

'Lite,' 'sugar-free' not always healthy

Officials warn of misleading labels

NEW YORK (AP) — "Lite" olive oil may have no fewer calories, cereal boasting "all natural fruit flavors" may have more salt and coloring than flavor, and "sugar-free" snacks may have sweeteners as fattening as sugar.

What's a health-conscious consumer to do? Frank E. Young, who heads the federal agency that regulates the labels on much of our food, can sympathize. He's a doctor, and even he has trouble.

It's hard "to read labels and figure out what to eat," said Young, commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which is responsible for labels on foods not regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Labels on food, he said, are "a relic."

Statements on food packages by law must be true, but may not tell consumers all they want to know.

"Saturated fat is still not listed, cholesterol is still not listed, and fiber is still not listed. . . . These are the nutrients the surgeon general has told the American public to watch for when they go shopping," said Bruce Silverglade of the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

Food processors say the problem is that many consumers aren't sufficiently informed about ingredients to interpret information already on labels.

"You get into good food-bad food, good ingredient-bad ingredient, when what you want to look at is your overall diet," said Allen Mathys, director of regulatory affairs for the National Food Processors Association. Its 450 members favor current regulations making many nutrition labels voluntary.

"That means you have to give much more information, you have to give interpretations of the information," Young said.

The FDA was sidetracked from food label reform by issues such as AIDS, he said. But labeling will be a dominant issue this year, and the agency is considering new regulations on fiber and cholesterol.

Silverglade agreed that prospects for reform are better. "What's changed is that several very important reports have been issued . . . advising Americans to modify their diet," including one by Surgeon General C. Everett Koop.

Also, consumers "are becoming increasingly frustrated" with labels, he said. A coalition of medical, dietary, aging and consumer groups is lobbying for changes this year from the FDA or Congress.

"Food labels could be one of the greatest measures we could take to benefit the health of Americans," Silverglade said.

Still, Young said, it likely will be years before consumers see changes.

All food labels must provide the name of the product; the name and location of the manufacturer, packer or distributor; and the net contents or net weight. But not all foods must list even the ingredients; the FDA has a "standard of identity" for about 300 foods — such as mayonnaise and ketchup — and doesn't require ingredient lists for products that fit the standard.

There are two issues the FDA must consider: nutrition labels, listing ingredients in descending order by weight, and per-serving amounts of calories, protein, and certain vitamins and minerals; and health claim labels.

"Health claims are claims that talk about the people that eat the food," said John L. Stanton, professor of food marketing research at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. "Nutrition claims are claims that are made about the properties of the food."

"We really need a strategy that includes both of them," Young said. The FDA has a proposal awaiting Office of Management and Budget approval that would regulate health claims.

Five things would be addressed: fats and heart disease, fats and cancer, fiber and cancer, calcium and osteoporosis, and sodium and hypertension. The FDA would come

Food label definitions

Here are definitions of some terms used on food labels, as provided by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

CHOLESTEROL: Fat-like substances found in meat, poultry and dairy products. Cholesterol is essential to some body functions, but the body can make what it needs so the amount in many diets is excessive, increasing risk of heart disease.

EMULSIFIERS: Widely used in food processing, these stabilize fat and water mixtures so they won't separate. In mayonnaise, for example, egg yolks emulsify the oil and lemon juice or vinegar. In chocolate and margarine, lecithin, derived from soybeans, is the emulsifier.

HUMECTANTS: Chemicals such as glycerol, propylene glycol and sorbitol that are added to foods to help retain moisture, fresh taste and texture. Often used in candy and shredded coconut.

HYDROGENATED and PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED: Labeling terms that describe the process of adding hydrogen to an unsaturated fat to make it saturated; oils may be hydrogenated to varying degrees to make them suitable for use in products such as margarine. The more an oil is hydrogenated, the more saturated fatty acids it contains.

LIGHT or LITE: Labeling language that suggests a food is lower in calorie content, unless some other meaning is specified or obvious. A "lite" product intended to be useful in weight-re-

duction must have no more than 40 calories a serving and no more than 0.4 calories a gram to be called "low-calorie." A "reduced-calorie" food must be at least one-third lower in calories than the food to which it is compared. Foods naturally low in calories cannot use these terms. Foods labeled "diet" or "dietetic" must meet the requirements for low- or reduced-calorie foods or be clearly marked as useful for another special dietary purpose.

