

# ink spots: opinions, news, and reviews from an inkjet



*"Let each new year of life be greeted with joy." Ecclesiastes 11:8.  
 "But the real things haven't changed. It is still best to be honest and truthful, to make the most of what we have, to be happy with simple pleasures, and to be cheerful and have courage when things go wrong." Laura Ingalls Wilder.*

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## January: traditional month to consider making changes

Pick up almost any magazine this month and you'll find at least one article dedicated to self improvement. Let me excerpt the following articles so you can decide if you want to spend \$3, or make a library trip. Here are some topics that interest me.

### QUALITY OF LIFE

**Get happy and you'll live longer.** Psychologists now believe that happiness is not necessarily based on genes or luck; "it's a learned skill, almost like knitting." Harvard's how-to-be-happy course has become the university's most popular class. The first lesson teaches you to embrace your failures and frustrations. "When you give yourself permission to be human," says course instructor/psychologist Tal Ben-Shahar, "you are more likely to open yourself up to positive emotions." Ideas:

- Make a gratitude visit. Deliver a thank-you note to someone you have never properly appreciated. When you feel thankful, you remember a positive life event. You'll also strengthen a relationship that may bring you future happiness.
- Focus on good things. Jot down three things that went well each day and explain why. This will help you be more grateful for what you have and more hopeful about the future

**Give each week a tech-free day.** Protesters at

Western Kentucky University challenged fellow students: "Take out the earplugs and plug into the world!" Tom Cannon says that it wasn't a protest against technology but rather overdependence on it. "We need to take charge of technology before it takes charge of us." David Levy, a professor at the University of Washington, observes a 24-hour Sabbath each week from all things electronic. "Whether you think of this as a religious mandate or simply a good idea," he says, "it's a piece of ancient wisdom that people can incorporate into their lives."

### WELLNESS

#### Drink some white tea.

White tea comes from the same plant as green and black teas, but it is made from the buds and young leaves, instead of mature withered leaves, and it is less processed. It's no cure-all, and the ready-to-drink bottled white teas actually eliminate some of its health benefits. So brew your own.

**Eat at home for your own good.** Research suggests that eating out plays a key role in the obesity epidemic in the US. The FDA has recently decreed that "artificial, artery-clogging" trans fats must be clearly identified on nutrition labels, and it's expected that they will be nearly gone in five years, but the catch is that

the FDA ruling only applies to food sold in stores; it does not apply to restaurants, bakeries, or deli counters. So it's likely that you will still be eating trans fats when you eat out.

In 1970, we spent just 26% of our total food budget eating away from home; in 2002, the number was 46%. Considerable research shows that eating out plays a huge role in the obesity epidemic in the US. "Home-cooked food is usually lower in saturated fat, sodium, sugar, and higher in good nutrients like fiber, calcium, and iron," says Adam Voiland, writer of the white tea material and this section. "Dinner at home is a winning recipe."

### ENVIRONMENT

**Lose weight, save fuel.** If you need another incentive to lose weight, you'll be doing something good for the environment. Professor Sheldon H. Johnson, University of Illinois, and a graduate student calculated that cars use a billion extra gallons of gasoline a year to transport Americans who have grown remarkably fatter. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had previously determined that, "based on the ten pounds the average American gained in the 1990s, airlines require 350 million additional gallons of fuel. This translates into 3.8 tons of carbon

dioxide, the main culprit in global warming."

#### Support local farmers.

"Most supermarket produce travels an average of 1,300 miles from farm to table and can spend seven to 14 days in transit before it even arrives on your supermarket shelf. In contrast, local produce is often sold the day it is picked," except perhaps in states like Minnesota this time of year. Nevertheless, we can get local eggs, fresh baked goods, poultry, and many other staples at our local co-ops and farmers markets, even in winter.

