

9 Scariest Food Facts

By David Zinczenko with Matt Goulding / Jul 27, 2011

There's a scene in the 1973 movie *Soylent Green* where food shortages cause people to riot in the street, and the throng becomes so unruly that front-loading construction machines roll in and begin shoveling people up into big metal buckets. These people are hungry—no, ravenous—for a food called soylent green. But here's the twist: They know that they love soylent green, but they have no clue what it's made from.

Sound familiar? It should. That's basically how we eat today. Pick up a random package in the supermarket and look at the ingredient list. Chances are you won't know half the ingredients. Take a look at the downright frightening facts *Eat This, Not That!* has uncovered. You may never look at food the same way.



1. Nutritious food costs 10 times more than junk food.

University of Washington researchers calculated the cost discrepancy between healthy food and junk foods and found that 2,000 calories of junk food rings up at a measly \$3.52 a day. Yet for 2,000 calories of nutritious grub, the researchers plunked down \$36. To add insult to fiscal injury, out of every dollar you spend on food, only 19 cents goes toward the stuff you eat. The other 81 cents goes toward marketing, manufacturing, and packaging. Think about that the next time your grocery bill jumps into the triple digits.

2. Grocers don't have to tell you where your produce comes from.



With meat, supermarkets must tell you the country of origin, but produce laws aren't as strict. Consider this: In a recent *E. coli* outbreak, German bean sprouts were implicated as the source of the bacteria, but that didn't prevent thousands of people from being infected. Many of those people were Americans, and they were clueless as to where their sprouts came from.

3. Fruits and vegetables are losing their nutrients.

According to the USDA, the fruits and vegetables we eat today may contain significantly fewer nutrients than those our grandparents ate. Researchers looked at 43 produce items and discovered drops in protein (6 percent), calcium (16 percent), iron (15 percent),

riboflavin (38 percent), and vitamin C (20 percent). The only way to counter this trend: Eat more of them.

4. Calorie counts on nutrition labels aren't accurate.



Researchers at Tufts University recently analyzed 269 food items from 42 national sit-down and fast-food restaurant chains, and they found that nearly 20 percent of samples contained 100 or more calories than reported by the restaurants. Think about it like this: If every meal you eat has 100 more calories than you need, you'll gain more than 30 pounds this year.

5. Chicken today contains 266 percent more fat than it did 40 years ago.

What's more, today's chicken also has 33 percent less protein, according to a study from the Institute of Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition at London Metropolitan University. The problem is modern farming practices. Cramped environments and unnatural diets produce birds that have the same weight problems as the humans who eat them.

6. Milk contains hormones that may cause cancer.



In 1970, a typical dairy cow could produce about 10,000 pounds of milk per year. Today, that same cow produces roughly 20,000 pounds. So did cows change? Nope. It's their feed that's different. Today's cows are routinely fed a hormone called recombinant bovine somatotropin, or rBST. Studies have linked rBST to a multitude of cancers, including those of the prostate, breast, and colon. Milk from rBST-treated cows is ubiquitous in America's supermarkets, but fortunately some of the biggest players are getting wise. Stores like Whole Foods, Wal-Mart, and Kroger now carry only rBST-free dairy.

7. Conventional supermarket peaches can be coated with as many as nine different pesticides.

Because peaches are prone to bruising, blemishing, and insect takeover, they're routinely soaked in chemicals in the weeks before being shipped off to the supermarket. That's why the Environmental Working Group rates peaches among the dirtiest conventional fruits in America. Also on that list: apples, celery, strawberries, and spinach. As a general rule, unless the produce has a thick, impermeable skin, assume it's soaked in pesticides. Now wash it with water and mild soap before you eat it.

8. You're probably eating trans fat without knowing it.



Slack FDA regulations allow food processors to claim zero trans fats even if the food contains 0.49 grams. To be clear, that's 0.49 grams per serving. That means by the time you finish, say, an entire bag of Cheetos, you might be ingesting nearly 5 grams of trans fat. Sure, the bag says "0 GRAMS TRANS FAT" right on the front, but if you look at the ingredient statement, you'll see partially hydrogenated oil, the primary source of trans fat.

9. The number of daily calories available to each American has increased by 500 over the past 40 years.

USDA data shows that the food industry supplies 2,700 calories to every man, woman, and child in America. In 1970, that number was 2,200. That increase translates into 52 extra pounds of fat per person, per year.