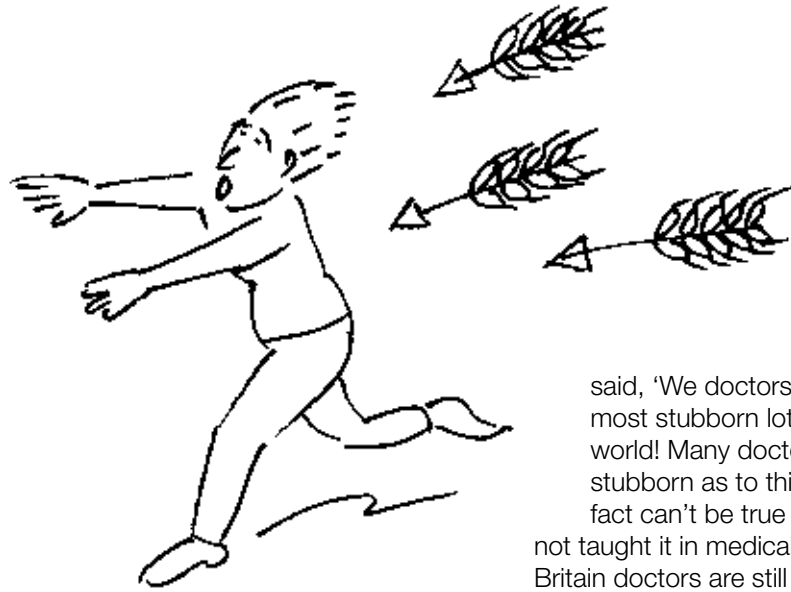
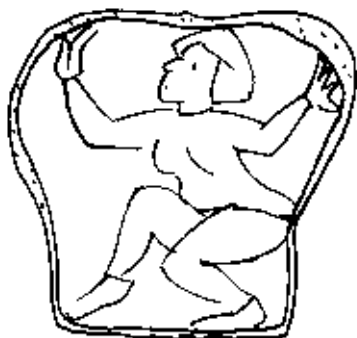
THE CLIENT'S NAME HAS BEEN CHANGED TO PRESERVE PRIVACY

Underneath the shining veneer there was a problem: Janet was unbelievably depressed. She found it hard to get out of bed in the mornings but she forced herself because she wanted to keep up the impression of being a dutiful wife and mother. But as soon as she was left on her own she found it hard to do anything. Her GP had put her on Prozac but that was four months ago and still things were no better.

Janet had read more than one magazine article suggesting there was a link between emotions and food. Was her depression caused by what she ate? It hardly seemed possible – as far as she could tell she ate a very healthy diet. Admittedly, she did get a certain amount of bloating and in the last six months had put on about half a stone but in all other respects she seemed to be physically very healthy.

A hidden allergy

Intolerance of certain foods that are perfectly healthy for the majority of us is nothing new. In Roman times Lucretius said 'one man's food is another man's poison'. Chaucer referred to 'blakke bread' as a cause of depression. Down the centuries people have had instincts about how food could be linked with the emotions. But they found it hard, of course, to support their suspicions with solid evidence. It was only in the 1950s and 60s that certain doctors, mostly American, began writing about



60-70% of symptoms diagnosed as psychosomatic are in fact undiagnosed reactions to food, inhalants and chemicals

how they found their patients' mental and emotional states to be sometimes linked to food. Dr Walter Alvarez described how headaches and dulling of the brain could be brought on by food. Drs Wrinkel, Randolph and Zeller in their book entitled *Food Allergy* described how depression, feeling drugged, hallucinations, insomnia could all be caused by food. Dr Speer, Dr Rowe, Dr Mandell and Dr Randolph all wrote books describing the astonishing power of food to produce not just physical symptoms but mental ones as well. In fact Dr Randolph went as far as to say that 60-70 percent of symptoms diagnosed as psychosomatic are in fact undiagnosed reactions to food, inhalants and chemicals.

Reluctant to change

All the above books are well written, believable and convincing – to even the most intelligent and sceptical of laymen. So why have they not been embraced by doctors? Maybe Dr Alvarez supplied the answer when he

said, 'We doctors are the most stubborn lot in the world! Many doctors are so stubborn as to think that a fact can't be true if they were not taught it in medical school'. In Britain doctors are still taught practically nothing about nutrition and allergies as part of their medical training.

