

# Salad bar or fat smorgasbord?

Q. Recently I visited a local restaurant and found their salad bar with a whole new assortment of foods, such as pasta salad, potato salad, pudding. Are these low-fat versions of the regular versions?

A. Salad bars are turning into smorgasbords. Fresh fruits and vegetables are being overshadowed or replaced by prepared dishes like the ones you mentioned.

These "new" salad bar selections are typically loaded with fat, calories and salt and are diet-killing temptations for the average person. CSPI recently compiled figures for assorted salad bar offerings. All of the following figures are based on a three-ounce serving:

- Guacamole — 119 calories, 2% fat.
- Carrot & raisin salad — 198 calories, 4 t.p. fat.
- Fettucini salad — 197 calories, 2 t.p. fat.
- Potato salad — 122 calories, 1 1/2 t.p. fat.
- Tuna salad — 156 calories, 2 t.p. fat.



**Terry Gibb**

In comparison, a mixed green salad consisting of lettuce and vegetables with two teaspoons low-calorie dressing contains only about 58 calories and virtually no fat at all.

When debating whether to include some of these high fat foods in your meal, look at your overall fat consumption for the day. Calories from fats should not exceed 25-30 percent of our total calorie consumption for a day.

If you're close to that amount, you might want to forego the fatty foods and choose low-fat (and usually calorie-free) foods.

Q. Are there cancer-causing ingredients in alcoholic beverages?

A. "Urethane, a potent carcinogen, is present in moderate to high levels in many commonly consumed alcoholic beverages." This quote is from CSPI in Washington, D.C., which has been waging a battle with alcoholic beverage manufacturers to get stricter controls on their additives and require labeling on alcoholic beverages.

Recently, a compromise was struck between the FDA and the whisky and wine industries to set limits on the amount of urethane legally allowed in their products.

The whisky industry has promised to keep urethane levels to 125 parts per billion (ppb) or less, starting in 1989. However, because whisky is aged an average of five to 12 years, consumers will still be exposed to this known carcinogen for years to come.

The wine industry is resisting maximum urethane levels in their products until 1995. Then, they estimate that all table wines will have no more than 25 ppb urethane.

These arguments have some serious problems. First, the agreements are voluntary on the alcohol industry's part.

Second, neither agreement protects consumers today from urethane-contaminated beverages currently being sold.

Third, there is no evidence that there is any "safe" level of urethane that can be ingested without increasing the risk of cancer.

CSPI points out that Canada recalls any alcoholic beverage that is found to exceed the legal limits of urethane. In the U.S., no legal limits have been set by the FDA despite the

Delaney Clause, which says "no food additive can be approved if the additive is found to induce cancer when ingested by man or animal."

This clause is the same one that pulled cyclamates off the market years ago.

The Consumer Mailbag answers your questions. Address mail to The Consumer Mailbag, Concern, Detroit, One Kennedy Square, 4th Floor, Detroit, 48226.

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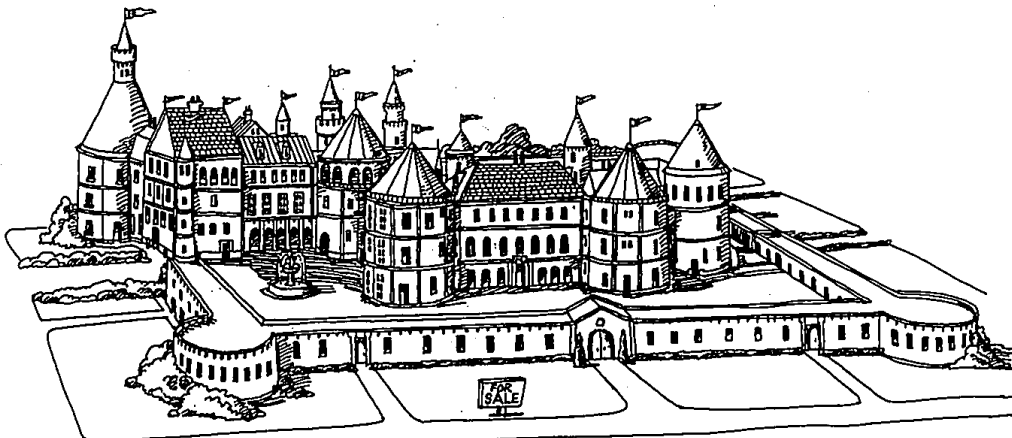
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