

Don't do it. Please. I know this book looks delicious, with its light-weight pages sliced thin as prosciutto and swiss, stacked in a way that would make Dagwood salivate. The scent of fresh baked words wafting up with every turn of the page. *Mmmm*, page. But don't do it. Not yet. Don't eat this book. (1)

Look at that little package of silicon gel that's inside your new pair of sneakers. It says DO NOT EAT for a reason. Somewhere, sometime, some genius bought a pair of sneakers and said, "Ooooh, look. They give you free mints with the shoes!" - soon followed, no doubt, by the lawsuit charging the manufacturer with negligence, something along the lines of, "Well, it didn't say not to eat those things." (1)

It's estimated that over a billion people in the world are smokers. Worldwide, roughly 5 million people died from smoking in 2000. Smoking kills 440,000 Americans every year. All despite that surgeon general's warning on every single pack. (2)

We all know that tobacco is extremely addictive. And that the tobacco companies used to add chemicals to make cigarettes even more addictive, until they got nailed for it. And that for several generations – again, until they got busted for it – the big tobacco companies aimed their marketing and advertising at kids and young people. Big Tobacco spent billions of dollars to get people hooked as early as they could, and to keep them as "brand-loyal" slaves for the rest of their unnaturally shortened lives. Cigarettes were cool, cigarettes were hip, cigarettes were sexy. Smoking made you look like a cowboy or a movie starlet. (3)

[The Big Tobacco] expanded their markets in the Third World and undeveloped nations, getting hundreds of millions of people hooked; it's estimated that more than four out of five current smokers are in developing countries. As if people without a regular source of drinking water didn't have enough to worry about already. (4)

As the lawsuits [against tobacco companies] progressed, it became more and more apparent that smokers did *not* know all the dangers of smoking. They couldn't know, because Big Tobacco was hiding the truth from them – lying to them about the health risks, and lying about the additives they were putting in cigarettes to make them more addictive. Marketing cigarettes to children, to get them hooked early and keep them puffing away almost literally from the cradle to the early grave, among other nefarious dealings. (4)

In 1998, without ever explicitly admitting to any wrongdoing, the big tobacco companies agreed to a massive \$246 billion settlement, to be paid to forty-fix states and five territories over twenty-five years. (4)

In 2003, the auto industry spent \$18.2 billion telling us we needed a new car, more cars, bigger cars. Over the last twenty-five years, the number of household vehicles in the United States has doubled. The rate of increase in the number of cars, vans and SUVs for personal travel has been six times the rate of population increase. In fact, according to the Department of Transportation, there are now, for the first time in history, *more cars*

than drivers in America. That's ridiculous! (5)

Walking declined by almost half in the two decades between 1980 and 2000. In Los Angeles, you can get arrested for walking. The cops figure if you're not in a car you can't be up to any good. If you're not in a car' you're a vagrant. Same goes for the suburbs, where so many of us live now. (5-6)

In 2002, the retail industry in this country spent \$13.5 billion telling us what to buy, and we must have been listening, because in 2003 we spent nearly \$8 *trillion* on all kinds of crap. [...] We buy almost twice as much crap as our nearest competitor, Japan. We spend more on ourselves than the entire gross national product of any nation in the world. (6)

Antidepressant use in the U.S. nearly *tripled* in the past decade. We've got drugs in America we can take for anything: if we're feeling too bad, too good, too skinny, too fat, too sleepy, too wide awake, too unmanly. We've got drugs to counteract the disastrous health effects of all our overconsumption – diet drugs, heart drugs, liver drugs, drugs to make our hair grow back and our willies stiff. In 2003, we Americans spent \$227 billion on medications. (6)

Like this book, the epidemic of overconsumption that's plaguing the nation begins with the things we put in our mouths. Since the 1960s, everyone has known that smoking kills, but it's only been in the last few years that we've become hip to a new killer, one that now rivals smoking as the leading cause of preventable deaths in America and, if current trends continue, will soon be the leading cause: overeating. (7)

The United States is the fattest nation on earth. Sixty-five percent of American adults are overweight; 30 percent are obese. According to the American Obesity Association, 127 million Americans are overweight, 60 million Americans are obese and 9 million are "severely obese." In the decade between 1991 and 2001, obesity figures ballooned along with our own figures: from 12 percent of us being obese in 1991 to 21 percent in 2001. [...] As of fall 2004, obesity is highest in Alabama (28.4 percent) and lowest in Colorado (16 percent). All that mountain climbing and hiking really must be good for you. (9)

Through the 1990s, the average weight of Americans increased by 10 pounds, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The extra weight caused airlines to spend \$275 million to burn 350 million more gallons of fuel in 2000 just to carry the additional weight of Americans, the federal agency estimated in a recent issue of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine [...] So many of us are obese that we've created a market for a whole industry supplying us with extra-large and reinforced car seats, giant chairs, super-heavy-duty bathroom scales, "toilets rated to 1,500 pounds, beds built to hold 1,100 pounds, even something called a 'trapeze' that helps people who weigh 1,000 pounds turn over in bed," the AP reports. Even our military forces are fat: 16 percent of active-duty troops are obese. [...] the average MRE (meal-ready-to-eat) contains 1,400 calories (and that's one of the modest ones) and hundreds of different preservatives, high fructose corn syrup and large quantities of salt. (10)

Sixteen percent of American kids are now overweight or obese. As of September 2004, *nine million* American kids between the ages of six and eight were obese. Kids are starting to clock in as obese as early as the age of two. [...] *The Journal of the American*

Medical Association says that 77 percent of African American women and 61 percent of African American men are overweight or obese. The National Women's Health Information Center says that Mexican American women are 1.5 times more likely to be obese than the general female population. (11)

The USDA reports that the cost of vegetables and fruit rose 120 percent between 1985 and 2000, while the price of junk like soda and sweets went up less than 50 percent on average. (12)

Being overweight doesn't just mean you get called names by other kids. Fast is *deadly*. Obesity-related illnesses will kill around 400,00 Americans this year – almost the same as smoking. (13)

Type 1 diabetes develops when the body's immune system destroys the cells that make insulin, and is generally thought to be caused by genetic, autoimmune or environmental factors. Type 2 diabetes is the kind you can develop through bad diet and excess weight. [...] In 2003 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that one out of three kids born in America in the year 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes. Among African American and Hispanic kids, it's almost one out of two. (14)

... more than 20 percent of all cancer deaths in women and 14 percent in men are linked directly to being overweight. Another 33 percent of cancer deaths are linked to poor diet and physical activity... (15)

Diets rich in plant-based fibers – whole grains, vegetables, fruits and beans – apparently reduce risks for these types of cancer. (15)

One in four cats and dogs in America is now obese. (15)

