



HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

The Menace of Synthetic Foods

By Dr. Royal Lee

Summary: “There is only one test for safety and wholesomeness in food,” [Dr. Royal Lee](#) proclaims in this succinct overview of his nutritional philosophy. “That is the test of time. The test of a long history of use, over many generations of life.” Dr. Lee expounds on the ill effects of processed foods, which were pushed hastily onto the market by industrial food processors seeking immediate profit. He cites evidence that bleached flour produces headaches, diarrhea and depression; corn syrup causes diabetes; and hydrogenated fats help cause heart disease. Dr. Lee also documents the negative effects of synthetic isolated vitamins, the “jackpot in synthetic foods.” Includes also a report on chicanery regarding food additives at the Food and Drug Administration from one of the most outspoken watchdog publications of its day, Morris Bealle’s *American Capsule News*. 1957.

[*The following is a transcription of the original Archives document. To view or download the original document, click [here](#).*]

The Menace of Synthetic Foods

There is only one test for the safety and wholesomeness in food. That is the test of time—the test of a long history of use, over many generations of life. Animal tests are not reliable to indicate good food for us; each specie requires a separate inquiry. The man who is successful in feeding race horses to win races cannot tell how to raise chinchillas or how to feed prize-winning sheep.

Agenized Flour

However, where *poisonous* effects are suspected, animal tests are valuable, for if a food is poison to an animal, such as agenized flour is in causing fits in dogs, we had better accept it as poisonous for us.

The bleached-flour makers were very vociferous in claiming that agenized flour never had any such effect on human subjects when its effect on dogs we discovered, but now, after a number of years have passed, you will find in the March 1957 issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, page 10, the news that English doctors, observing the effects of agenized bread, find that it caused in human victims “epileptic-like fits; abdominal bloat; irritable, negativistic, and spiteful dispositions; headache; insomnia; mental depression; diarrhea; and rectal itching.”

The report blames “wheat allergy,” yet England has no yet outlawed agene. If people on agenized bread get “fits” like the dogs on agenized bread do, then why look for a new cause, heretofore unknown? And if one oxidizing bleach is poison, how can another be safe? We know that *all* bleaches cause the formation of *alloxan* in cereals by the oxidizing of *xanthine*, so all bleaches should be condemned on that basis alone.

Synthetic Glucose

[Bleached flour] is a good illustration of the use of a new, synthetic component in a staple food and the consequent reactions. Another example is that of synthetic *glucose* (*aka dextrose, corn syrup, corn sugar*), synthetically made by treating corn starch with acid under high temperatures and then bleaching and deodorizing the chemically altered residue so it can be used as a food adulterant. The acid treatment destroys the food nature of the product. It destroys the natural mineral and vitamin content of the starch, [making the resulting product] nothing but pure calories. Synthetic glucose has been shown to cause diabetes, block the assimilation of calcium, and predispose to cancer.

Hydrogenated Fats

The same situation is true of hydrogenated fats. They are *synthetic imitations* of natural fats. They are all falsely labeled “vegetable shortening” just because they were synthesized from a

vegetable oil, but the hydrogenation was accomplished by destroying the original oil and all its components, leaving a questionable fat that is, again, at best pure calories. Of late, it has been definitely proven that hydrogenated fats cause high blood cholesterol, which aggravates cancer and heart disease. As pure calories hydrogenated fat never had an excuse for admission to any diet. The *Saturday Evening Post* of December 1, 1956, has a leading article on the cause of cardiovascular disease—which kills 800,000 people per year in this country—remaking that a major cause of the high blood cholesterol behind the situation is *hydrogenated fats*.

Synthetic Food Colors

Synthetic food colors have a sorry history too. We might start with [butter yellow](#), which is used basically to to defraud, to deceive, the buyer. Low grades of butter are made from milk produced in winter, when the cows are not getting green grass or succulent feed. Their low quality is shown by their poor color, which is due to low vitamin content. The housewife, in her instinctive search for wholesome, health-building food for her family, always was willing to pay more for yellow butter.

And so the custom—vicious in its inception—grew up to add a dye [butter yellow] to white butter so that its price could be raised to that of the best butter. (Today, butter is treated with special “flavoring essence” to improve the illusion of quality—I speak here of *butter*, not oleo). After forty years of this swindling of the housewife, the gruesome discovery was made that this coal-tar dye being used in butter was one of the most potent carcinogenic chemicals known to science.

This started an investigation of other coal-tar dyes used in foods, with the results described in the quotation added as an appendix herewith, from Morris Bealle’s *American Capsule News* of Washington, No. 26. In the orient, especially the Philippines, butter yellow has been used in great quantities to dye rice, as a substitute for the costly Spanish saffron. As a result, the cancer incidence has been tremendously augmented. This is discussed at length in Dr. Blond’s recent book *The Liver and Cancer* (Williams & Wilkins).

