

Eating Mr. Right

Students battle to build healthy lifestyles in B-CS' "steak and potatoes" community.

By APRIL TOWERY
 THE BATTALION



Students living a lifestyle where eating dinner out of a paper bag is an everyday experience may have difficulty finding a fruit and veggie plate at the Greasy Burger Drive Thru.

Although wheat-free, gluten-free brown rice hamburger buns and veggie pockets aren't on the menu at the Greasy Burger, there are ways to obtain health food in Bryan-College Station.

This week, over 1,000 dietitians from across the country will be in San Antonio for the 79th annual meeting of the American Dietetic Association. Growing organizations such as these are evidence that nutrition, health and vegetarianism is not just a fad.

Sophomore business major Stephanie Ogden became a vegetarian when she was in the first grade after a field trip to a pig farm.

Ogden said that being a vegetarian makes eating on campus a challenge.

"I'm getting tired of eating wild rice casserole with cheese sauce," she said.

The upcoming holidays Thanksgiving and Christmas are accompanied by the traditional meals, which center around turkey as the main dish.

Ogden said this has not been a problem for her in the past. "I just eat around it, everything but turkey," she said. "There's so much more food than meat, but it isn't always healthy."

Former faculty adviser of the Texas A&M Vegetarian Society and associate professor of philosophy Gary Varner said there are several different classifications of vegetarians, which he explained in his report, Varieties of Vegetarian Diets: Ethics and Health.

"Nutritionists commonly recognize the following varieties of vegetarian: vegans eat neither meat nor any animal byproducts (things which, like eggs and dairy products, can be obtained without slaughtering the animals); lacto-ovo vegetarians eat no meat but do eat both dairy products and eggs; pescovegetarians eat fish but no other meat; and semi-vegetarians eat small quantities of various meats," Varner wrote.

The Vegetarian Society is not active on campus this year because of a lack of student involvement. The society was founded in 1991 and was active for only two years. Although it was reincarnated in Spring 1995, the student leaders have since graduated. According to its constitution, the society aimed to "advise and inform the Texas A&M community of the positive impacts of a vegetarian diet, and to provide a forum to express these views."

Varner said that the society was beneficial to the vegetarians because of the common goals they shared. He said the members of the society would share vegetarian horror stories such as discussions about vegetarian meals like "the dreaded steamed vegetable plate."

"In a community like this, vegetarians can share dietary commitments and similar ethical outlooks," Varner said.

Varner, a vegetarian himself for 16 years, said the society may have a future, but he does not intend to advertise it.

"I'm not going to push people into starting one," he said. "It's an easy thing to restart, and the resources are available if they will just come talk to me."

Janis Atkins, owner of Brazos Natural Foods, said one of the most popular products among students is the Source of Life vitamin.

"Students like it because it gives them energy," she said. "They also like quick foods like the garden burger or granola."

The appeal of herbal products such as shampoos and conditioners is that they do not contain the harsh additives that other products do. According to reports compiled by experts Ezio Bombardelli, Paolo Morazzoni and P. Mattioli, herbal products can decrease depression, anxiety, apathy and insomnia.

General Nutrition Center manager Manny Herrera said herbal products are not just a fad because of the genuine benefits the customers have received.

"The popularity of these products has grown, especially among my older clientele," Herrera said. "Most of our customers are students who are interested in what we call sports nutrition products, specifically protein supplements and shakes. We try to specify the dosage before they leave so they will not abuse these products for a diet."

Mary Clark, Columbia Medical Center supervisor of the dietary department said she has seen many

students struggle with changing their eating habits.

"My daughter is a student and she works, so she doesn't have time to eat healthy," Clark said. "You can't get vegetables and fruit at the fast food place."

"The problem with trying to lose weight quickly with diet pills is that once you stop taking the pills, you're going to gain that weight back and maybe even more. The only way to lose weight is to do it slowly and change your eating habits, or what you've been eating is going to come right back to you."

Organic products are popular among health food activists because they have no pesticide. A recent report from the USDA Pesticide Data Program noted that 61 percent of 6,000 fruit and vegetable samples had measurable residues from at least one pesticide, and many carried residues from at least two different chemicals.

Atkins said Bryan-College Station has few vegetarians compared to other cities.

"It's mostly a steak-and-potatoes type of venue as opposed to places that have more vegetarian and ethnic types of foods," Atkins said.

Ogden said it is important for meat-eaters to understand that vegetarians are serious about what they eat.

"People say, 'How can you call yourself a true Texan?' or

that I'm un-American because I don't eat meat — that gets annoying," she said.

Varner said that when students come home from college and announce a vegetarian diet, it can cause problems.

"You'd be surprised how disruptive it can be, like it's rejecting core values," Varner said. "It can be perceived as threatening or condemning the lifestyles of others, whether it's meant that way or not."

