



Pink Goop: Supersized

| Kevin Wolff | 03/07/2011 |

A warm Big Mac, hot fries, cheesy burrito, and some crispy, golden fried chicken. Sound good? Probably. Sound unhealthy? Totally. Still going to eat it? Absolutely. But does the average American actually know just how bad these fast foods can *really* be for your body? Since the early years of modern fast food chains, Americans have been told that these foods are terrible for your diet, and sometimes even enlightened regarding the behind-the-scenes industry that manufactures these foods. Nevertheless, as our aching stomach gurgles awaiting food while we drive past a sign depicting a gorgeously perfect burger and shake, we question our conscience: how bad can it really be? The truth is, our nation still has **no** idea how bad it can get; they simply keep on munching away...

We have all taken the routine trip to the doctor, watched a health show or film, read a book, or some other media and been told to stay away from fast foods during at least some point in our lives. Having learned from these experiences, it becomes common knowledge that those delicious, greasy, sugary foods we Americans love are complete trash for our bodies. However, beyond this simple rule is where the darkness lies; the average fast food consumer doesn't know exactly what is going into these foods *beyond* the oils, sugars, and other miscellaneous yummy things. As it turns out, all it takes to find out what really lies within your favorite crispy delicious meal is a quick trip to Snopes or McDonald's very own website! With a simple search of McDonald's on Snopes.com, (an organization dedicated to proving and debunking urban legends) one can easily discover a seemingly harmless, yet extremely eye-opening reveal regarding the creation of the McNugget and several other meat fast food products. According to

Snopes, McNuggets are formed using a very industrial technique called MSM: “Mechanically separated meat is a paste-like or batter-like meat product created by forcing unstripped bones under high pressure through a type of sieve to separate edible meat tissue from the bones.” As if this didn’t sound atrocious enough, the organization continues on to explain the subsequent tasks McDonald’s corporation carries out in order to make the mushy mass of protein edible for their loyal consumers: “In order to satisfy consumer preferences, (People who prefer not to eat flavorless pink goop) food producers may utilize additives in MSM-derived products in order to alter their color, taste, or texture.” (“Snopes”) After much revolt, one might ask themselves what could these said “additives” be? Upon a short glance at McDonald’s ingredient list of “Popular Menu Items,” sit several quite peculiar and difficult-to-pronounce chemicals. The corrupt food company gives brief explanation for a few of these additives such as, “Dimethylpolysiloxane added as an anti-foaming agent” and, “...TBHQ and citric acid added...” (“McDonald’s) Now that these chemical additives have been exposed, there is very little to be said of what exactly these man-made ingredients are, and how they react when placed into the body. As experts in pharmacology and muckraking, Ian Burgess from the National Center for Biotechnology Information and David Martin from CNN Health, de-mystify to our horror, the truth concerning a few of these additives. Simply put, Polydimethylsiloxane, or “PDMS” for short, is a silicon based polymer also known as Dimethicone. It takes its place in our country’s many cosmetic products, lotions, head lice killers, and is even the main ingredient in Silly Putty! (Burgess) Just as one chemical is revealed, David Martin notes, “TBHQ is a preservative for vegetable oils and animal fats, limited to .02 percent of the oil in the nugget. One gram can cause ‘nausea, vomiting, ringing in the ears, delirium, a sense of suffocation, and collapse,’...” (Martin) Of course, the every-day loyal fast food customer might retort something along the lines of, “but

that's just McDonald's... and it's only their nuggets... I just eat their burgers!" Little do they know that McDonald's, and other various fast food chains' corrupted web of disgust can be found entangled and very much alive amongst their entire menu in addition to those sickly nuggets. These fast food companies hide their dirty secrets, and only when they have a lawsuit on their hands do they change anything; changes of which are just enough to appease the lawsuit, but never more, and never less. As CNN's David Martin puts it, "In 2003, McDonald's launched similar, all-white-meat McNuggets after a federal judge dubbed the food 'a McFrankenstein creation of various elements not utilized by the home cook.' Among the ingredients that remained in the new McNuggets: tBHQ and dimethylpolysiloxane." (Martin) Even after removing McDonald's from the chopping block, we can still spot more corruption in food companies such as Taco Bell and their "beef." Jesus Diaz, a food industry critic, writes in his blog about the so called meat contained in Taco Bell's glut of available products: "Everything is processed into a mass that actually looks like beef, and packed into big containers labeled as 'taco meat filling.' These containers get shipped to Taco Bell's outlets and cooked into something that looks like beef, is called beef, and is advertised as beef by the fast food chain." (Diaz) Before the ranting blogger ends his post, he tells of the real nature of this "beef" informing readers that "...according to the Alabama Law firm suing Taco Bell –only 36% of that is beef. *Thirty-six-percent*. The other 64% is mostly tasteless fibers, various industrial additives and some flavoring and coloring." (Diaz) With a later addition of the full ingredients list for the deceptive company's "36%" beef, one has to wonder how these semi-edible "meals" can be considered actual food for humans to consume with so much junk injected, packed, piled, and slipped within.