NATURAL: A term that appears on many products but has no official definition for FDA-regulated foods. Natural meats, however, are minimally processed and contain no artificial flavors, colors or preservatives.

SODIUM: A chemical essential for regulating body fluids and muscle function, but in excessive amounts linked with increased risk of high blood pressure. Food labeled "sodium-free" must have less than 5 milligrams per serving; "very low sodium," 35 milligrams or less a serving; "reduced sodium," the usual level reduced by 75 percent. Table salt, or sodium chloride, is one kind of sodium.

SUGAR-FREE or SUGARLESS: Table sugar (sucrose), fructose and corn syrup are among the calorie-containing sweeteners in food. A food labeled sugar-free may have calories from natural sugars (xylose, sorbitol and mannitol), provided the basis for the claim is explained.

up with model label statements that manufacturers could use, or companies could write their own within certain guidelines.

Supreme Court upholds Dallas dance hall rule

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ruling there is no "generalized right of social association," the Supreme Court said Monday that communities may protect young teen-agers by banning anyone over 18 from some dance halls.

The court unanimously upheld such a Dallas ban, saying it does not

violate young people's right to associate with whom they please.

Although the word "association" does not appear in the Constitution, a long series of Supreme Court decisions recognized such a right — including political and familial associations.

But writing for the court Monday,

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist said, "We do not think the Constitution recognizes a generalized right of social association that includes chance encounters in dance halls."

In other matters, the court:

- Made it significantly easier for law enforcement officials to question, search and arrest air travelers suspected of smuggling drugs.

The court's 7-2 decision in a case from Hawaii upheld, as had previous high court rulings, the use of a drug courier "profile" that drug enforcement agents use to identify likely smugglers.

- Ruled, by a 6-3 vote in a Mississippi case, that state courts lack the authority to approve adoptions of Indian babies by non-Indians even when the natural parents leave the reservation to give up the children.

Sending the case back to a tribal court for more study, the justices said tribal rights and Indian culture take precedence over individual rights in such circumstances.

- Refused to scuttle the Iran-Contra trial of Oliver North or block the trials of two of his co-defendants.
- Refused to revive a "clergy malpractice" lawsuit stemming from the 1979 suicide of a young California man counseled by pastors of his church.
- Agreed to decide whether a Baltimore woman may be jailed for refusing to reveal the whereabouts

of her young son, whom authorities fear may be dead.

- Refused to throw out, or order a federal appeals court to consider throwing out, an indictment charging New York hotel owners Harry and Leona Helmsley with federal income tax evasion.
- Let stand in a case from Washington state a ruling that allows widespread drug testing of workers in the nuclear power industry.
- Left intact a ruling that city police officers in Washington Township, N.J., may be required to undergo both random drug tests and tests that are part of annual physical examinations.

In the dance hall case, a state court had struck down a Dallas ordinance licensing certain businesses on condition that only those aged 14 to 18 be admitted as patrons.

The ordinance was challenged by Charles M. Stanglin, who operates the Twilight Skating Rink.

He divided the floor of his skating rink so that patrons dance or skate to the same music in full view of one another. People over 18 can be admitted to the skating rink but not to the dance hall.

The court said dance hall gatherings "might be described as 'associational' in common parlance, but they simply do not involve the sort of expressive association that the (Constitution's) First Amendment has been held to protect."

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HER ALIBI PG	7:15 8:30	THE RESCUERS a 7:15 8:30
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		*DANGEROUS LIAISONS R 7:30 8:45

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Marvin's Drive-In Grocery, 1600 E. Washington St. in Navasota, was robbed Jan. 29.

The suspects entered, stole a bank bag containing checks and cash, and then stole a coffee can containing \$100 worth of nickels.

No evidence has been found, but investigators believe more than one person was involved and that they were familiar with the operations of the store.

If you have any information regarding this crime, contact Crime Stoppers at 775-TIPS. Once called, Crime Stoppers will issue a special coded number to protect the caller's identity.

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Dr. Wonmo Dong, Director of Asian Study Program, and Associate Professor of Political Science, Southern Methodist University.

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