In 2001, the BBC reported that a French team of scientists had pinpointed an “obesity gene” - but, they went on to note, “the majority of people in Europe carry the gene – so it is only one piece of jigsaw of reasons why obesity develops.” (16)

In the Judeo-Christian tradition on which our society was supposedly founded and to which we Americans give so much lip service (pardon the pun), overeating wasn't just bad for you, it was *bad*, period. As in morally wrong. They even made it one of the seven deadly sins – gluttony. In Dante's *Inferno*, gluttons are tormented for all eternity in the third circle of Hell, where the three-headed dog-monster Cerberus entertains himself by tearing them limb from limb and flaying their skins off. (17)

It's no coincidence that the explosion of obesity in this country happened at exactly the same time as the explosive growth of the fast-food industry. (19)

In 1970, Americans spent \$6.2 billion at fast-food joints. In 2004, it was \$124 billion. [...] The fast-food industry has been pretty relentless in encouraging us to eat. Critser explains that during those recession years of the mid-1970s, Americans cut way back on what they spent at the movies, in restaurants and at fast-food joints. The problem for the fast-food industry was how to convince them to eat and spend more. A McDonald's exec named David Wallerstein came up with the answer he'd faced the problem in the movie theater business. Movie theaters make tons of money on popcorn and the other

crap the push on us. It's what they call a "high markup" items – it does cost them much, so there's a big profit margin on it. Wallerstein wanted to get people to eat more popcorn. He tried two-for-one specials, but they didn't work – no one wanted to be caught scarfing down two boxes of popcorn. "So Wallerstein flipped the equation around," Cristers writes. "Perhaps he could get more people to spend just a little more on popcorn if he made the boxes bigger and increased the price only a little. The results after the week were astounding. Not only were individual sales of popcorn increasing; with them rose individual sales of that other high-profit item, Coca-Cola." (19-20)

When I called Outback to ask [about their menu calorie content], they told me that one order of its Bloomin' Onion rings wallops you with up to 2,500 calories – that's what the average adult male is supposed to eat in an entire day. And that's an appetizer. Throw on, say, a Drover's Platter on ribs and chicken, a salad drenched in cheese and fatty dressing, and finish off with one of their mountainous Sydney's Sinful Sundaes, and you've packed in as many calories as you should be taking in over several days. In one meal. (21)

When fast-food places first opened they tended to offer one size of fries, for example. At McDonald's, that size, which contained about 200 calories, eventually became the "small order." Then they added "medium," "large," and "super size." A super size order of fries which came in a cardboard bucket the size of a small child's head, packed over 600 calories. A big Mac Combo delivers a hefty 1,140 calories. Until 2004, you could super size it and get 1,460 calories for just pennies more! The average meal at McDonald's, according to Critset, expanded from 590 calories to a jumbo 1,550 calories. By the end of the century, Del Taco was offering a "Macho" meal that weighed *four pounds*. (21-22)

The Double Gulp at your local 7-Eleven comes in a bucket the size of a wastepaper basket, which holds 64 ounces of soda – half a gallon! Depending on how much ice you put in it, that's 600 to 800 calories. And it contains the equivalent of 48 teaspoons of sugar. It's liquid diabetes! (22)

Soda is also bad for the teeth and bones, especially for teenagers. Between 40 and 60 percent of peak bone mass is build during the teen years. But the phosphoric acid in sodas prompts the body to pull calcium and other minerals *out* of the bones to counteract the acidity, which can lead to osteoporosis down the line. (25)

... try getting Coke or Pepsi to admit they're harming out kids and they just howl that you're un-American, a pinko commie and definitely a "food Nazi." (25)

Physical activity has declined across the board at the same time that our caloric intake has increased. Studies show that almost 60 percent of Americans exercise rarely or never. That figure pretty exactly correlates with the number of overweight and obese Americans. An amazing coincidence, right? (27)

As America switched from a manufacturing and farming economy to a service and high-tech one, more and more of us have jobs that don't require anything in the way of physical activity. We sit in cubicles and answer phones. (28)

Today's American diet plan is to overeating what the charge card is to overspending: a handy-dandy, painless way to make it *easy*. In the bad old days, dieting was hard. A diet

was a "strict regimen." It required willpower and self-discipline. Dieting meant you had to deny yourself. Eeeewww! (31)

There are even creams on the market that you can supposedly just rub on your fat and it will magically disappear. And, of course, there are pills. It wouldn't be modern America if there weren't pills. Some of them are old-fashioned "appetite suppressants" - conventionally known on the street as "speed." Then there are the new "fat-blockers." One declares, "Super Fat-Fighting Formula guarantees rapid weight loss. Shortly after ingesting small amounts of the component, it dissolves into a gel that absorbs and surrounds excess fat and calories, preventing them from forming body fat." (32)

There was never a TV on during dinner, either. We talked. Yes, we actually spoke to one another. Crazy, right? Dinner was a great time in my house, a time to share stories about the day, a time to reconnect with the people you love, no distractions, a time to nourish your spirit as well as your body. (43)

We're now at a point where obesity is rivaling smoking as a killer, and a lot of people are beginning to see parallels between big tobacco and Big Food. (46)

Another hotbed of anti-*Super Size Me* sentiment was the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI). It calls itself "a non-profit, non-partisan public policy group dedicated to the principles of free enterprise and limited government." It's another front that looks like a think tank but operates as a corporate shell, pro-Big Food, pro-biotechnology and genetically modified foods, anti-nutritional labeling, antiregulation and very anti-me. CEI's "non-partisan" activities include lobbying against the Kyoto global warming negotiations, auto-emissions reductions and pretty much any other sound environmental policy you could name. They even sued the Clinton White House Office of Science and Technology for publishing a report on global warming it called "junk science" and a "\$14 million compilation of global warming scare stories." (51)

While I'm on this subject, I should mention that you also have to be careful about organizations like the American Dietetic Association (ADA), the American Heart Association (AHA), the American Cancer Society (ACS) and other of that type. You see their opinions and recommendations quoted all the time in the media. You think of them as organized to watch out for you health, to keep an eye on what Big Food and the pharmaceutical industry are up to, things like that. But actually, they all take money from Big Food and/or Big Drugs, and they all have conflicts of interest that color the advice they offer you. They've got their donors' and board member' interests in mind at least as much as, and maybe more than, yours. (54)

Similarly, there are good reasons the American Cancer Society seems to focus all its energies on promoting cancer drugs and treatments, then falls almost silent when it comes to identifying potential carcinogens in our food, air and water, and is downright quiet about strategies for cancer prevention. The ACS recruits board members and receives huge donations from the very pharmaceutical, chemical, food and biotech companies that sell cancer drugs, manufacture pesticides, experiment with genetic modification, peddle foods that are bad for us and pollute our environment. (55)

... in the summer of 2004, city health-code inspectors found one or multiple violations in sixty-eight out of seventy-three of those [McDs] NYC locations, for which information was

provided. (60)

One of the first things the United States occupying forces did after invading Afghanistan was to welcome a McDonald's. *Hey, Mr. Taliban, tally me some french fries!* There's even a McDonald's situated strategically near the Dachau concentration camp. They built a McDonald's where more than 30,000 people were exterminated during World War II. When this store first opened in 1996, visitors to one of history's most horrific sites emerged to find this note under their windshield wipers:

Dear Visitor,

Welcome to Dachau, welcome to McDonald's. Our restaurant's got 120 seats, about 40 outdoor seats and for our young guests an Indoor and Outdoor Playground. How to find us? Really simple. Just follow the picture. We're happy for your visit!

