

# Trend setters take a bite out of future

The last time I wrote a trend column, soft yogurt had just become the rage here in our suburbs.

So had cookie nooks, video stores, muffin shops and high-low aerobics. Fax machines and car telephones had begun their invasion. Mountain bikes were fast replacing skinny-tired racers and the sport of roller blading was moving right along.

It was the summer of '89. And the profusion of big box stores, coffee houses and blueberry bagels had not yet hit Oakland County.

Way back then, we hadn't really discovered Thai food. And most of us couldn't tell hummus from baba ghanoush.

In the summer of '89, Detroit's auto industry was still in park. Somerset was a mere mall and not a collection and Birmingham had — oh, no — just one coney island.

Obviously it's catch-up time.

As we approach the half-way mark of 1996, here are some fun trends to watch — and experience.

The stuff of life is rising everywhere.

The smells of fresh, hand-kneaded bread waft out to our streets as shops with names like Breadsmith, Dakota and Great Harvest come to our towns.

And bagel stores are on a roll as newcomer chains like Einstein and Bruegger's compete with old standbys like Detroit and New York Bagel companies. The adventurous among us have been seen sampling exotic flavors like spinach, sundried tomato and chocolate chip.

You can't and don't want to miss those mushrooming veggie and fruit superstores as Merchant of Vino ploughs new ground in Troy and Farmington Hills and Nino Salvaggio carts his wares to the Rochester area to compete with Papa Joe's.

The new Zagat Restaurant Survey



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of Michigan notes that what makes our area "culinarily distinct" is its large number of Middle Eastern restaurants. And they just keep on opening around our suburbs.

At this rate, the Birmingham Michigan store will have to stock tabouli along with Sanders hot fudge as edible souvenirs of our region.

The era of the mega movie theater is obviously upon us — as an eight-screen theater recently opened in Birmingham and Southfield awaits a

20-screen complex early next year.

The fact that for the second time within a short span we will be getting a new area code testifies to Oakland County's love affair with home computers, cellular phones and fax machines.

The runners, bikers, walkers and roller bladers that speckle our streets spell out that exercise remains trendy. And as we saw by the record crowds at the U.S. Open, golf is simply huge.

But you have to do a little scouting to discover that step may now be the aerobics class of choice and snowshoeing is making significant tracks.

Pampering our bodies is also in vogue. Spas galore and glamorous have sprung up around our suburbs. And the new dueling spas expected at Nordstrom and Hudson's when they open at Somerset North in Troy will undoubtedly spur more of us to sample a treatment or two.

Halfway through 1996 here are a few predictions for the rest of the year:

• The Twist & Shout Pretzel Store next to the Uptown Birmingham Theatre — or its equivalent — will spread to become the "cookie nook" of the future.

• At least one sports club will introduce the new indoor sports phenomenon of "spinning" on heavy-duty stationary bikes which started, like many trends, on the West Coast and has apparently been in hot pursuit of New York City.

• Oh, and the wet weather will stop before Oakland County is officially designated a rain forest.

Judith Doner Berne, a West Bloomfield resident, is former managing editor of the *Eccentric Newspapers*. You can comment on this column at (313)953-2047, Ext. 1997 or write or fax a letter to the editor.

## New generation inherits insurance debate

The next big issue," said state Rep. Gerald Law, "will be use of genetic tests by insurers."

We chatted on the House floor during a lull in the school aid debate. Law, R-Plymouth, had just seen his bill to license hospices signed by Gov. John Engler. Law is working on pain management bills with Rep. John Jamian, R-Bloomfield Township, in a bipartisan group on the Health Policy Committee.

Clearly, Law was thinking ahead — and he was right.

On June 18, the New York Times reported, the New Jersey Legislature passed a law banning health insurers from denying access, or setting higher rates, to individuals who are genetically predisposed to certain diseases.

Eleven states have such laws. New Jersey's is considered the most comprehensive, said the Times, because it covers both genetic testing and genetic information, such as family history.

A group called Council for Responsible Genetics was quoted as saying it

identified more than 200 cases of insurance and job discrimination around the U.S. based on genetic information.

Here is the worker's problem: If you find at 30 that you carry a gene that programs you to get breast cancer or Alzheimer's or cystic fibrosis in your 40s and you apply for a big job, an employer's health insurance carrier won't want you hired because you will cost them a pile of money.

Results: You don't get a job, are discarded on an economic scrap heap and buy health insurance from anyone who knows about your genes.

The New Jersey law considers genetic information to be private property. Without it, the insurer has to treat everybody pretty much alike, so everybody has a crack at the job.

An insurer does well when it can weed out bad risks and cream off good ones. Understandably, insurers want to be protected against "self-selection" — a bad risk who knows he carries



TIM RICHARD

bad genes for colon cancer, keeps it a secret and tries to buy a ton of life insurance. The statute has some safeguards.

It's the same as if someone could foretell the future. Ladbroke DRC and Northville Downs wouldn't let him near the betting windows.

Genes are the units of heredity. Genetics is the science that showed how Darwin's theory of evolution worked.

Thirty years ago, Dr. Leroy Augenstein began talking about the impact of genetics on human life and moral

laws. He campaigned for the U.S. Senate on the issue of the biological revolution. A biophysicist at Michigan State University, Augenstein spoke on who makes decisions, and how, on such questions as:

- Of three possible patients, who should get one open place on a kidney machine?
  - If the odds are one in four you and your spouse will have a child so retarded it wouldn't know who or what it is, would you procreate?
  - "Would you deliberately choose to have a child with an IQ of 200?"
  - "Should the immediate family be the ones to decide whether a person in a terminal illness should or should not be treated, even if there is a fairly large inheritance involved?"
  - "Should parents use mind manipulation or behavior manipulation techniques to make sure what values are in their children?"
- He raised the questions 200 or 300 times a year before PTAs, Jaycees,

Kiwanians, fellow Republicans and anyone else. He put it in a book called *Come, Let Us Play God*. He was the most sought-after speaker on the MSU faculty.

Augenstein won a seat on the State Board of Education in 1966 and was gearing for a bigger job with this pitch: No one in the U.S. Congress was scientifically prepared to deal with these issues or was even raising the moral questions that genetics was raising.

He was 41 when he died in a 1969 plane crash near Charlotte.

Many of his questions still are with us. Sometimes they pop up in the assisted suicide context; other times, in an insurance context, as Law suggests, or an abortion context. But in today's moron-level campaigns, we are unlikely to see them discussed in a TV debate.

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events.



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