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## THE DIET-HEART QUESTION

By Corinne LeBovit

The scientific community appears to be in general agreement that modifying the diet and activity patterns of the U.S. population would be a prudent course toward decreasing the incidence of heart disease and stroke. The speakers at a seminar sponsored by the American Heart Association in April based their evidence on a great variety of epidemiological studies and clinical trials.

Comparison of populations with low and high incidence of hypertension indicate correlations with activity and diet even for children as young as 5 years. Among the factors associated with greater risk are sedentariness, obesity, cigarette smoking, diabetes, stress, and a diet high in saturated fat, sugar, salt, and cholesterol.

Dr. Henry Blackburn of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, a speaker at the Conference, stated that prevalence of low activity levels, obesity, and related high blood lipid levels and hypertension are socio-cultural and can be safely prevented. He believes that such prevention requires a mass strategy which would involve the educational system, health professionals, government at all levels, food producers and deliverers, as well as individuals. An example of the kind of change he discussed was modification of dairy and meat products all the way from animal breeding to manufacturing, marketing, grading, and advertising.

Dr. Blackburn cited Norway as the only country that has a national food and nutrition policy aimed at health and reduction of preventable disease. The Norwegian policy includes evolutionary controls throughout the food system to move the national diet toward desired goals.

### USDA Proposes Alternative Requirements For Pre-Cooked Beef Roast

"Rare" pre-cooked beef roast would no longer be a rarity if pro-

posed changes in federal meat inspection rules go into effect.

Carol Tucker Foreman, assistant secretary of agriculture for food and consumer services, said that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposal would allow meat processors to use longer cooking time-lower temperature processes as an alternative, but safe, cooking procedure in the product's preparation.

In the wake of several food poisoning episodes caused by rare pre-cooked beef roast, USDA's Food Safety and Quality Service (FSQS), last September 2, invoked an emergency rule requiring commercially pre-cooked beef roast be brought to an internal temperature of 145 degrees fahrenheit—63 degrees centigrade. That temperature destroys salmonella organisms that can cause food poisoning, but it also cooks the meat "medium rare" to "well done." In effect, the internal temperature requirement made it impossible to provide consumers with a pre-cooked "rare" beef roast.

Meat trade associations subsequently funded studies to find alternative processing procedures ensuring a safe product without the necessity of cooking it to the 145-degree internal temperature. The resulting recommended procedures were studied by USDA and found to be equal in salmonella destruction to the procedure now required. These procedures, proposed today as alternative requirements for the preparation of commercially pre-cooked beef roast, involve various combinations of cooking times and temperatures. Some of the combinations would permit the retention of the reddish appearance characteristic of "rare" beef roast.

Essentially, bacteria such as salmonella are destroyed when a product is cooked at a high temperature for a short period or at a lower temperature for a longer period. However, it is the higher temperatures that cause the color of meat to change from red to gray—long cooking at lower temperatures causes little change in meat color.

The proposal, published in the May 2 *Federal Register*, includes among other requirements, a table of alternative cooking times and temperatures for preparing pre-cooked beef roast that is salmonella-free but retains the "rare" appearance.

### USDA Revises "How to Buy Dairy Products"

A recently revised U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) booklet can help you choose among the various kinds of dairy products on the market.

"How to Buy Dairy Products" includes a dairy dictionary and explains the USDA quality grades found on some manufactured dairy products, such as butter, nonfat dry milk, and Cheddar cheese. Tips on using and storing dairy products as well as a milk equivalencies chart are included in the booklet.

"How to Buy Dairy Products" is one of 14 booklets in a series of publications issued by USDA's Food Safety and Quality Service (FSQS). The series gives consumers information on U.S. grades for food, tells them how to use this knowledge of quality, and provides other food buying advice.

Other booklets include: How to Buy Fresh Fruits (G-141), How to Buy Fresh Vegetables (G-143), How to Buy Eggs (G-144), How to Buy Beef Steaks (G-145), How to Buy Beef Roasts (G-146), How to Buy Poultry (G-157), How to Buy Meat for Your Freezer (G-166), How to Buy Canned and Frozen Vegetables (G-167), How to Buy Dry Beans, Peas, and Lentils (G-177), How to Buy Canned and Frozen Fruits (G-191), How to Buy Cheese (G-193), How to Buy Lamb (G-195), and How to Buy Potatoes (G-198). All of the publications are also available in Spanish except How to Buy Potatoes.

Single free copies of "How to Buy Dairy Products" (G-201), and any of the other booklets, may be obtained from the Office of Governmental and Public Affairs (GPA), USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Please order by booklet number.