Your McDonald's Restaurant, Dachau.

Good old Ronald. He may sell food, but no one ever said he had taste. (61)

In the United States, we have more McDonald's than public libraries (a little over 9,000) or hospitals (around 5,800). (64)

In Africa, some doctors now consider obesity a major disease on par with AIDS and, ironically, malnutrition. (66)

Around 50 percent (24 million) of adults in the UK are overweight or obese, and levels are still rising. (67)

But nobody in England, or most anywhere else, has stood up to Ronald like London Greenpeace has. In 1990, McDonald's took advantage of England's ridiculous libel laws (basically, all you have to do in England is call someone an ass to get your own ass sued off) to sue London Greenpeace for distributing a leaflet called "What's Wrong with McDonald's?" It was a helluva document, accusing McDonald's of everything from destroying the rainforest and causing starvation in the Third World to exploiting children, lying to them in false advertising and feeding them food that could kill them. Since London Greenpeace was not incorporated, McDonald's had to pick individual members to sue. So it infiltrated the organization with spies. One of them even had an affair with a member – that's what they call due diligence in legalese. McDonald's named five individuals in its suit. Three of them dropped out, leaving Dave Morris and Helen Steele as the two Davids who stoop up to McGoliath. The case dragged on for years. In fact, it became the longest-running trial in British history. It was a war of attrition, with McDonald's spending tens of millions of dollars in the hopes that Morris and Steele would go bankrupt or give up out of sheer exhaustion. Dumb move. Along the way, the trial got tons and tons of international publicity, most of it bad for McDonald's. In 1997, the judge ruled that since Morris and Steele had failed to prove their allegations against McDonald's about the rainforest and Third World starvation, they were guilty of libel. But then he dropped a bombshell, declaring that they *had* proven that McDonald's exploits children, uses false advertising and threatens the health of long-term customers. The judge drastically reduced the damages they were to pay McDonald's, but it didn't matter, because they refused to pay one pence anyway. And they immediately filed an appeal. Although McDonald's technically won its case in court, it was a disastrous loss in the court of public opinion. It ain't no coincidence that right about the time the judge was reading his verdict in court, the president of McDonald's Corporation was being fired by

his board of directors. (67-68)

In 1999, a French farmer named Jose Bove led a group of farmers and activists in attacking a local McDonald's in the process of being constructed in his hometown of Millau, tearing the building down with this tractor. Needless to say, he is now a national hero in France. In another move that could only happen in France, chef Dominique Valadier abandoned his career in fancy five-star restaurant to run the students' and teachers' canteen at a school near Marseilles. He serves the teens and their delighted teachers gourmet meals like bull stew and polenta, squid-ink pasta, and salmon, washed down with glasses of Cote du Rhone – and does it for about the same price as a crap meal at McDo. As a result, the McDo outlet right across the street from the school is now empty at mealtimes. Kids are now enrolling in the school just to get to eat there! (71)

Later that afternoon, [1st day of filming “Super Size Me”] all the sugar I'd ingested in just two McDonald's meals – we calculated it at about half a pound's worth – plus the caffeine had me all jumpy and jittery. My body wasn't used to that much of either substance. I felt all cracked out, with weird, electrical buzzing sensation pulsing in my arms. (79)

A Big Mac contains 30 grams of fat. Each gram of fat contains 9 calories. $9 \times 30 = 270$ calories from fat. Since a Big Mac packs 560 calories total, that means that nearly 50 percent of the calories in it are fat calories. That's 20 percent more than recommended. Some 16 percent come from saturated fat, so that's well over the recommended max, too. (81)

Some scientists believe that high-fat, high-sugar food is actually physiologically addictive, like a form of drug. The data are still inconclusive, but it's possible that a meal high in fat may dull the hormonal signals your body usually sends itself to let you know you're full, so you keep eating long after you should have put that Whopper down. In its February 1, 2003 issue, the British magazine *New Scientists* reported that there's evidence that suggests that if you have too much fat in your system, or just ingest too much too suddenly in one fatty meal, your hypothalamus grows less reactive to leptin and other weight-regulating hormones. In effect, your brain gets too fat and lazy to do its job of telling you to drop the chalupa. There's also some worry, *New Scientist* went on, that “early exposure to fatty food could reconfigure children's bodies so that they always choose fatty foods.” You hear that? Parents, teachers, schools, get your act in gear now! (84)

A message posted on my site that should be filed under “Why I'll Never Eat McDonald's Food Again” Stories:

I used to work in a funeral home, and one night I was down in the morgue when I was summoned to the crematorium. When I got there, I saw the embalmer standing in the door of the crematorium holding a fire extinguisher. As soon as he saw me, he told me to run back downstairs and grab some sheets or hospital gowns. So as I'm heading downstairs I feel strangely hungry, which is not a feeling you usually get working in a funeral home. I grab a stack of hospital gowns and run back to the crematorium. What happened was that this morbidly obese gentleman was so big that his fat was melting off faster than the machine could burn it up. Having worked in the funeral home for a while, I have smelled some hellacious things and know it helps to not pay attention to what I am smelling. But this actually

smelled ... familiar, and slightly appetizing. As I was walking out of the crematorium, I realized exactly what it smelled like: all that melted human fat smelled exactly like the inside of a McDonald's. (85)

Quick chemistry – I mean, nutrition – lesson. There are four kinds of fats: monounsaturated fat, polyunsaturated fat, saturated fat, and trans fat. The first two are “good” fats, saturated fat is bad fat and trans fat is by far the worst. Trans fats severely lower your HDL cholesterol (the good kind) and drastically increase your LDL (bad) cholesterol, which hardens and clogs your arteries, which leads to heart attacks. Oh, and it promotes diabetes, as well. (86)

... partially hydrogenated oils [...] extends the shelf-life of those indestructible processed foods you eat, but it can drastically shorten your shelf-life. (86)