"By decreasing the distance food travels, you help reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Tons of fossil fuels are used in transporting food by trucks, ships, and airplanes. Plus, the refrigeration needed to keep food from spoiling before it gets to the store burns energy."

Local produce bypasses the chemical preservatives often used to extend the shelf life, while the packaging for supermarket produce turns into more waste. "Buying food locally provides a double helping of benefits: the flavor of fresh food and the possibility of a cleaner planet," says Beth Brophy.

[The six topics above were chosen from those covered in "50 Ways to Improve Your Life in 2007," *US News and World Report*, December 25, 2006.]

## New questions about the safety and efficacy of soy

**“Heart disease, breast cancer, hot flashes, osteoporosis, brain aging. Researchers have been hunting for evidence that soy—or its estrogen-like flavones—can curb or prevent each of them. In most cases, the evidence is still iffy at best.”**

“Soyonara? Tough times for the miracle bean,” David Schardt, *Nutrition Action Health Letter*, October 2006.

Once the darling of the health food movement and vegetarians in particular, soy seems to be losing its all-purpose hero status. Because I have been anti-soy for 15 years, as a result of reading books by John Lee, MD, and Russell Blaylock, neurosurgeon, my reaction is “it’s about time!” Most of the following is excerpted from the October 2006 issue of *Nutrition Action News*, “Soyonara? Tough times for the “miracle bean.”

David Schardt’s 6-page article opens with “It’s been a pretty tough year for the little legume.” Funding for new soy studies by the National Institutes of Health was suspended in August 2005, when an expert US government panel found insufficient evidence that soy can prevent heart disease, relieve menopausal symptoms, or prevent osteoporosis. Below are some recent findings.

**Heart disease.** After looking at the results of several well-controlled studies, the American Heart Association dropped its previous endorsement of soy in February 2006, when its Nutrition Committee concluded: “The direct cardiovascular health benefit of soy protein or isoflavone supplements is minimal at best.”

**Breast cancer.** Bruce Brock and his colleagues at the Kimmel Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins analyzed 18 epidemiological studies on soy and breast cancer that were published from 1978 to 2004. They found the studies of women incon-

clusive and not duplicatable. One problem was that a large intake of soy did not have a greater effect than a smaller intake. Animal studies were easier to control, but they used “amounts of soy or soy isoflavones that you can’t get by diet alone.” Comparison to Asian women have historically been cited, but as Dr Lee and Dr Blaylock have noted, Asians eat soy in natural forms, not trendy soynuts, protein shakes and bars, or other fast foods dreamed up by creative manufacturers in the US.

**Menopause.** Heidi Nelson, Oregon Health and Science University, looked at six studies and then ran several of her own. Women reported fewer hot flashes in only three of five that used 50-70 mg of isoflavones a day. A sixth study tried 150 mg; it showed no effect, “which is contrary to what you would expect.” Her conclusion: “We have no strong evidence about soy’s effectiveness because we are lacking trials that compare isoflavones with a placebo.”

**Osteoporosis.** When the Women’s Health Initiative trial on 16,000 postmenopausal women using hormone replacement therapy was stopped because it raised the risk of heart attacks, strokes, blood clots, and breast cancer, scientists asked whether “plant estrogens in soy [might] provide a kinder, gentler boost to bones.”

Researchers looked at some two dozen trials testing soy isoflavones, soy

protein, or placebo on bone density, bone formation, or bone breakdown. Soy expert, Mark Messina, Loma Linda University, consults with soy companies on the latest research. One study suggested that isoflavones increase density in the spine, another density of the hips. “When you throw in that kind of inconsistency, along with the fact the studies used different products in different kinds of people, ...it’s not possible to draw definitive conclusions,” Messina says.

**Brain.** A study six years ago in Hawaii showed that middle-aged men who ate the most tofu were the most likely to suffer cognitive impairment and brain atrophy later in life. Pauline Maki, University of Illinois at Chicago, thought that was silly. Subsequent soy studies with monkeys over 15 months showed very different results with male and female monkeys. Females had no adverse reactions to a high soy diet, but males were more likely to grab, slap, bite and chase other males. Maki concluded: “There should be some caution in recommending large amounts of isoflavones for men.”

