

The \$41 Million Dollar Pyramid

Thanks to star-spangled media blitzes and a government campaign of lies, many Americans are led to believe that meat and dairy products are essential components of a well balanced and healthy diet. I'm sure most high school students recall the numerous months in class spent going over again and again the "Food Pyramid" put out by the USDA.

This Food Pyramid promises a healthy life for its users, however, the only good it does is for the cattle farmers and the politicians which gladly take fat campaign contributions. After years of classroom and television lies it's about time there were some actual facts.

The truth is that since the Food Pyramid's beginnings in the early 90's it has been steeped in corruption. In 1988, under mounting pressure from studies showing that meat and dairy clearly do not deserve portions equal to grains and vegetables, the USDA decided to withdraw its "Basic Four" diagram and start work on the Food Pyramid. After about four years of research the USDA was finished with its diagram, and at the same time the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) had completed their version.

Just prior to the Food Pyramid's release, citing leaks from eager members of the USDA, the Washington Post wrote a controversial article contrasting the USDA's Food Pyramid with the PCRM's new diagram. It turned out that the PCRM's chart was entirely based on plants while the USDA's Food Pyramid, while having given large portions to grains, still gave equal portions of meat and dairy products to fruits and vegetables.

In a meeting the day after the Post's article ran, representatives from the meat and dairy industry went crazy on USDA Secretary Edward Madigan for the leaks and bad press. Staffers close to Madigan reported that they had never seen him so angry, and went as far as to say he was "livid." Quickly, the Food Pyramid's release was cancelled, reportedly in need of more testing. A year later, after the controversy had settled, the USDA released the Food Pyramid with few changes: this time the pyramid called for one less serving of meat and dairy than fruits and vegetables.

You may be asking yourself why there are such discrepancies between what the government and PCRM believe is a healthy diet. To answer that question let's look at the facts. Congress, over the past decade, has received more than \$41 million in campaign contributions from the food industry, more than a third of that going to members of the House and Senate agricultural committees. This includes \$9 million from the meat and poultry industry, \$3.1 million from the National Restaurant Association, \$1.4 from the Cattleman's Beef Association and \$1.7 million from the



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McDonald's Corporation. Also, let us take into consideration that in 1994 former USDA Secretary Mike Espy resigned under allegations that he had accepted illegal corporate gifts. After a lengthy investigation, Espy was charged with receiving illegal bribes from seven corporations and was indicted on 39 felony counts including mail and wire fraud, violating the Meat Inspection Act of 1907, receiving illegal gratuities and making false statements.

Should the American people be trusting the USDA for honest health information? If you don't already know, the two pieces of the Food Pyramid that are in question are the meat and dairy sections that receive almost equal priority to the fruit and vegetable sections. Mounds upon mounds of data has clearly shown that meat and dairy do not belong in the pyramid at all, and that the benefits they do provide can be easily found in fruits and vegetables without the dangerous side effects.

The claim that meat belongs in a well balanced diet is completely false. According to the American Cancer Society at least one third of all annual cancer deaths in the U.S. and up to 80% of colon, breast and prostate cancer are due to consumption of fatty foods, particularly meat. Also, red meats have been shown to give women twice the chance of colon cancer and raise the risk of getting heart disease by 57% in all adults, according to an Oxford study. Another study in Uruguay showed that those women who regularly consumed red meats had 4.2 times the chance of getting breast cancer than those who consumed a plant based diet.

When one considers this, plus the fact that there has never been a study to show that red meat has any long term benefits for humans, it's amazing that the government has given no warning about it. However, the government has no problem spending billions of tax dollars warning children about the dangers of smoking tobacco, which causes less cancer and less deaths than red meat.

There are many people that believe red meat is terrible for their health but regularly consume white meats and fish as a safe alternative. Despite what they may believe, 80% of all food related illnesses and 75% of all food related deaths come from the bacteria salmonella and campylobacteria which are mainly found in chicken. As for fish, one serving of salmon contains 74 mg. of cholesterol, the same as that of a T - Bone steak. Besides, the prized omega-3 fatty acid found in fish can be found in a variety of fruits and vegetables. Another factor to take into consideration is that 43% of salmon, 25% of swordfish and 50% of lake whitefish contain PCB, a synthetic liquid that was outlawed in 1976 because it caused cancer. PCB accumulates in the body and become increasingly toxic as more and more is consumed.

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