In 1976, for the first time, a British doctor published a book about food allergies and mental and physical symptoms. Called *Not all in the Mind* by Dr Richard Mackarness, it sold a lot of copies and garnered much publicity. A few GPs, fed up with not seeing any improvement in their patients' symptoms, read it, were fascinated, and went to meet Dr Mackarness at Basingstoke General Hospital where he was practising psychiatry. They were convinced; they left the NHS and set up in private practice. Many of those 20 or 30 doctors are still in practice today. But they, along with certain clinical nutritionists like myself, remain the only practitioners who really specialise in exploring the connection between food, mind and mood.

Too much wheat

Back to Janet. When I analysed her diet it became obvious that she was doing something often seen in people with food intolerances: eating far too few foods. For breakfast she had Weetabix and semi-skimmed milk. For elevenses, two biscuits and a cup of tea, for lunch, a salad sandwich with either ham, cheese or tuna. At about 4.30 she had a slice of carrot cake or a flapjack and at 7pm she had dinner – always a salad, occasionally with

chicken or fish but more often with pasta or couscous.

It doesn't sound too unhealthy, does it? In fact, it is fairly close to the sort of diet recommended by dietitians in hospitals. But unfortunately many dietitians don't know about (or refuse to recognise) food intolerances so they don't spot the clues that suggest food intolerance.

It is important in such a case to also cut out all the cereal grains which are closely related to wheat: rye, oats, barley, corn, millet.

An experienced observer would notice that Janet's diet comprised of too much wheat. She ate it four or five times a day. That, coupled with the fact that her depression was always at its worst in the mornings, and often lifted as the day went on, strongly suggested wheat was her problem. I therefore recommended an exclusion diet (no wheat or other cereal grains for 10 days) and then challenge testing by reintroduction of the suspect foods.

It is important in such a case to also cut out all the cereal grains which



are closely related to wheat: rye, oats, barley, corn, millet. The last two don't contain gluten but gluten is often a red herring; it applies only in the case of coeliac disease. Most people with wheat intolerance don't have coeliac disease, they simply have food intolerances.

Once Janet removed these grains from her diet, she was her old sparkling self

Because oats, rye, corn, barley and millet are all very closely related – who, apart from farmers, can tell them apart when they are growing in fields in the summer? – an intolerance of wheat often means the patient is not much better off with one of these other grains. Rice is different. Although in the same food family, it is sufficiently different to wheat (I call it a second cousin of wheat) for it not to be a problem for most British people.

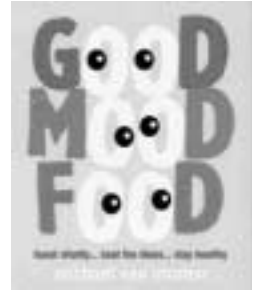
Once Janet removed these grains from her diet, she was her old sparkling self. Her depression lifted and she lost the extra half stone in weight. She was amazed at the connection between her diet and her mood.

Michael Franklin is a nutritionist practising in Oxford and London. He can be contacted at the Oxford Nutrition and Allergy Centre on 01865 459553.

Book corner

Good Mood Food

by Michael van Straten
published by Cassell & Co., 2001
160 pages
price £10.99



The chapter headings in this colourful cookbook that range from 'Vitality Foods' and 'Brain Foods', through 'Sexy Foods' and 'Macho Foods' to 'sensitive foods' will give a flavour of van Straten's approach to the subject. And the amusing recipe titles such as 'Tart's Delight', 'Flirts Flan' or 'Peaceful Prune Pud' need not detract from the broad menu of good food on offer. Herbs and their therapeutic benefits are also included along with some nutritional information about each dish. Perhaps a gift to tempt a reluctant teenager to take an interest in the idea that food does affect mood?

Diet Intervention and Autism

by Marilyn le Breton
published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001
232 pages
£12.95



Written by the mother of Jack, a young boy with autism, for other parents wanting to try the gluten-free, casein-free diet that has been demonstrated to help some of these children. Monosodium glutamate and aspartame are also included and there are lists of the 'Good Guys' and the 'Bad Guys' to guide your food shopping. In the book that Marilyn wishes had been available to her she addresses parents' concerns in a friendly and accessible style. FAQs such as 'Is the diet too difficult and time-consuming; too strict; too expensive?' are tackled sensibly and there is a handy selection of basic recipes. An engaging and easy read, and a useful resource as well.

