

DAVID RUSSELL ON...

Illusions of Plenty



Take a moment to think...

Our desire for sweetness is instinctive. During our evolution natural sweetness directed us towards ripe fruits and vegetables and away from poisonous plants that mostly tasted bitter. Natural sweetness is frequently linked to rich sources of essential trace elements and minerals. For good health we need seven minerals in relatively large quantities, calcium, magnesium, phosphorous, potassium, sodium, sulphur and chloride, the so called macro minerals. In addition the body needs a number of trace elements, including copper, chromium, selenium, zinc and iron etc. Fruit and vegetables grown on 'fertile' soil and animals fed on products grown on 'fertile' soil will provide all these elements.

Fresh foods 'did' taste sweet but no longer. Many are harvested under ripe, to extend their shelf life and lessen damage in their 'food miles' journey – reducing nutritional content. Many are robbed of their trace elements, growing on exhausted soils our staple foods have been 'dumbed down'.

We are 50 years into a mass experiment in human nutrition. A result of this is the degeneration of nutrition and a wave of sickness. Could the fact that we have changed our basic foods be responsible for the current health catastrophe? In 1973 we spent £3.2 billion on the NHS by 2004 it had risen to £98 billion.

Check this out – it was the 1947 Agricultural Act that drove farmers down a route of chemical production. Nitrogen compounds are now the work horses of modern farming and they are degrading every day foods. Nitrogen fertilisers weaken plant structures creating excessive growth. This creates crops prone to disease and when used as feed are unlikely to promote healthy animals. The result is frequent use of antibiotics.

What is my point?

Today's produce has little in common with nutrient rich pre-industrial society. Chemical farming, poor soil management has robbed the foods of their health giving minerals and antioxidants.

Molecular gastronomy and theatre cooking are of little significance, today's fresh produce is all show and no substance.

What can we do?

Reassess your purchasing criteria, no longer can this be based on the outdated price alone criteria. Our customers' knowledge base is growing, their desire to know the origin of raw products, transportation methods, nutrient values has become a driving force in their decision to purchase.



Coffee consumption is on the up in pubs

Fancy a jar?

The UK is becoming a nation of coffee connoisseurs who think it's more sophisticated to have a hot drink than a cold one in trendy bars, according to a survey by Fairtrade coffee company Percol. Instead of alcohol 20% now go to the pub to drink cappuccino, 62% of women say their favourite coffee drink in pubs and bars is frothy cappuccino, while almost as many men (61%) prefer the hard stuff, espresso. Overall, young people – under 35 – choose cappuccino.

Half of us would prefer to go to a bar or pub that served Fairtrade coffee and almost half (40%) said they'd rather have Fairtrade than an ordinary coffee variety, wherever they drank it.

Brian Chapman, who founded

Percol, said: "Coffee is becoming more like wine, with drinkers becoming more discerning. We have found that people are increasingly more interested in where their coffee comes from as they are more influenced by Fairtrade and the desire to be a responsible customer."

The UK's coffee shop market is now worth £450m, a rise of 109% since 1999, according to Mintel. The arrival of American style chains like Starbucks and Costa Coffee have been credited with boosting consumer interest in coffee, which has become the second most traded commodity behind oil.
www.percol.co.uk

Tools you can trust

The packingsolutionscompany Huhtamaki has come up with the Polarity range of drinks tumblers, ideal foriced drinks and smoothies this summer. Made from APET they come with either flat or domed lids.

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