

By Carol T. Culhane, PHEc, MBA

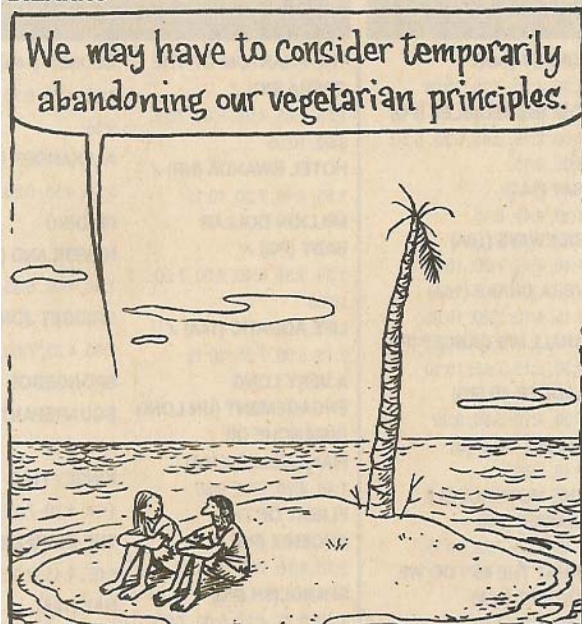
☀ The Rise and Fall of Low-Carb

Calendar years 2003 and 2004 have witnessed the rise, peak and leveling of the low-carb food sector. Estimates of market penetration (variety), market size (volume purchases) and market sales of low-carb products varies amongst industry analysts. However, there is widespread agreement that the low-carb sector, which originated more than 30 years ago in the USA, is here to stay. Further, penetration rates and sales are predicted to remain at higher plateaus than those witnessed prior to the re-launch of the low-carb diet by Dr. Atkins in 1999.

Bound & Gagged



BIZARRO



☀ Media Frenzy

While some food manufacturers decidedly stayed out of the foray, media outlets of every size and description could not resist running a low-carb story. Canada's national *Globe and Mail* published 148 low-carb related stories from January 2002 to 2005, appearing in Business, Lifestyle and Feature sections. On a smaller yet effective scale, the Moncton, NB *Times & Transcript* features a weekly column by local businessman Paul Fraser, who has reportedly lost 75 pounds on the Atkins diet and continues to keep the weight off, one year later. (November 3, 2004). Meanwhile, America's well-respected food columnist and authority, Jane Brody, writing in the September 21, 2004 edition of *The New York Times*, awarded the "junk food marketing prize" to "so-called low-carb products", adding that an "astonishing number of 930" have been introduced into US markets in the last five years.

☀ Affluence & Diversity

Democracy breeds affluent and diverse societies. Individually and deliberately chosen low-carb diets that concentrate complex nutrients – fat and protein – from the highest levels of the food chain, is one such example. This renewed exposure to the low-carb diet concept leaves much to be answered, despite the leveling of demand. Will a significant number of consumers continue to embrace a weight-reduction strategy that has been around since the 1970's? Will Health Canada and the FDA allow low-carb products to be so labeled, or not, and upon what set of rationale will they make their determinations? **ff**

☀ Some Websites

<http://www.nytimes.com/> (Search for 'low-carb' to view the 137 related stories published since 1996.)

© 2004 International Food Focus Ltd., 211 Carlton Street,
East Office, Toronto, ON M5A 2K9 T: 416-924-3266
F: 416-924-2726 E: focus@foodfocus.on.ca

Food Fax is archived @ our web-site www.foodfocus.on.ca