“In Europe [food companies] hired chemists and took trans fats out ... In the United States, they hired lawyers and public relations people. No one doubted trans fats have adverse effects on health, and still companies were not taking it out.” (87)

Some scientists believe that those ten teaspoons of sugar you slurp down in a 12-ounce Coke or Pepsi may stimulate the same part of your brain, the “reward circuits,” that cocaine and nicotine do. (92)

As Greg Critser points out in *Fat land*, there's sugar in everything. Sugar is the number-one food additive in the United States. Refined sugar is the predominantly used sweetener, but it's gradually being replaced by high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS). (94)

Even if you don't eat sweets, the amount of refined sugar you may be consuming would shock you. Mostly it's hidden in things like french fries ... and bread, soups, cereals, hot dogs, lunch meat, salad dressings, spaghetti sauce, crackers, mayonnaise, peanut butter, pickles, pizza, canned fruits and vegetables, tomato juice and ... well, the list is endless. (95)

The potential health risks of artificial sweeteners have been debated for a long time. In 1970, cyclamate was banned in the United States as a possible carcinogen, and the FDA proposed a ban on saccharin due to cancer concerns raised by lab experiments; though the ban was not enacted, saccharin came with a warning label until congress had it removed in 2000. (Once again, the fine folks in congress were working with your best, I mean worst, interests in mind). Studies have also shown potential cancer-promoting properties in acesulfame. The FDA has said aspartame may be linked to some uncommon but troubling side effects, including headaches, hallucinations, panic attacks, dizziness and mood swings. There were far more troubling studies possibly linking aspartame to birth defects and brain tumors, one conducted by the FDA itself as early as 1981, but they were overlooked in the rush to get NutraSweet approved and marketed. In large-dose lab testing, sucralose has been linked in animal studies to shrinkage of the thymus glands and enlargement of the liver and kidneys. But, as with NutraSweet, Splenda made it to the market before any large-scale, long-term population studies could prove or disprove those results. (98-99)

So now you know all about fat and sugar. Believe me, all that will sound downright natural and healthy when you hear about food processing, from meat production to

pesticide use in cultivation to chemical additives. (101)

The USDA says we eat 1 million animals an hour. (101)

... the cattle industry [...] is "the largest single segment of U.S. Agriculture, generating more than \$30 billion a year in direct economic output plus three times that in related economic output. (101)

In 1996, sales of beef and burgers plummeted after Oprah Winfrey did a show on mad cow, which she said "has just stopped me cold from eating another burger." Her guest on the show, Howard Lyman, was a former cattleman who'd become a passionate opponent of the dangerous ways the corporate cattle industry was handling meat. He was known as the "Mad Cowboy."

"A hundred thousand cows per year in the United States are fine at night, dead in the morning." he told Oprah. The majority of these cows are rounded up, ground up, fed back to other cows. If one of them has mad cow disease, it has the potential to affect thousands."

A group of Texas cattlemen sued them both for libel and "disparagement." In 1998, a jury found in favor of Oprah and Lyman. The Texans appealed twice and were twice turned down. (102)

A pound of ground beef used to come from one or two cows. But in the late 1990s the USDA found that a pound of ground beef could be made from leftover scraps collected from a dozen, a few dozen, or as many as 400 cows, all smashed together. (103)

It's been estimated that as much as 78 percent of ground beef contains microbes that are spread primarily by fecal matter. It's all that shit the cows produce and then stand around in. Kind of gives a whole new meaning to the old curse "Eat shit and die." It's like the food industry is saying that to all of us: *Eat shit and die, America.* (103)

Something like 20 million [chickens] are slaughtered every day. Some are ground up alive. Egg-laying hens live their entire lives in small wire cages, stacked on top of one another like prison cells, up to 80,000 of them in one windowless building. They don't walk, fly, perch, preen, nest, peck, dust-bathe or scratch for food. They just squat there and crank out eggs. The terrible conditions drive them nuts, so they'll scratch and peck one another's eyes out, and even turn cannibal. To prevent that, they often have their beaks and toes cut off. Because of all the stress, their immune systems shut down, so they're pumped full of antibiotics – which, of course, are passed on to us every time we eat chicken. Which is helping to spread new, drug-resistant bacteria through the human population. For instance, there's a new super-strain of salmonella out there that's resistant to Cipro, one of the most powerful antibiotics known. Other antibiotics like penicillin, bacitracin, erythromycin and tetracycline are also losing their potency against the new "supergerms." You don't even have to eat meat for this to affect you – testing has found evidence of antibiotics and antibiotic-resistant bacteria in many of the country's waterways. (104)

The spread of E. coli and mad-cow disease are just two or more than a dozen examples of foodborne pathogens that have been linked to beef. One of the more harebrained methods that meatpackers have been testing to kill the

bacteria in tainted meat is to hit the meat with bursts of low-level radiation, which screws with the bacteria's DNA. Watch for glow-in-the-dark burgers at your new McDonald's and schools. (105)

In an amazing display of collective insanity, the meat producers of this country are feeding all sorts of animals to the animals they feed to us. Dead pigs and dead horses are ground up for cattle feed, and so are dead chickens. A lot of chicken manure gets mixed up into the feed in the process, so the cows are not only eating chicken, but chicken shit, which can spread salmonella, tapeworms and chemicals like arsenic. Not only are cows fed dead chickens, but chickens are fed dead cows. (Cue "The Circle of Life" from *The Lion King*.) You want to hear something really disgusting? The cattle industry buys million of dead cats and dogs from animal shelters every year, then feeds them to the cattle who end up in your burger. (105)

...a billion-dollar industry sprang up to make processed food not taste like cardboard. Mostly they do that by injecting chemicals. A simple example is methyl anthranilate, which is used as a metal corrosion inhibitor in jet engine lubricants and also to make grape Kool-Aid taste like grape. Amyl acetate (also used as a paint and lacquer solvent) tastes like banana. But the formulas are usually much, much more complicated than that. To simulate an old-fashioned strawberry milkshake, the "artificial strawberry flavor" in a Burger King shake contains forty-six chemicals. None of which is strawberry. (108)

Over the last twenty-five years, Idaho has lost about half of its potato farmers. Now it's vast corporate farms that stretch for thousands of acres. To maximize output and minimize costs, they use all sorts of high-tech methods, including chemical fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides, all of which have a highly questionable impact on the environment – not to mention the impart on our bodies. (108-109)

For a while, McDonald's was even working with the giant chemical company Monsanto, former producer of the herbicide Agent Orange, to produce genetically modified spuds that had the pesticides programmed right into them. (You can read more about it in Michael Pollan's book *The Botany of Desire*. They were called NewLeaf potatoes, genetically engineered to produce their own insecticide, called Bt (short for bacterial toxin). Supposedly, any Colorado potato beetle – the scourge of potatoes – that took a bite from a NewLeaf leaf was doomed. NewLeafs were actually registered as a pesticide with the EPA. (109)