U.S. Supreme Court Rulings

Now, [Dr. H.W. Wiley](#) long ago set up the interpretation of the [Pure Food Law](#) [of 1906] that any meddling with food to deceive the buyer was illegal. The U.S. Supreme Court agreed with him in two very interesting cases, one in which they affirmed that the addition of more caffeine in a soft drink (beyond the natural content of the coca and cola) to make the stuff more habit-forming (like spiking coffee with more crystalline caffeine or beer with more alcohol) was a violation of the law. The bleaching of flour was also declared illegal. The principle was affirmed that the government, to prove violation, need not prove harm from the added products. We know today how wise that principle was, [it being] so well exemplified by its failure of enforcement, thanks to financially powerful opposition.

Vitamin Jackpot

Of course the big jackpot in synthetic foods was struck when the vitamin discovery developed. Natural vitamins are, in the main, parts of enzyme systems, not chemicals at all but biological mechanisms. The chemist, however, took over, taking apart the complexes and hastening to make synthetic imitations of the major component of each complex. This was about as clever as if he had stumbled on a watch and, in his ignorance of the watchmaker's art, thought that his find was [merely] a piece of organized metal—*organized brass*—organized obviously for a purpose but the purpose unknown to him.

[The chemist's] bungling efforts to make a synthetic vitamin have been limited to making only simple chemical components, as if he were to cast a brass watch without the internal mechanism. Vitamin C, he thought, was ascorbic acid, ignoring the discovery of Dr. Charles Sajous of Johns Hopkins, who identified vitamin C as tyrosinase in 1933. Tyrosinase is, in fact, the organic nutritional form of copper, just as vitamin B12 is organic cobalt. Later it was discovered that copper and ascorbic acid were always found in parallel concentrations in milk, indicating that they were parts of the same complex. This explains why scurvy tends to be accompanied by anemia, copper being known as a factor that promotes iron assimilation.

Nutritional Monstrosities

We might go back to the fundamental principle that a vitamin is the stuff that corrects a deficiency disease. Until you know all the reactions to a known deficiency, you certainly cannot set up specifications for the vitamin to cure it. Just because the scurvy victim gets *some* relief from ascorbic acid, the beriberi victim gets *some* relief from thiamine, that is *no*

proof that the vitamin in question has been captured. Ascorbic acid does *not relieve* the capillary fragility of scurvy, for instance—that requires *another* synergist of the vitamin C complex, the P factor. Thiamine does *not relieve* the nerve paralysis of beriberi—that requires vitamin B4. A refined, pure vitamin [i.e., the “most active” component without its natural synergists] is as much a nutritional monstrosity as a refined food such as white sugar or white flour. Its use can only result in new and unexpected hazards to the user.

Now, the pure *synthetic* product is still another step away from sanity. Just as synthetic glucose not only fails to provide the minerals and vitamins that accompany every natural carbohydrate, just as refined natural sugar fails to provide these essentials but goes further and promotes diabetes, hypoglycemia, and cancer, the synthetic vitamin also has some very frightful attributes.

Known Toxic Effects

To list a few [negative attributes of synthetic vitamins], I may cite the fact that Dr. Barnett Sure in 1943 showed thiamine to act as a long-range castrating agent on test animals—only twice the daily requirement causing sterility of second-generation offspring. Dr. Morgan, at the University of California, has shown that synthetic pantothenic acid has castrating effects on test animals. And the failure of synthetic vitamin C to stop dental gingivitis or any other infection is well known. The natural product [on the other hand] is very prompt and reliable in this effect.

Synthetic Vitamin D

The poisonous nature of synthetic vitamin D is well known; it causes calcification of kidneys in normal doses, whereas the natural product never does. Thousands of babies have been killed by viosterol [synthetic vitamin D2], prescribed by doctors who were unaware of its vicious effects. I know of one pediatrician who committed suicide when he realized how many babies he had killed by his ignorance. Nausea and the inability to retain food are the reactions to toxic doses of viosterol in the infant, as is kidney hemorrhage.

Chemical Difference

These toxic effects of synthetic vitamins are due to the fact that there is a chemical difference between synthetic and natural products. No synthetic amino acid, for instance, has ever been found to be usable in nutrition. Amino acids must be created in living cells to be nontoxic and useful in food. They therefore must be, in truth, “natural organic foods.” Amino acids made by chemical methods have been found to be toxic and incapable of supporting life. Only those made by living cells—by fermentation processes—can be used in food without harmful effects.