The real question we should be asking ourselves is why we continue to support these companies taking advantage of us by paying for and eating their fake, manipulated foods. The answer is dangling right in front of our noses: marketing. Evil, conniving, scheming advertising trickery is the key to drawing in the hordes of Americans each day. The worst part of it all is that they've had us hooked since we were toddlers and we didn't even know it. Famous muckraker and author of the best-selling book Fast Food Nation, Eric Schlosser knows this and leaves no brand un-turned as he exploits the advertising subterfuges of major food companies. Schlosser conveys the McDonald's corporation's cleverly and mischievously planned advertising techniques, purposely modeling them after Disney's famed format by featuring a kid-friendly, happy-go-lucky clown mascot named Ronald McDonald. (Schlosser) Remember him? The truth is, we all remember him and his kooky friends from childhood, and that's exactly the problem. When kids think of going to see Ronald and his entourage, they end up begging their parents to go for food at McDonald's. It isn't about the food; it's about the great advertizing ploys. This method naturally brought the company strong, yet dangerous brand loyalty which would forever be instilled in kids' minds all the way through their lives via this nostalgic connection of cheerful "friends." As a child, I distinctly remember incessantly nagging my mother to take me to McDonald's for a Happy Meal. If I finally got it, it was really only for the themed toy and to play in the "PlayPlace" of colorful chutes and tunnels. Through the history of the company, several lawsuits have been filed, and for good reason. Still, the junk food giant manages to escape the law every time. In a recent article from CSPI, (The Center for Science in the Public Interest) the author calls McDonald's "...the stranger in the playground handing out candy to children." In further explanation, they say "McDonald's use of toys undercuts parental authority and exploits young children's developmental immaturity –all this to induce children to prefer foods that may

harm their health. It's a creepy and predatory practice that warrants an injunction." ("CSPI") Essentially, the restaurant has created an army of children that make sales for them, and CSPI eloquently contextualizes this into a powerful point for their article: "McDonald's marketing has the effect of conscripting America's children into an unpaid drone army of word-of-mouth marketers, causing them to pester their parents to bring them to McDonald's." ("CSPI") This brainwashing via advertising needs to stop, but the only way it's possible is to resist the urge. The next time a fast food ad pops up on television, or a billboard off the roadside stands proudly boasting perfect looking fast food, think of the reason why that food looks so appealing and the urge just might simmer down to a disgusted squirm, or even a shudder.

Although the thought of eating various chemicals in food that was mischievously marketed to us and our families sounds beyond ghastly, the corruption of the food industry goes clear past that. When food companies such as Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald's claim that the meat they put into their menu items is 100% meat, they're surprisingly not lying for once. The downside is how this "pure beef" is actually treated before it gets into America's hamburgers, nuggets, and fried chicken meals. One legendary muckraking group calling themselves, "Kentucky Fried Cruelty" satirizes KFC with a firm grasp on their cameras, ready for the next undercover shot of the company's terrorizing deeds. Their most famed video and report came from Kentucky Fried Chicken's former "Supplier of the Year" slaughter house on which the organization wrote a scathing report illustrating the appalling acts that took place: "...workers were caught stomping on chickens, kicking them, and violently slamming them against floors and walls." Their fuming account didn't stop there though: "Workers also ripped the animals' beaks off, twisted their heads off, spat tobacco into their eyes and mouths, spray-painted their faces, and squeezed their bodies so hard that the birds expelled feces – all while the

chickens were still alive.” (“Kentucky Fried Cruelty”) As one can imagine, the video following such a graphically descriptive testimony is unimaginably immoral and unjustifiable for the workers. Even if these animals were treated with respect by slaughter house workers, there are additional sickening practices taking place behind closed doors. The greedy food industry’s desire for extra “bang for their buck” has become so great that KFC began the injection of their birds with hormones to plump them up before delivery. Not only is this a bad idea for its human transference possibility, but these drugs result in the chicken’s body to exceed the weight their legs can carry. Many of the fowl residing within the killing factories are crippled from their legs snapping under the weight. (“Kentucky Fried Cruelty”) As well as hormonal injections, Eric Schlosser once again brings down his hammer of justice, uncovering the truth of the meat processing industry. In his book Fast Food Nation, Schlosser points out the fact that several fast food companies take part in various dangerous and unknown endeavors. For instance, these distribution farms will render dead pigs, horses, and chicken feces into feed for more farm cattle to eat before they are butchered and sent off to the restaurants we eat at. Resultantly, it doesn’t come as a surprise that these procedures are directly linked to the spread of E.Coli and “Mad Cow” disease. (Schlosser)

With such vast amounts of frightening and mostly unknown information to be discovered about these devilish, greedy corporations, it seems as if there is no longer a safe place to eat in the U.S.! As scary as the truth may be, there is still hope. Numerous companies have pledged to serve free-range, organic, and hormone-free foods alongside down-to-Earth advertising. Knowledge is power. Americans must educate themselves about the healthy, safe alternatives opposing these fast food companies to facilitate better choices regarding the foods they choose to eat.

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