Pollan visited a potato farmer in Idaho who grows Russet Burbanks – the taters most used in french fries – for McDonald's. Along with various insecticides, pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers and fungicides, this farmer dusts his crop with some of the most toxic chemicals now in use, including Monitor, a deadly chemical that damages the central nervous system. He tells Pollan he won't go into a field for four or five days after it's been sprayed. Monitor kills apids, which are harmless but transmit a virus that causes a problem called "net necrosis" - sounds spooky, but all it means is brown spots on the potato's flesh. But McDonald's doesn't want brown spots on its fries. This farmer could plant other kinds of potatoes that aren't susceptible to net necrosis, but then he'd lose McDonald's as a buyer. (110)

...you think a standard Chicken McNugget is like this little piece of breast meat with a little flour and breadcrumbs sprinkled on it to make it crunch, right? Sorry. There's no

one place on the chicken that the McNugget comes from. A McNugget is pieced together from the mashed-up little bits of a dozen or more chickens. And then they throw in water, modified cornstarch, salt, chicken flavor (yeast extract, salt, wheat starch, natural flavoring (animal source), safflower oil, dextrose, citric acid, rosemary), sodium phosphates, seasoning (natural extractives of rosemary, canola and/or soybean oil, mono- and diglycerides, and lecithin). Battered and breaded with: water, enriched bleached wheat flour (flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid), yellow corn flour, bleached wheat flour, modified corn starch, salt, leavening (baking soda, sodium acid pyrophosphate, sodium aluminum phosphate, monocalcium phosphate, calcium lactate), spices, wheat starch, whey, corn starch. Breading set in vegetable oil. Cooked in partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (may contain partially hydrogenated soybean oil and/or partially hydrogenated corn oil and/or partially hydrogenated canola oil and/or cottonseed oil and/or sunflower oil and/or corn oil). (111-112)

To test how long Mcfrankenfood lasts, I bought various McDonald's items – a Filet-O-Fish, le Big Mac, fries, the usual suspects – and also some real fries and a real burger from a non-fast-food sandwich place. I put them all in big, lidded glass jars in my office and watched nature take its course. Two weeks, a month, six weeks. Everything gradually decayed and decomposed, the way God intended it to. My office got awful stinky. Only those McDonald's fries refused to die. Those freaks of nature didn't decompose one bit in ten weeks. They didn't mold, they didn't break down, nothing happened. After ten weeks, they still looked brand new. That was the point at which my intern freaked out at the disgusting sights and smells and threw everything away, so I have no way of knowing how long those Frankenfries would have lasted. For all I know, they're still looking as new as the day I bought them, somewhere in the Fresh Kills landfill. (115)

I asked a bunch of people on the street if they knew what a calorie was. Not one of them could tell me. Not one! If I'd asked them who had won the last *American Idol*, or how many games it had taken the Red Sox to win the World Series, I bet they coulda told me. But ask Americans about basic issues of their own health, and all you get are blank states. (121)

The average man weighing 150 pounds can burn off 115 calories with every ten minutes of high-intensity aerobic exercise. Ten minutes of racquetball will burn around 90 calories. Running at a good clip for those ten minutes buy you a handsome 131 calories. Sitting on your behind for ten minutes only uses up 12. A woman weighing 123 pounds can burn 56 calories in ten minutes of bicycling at a decent speed, 77 calories playing basketball, 78 playing soccer, and 88 calories in ten minutes on the StairMaster. (122)

Like I always say, "The family that sweats together rides home in a smelly car together." (123)

You know what gyms should do? Give free memberships to women. Write off all those free memberships as tax-deductible donations to the health of our nation. Then every guy in town would have reason to (a) come to the gym and (b) get his fat butt into shape. (123)

It's bad enough that all us adults are sitting around on our behinds all the time, only getting exercise when lifting a beer and a slice to our faces while watching our favorite ball team on TV. But what's worse, what's downright criminal, is the example we're setting for our kids. A nation of couch potatoes, raising a nation of pudgy little couch spudlings, whose only exercise anymore comes from using the remote or the joystick. (125)

...there are studies showing that gym is actually good for the brain as well as the body. The increased flow of oxygen to the brain that comes with physical exercise can make kids better, more focused students when they return to the classroom. (126)

So, we're overeating and embarrassed, but too lazy to do anything about it. Ain't that America, babe? That's as American as baseball – well, not playing baseball but watching it, while eating hot dogs and apple pie and driving Chevrolet. And not a little Chevy either, but one big enough for our big ol' overfed and undermoved bodies. You think it's coincidence that great big SUVs have become so popular? (128)

As the days and weeks progressed [into filming *Super Size Me*] or maybe I should say disgraced, other weird shit happened to my body. The first zits sprouted on my face before the first week was out. Pretty soon I felt like I was thirteen again – pimply, pale, greasy and funny-looking. That goodness I already had a girlfriend. (For the time being, at least.) In my chest, I started to have ... not chest pains, exactly .. and not man-breasts, at least not early on. It just felt like there was a weight on my chest. It's hard to describe. It felt like someone had stacked weights on my chest. I didn't know what it was, but I knew it was probably not a good thing. Worse, I started getting this really weird feeling in my penis. Those buzzing pulsations I'd felt in my arms were not in my penis. It was like I could feel the blood pumping in and out of it with every pulse. It was a freaky feeling. You know what it feels like when you put your finger on a cat's throat when it's purring? That's what this felt like inside my penis. At first I thought the wireless mike I was wearing for the filming was sending some sort of small energy charge into my body, so I went into the bathroom and took it off. But it didn't stop, and it totally freaked me out. I mean, I like it when my penis is happy, but I don't want to feel it purring like a cat. This was beyond worrisome. Pretty soon it was difficult for me to go back to work after lunch. By the time I'd get back to the office, I'd feel really lethargic and scatterbrained, and I just couldn't focus. As the month progressed, I got more and more forgetful. Feeling fuzzy most of the time. My friend Scott Ambrozy, the director of photography, kept saying the diet was making me dumber. I wished I'd taken some sort of cognitive test at the beginning to see if we could measure how it affected my ability to process information. It made me think of kids going back to class after a lunch of McCrap. It's hard enough to stay awake in school. No wonder kids' test scores are going down. All I wanted to do was curl up under my desk and nap. (133)

I started getting prebreakfast, prelunch and predinner headaches, too. Massive, pounding thumpers that would rip through my skull. But the minute I started eating the food, the headaches would to away. Way too strange. (134)

