



All familiar containers, but do you really speak the same language when it comes to understanding what's inside those bottles, wrappers and boxes on the grocery store shelves? (Staff photo by Dick Kelley)

Sugar's good, but not for you

By CAROL MAHONEY

Sugar may be sweet, but it leaves a bad taste in the mouth. Nutrition-conscious consumers believe that there's too much of it in everything we eat.

Betty Matthaei, co-owner of Bette's, a Birmingham health foods store, said the average American eats 150 pounds of sugar each year.

"And that amount represents a lot of sugar we are not aware that we are eating," she said. Sugar is found in such unlikely foods as hot dogs and bologna as well as canned and frozen vegetables.

In addition to claiming that sugar has no food value and offers "empty

calories," Mrs. Matthaei said, "Sugar needs vitamins and minerals in order to be assimilated by the body."

"AN ORANGE, for example, has natural sugar, but it also contains the necessary vitamins to help the body assimilate it."

Mrs. Matthaei was one of three speakers at a recent food conference sponsored by Concern Inc. A volunteer non-profit organization, Concern is dedicated to helping the American public make ecologically wise decisions in the market place.

About 50 people turned out at the Birmingham Masonic Lodge for the

conference entitled "Food: An Environmental Topic."

Other speakers were John Sobetzer, environmental attorney, and Paul Tomboulis, professor of chemistry at Oakland University. Sobetzer is also executive director of the East Michigan Environmental Action Council.

JOKINGLY DUBBED "doom, gloom, and bloom" by Barbara Van Dusen, president of Concern who introduced them, the speakers gave their views on the problems facing the American public of food, its production, its nutritive value and its cost. Sobetzer, who admitted to being the doom part of the conference, focused

on diminishing farm lands and the increased food prices that will result.

To support his claim, he offered the grim statistic that the United States is losing twice as much farm land as it is gaining "as much as four miles a day."

"The United States is not likely to run out of food in the next few years, but we will pay more for it," he said.

He added that urban sprawl, soil erosion and strip mining are contributing to this loss of farm land.

"We force ourselves to plow up our wetlands and try to farm them while we use our best farm land for homes and roads," he said.

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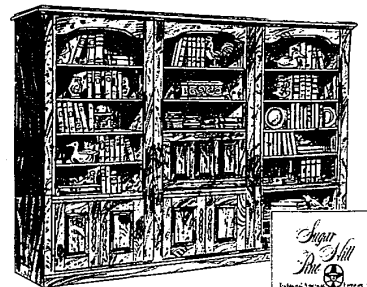
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