**Prostate cancer.** “Men normally produce small quantities of estrogen. How do they respond to the larger amounts of plant estrogens in soy isoflavones?” Studies that give soy to men with prostate cancer are inconsistent.

Three columns, of course, do not do justice to 6 pages. You’ll want to read it all. +++

# Mixed messages: some of what the media said in 2006

## Good for us:

**“Eating fish** regularly reduces your chance of dying of heart disease by 36%. Fish, especially wild salmon, is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential to cardiovascular health. A weekly fish meal, a Harvard study found, also reduces overall mortality by 17%. ‘Seafood is likely the single most important food one can consume for good health,’ said a Harvard researcher.”<sup>1</sup>

**“Walnuts** can reverse the ill effects of bad fats on the cardiovascular system. Spanish researchers found that when we eat a meal that’s high in saturated fat, our arteries begin to harden right away, which increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. But when researchers gave people a snack of eight walnuts right after they had eaten a meal laden with bad fats, the nuts’ good fats helped their bodies to stave off the artery hardening.”<sup>1</sup>

**“Chocolate** contains blood-thinning chemicals called flavonoids. When we eat chocolate, our blood takes longer to clot, about 130 seconds compared with 123 seconds. Clots that form too fast are a serious danger, and cause heart attacks and strokes.....Researchers at Johns Hopkins University instructed 1,500 volunteers in a study on aspirin to avoid chocolate, tea, strawberries, and red wine. When pressed, 139 volunteers admitted that they had been cheating by snacking on chocolate. ‘What these chocolate offenders taught us is that the chemical in cocoa beans has a biochemical effect similar to aspirin,’ epidemiologist Diane Becker told BBC News. ‘A couple of tablespoons of dark chocolate a day could be just as good as an aspirin for maintaining cardiovascular health.’ ”<sup>1,2</sup>

**“Low carbohydrate/high protein diets** have been given a new stamp of approval, says the *Los Angeles Times*.....A new 20-year study by researchers at Harvard and UCLA found no association between low-carb diets and the risk of coronary problems. Based on health data of more than 82,000 women, the study found that low-carb diets do not increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. And when the diets include a lot of vegetable fats rather than lard and other animal fats, dieters can actually boost heart health, cutting disease risk by up to 30%. Study author Thomas Halton, said, “While no diet is risk free, you can reduce your risk by picking healthier sources of fat.”<sup>2</sup>

**“Sleep** makes you smarter. Harvard researchers found it takes several hours of deep sleep to help the brain solidify memories we make during the day. During slow-wave sleep, a natural electric current traverses the brain, organizing the storage of memory. That’s why a good night’s sleep is always better than an all-night cram session.”<sup>1</sup>

**Flu shots.** “The Centers for Disease Control is recommending for the first time that all children from six months to five years should be immunized against seasonal flu .....Parents, siblings, and baby sitters should also get flu shots,” said Daniel Jernigan, deputy of the CDC’s influenza division..... “And vaccination is particularly important for children who have chronic ailments like asthma, who are much more likely than their peers to be hospitalized with flu complications.”<sup>3</sup>

## Bad for us:

**“Fish** contains too much mercury. A test of the fish in top-rated California sushi restaurants revealed shockingly high levels of mercury, the poisonous metal that accumulates in the body and causes brain damage in children and fetuses. Mercury levels are particularly high in sushi-quality pieces of tuna, swordfish, and shark. ‘Eating sushi has become the new Russian roulette,’ said public health analyst Eli Sadler.”<sup>1</sup>

