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Eat your veggies

Study shows sprouts contain cancer fighter

WASHINGTON (AP) — Good news for people who hate broccoli: A study shows there is up to 50 times more anti-cancer chemical in broccoli sprouts than in the mature vegetable — and the sprouts don't taste like broccoli.

Three-day-old broccoli sprouts, which are tender shoots topped with two baby leaves, are loaded with a concentrated form of sulforaphane, a powerful cancer fighter, say researchers at Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Paul Talalay, head of a team at Hopkins that discovered sulforaphane five years ago, said he was surprised that the sprouts contained such a high level of the anti-cancer compound.

"If these are developed commercially, this could be a really easy way for people to get the benefits of chemoprotection against cancer,"

said Talalay.

A report on the research was being published Tuesday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Earlier studies showed that sulforaphane, found in broccoli, cauliflower and some other vegetables, prompts the body to make an enzyme that prevents tumors from forming. A 1994 study indicated that cancer development was reduced by 60 percent to 80 percent in laboratory animals fed sulforaphane extracted from broccoli.

Talay said that diet studies have shown that eating 2 pounds of broccoli a week can provide enough sulforaphane to lower colon cancer risk by half.

Talay said his lab has found that the sulforaphane content in broccoli from a grocery store can vary by a factor of eight or 10 and there is no way

to identify a vegetable loaded with the compound from one that is not.

"They look the same," he said. "It is impossible to tell a highly protective broccoli from a poorly protective broccoli."

Broccoli sprouts may solve this problem, said Talalay, because the baby plants have a uniformly high level of sulforaphane.

"Because of the high content (of sulforaphane), it is possible to consume far lower quantities of the sprouts and get the same protection," he said.

Broccoli sprouts resemble the alfalfa sprouts now common in grocery stores, but they have more flavor, said Talalay. And the broccoli sprouts do not have the sharp tang of mature broccoli that many people, such as former President Bush, find unpleasant.

"They have a far more interesting

taste than ordinary sprouts," said Talalay. "You can use them in sandwiches or salads."

Talay said the broccoli sprouts take just three days to grow from seeds, in contrast to the 55 to 70 days it takes to grow a mature broccoli plant.

Broccoli sprouts are not grown commercially, but Talalay said that if other researchers confirm his findings of his lab, it could encourage growers to start producing the broccoli as a new vegetable health-conscious shoppers.

"This is an important finding," said Michael Bennett, a professor at the University of Texas, Southern Medical Center and an expert on diet and cancer. He said that diets rich in broccoli and other vegetables have proven benefit to health but that the important thing is getting people to eat them.

Survey: Americans puzzled by Constitution

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pop quiz: How many U.S. senators are there?

One in two Americans do not know the answer is 100, according to a survey on the U.S. Constitution released Monday. And two in five don't know there are three branches of government, let alone what they are.

Mayor Edward G. Rendell of Philadelphia, where the Constitution was signed 210 years ago this Wednesday, said the results were disappointing.

"That shows an appalling lack of knowledge for a document that determines what we do," said Rendell, chairman of the National Constitution Center, created by Congress in 1988 to increase awareness of the document. "Every day, issues important and central to us as people and government are affected by the Constitution."

Fewer than one in five surveyed were able to correctly answer at least eight of 10 basic questions, such as how long senators serve (six years), who nominates Supreme Court justices

(the president) and what the first 10 amendments to the Constitution were called (the Bill of Rights).

Rendell, whose group sponsored the survey,

"That shows an appalling lack of knowledge for a document that determines what we do."

EDWARD G. RENDELL
CHAIRMAN
NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

did find a ray of hope in findings that 91 percent consider the Constitution important and 77 percent believe it has an impact on their daily lives — even if many of them cannot say precisely how.

"The good news," Rendell said, "is they have

a great reverence for the Constitution."

Rendell said the lack of knowledge stems partly from an education system that tends to treat the Constitution in the context of history rather than as a living document that shapes current events.

The survey also found that:

- 16 percent incorrectly believe the Constitution declares Christianity the official religion.
- 35 percent wrongly believe the document declares English the premier language.
- 24 percent cannot name any of the First Amendment rights, and only 6 percent name all four: freedom of speech, press, assembly and religion.

The telephone survey of 1,000 U.S. citizens conducted by the New York communications firm of Shepardson, Stern & Kaminsky, has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. Respondents were asked a series of open-ended and true-false questions.

Helms battles over federal arts funding

WASHINGTON (AP) — The annual battle over federal arts funding moved to the Senate Monday with conservative Sen. Jesse Helms urging elimination of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The House has already stripped funding for the NEA from a fiscal 1998 spending bill and Senate acceptance of the Helms measure would set up a confrontation with the White House, which strongly supports the agency responsible for federal subsidies for the arts.

Helms, R-N.C., contends that the NEA funds programs that many Americans find objectionable or blasphemous. "It is self-evident that many of the beneficiaries of NEA grants are contemptuous of traditional moral standards," he said in a floor speech.

He said the NEA caters to "phony, self-appointed artists who insist on using the American taxpayers' money to finance anything they want to drag up from the sewer and declare to be art."

The NEA, founded by President Johnson in 1965, provides grants for nonprofit and community art groups.

NEA spokeswoman Cherie Simon said legislative restrictions and internal reforms have solved past complaints of problematic funding, and that the NEA didn't even fund some of the programs that Helms condemned.

Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., spoke of NEA backing for theater groups that bring Shakespeare to tiny towns in his home state. "It would be a shame to focus on a few mistakes when there are so many good worthwhile projects that the NEA has made a reality."

A vote on the Helms amendment, attached to a \$13.7 billion bill to fund Interior Department and Indian programs in fiscal 1998, is expected as early as Tuesday. The bill currently includes \$100 million for the NEA.

Smithsonian chief refuses to change sweatshop exhibit

WASHINGTON (AP) — The head of the Smithsonian Institution said Monday the museum has no intention of changing a planned exhibit on sweatshops that some clothes makers have called biased.

The California Fashion Association, which represents major clothing firms, last week accused the Smithsonian of taking a "political position" by focusing on sweatshop conditions rather than on the apparel industry's contributions to American business.

The show is scheduled to open April 15 at the National Museum of American History in Washington.

It will include a reconstruction of an El Monte, Calif., factory where 70 undocumented Thai immigrants were discovered in 1995 working under slave-like conditions, sewing clothes for brand-name makers.

Asked Monday if he would consider reshaping or canceling the exhibit, the Smithsonian's secretary, I. Michael Heyman, said, "Not at all."

Ilse Metchek, the fashion group's executive director, contends the show is negative, unbalanced and unduly influenced by labor unions — a claim refuted by the museum. She pledged last week to block it.

"We want to turn this exhibit plan into another Enola Gay," Metchek said, referring to a 1995 controversy over an exhibit of the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Japan.

Heyman said Monday the sweatshop show's planners had tried to get cooperation from the clothing industry. If the effort remains unsuccessful, officials will try to get input from individual manufacturers, he said.

The show's co-curator, Peter Liebholtz, invited clothing groups to provide videos of "good industry practices" to balance the sweatshop information, Liebholtz said last week. But several industry groups said such videos would not provide enough of a counterweight to the El Monte exhibit.

The exhibit is called "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A Dialogue on American Sweatshops, 1820-Present." It received money from, among others, the Labor Department and an apparel labor union.

"Some of the exhibitions in the history area at the Smithsonian are on contemporary issues," Heyman said. "And normally what one seeks in those is to use the contemporary issue to focus attention and to give the historical context of that contemporary issue."

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