

EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

What a bummer! I just read “Exercise in Futility” (The Atlantic magazine, April 2015), and its message is that working out won’t guarantee weight loss. Au contraire, it seems that the harder we exercise, the more our stubborn systems fight to regain lost weight. This is an evolutionary adaptation in humans to survive food shortages and famine. When our bodies detect weight loss from exercising, our metabolism compensates chemically and biologically by turning down our furnace and packing on pounds. The Atlantic article states that despite rising rates of exercise globally, obesity rates around the world continue to climb. Isn’t this just maddening? Nevertheless, we still get positive health benefits from exercise (preventing bone and heart disease, some cancers, and maybe even depression), so don’t give up yet. There is still one thing we can control: what we eat. Bottom line: Calories still count.

WHICH WOODSTOCK WERE WE?

Woodstock, New York town historian Richard Heppner says a new history book about his Catskills town got its facts all wrong, including mixing up two different Woodstocks: his town in New York and the one in Illinois. Heppner’s protest column appeared in the Woodstock (N.Y.) Times newspaper March 19 (woodstockx.com).

SOUND BITES

When you enjoy a good meal, all your senses are engaged: sight, taste, smell, and touch. But don't forget about sound: Good food can also mean crispy, crunchy, chewy, sizzling, crackling, etc. University of Oxford experimental psychologist Charles Spence is an expert on this often-forgotten sense in relation to food. His research found, for instance, that Pringles canned chips taste better if they sound noisier when eaten. Chomp! (Barron's magazine, March 19)

PULLET SURPRISE

Natural/organic grocer Whole Foods Market Inc. is switching to slow-growing chickens, bucking the meatpacking industry trend toward faster-growing birds fattened up with antibiotics and special fast-growth feed and feeding techniques favored by the industry. Whole Foods says the global change will mean more humane conditions for raising chickens and a better-tasting product for the poultry consumer. Breeds like Red Ranger grow 23 percent slower than conventional fast-track chickens, and will be used to repopulate Whole Foods' chicken farms over the next eight years as they make the transition to Slow Chicken. (Wall Street Journal, March 18)

HOT AND COLD

The term "climate change" covers all sorts of extreme weather events brought on by global warming: severe storms, floods, droughts, heat waves, cold snaps, etc. We are seeing some of the highest temperatures and most

violent storms ever recorded. (U.S. National Research Council, EarthWeek.com)

LOOKY-LOOS

Scott McKellar says that when the Marina district was savaged by the great quake of 1989, S.F. Chronicle columnist Herb Caen categorized the crowds of people converging there for a look-see as “rubbleneckers.”

SWAMI SEZ

“Books are fatal: they are the curse of the human race. Nine-tenths of existing books are nonsense, and the clever books are the refutation of that nonsense. The greatest misfortune that ever befell man was the invention of printing.” (Benjamin Disraeli)

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