

COMMENT ON KURTI: THE SENSUAL ASPECTS OF FOOD CONSUMPTION

by

Kook-Hee Kang
Professor of Food Microbiology
Department of Dairy Science
Sung Kyun Kwan University
Seoul, KOREA

DISCUSSION PAPER

on

Nicholas Kurti's

THE SENSUAL ASPECTS OF FOOD CONSUMPTION

(Commentary)

THE SENSUAL ASPECTS OF FOOD CONSUMPTION/EATING

by Prof. NICHOLAS KURTI

Kook-Hee Kang
Professor of Food Microbiology
Department of Dairy Science
Sung Kyun Kwan University
Korea

It is my pleasure of having a chance to comment on the lecture of Professor Kurti. It would be very presumptuous of me to remark upon his profound contents of the lecture, such an eminent scholar as Professor Kurti. However, I am also one of the scientists in the field of food science, so that I would like to comment a few point of view which I felt from the matters presented in this lecture of Professor Kurti.

1. Interchange of human food habit

We know that different nations have quite different human food habit. As the development of means of traffic and media of communication have rapidly taken place in our modern society, the international interchange has been frequently occurred and hence food habit also has been changed dramatically. Many of the oriental peoples are getting accustomed to enjoying the western foods in their own countries without visiting the western countries, and also there are increasing number of peoples who enjoy the oriental foods in western countries.

Such a tendency will be of help to improve the nutritional imbalance which resulted from a diet habit of long standing. If western peoples who intake large amounts of animal foods can consume the oriental food mainly composed of vegetable material such as cereals and vegetables, it will result in reducing the amount of intake of animal fat and the occurrence of obesity. On the other hand, if oriental peoples will intake the western food stuff made of a plenty of animal material, they can correct any imbalance by supplementing of minerals, proteins and fats which are deficient in vegetable foods.

In the case of drink, there is a big difference between western and orient. Western peoples have taken milk, juices and coke, but oriental peoples have drunk mostly barley tea and leaf tea. Especially, barley

tea has been traditionally considered as a "general purpose" drink in Korea. In recent years a kind of soft drinks, named "McCol", which is made from the extract of barley with supplementation of vitamins, is very popular in Korea.

Although it can be understood that western peoples are concerned about cholesterol which is contained some what large amounts in milk and meat product, there is a chance of misunderstanding for oriental peoples from such an information. The annual amount of consumption of milk per capita is not more than 20 kg in Korea. But some consumers are thinking that it would be detrimental to health. Such as obesity and coronary heart disease, by intake of a piece of butter.

I want to recommend those peoples worried about cholesterol in milk to take the fermented milk by lactic acid bacteria. According to the result of recent research, it was indicated that the level of blood cholesterol were decreased by the large intake of lactic acid bacteria, and it was very interesting observation to us.

2. Problems of freshness in vegetables and fruits

In our modern industrial society, it is almost impossible for consumers resided in a large city to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables, as the result of long distance between consumers and farm producers. As mentioned by professor Kurti, in Korea, it had been a long time since a tomato was lost its own fresh taste, and other fruits such as strawberry, pear, apple, melon, water melon, and persimmon, also followed the same trend.

However, we can have "fresh" peas at any time on the basis of preservation by "deep freezing" method. As same as peas, it also occurs in Korea and Japan that persimmons are preserved by freezing method in the high season of fall, and sold them in the next summer, in order to keep the freshness of them, to get more profit for growers, and to satisfy the taste of persimmons during the out of season for consumers. It should be further developed the techniques of "deep freezing" method and of the gas storing method in respect to the preservation of fruits and vegetables.

"Kimchi", one of the representative traditional foods in Korea, is the lactic acid fermented food which keeps the maximum freshness of vegetables. In recent years, foreign countries including Japan and U.S.A., take an interest in kimchi.

In order to prepare kimchi, the ingredients used, for instance, radish, cabbage, chestnut, egg plant, green onion, onion, cucumber,

and pear are properly mixed and then are stood for several days to produce natural lactic acid fermentation.

All over the ingredients used for Kimchi are cleanly washed, and are used directly to make Kimchi without heat treatment. Therefore the nutrients of the ingredients are retained well in Kimchi without changing their nutritional properties. In addition to this, Kimchi is the good for health, because the increase in growth of lactic acid bacteria in Kimchi result in lowering the pH to about 4, and thus pathogenic bacteria are destroyed by such a low pH. As though the white, polished rice is the chief food of Koreans, I think that no one seriously suffer from beri-beri in Korea, namely due to the intake of lots of Kimchi containing sufficient amount of vitamins.

3. Doctrine of religion and food habit

The doctrine of religion prohibits humans from eating or drinking many kinds of foods. Hinduism, Quaker, or the Seventh-Day Adventist leads to abstain from eating animal foods. Once upon a time, Buddhism in Korea also forbade buddists animal foods, but at present such prohibition system is abolished and only part of monks still keeps the tradition within the buddist temple.

As indicated by professor Kurti in his conclusion, I think that the doctrine of religion should be improved rationally from a point of view of human health. Foods exist for the physical health of human and doctrine of religion exists for the spiritual growth of human. Thus, I assume that it will become a troublesome question if the good foods for health are prohibited from eating by the doctrine of religion. In my opinion, it would be enough that the doctrine of religion stipulate for the matters of the moral principles of higher degree and formation of character, in which mental and spiritual growth of human can be continuously developed.

As I mentioned previously, the whole world of today, so-called a village of the earth, becomes a formation of an every day life living condition, interchanges rapidly with religious sites and culture of dietary life between nations, and is in the process of creation of the new world of civilization. As we want to think about the fact that christians who can eat a steak and Quakers or Hindus who cannot eat a steak sit together for having a meal, we should find a solution which is the right direction to improve the dietary life.