Webwatch

www.mdf.org.uk

website of the manic depression fellowship

www.mentality.org.uk

a new charity dedicated to the promotion of mental health

www.connects.org.uk

a new mental health and learning disabilities portal (or gateway to further information) from the mental health foundation

www.equazen.com

information and products relating to omega 3 and omega 6 essential fatty acids

www.tasteofthewild.co.uk

mail order food and products which cater for a wide variety of diets, allergies and intolerances

www.motherhemp.com

information and products made from hemp – an excellent vegetarian source of omega-3 oils

www.environmentalmedicinefoundation.co.uk

a charity concerned to establish the scientific facts about environmental medicine and to increase public, medical, commercial and governmental awareness of its efficacy

www.april.org.uk

Adverse Psychiatric Reactions Information Link website for adverse effects of psychiatric drugs and medicines

www.kinvarasmokedsalmon.com

if you like your smoked salmon both wild and irish then this is the place to get it!

Smell your sweet cravings away!

The answer to uncontrollable food cravings may be lingering right under your nose. This is the claim of the manufacturers of a new 'crave control' device that aims to harness the potent power of smell in order to satisfy the urge to eat sweet foods.

Anyone who has suffered a bad head cold and a stuffed up nose will have experienced first hand the importance of the sense of smell for generating an appetite for and enjoyment of food.

Food can have a direct and potent connection with mood that by-passes the mouth and digestive system altogether

The pleasure of tasting food is almost entirely due to volatile substances breaking away from the food and drifting up into the nostrils. Here, the airborne food molecules become attached to the lining of the nose where they have a direct link via special smell receptors to the nerve cells of the brain. In this way food can have a direct and potent connection with mood that by-passes the mouth and digestive system altogether.

Any professional sniffer of smells, such as those responsible for creating expensive perfumes, will tell you that they have to give their noses regular rests from the delicate art of aroma detecting. This is because the sense of smell soon fades and so that which produced delight or even distaste can soon become dulled to indifference.

So how does all this relate to controlling our cravings? Well, on the understanding that the olfactory senses can be saturated by excessive smelling, and that the sense of taste appears to be in fact 95% aroma, the idea is that we can intentionally overload our sense of smell and sniff ourselves away from the desire to actually taste chocolate (or whatever is your particular weakness).

The manufacturers of Crave Control claim that spending £19.95 for their vanilla-blend scented patches is more effective than DIY sniffing for controlling food cravings. This, they argue, is because the patches are designed to slowly release their chemistry to 'progressively and continually saturate the olfactory senses'. More patches, designed to help people resist the temptation to indulge in salty and savory snacks are, apparently, being planned. But whether either the shop bought patches (available from Boots) or sniffing the biscuit barrel is effective remains to be seen. Or smelt.

Food and Mood newsletter

In the next (winter) issue out December 2001

Deadline for contributions 31st October 2001

food and mood

The Food and Mood Project was started in 1998 with a Millennium Award from Mind, the mental health charity. The aim of the Project is to empower individuals to explore the relationship between diet, nutrition and emotional and mental health, and to share this information with others.

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Talks and workshops

These are an opportunity to explore the relationship between what you eat and how you feel with Amanda Geary, founder of the Food and Mood Project

Thursday 13th September 2001 7pm – 8.30pm (Talk)

hosted by: Mind in St Albans

venue: The Friends Meeting House, 112 Southdown Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire.

cost: free

open to: the general public

bookings/further information: Mind in St Albans 01727 865070

Wednesday 26th September 2001, 7pm – 9pm (Talk/Workshop)

hosted by: Camden Manic Depression Fellowship Group

venue: Gospel Oak Methodist Church, Agincourt Road, London NW3

cost: £5 (Camden MDF members free)

open to: MDF members only

bookings/further information: Manic Depression Fellowship 0207 793 2600

Thursday 12th October 2001 time to be confirmed (Workshop)

hosted by: Mind in Exeter and East Devon Ltd

venue: St Sidwells Community Cafe, Sidwell St, Exeter

cost: £20

bookings/further information: Mind in Exeter and East Devon Ltd 01392 204499

Saturday 10th November 2001 1.30pm-5pm (Workshop)

hosted by: Brighton Natural Health Centre

venue: BNHC, 27 Regent Street, Brighton BN1 1UL

cost: £15

open to: the general public

bookings/further information: Brighton Natural Health Centre 01273 600010

• If you can't travel to these venues and would like to host a Food and Mood talk or workshop in your area please contact Amanda on 01273 478108.