But what about diet soda? Well, diet soda's not such a great idea, either. Diet sodas usually contain that synthetic sweetener, aspartame, that the Department of health and Human Services has said may be linked to some uncommon but troubling side effects,

including headaches, hallucinations, panic attacks, dizziness and mood swings. The Center for Science in the Public Interest's recommendation on diet soda is that "if you consume more than a couple of servings per day, consider cutting back. And, to be on the safe side, don't give aspartame to infants." (136)

But it wasn't the McDonald's brothers who made it happen. They'd have been happy spending the rest of their lives flipping burgers in San Berdoo. The real Dark Overlord of the McDonald's evil empire was Ray Kroc, a salesman of milkshake machines who was their first licensed franchisee in 1954. By 1961 he'd bought the whole megillah from them. By '65 he had the corporation listed on the New York Stock Exchange. By '67 he'd opened the first McDonald's outside of the United States, in Canada. In '68 he introduced the Big Mac. The Egg McMuffin debuted in '73, the Happy Meal in '79, and blah blah blah. When Kroc died in 1984, McDonald's was well established as the biggest, baddest fast-food chain in the known universe. It had its competitors and its shameless imitators like Burger King, but its supreme world hegemony was unchallenged. (139)

Parents are their children's primary role models. Kids learn their life habits, good and bad, from their parents. If you're a mom or dad who eats crap all the time and you don't exercise, what are your kids going to do? (149)

In her book *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*, psychologist Susan Linn, associate director of the Media Center at Harvard University's Judge Baker Children's Center, explains how marketing to kids – which before the 1970s was practiced only by a few toy makers, cereal companies and entertainment companies – has ballooned. Today, corporations spend over *\$15 billion every year* on marketing, advertising and promotions meant to program kids to consume, consume and consume some more. (150-151)

...there was actually a marketing study put out in 1998 called *The Nag Factor*. Was it published to help parents learn how to say no to their kids? Tzzzzt. Sorry. Nope, it was done to help advertisers and marketers learn how to target kids better, to get them to nag. I couldn't make this up. The press release that went out to advertisers to announce the publication of this study was called – I'm not kidding – "The Fine Art of Whining: Why Nagging Is a Kid's Best Friend." Another study nickname for it is "pester power." So what did these evil geniuses find out? Things like: Divorced parents, and those with teenagers of very young children, are most likely to give in to nagging. (151)

The whole scam of labeling kids' food as healthy and good for them came to its most despicable low in 1988, when, as Marion Nestle explains, "the American Heart Association (AHA), long a distinguished champion of research and education promoting low-fat and other dietary approaches to prevention of coronary heart disease, decided to raise funds by labeling foods 'heart-healthy.' The AHA would identify foods that met certain standards for content of fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium with a logo consisting of a red heart with a white check mark and the words "American Heart Association Tested & Approved." The AHA planned to collect fees from food companies that made approved products and expected to benefit from company advertising and promotion of the partnership." Get it? For a fee, we'll declare your product healthy! Pretty soon, you had manufacturers like Kellogg Promoting all their "heart-smart," AHA-approved brands ... like the notoriously sugar-laden Cocoa Frosted Flakes, Fruity Marshmallow Krispies and "Low-Fat (but by no means low-sugar) Pop-Tarts." Remember? And now, General Mills is making the same American Heart Association claims for most of its cereals, including

Cocoa Puffs and Frosted Cheerios. Sure, none of these cereals and others like them are fat laden, which most people associate with heart trouble, but the AHA seal of approval sends an overall message that the product is healthy. One irony is that Post cereals can't participate, because Post is owned by Philip Morris, and American Heart Association rules prohibit endorsements of any product owned by a tobacco company. So General Mills Cocoa Pebbles is AHA approved, but Post Cocoa Pebbles, virtually identical in nutritional contents, is not. (154-155)

As early as 1978, the Federal Trade Commission proposed a rule to ban or severely restrict children's advertising on television. Predictably, the broadcasting, advertising, food and toy industries howled. Congress caved. It actually passed legislation in 1980 stripping the FTC of its authority to restrict advertising. Since then, parents have found themselves hopelessly outfoxed by the evil advertising geniuses who target their kids. (157)

A recent study by the American Psychological Association says kids under eight have a hard time distinguishing ads from entertainment anyway. (160)

In 2000, government agencies spent about \$48 million to promote nutrition and health for kids. But McDonald's alone spent fourteen times that amount - \$665 million - to advertise its McGrub in U.S. Media alone (TV, radio, print and outdoor signs) that year. In all, the food industry spent \$2.7 billion advertising fast food, junk food, soda, dandy, snacks and sugar-coated cereal in 2000 - 56 times what the government spent on its nutrition promotion. (161)

One thing that really pisses me off is the way sports figures and other celebrity "heroes" are used to sell crap to the kids who look up to them and want to grow up to be just like them someday. (161)

The deal [McDonald's sponsoring Olympics] backfired in a funny way during the spring before the '04 Games, when some clever reporter asked the tiny American gymnast Carly Patterson, whose picture was about to be pasted across 70 million McDonald's bags that summer, when was the last time she actually ate at McDonald's. "Gosh," the poor innocent kid admitted, "I couldn't even tell you. It was when i was really young. I can't really have McDonald's right now, you know?" The media loved it, but I bet there were some heart attacks in McDonald's public relations offices. (Apart from their regular health-related ones, I mean.) After all, McDonald's had contracted Patterson as a spokesperson well before the Games began. I half-expected Carly to mysteriously disappear from the U.S. Olympic team. Instead, after what were probably some grueling behavior modification sessions with the publicists, she changed her tune. By the time of the Games, she was dutifully dipping the tip of a plastic spoon into some yummy sugar-loaded yogurt parfait and telling reporters, "It's fruit and yogurt. It's good for you." (162)

By the way, you want to know what sort of control the big food sponsors have over what gets consumed at the Olympics? Total, that's what. Complete food fascism. At the Athens Games, according to the *London Times*, spectators - not the athletes, but the paying spectators - were told that "they could be barred for taking a surreptitious sip of Pepsi or an illicit bite from a Burger King Whooper. Strict regulations published by Athens 2004 dictate that spectators may be refused admission to events if they are carrying food or drinks made by companies that did not see fit to sponsor the games." (163)

No sports hero has shown himself to be a more willing corporate pitchman and mascot than Michael Jordan. Arguably the greatest player in the history of basketball, he's also been one of the most aggressively self-merchandised. Mr. Basketball is Mr. Endorsement. The guy CNN once called "a golden marketing tool" (think about that for a second, Michael) has sold everything from Nikes to Hanes undies to Bugs Bunny movies and merchandising to Gatorade to perfume to World-Com long-distance serviced to, of course, McDonald's fries. (164)

