

DAVID
RUSSELL ON ...

The fight against trans fats



The latest news from Hollywood is earlier this year California became the first US state to ban restaurants and food retailers from using trans fats: processed fats, with a host of health concerns. The new legislation will take effect in 2010 and follows the lead of some American cities, including New York, Philadelphia and Seattle, which have already banned trans fats. Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, said that this represented a “strong step toward creating a healthier future”.

Trans fats are vegetable oils that have undergone a chemical process called hydrogenation, to turn them from liquid to solid. This makes them hugely valuable to the food industry as they artificially harden products like margarine and increase the shelf life of processed foods. They are found in everything from cakes and biscuits to packet soups, stock cubes and chocolate.

In 2006 a review in *The New England Journal of Medicine* stated that up to 19 per cent of heart attacks and related deaths could be prevented simply by eliminating trans fats from our food. These fats also block brain function by taking up the position of omega 3 fats – the good fats from fish oil – to inhibit neurotransmitter function and upset the brain’s ability to process information. With rates of heart disease and dementia soaring in the UK, surely banning trans fats would go a considerable way towards protecting our physical and mental health.

According to the US Food and Drug Administration, average Americans eat a whopping 2.14kg of trans fats each year. Like cigarettes, there is no safe level of consumption so it is important that people are safeguarded from trans fats when eating out.

I hope Britain will catch up with California and instigate a similar ban on the use of trans fats in restaurants and food production. Some manufacturers such as Sainsbury’s and Marks and Spencer have already taken steps to eliminate trans fats from their food. In the meantime, you can avoid these damaging fats by checking ingredients. Don’t buy anything listing trans fats, or their alter egos: hydrogenated fats and partially hydrogenated fats. While you’re at it, why not make your menus trans fat free? It might just make your customers stay healthy and return.

CHOCOLATE WEEK

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Now in its fifth year, Chocolate Week is the UK’s biggest chocolate event – a week-long celebration of fine chocolate with talks, tastings and demonstrations taking place



Indulge in Chocolate Week.

around the country. Taking place from 13–19 October, Chocolate Week promotes the exceptional chocolatiers we now have in the UK and encourages people to visit our wonderful, indulgent chocolate shops.

Events organised so far include a chocolate masterclass at William Curley, a Children’s hour at Melt, a chocolate & cheese tasting and chocolate & port or wine tastings. These events and many more will be listed on the website – www.chocolate-week.co.uk.

Divine, the leading Fairtrade chocolate brand co-owned by cocoa farmers, sponsors the week and has some exciting events. Divine is also collaborating with two-Michélin-star chef Michael Caines to develop new chocolate dishes for his hotels and restaurants to showcase during the week.

NEW TRAINING KITCHENS FOR SOUTH DOWNS COLLEGE

A major chef training college has installed state-of-the-art kitchens to train the chefs of tomorrow. South Downs College’s new kitchens with the installation of a high-functioning Charvet cooking suite.

Gerry Shurman, head of catering, hospitality and travel at South Downs College said, “We are delighted with the kitchens, which were finished in time for the start of a new term. South Downs College is recognised as an outstanding provider of hospitality and catering courses, and prepares students to work in the nation’s top kitchens.

Over the last five years, the team at BF Engineering has gradually replaced and upgraded all our equipment to ensure our students learn in the very best environment.”



The Charvet cooking suite.