

15. 100% Natural

Food is basically energy for the body. It is true that it also contains specific important nutrients, like thiamin or Vitamin C, but fundamentally it is energy. In the old days, meaning any time more than about 100 years ago, the original source of this energy was sunlight.

Sunlight hit green plants, causing them to grow, and then people ate the plants; or else animals ate the plants and then people ate the animals. (Sometimes the animals also ate each other, but curiously it is true that, except for fish, predators are generally not considered very tasty.) Of course, the widespread use of fertilizers made from petroleum has changed all that. Sunlight is still part of the original source of the energy in food, but these days so is oil. Ted supposes that it is true that oil also had its original source of energy as sunlight, but that was long enough ago that the practical implications of that fact are nil.

It should be possible to calculate how much energy from oil shows up in our food, and in fact someone has probably done this already. Ted's efforts did not get very far. For example, a pound of beef yields about 1000 calories, though obviously this varies with the type of beef, and especially the fat content. That pound of beef required about five pounds of corn consumption by the cow, and five pounds of corn is about 10,000 calories. At this point Ted got confused about how much fertilizer went onto the field to create five pounds of corn, how much oil went into that fertilizer, how many BTU's of energy that oil would yield, how many calories are in a BTU, etc. etc. But Ted guesses that the energy in the oil that was used to create the beef exceeds the energy in the beef.

That raises an obvious question: *why not just eat the oil?* Now, the reader may reasonably think that you can't just eat oil. Well, you can't drive your car with crude oil in your tank, either. The trick is in the processing. Making fertilizer to make corn to make beef is one

kind of processing, but Ted was sure that his chemists could find less energy-wasteful methods of processing. And, of course, they could, and this was the beginning of the PetroFoods conglomerate that has given us such famous and yummy products as Cheaz, Whipt Kreem, Peenut Budder, hamburgerer, hot dawgs, Chearios and Potatoe Chips.

A problem that Ted quickly encountered is that some people, including Piotr, felt that his products were not sufficiently natural. Ted is not sure exactly what people mean by the word “natural,” but he bearsonally believes that everything on this earth was put here by the Great Bear, and all of it, and anything made from it, is 100% natural. Of course, some people may have religious beliefs that do not include the Great Bear, and so Ted created a more ecumenical slogan:

PetroFoods: God's Bounty, Man's Ingenuity. Always 100% Natural.

This made his products popular with more or less everybody except atheists and a few back-to-nature types who lived in places like Idaho and Alaska, and who frankly weren't going to buy much of anything that Ted or anyone else produced.

Another advantage of products constructed from hydrocarbons is that Ted could tightly control what was and wasn't in them. This enabled him to use catchy, healthy-sounding, accurate phrases like *no cholesterol* or *absolutely no trans fats* or *no preservatives*. (Petroleum products tend to be pretty well self-preserving.) He also added the contents of multi-vitamin pills and fish oil capsules to many of his products. So, for example, one helping of his Special T breakfast cereal, made from PetroFood's newly-invented brann flakes (made, in turn, from ground up corn cobs, bound with petroleum distillates and bit of glue), was truthfully advertised as containing 100% of the USDA recommended daily allowance of 21 vitamins and minerals. It wasn't mentioned that it also contained enough petroleum to drive your car for 227 yards.

Ted hired a whole sorority house full of English majors from Wellesley College – people who could be counted on to use words precisely – to do his advertising. A few of them were law school graduates as well, so that they could help skirt the edges of troublesome truth-in-labeling and truth-in-advertising laws that threatened to infringe on Ted’s rights to free expression and large profits. One of Ted’s famous ad campaigns, for his Tomatoe Soup, proudly and correctly pointed out that his soup contained more Vitamin C than a steak, more omega-3 fatty acids than a grapefruit, and more protein than four heads of lettuce. Another of his verbal triumphs was the take-out box from his Pizza Hutt chain of restaurants, which proudly proclaimed that the pizza “contains 100% real cheese.” When it was pointed out that the pizza actually contained 98% Cheaz and only 2% cheese, Ted’s public relations corps responded that the box didn’t say that there wasn’t any Cheaz in the pizza. It just said that the pizza contained some cheese that was 100% real.

Ted encountered a troublesome legal dispute over his Dairy Delight shops selling soft-serve “ice cream.” The State of Wisconsin threatened to shut them down since his product in fact contained no dairy products whatsoever. Ted responded with a series of ads showing very happy *dairy* cows who were absolutely *delighted* that their milk could go to their lovely babies, now that it wasn’t needed to make soft-serve ice cream. This dispute is still lingering since every time an attorney or judge tried to take testimony from the cows in question, all that they would say is “moo.” And in any case there is some question of whether testimony from a non-dignified species is allowable in a court of law.

Ted’s Potatoe Chips also raised some difficult legal issues. This occurred because, as Dan Quayle learned to his horror, the word “potato” has no “e” at the end, but the word “potatoes” does contain an “e”. By law, potato chips must contain potatoes. PetroFood’s

position is that there is no implication in the name that potatoe chips contain even a single potato. However, the USDA's position is that "potatoe chip" is really a shortened description of a "potatoes chip," which then must contain potatoes. Ted discovered that this is a regulatory issue about the name itself that cannot be addressed by adding a few real potatoes and saying "made with 100% real potatoes." He may have to change the name of the product. Kristin suggests Poetato Chips whereas Piotr favors Spud Slices. Another possibility, of course, would just be Pringlz. These should sell well in the Czech Republic.

Interestingly, Ted refused to synthesize foods belonging to the three food groups traditionally consumed by bears – nuts, berries and salmon.

Ted considered starting a chain of restaurants that served only synthetic (but 100% natural!) foods. The restaurants would have been called This Food Is Unreal. Unfortunately, a little research showed that in modern-day America a restaurant serving synthetic food would not be much of a novelty, or even mildly unusual, and this plan was quickly dropped. Instead he opted for a chain of restaurants, all located at freeway interchanges or tollway rest areas, called Fill 'er Up, in which truly fast food is dispensed from hoses attached to what look like gasoline pumps and drunk from Styrofoam cups. The pumps would be color-coded for clarity: red for Meate, green for Veggies, blue for Froot, yellow for Dairy Delight. These would be America's first (but probably not last) restaurants with a pay-at-the-pump option.