One of the funniest pop-star endorsements ever was announced in September 2004, when McDonald's signed Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen to promote Happy Meals in France. "Sales of Happy Meals are down in France," *Newsweek* snickered, "and marketers evidently believe the eighteen-year-old twins send just the message needed to reverse the trend." So Mary-Kate came straight out of a rehabilitation clinic for her eating disorder to be a spokesperson for Happy meals. (Hey, look, McDonald's just wants people to be the Happy Meals. NO one said anything about eating them.) (166)

And, in fact, to this day you'll never see Ronald McDonald eating the food. Not in any commercial. He danced and sings, grins and giggles and smiles at the kids while they stuff their faces, but he never touches the grub. Why? Because like the late Easy-E said in the song "The Dopeyman"; "Don't get high off your own supply." (168)

Recently, Advertising Age cited Ronald McDonald as number two on its list of top-ten advertising icons. Of the twentieth century. Who was number one? The Marlboro Man. (170)

In fact, a lot of the time the USDA seems to function like a Big Food lobby that conveniently just happens to be a wing of the federal government. That's partly because so many of its executive offices, from the Secretary of Agriculture on down, are occupied by people who came from the executive offices of the Big Food corporations and will go back there when their tour of duty in D.C. is completed. In 2004, something like forty-five of the top offices of the USDA were filled by people recruited from Big Food and its lobbies. "Incestuous" hardly seems like a strong enough word to describe the revolving-door relationship between the USDA and Big Food. [...] "Conflict of interests" is hardly apt. These people have no conflict of interests. They know exactly whose interests they serve. (176-177)

The Food Pyramid got the USDA into trouble the very first time it was unveiled, in 1991. The department's friends in the beef industry were outraged at what a small space they got on it, and it took a year of haggling to come up with a version that pleased them. So, right from the start, the USDA was compromising your health to appease one of its true constituents. (179)

Actually, the "God Milk?" ad campaign was a product of what are called checkoff programs, which are designed by the USDA and made mandatory by acts of Congress to help promote various agricultural commodities. The USDA oversees and must approve all checkoff activities. In this case, milk producers forked over a percentage of their revenues to the Dairy Board, which in turn paid for the "Got Milk?" and other promotions. Have you seen the new McDonald's Milk Jugs? If you think that was a McDonald's idea, think again. And don't forget port – the National Pork Board paid McDonald's thousands of

dollars to help create and promote the McRib Sandwich. It's not just dairy and port, either. The USDA uses checkoff programs to gouge farmers from almost any area – beef, eggs, cotton, mushrooms, honey, watermelon, popcorn, soybeans, potatoes, lamb, etc. Farmers from across the spectrum hate these programs, and in 2001 they cheered when the U.S. Supreme Court declared the mushroom checkoff program unconstitutional because “it compels producers to finance and/or to be associated with political or ideological speech to which they are opposed.” At the time of this writing, beef producers are awaiting what they hope to be a similar Supreme Court decision, and the port checkoff has been flopping around the courts for years. (181-182)

Attorney John Banzhaf put it bluntly: Schools that let the fast-food and soda companies into their lunchrooms “get a bribe for every fat burger or sugar soft drink which is sold,” he says. “Even those who defend it seem to say, 'Well, it's bad, we know it's not good for the kids, but we do it for the money.' We have a simple word in the English language for people who do something they know is wrong for money. We call it 'prostituting' yourself.” (185)

In 2004, the Associated Press reported that “Krispy Kreme stores will give Palm Beach County students in kindergarten through sixth grade a free doughnut for every A on their report card. Another program has students decorate posters of doughnuts with 'success sprinkles' when children meet goals. The posters can be turned in for a class set of doughnuts.” (189)

On the national level, one guy who's shown he truly gets it is Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa. The ranking Democrat on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, he introduced a bill in 2004 called the HeLP America (Healthy Lifestyle and Prevention) Act, a really sweeping piece of legislation that would include tight regulations on all aspects of what the junk-food industry is doing in our schools, a ban on food marketing and advertising in schools and funding for schools to give kids alternatives to junk food. And this part I love: The bill would be funded by fining tobacco companies if sales of cigarettes to minors don't decline. (193)

Sweden, Norway and Finland banned marketing to children under age twelve. In Canada, the province of Quebec bans marketing to children under age thirteen. Greece prohibits TV commercials for toys between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m., New Zealand bans junk-food marketing to kids and the UK has announced plans to do the same. (194)

I knew I was going to gain weight during my McDonald's month, but I and my team of health advisors were startled at how much I gained, and how fast. When I had my first weigh-in at health on Day 5, I had ballooned from 185.5 to 195 pounds. Almost 10 pounds in five days of a McDonald's diet! At my second weigh-in on Day 12, I was up to 203 pounds. I was adding roughly nine pounds every six days! I'd turned myself into the Anti-Jared! If we'd met during my diet, we both might have exploded, like matter and antimatter. At the rate I was going I'd gain 45 pounds by the end of the month. That didn't seem possible, but 18 pounds in two weeks wouldn't have been conceivable either if I hadn't just done it. [...] Bridget, my nutritionist, was already concerned by Day 5. She said gaining weight that fast is not healthy and suggested I stop eating McBreakfast, or only have a banana and a coffee. Sorry Bridget, I said, but McD's doesn't sell bananas. Okay, she said, then have a yogurt instead of a sundae for dessert. I could tell she didn't eat at McDonald's often. It was true that a small yogurt had fewer calories than one of

their sundaes, but the regular size, especially if you added the crunchy granola topping, had more calories than even the hot fudge sundae. So at least take a multivitamin, Bridge said. They don't sell multivitamins, either, I replied. (199-200)

They say that by 1087, England's William the Conqueror had gotten so fat he couldn't ride his horse – guess his conquering didn't include his appetite. So he went on the first recorded liquid diet in history: He stayed in bed and drank liquor instead of eating, thinking he'd lose weight that way (or maybe he just wanted an excuse for being a lazy drunk). (201)

Folks, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but *there's no magic cure for obesity*. Sorry. The only way to lose weight and keep it off is to eat sensibly and to exercise. (205)

You ever noticed how people walk into fast-food restaurants and stare at the board like the menu has changed since the last time they were there? These places have had the same menu for *decades*! What are you waiting for? There's no filet mignon today. Or lobster bisque. Just the same old McCrap they've been serving for years. But now I understand. They're junk-food zombies, just like I'd become. (208)

It's called NASH syndrome, or nonalcoholic steatohepatitis, a liver disease that closely resembles alcoholic liver disease but occurs in individuals consuming little or no alcohol. The first step is excess fat deposited in the liver, which can cause inflammation and scarring, which can lead to cirrhosis. And cirrhosis is irreversible and potentially fatal. A lot of people don't know about this until it's too late and they're showing the symptoms. Biopsies on the livers of overweight and obese children reveal that some of them are already showing the scarring that suggests they're on the road to cirrhosis unless they change their diets. (209)