The chemical reason for the incompetence of synthetic foods is discussed in the [Lee Foundation Report No. 6](#), for those who would like to pursue this type of study. Also, in Dr. McAllister’s book *Narrative on Comfrey* (Lee Foundation) is a discussion of why and how organic crystalline products can change with age, so that they become unfit for use either as food or drugs even though adapted for such use at one time. We see here again the advice of Dr. E.V. McCollum, “Only perishable foods are wholesome, eaten before they spoil.”

We are paying a terrible price for our unwarranted and, in fact, illegal use of synthetic foods. There can be no honest and sound defense of such a practice.

By Royal Lee, March 29, 1957.

[Additional, supporting article]:

Mess in Washington

By Morris Bealle, American Capsule News, Washington DC, Number 16, October 27, 1956

It is a well-known advertising maxim that the public is a sucker for the pretty package. Big Business, which never misses a bet where another million dollars can be made, didn’t miss this one. A poisonous product called “butter yellow” was developed from coal tar. This was then put in substandard butter to make it look more attractive to the housewife. Lighter colored butter comes from cows fed a very poor quality of hay and feed in the wintertime. The coloring of butter is the way to make a low-grade product look like a high-grade one—and get more money for it from the consumer.

When independent researchers, led by the [Lee Foundation for Nutritional Research](#) (Milwaukee), let out the information that this butter yellow was a poison, the butter

manufacturers let out a squawk. The American Butter Institute (through their spokesman) got out a circular that was about 95 percent sheer falsehoods. First, it intimated that the use of paradimethylaminoazobenzene (butter yellow) is not used in butter at all—and never was. It was used to make textiles look like butter, this brochure said.

However, *Merck's Index*, 4th edition, tells a more truthful story. Under the heading “Dimethylaminoazobenzene (Butter Yellow), made from diazobenzene chloride and dimethylaniline,” it says the [compound's] only uses are for coloring butter and fats. So from that alone you can dismiss anything the butter trust says as pure falsehood.

Merck's Index, 6th edition, gives further information. It says this butter yellow is a carcinogen. *Saunders Medical Dictionary* says a carcinogen is a “substance that causes cancer.”

Now comes the National Research Council [NRC], accusing the Food and Drug Administration [FDA] of approving 119 coal-tar dyes for use in foods, many of which definitely are poisonous. The Food & Drug Bandits (as they are aptly called in informed circles) say a little poison won't hurt you. However, the Supreme Court of the United States (in its better days) has said that that makes no difference; any poison at all placed in foods is criminal.

[Dr. Harvey W. Wiley](#), father of our food & drug [safety] laws, often said, “Poisons do harm in proportion to their presence—and any at all is too much.” Some poisons, such as sodium fluoride, are cumulative and are not excreted by the liver and kidneys.

Prodded by the NRC, the FDA finally admitted that they had investigated 15 of those 119 “approved” coal-tar products and found 10 of them to be toxic (poisonous)—and that they may investigate the other 104 in the next 25 years.

The first of these [toxic products] is called FD&C (food, drug, and cosmetics) Red No. 32, trade name Amaranth. The U.S. Dispensatory (the Bible of the pharmaceutical profession) says this is used for dyeing wool and silk a bright bluish red—and also as a coloring for pudding, gelatin, frozen desserts, maraschino cherries, sausage casings, soda pop, and candy.

The FDA now admits that Red No. 32, and also Orange No. 1 and Orange No. 2, have been “decertified on the basis of results of recent experiments.” Also, on the basis of recent experiments on fifteen of these “certified: coal-tar products, ten have been found “distinctly toxic when fed to rats at levels as low as one-fourth of 1 percent of an otherwise standard diet.”

This is the federal agency that is paid to protect the public from poisonous food and drugs. Its alibi is that these poisonous colorings were “informally certified” when the [Pure] Food & Drug Act was passed in 1906 and that they never got around to finding out whether or not they were poisonous. They claim a shortage of help. Yet they never are short of help when the Drug Trust orders a crackdown on a vitamin vendor who is helping people keep well and away from drugstores, or a clinic that is curing cancer and keeping people away from the X-ray and radium racketeers.

Another thing. An assistant secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (the federal bureau in charge of the Food and Drug Administration) was appointed by the flour industry. His name is Mentener—a vice president of the Pillsbury Company. With his advent, the Truman formula, allowing Big Business to sell wheat with “only 64 pounds of rat excrement and 12 gallons of rat urine in a carload of wheat,” was expanded to allow 128 pounds of excrement and 24 gallons of urine per carload. Whether the poisons put in the wheat to bleach the flour white—and prettify it for supermarket shelves—cancels out this rat filth, the Food & Drug banditti sayeth not.

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