**“Trans fats,** researchers have concluded, are about the worst thing you can eat. Found in snack food, cake mixes, and shortening, trans fats are known to increase levels of bad cholesterol, to clog and stiffen arteries, and to lead to cardiovascular deterioration. The fats are such a hazard, in fact, that a panel of New York City health authorities decided to ban them from restaurants by 2008.”<sup>1</sup>

**“Hot dogs** produce a chemical so powerful it can warp human DNA. Some brands are preserved in sodium nitrate, a precursor to nitroso compounds, which are known to cause cancer in lab animals. Nitroso compounds could mutate DNA in the intestine while hot dogs are being digested, triggering the development of colon cancer.”<sup>1</sup>

**“Red meat** and breast cancer: Young women who eat red meat are at increased risk for hormone-related breast cancer.....A large scale study at Harvard of more than 90,000 premenopausal women found that women who ate more than 1.5 servings of red meat a day were twice as likely to develop breast cancer as women who ate no more than three servings a week. The more red meat the women consumed in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, the greater their risk of breast cancer over the ensuing 12 years. Most breast cancers are hormone-receptor-positive: they are fueled by higher levels of estrogen or progesterone. Hormones fed to livestock are often present in red meat.”<sup>2</sup>

**“Insomnia** makes you fat. People who get less than five hours of sleep each night are more likely to pack on the pounds. Those who get seven hours of shut-eye tend to stay slim, while those who get five hours a night are 32% more likely to gain, and 15% more likely to become obese. For sleepless people, chronic tiredness takes away their energy to fidget away calories during the day, reducing their resting metabolic rate.”<sup>1</sup>

**Flu shots.** “Here’s how flu shots are cultured,” said Neal Barnard, MD. “A hole is bored through the shell of a chicken egg. The influenza virus is injected, infecting the chick embryo and surrounding fluid. Several days later the egg is opened, its contents extracted and treated to kill the virus.....On average, 1-2 eggs are required per immunization; the production process uses nearly 100 million eggs per year. Intensive egg-laying operations have raised serious [concerns]. The method has scientific drawbacks too. First, the production process is so slow, scientists must decide months in advance which viruses are likely to circulate the following winter. If they are wrong, the vaccine will be less effective. Second, the vaccine may contain traces of egg protein; people with egg allergies can react to the vaccine as they would to eating eggs.”<sup>4</sup> +++

<sup>1</sup> *The Week*, Dec 29, 2006 <sup>2</sup> *The Week*, Dec 1, 2006 <sup>3</sup> *US News & World Report*, Oct 26, 2006 <sup>4</sup> *Vegetarian Times*, Nov/Dec 2006.

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## Out with the old, in with the new

If you've had your major appliances for a number of years, sooner or later they will come due for replacement. Our townhouse was built in 1979 and came with good quality appliances. Yet, as Willie Loman said to his son Biff, in *Death of a Salesman*, "they time these things." Between the 25th and 26th year of living here, we replaced every appliance except the water heater and the central air. Once again, we purchased everything from Quality Appliance, our hometown dealer, who had serviced our original models to last them that long, and we shopped with recent copies of *Consumer Reports* in our hands.

"When you're looking for a new appliance, buy the most energy-efficient model possible to save energy, save money, and curb emissions," says the Sept/Oct 2006 issue of *Real Money*, a publication of Co-op America. According to the EPA, energy efficient appliances use ten to 50% less energy and water than standard models. Then be sure that the dealer recycles your old ones, "so that you retire energy-guzzling models," and look for the Energy Star, introduced in 1992 to help consumers protect the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. [*I'm always glad to send articles to you if you cannot find them.*] +++

## Notable quotables

**Three things can add 11-12 years to your life.** The British government is urging its citizens to make three lifestyle changes that can have such a significant impact that they can give you the life expectancy of someone 11 or 12 years younger: Stopping smoking [adds four years], eating more fruits and vegetables [adds three years], and exercising more [adds three years]. Moderate exercise for someone who works in an office means hitting the treadmill or the gym for an hour a day. A moderately active job with some movement and a lot of standing requires thirty minutes a day. Nurses, construction workers, and others with active jobs do not require additional exercise for longevity. *Netscape*, printed 4 January 07 from the internet.