My CGOT (serum glutamic oxaloacetic transaminase) count, [by day 18 of filming Super Size Me] which is supposed to be under 37, had gone up from 21 to 130. My SGPT count had been 20 and was now 290 – it is supposed to be under 40! (209)

It's so typical of how American medicine deals with health problems: instead of prevention, you wait until it's really serious, then develop a high-tech, high-cost surgical procedure [bariatric surgery, gastric bypass surgery, or a Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass]. But the jury is still out on the long-term effects of this procedure on a child whose body is still developing. It just seems to me we'd all be better off if we'd focus as much on prevention as on treatment. (215)

Did you know that in Chinese culture, you don't pay the doctor when you're sick? It's his job to keep you well. If you're sick, he ain't doing his job, and he don't get paid. If he comes around and makes you well again, then you start paying him. (217)

There's no question that antidepressants and other medications help an enormous number of people and save lives. But there is also a large number of people who would benefit as much or more with preventive and lifestyle care – diet, nutrition, exercise – to address depression, sexual dysfunction and attention deficit disorder. (218)

Speaking of the medical establishment's nearly total disregard for the importance of good

nutrition to our health, when we visited Texas Children's Hospital, I saw something that blew my mind. A McDonald's. In the hospital. A children's hospital. A *f* McDonald's in a children's hospital that is now stapling obese children's stomachs!* To me, that is utterly irresponsible, a flagrant violation of the doctor's pledge of *primum non nocere*: first, do no harm. (219)

In 1916, the first self-service grocery store, Piggly Wiggly, opened in Memphis. By 1940, there were almost 3,000 Piggly Wiggly locations nationwide. Safeway, A&P, King Kullen, Ralph's, Kroger's and the rest all followed suit. With their aisles of products all vying for the shopper's attention, these stores made brand names and packaging important for the first time. They also began the trend of one-stop food shopping as they added a meat counter, a fish counter and dairy and bakery sections. In short, they became "supermarkets." The frozen-food locker filled with Swanson TV dinners appeared in the early 1950s. By 1955, 60 percent of our food was brought in supermarkets. (231)

My two cents on shopping: never get sucked into the vortex that is the center of a grocery store. Do all your shopping around the perimeter of the store. That's where all the fresh food is – the produce, dairy, fresh meat and fish. The center is for boxed, frozen, processed, made-to-sit-on-your-shelf-for-months food. You have to ask yourself, "If this food is designed to sit in a box for months and months, what is it doing inside my body?" Nothing good, that's for sure. (234)

"Organic" means farming and ranching without synthetic pesticides, chemical fertilizers, growth hormones or antibiotics. Organic farmers use frequent crop rotations and plant diversified crops (rather than chemical fertilizers) to replenish the soil, and beneficial insects to control the bad ones. They let livestock roam outdoors. And no genetically modified anything, or additives or preservatives. It can be just as productive and more profitable than corporate agri-techno-farming. Organic farms are home to a much wider diversity of insects, birds and wild plants than that chemically blasted agribusiness land. And, obviously, they aren't leaking deadly pesticides, antibiotics and supergerms into nearby waterways or building them up in our bodies. (235)

In just one month of a fast-food diet, I was showing signs of liver disease. (242)

Basically, after one month on a McDonald's diet, I was a wreck. I asked my health advisor if it would be okay with them if I continued the experiment for another month. They all looked at me like I was out of my mind. [...] "If you kept up the diet, you'd probably develop coronary heart disease in a greatly accelerated fashion. With the combination of high blood pressure and a high-cholesterol and high-fat diet, you'd develop heart disease in a more accelerated fashion than if you would have some other zingers like diabetes and cigarette smoking and family history." (243)

Super Size Me opened in the United States on May 7, 2004, in nine cities, on forty-one screens. Within two weeks that number had tripled. By May 19, it was the number-ten movie in the country. By midsummer it had grossed over \$10 million – the third highest-grossing documentary in history! (246)

In Japan, a very strange thing happened: No TV or radio station would interview me. Not one. Coincidence? I think not. In almost every country we went to, McDonald's reps threatened media outlets with the loss of significant ad revenue if they talked to me or

did stories on the film. (How did I find out about this? The publicists and journalists told me themselves.) Japan is an even more obediently corporatized culture than we are, and its media are particularly subservient to advertisers. Just another rung in a tall ladder of media manipulation by a company that may only flip burgers and sell fries but still has the ability to influence what people see, hear and read. (Just think of what companies with real power are able to withhold from you in the news!) The sad thing is, Japan is one of the countries where the American fast-food diet has wreaked the worst havoc on traditional healthy eating habits. In South Korea an environmental activist decided to copycat me and live on fast food for thirty days. But he only made it to Day 24 before "doctors said he was risking his life" and made him stop. He did this before the movie even opened in South Korea. I swear I did not put him up to it. "The toxic effect my eating had on my body was apparent, and doctors told me to abandon my experiment because it's too dangerous," the activist told an Asian news agency. "His liver was severely punished, plus we found signs of heart problems," one of his doctors said. (247-248)

Having learned from past mistakes, *Fortune* noted, the fast-food industry often now simply offers that "create the illusion of being healthier even though they aren't. And all the while it's continuing to peddle burgers, fries, and soda." (252)

But by far the most repulsive phony attempt by any of these companies to improve its image and convince the world that it's a caring corporate citizen is McDonald's annual World Children's Day, began in 2002. Every November, this "worldwide fund-raiser" tries to guilt everyone who walks into a McDonald's into donating one dollar to the Children's Day fund. In addition, McDonald's earmarks some portion of the billions of dollars it earns making your kids fat and sick with its food. It then donates these ill-gotten gains to ... the Ronald McDonald's House Charities, of course. (254)

Even Krispy Kreme, seeing its sales and stock price drop in 2004, announced that it was coming out with a sugar-free doughnut. Huh? If you look up the word "oxymoron" in the dictionary, there's a picture of a sugar-free Krispy Kreme doughnut next to it. (258)

Even in disguise, the company couldn't get a break in England. As the new [McDonald's] campaign was being rolled out, the British tabloid *The Sun* got its hands on an internal memo from McDonald's to the casting company hiring actors for the new TV commercials, which said: "Because this is McDonald's, it is important that all artists submitted to us are NOT FAT OR OVERWEIGHT in any way." (260)

But in March 2004, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved the so-called "Cheeseburger Bill" - officially the personal Responsibility in Food Consumption Act. Which, Reuters explained, "would require courts to dismiss certain lawsuits filed against manufacturers and sellers of any food product as well as the trade associations that represent them. The bill would affect lawsuits seeking damages for injury resulting from weight gain, obesity, or any health condition associated with obesity as a result of consumption of these products." (262)