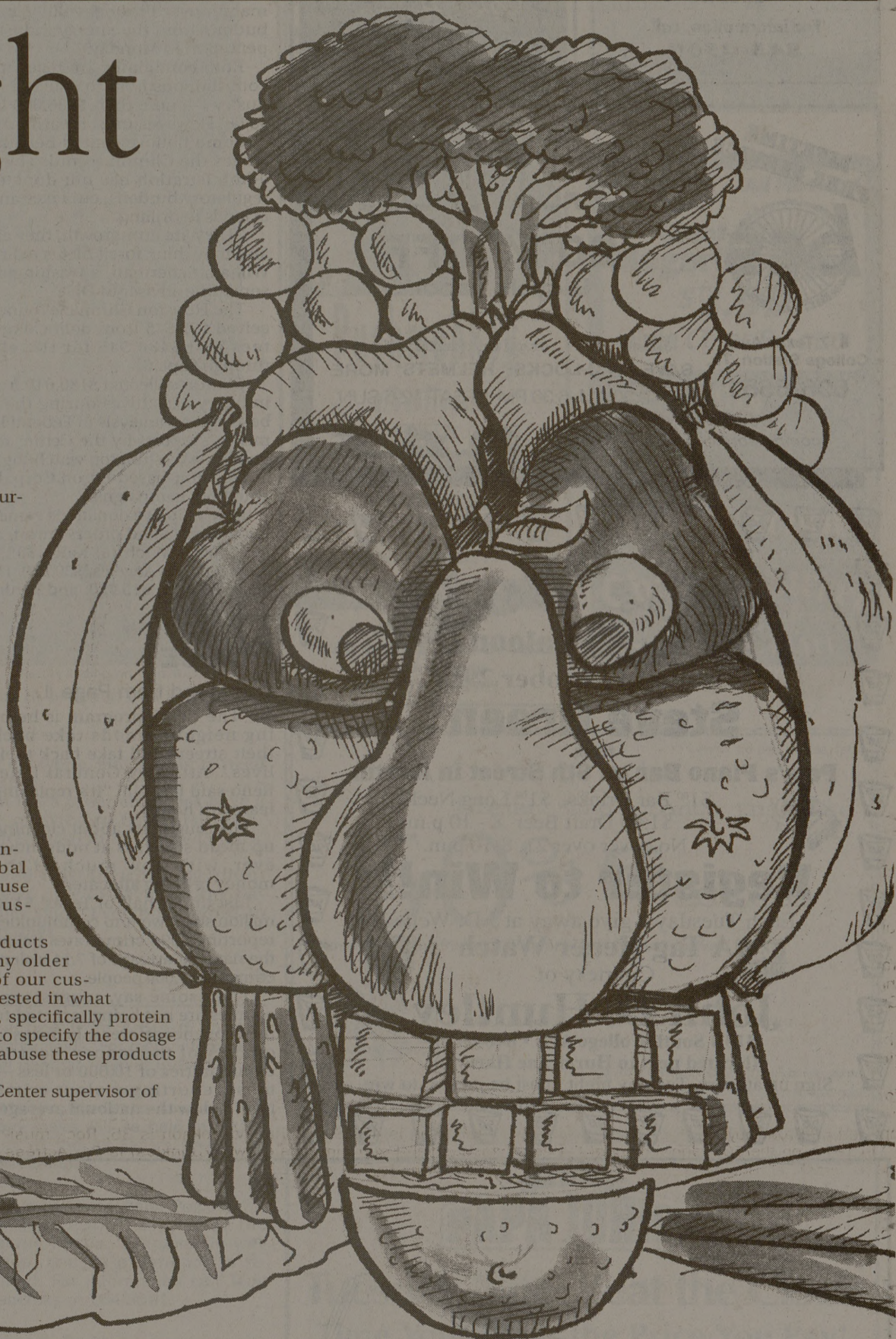
Atkins said students should be careful with the vitamins they take.

"There are no magic pills, whether it's from a natural foods store or prescription," she said. "When they talk about 'body, mind, spirit,' it's true because you can't expect a pill to work if you're not eating healthy."

Vitamins, however, can be beneficial. Recent studies show that vitamins B6, C and E have assisted in AIDS research.

Atkins said "the bottom line is education."

"What everyone needs to do is listen to their own body," she said. "There's limits on all of the foods and vitamins so you should read do what the bottle says. Some people may require more of something than another because of something hereditary, abuse to your body in the past or an illness. Different doctors recommend different things all the time."



"There's so much more food than meat, but it isn't always healthy."
 Stephanie Ogden
 sophomore business administration major

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Monday, November 25

Class of '97 Activities:
 11:30 BBQ at the Grove
 Meet at Kyle Field 97 minutes after noon!

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 Meet at Bonfire site 98 minutes after noon!

'97 / '98 T-Shirts go on sale November 6!

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