**By the numbers.** "New year, new diet. Or a better diet at least." Consider these US Dept of Agriculture statistics: • *Percentage of people in the US not getting enough calcium: 70%.* Servings of calcium-rich foods such as yogurt and cheese needed: 3. • *Percentage lacking adequate amounts of potassium: 97%.* Cups of orange juice and cooked spinach needed: 3. • *Percentage not getting enough dietary fiber: 96%.* Cups of cooked oatmeal and cooked white beans needed: 2. • *Percentage failing to get enough magnesium: 56%.* Cups of whole grain cereal and cooked white beans needed: 2. • *Percentage not getting enough vitamin A: 44%.* Cups of cooked kale, mashed sweet potato or carrots needed: 1. • *Percentage not getting enough vitamin C: 31%.* Cups of vegetable juice, grapefruit juice, or cooked broccoli needed: 1. • *Percentage not getting enough vitamin E: 93%.* Ounces of almonds needed: 2. Article by Janet Helm, registered dietitian in Chicago, "The State of Your Plate," *Relish*, supplement to the *Northfield News*, 6 Jan 2007.

**What's in a vaccine?** "Ammonium sulfate [salt]; beta-propiolactone; genetically modified yeast, animal, bacterial and viral DNA; latex rubber; monosodium glutamate [a neurotoxin]; aluminum; formaldehyde [major constituent of embalming fluid]; microorganisms [live and killed viri and bacteria or their toxins]; polysorbate 80; tri(n)butylphosphate; glutarealdehyde; gelatin [produced from selected pieces of calf and cattle skins, demineralized cattle bones, and pork skin]; gentamicin sulfate & polymyxin B [antibiotics]; mercury [thimerosal]; neomycin sulfate [antibiotic]; phenol/ phenoxyethanol [used as antifreeze]; human and animal cells [human cells from aborted fetal tissue and human albumin. Pig blood, horse blood, rabbit brain, guinea pig dog, kidney, cow heart, monkey kidney, chick embryo, chicken egg, duck egg, calf serum, sheep blood, and others.] [www.korenpublications.com](http://www.korenpublications.com). Available as a poster in some chiropractor and naturopath offices, including ours. [*You may ask me for an internet item: "12 reasons not to get a flu shot."*]

**Feeding infants.** "If at all possible, breast feed your baby....Cow's milk should never be given to a newborn or young child since it has a much higher level of glutamate [an excitotoxin] than human milk and also it is *strongly* associated with juvenile diabetes. Also do not feed your baby soy milk. Soy milk is high in glutamate and also contains estrogenic plant compounds. In addition, soy significantly inhibits the thyroid gland, which is essential for proper growth, especially brain growth.....[G]oat's milk is closer to human milk in composition. But do not use raw goat's milk as it may contain numerous viruses.....A recent comprehensive study of MSG disclosed that infant formulas frequently contain glutamate levels that are equal to those causing brain lesions in experimental animals. Levels of free glutamate are especially high in formulas that contain casein hydrosylates, which is made from cow's milk. Because these formulas are also devoid of DHA, it is no wonder that we are seeing widespread, intractable developmental and behavioral problems in the children of this country...." Russell L. Blaylock, MD, *Health and Nutrition Secrets that can save your life*, 2002.

**The vaccine controversy.** [*This chapter in Dr Blaylock's book should be required reading for parents. Unable to summarize 12 pages, I offer this summary from p 159.*] "Vaccines: activate microglia, stimulate excitotoxicity, cause leaky gut syndrome, encourage release of neuroreactive food components, promote yeast infections, deplete vital nutrients, precipitate abnormal brain-pathway development, destroy dendritic connections, deplete DHA." +++