



Does searing meat really seal in the juices? And how do you keep tender meats from becoming tough by the end of a braise?

In this lighthearted and informative book, Harold McGee, author of *On Food and Cooking*, applies a scrupulous scientific method to his entertaining pursuit of culinary enlightenment. In the first of three sections, he experiments with traditional kitchen practices and the biochemical nature of various common foods, investigating the hows and whys of preparing jerusalem artichokes, guacamole, mayonnaise, persimmons and much more. In the second section, he addresses current dietary controversies surrounding heart disease, cancer and Alzheimer's disease, dispelling many time-honored myths and presenting a balanced outlook on diet and health.

McGee's final chapters cover historical attempts to understand cooking and eating as well as recent biological and chemical findings that offer a glimpse into the mysterious nature of gastronomic enjoyment. Packed with literary and historical anecdotes, this collection of browsable kitchen lore is bound to interest both active and armchair chefs.

Why do lettuce, avocados and basil leaves turn brown? And how can you retain the green in salads, guacamole and pesto?

North Point Press, 1990, 339 pages, 6 1/4" x 9 1/4", hardcover, \$19.95

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doubled placental resorptions of fertilized eggs. The Swedish team found no placental resorption increase when exposure began on day 7. The human preimplantation equivalent to this period is the first 6 to 9 days.

If these mouse findings directly related to women's pregnancy experience, VDT operators would have a very hard time having children. Radiation exposure during very early pregnancy would reduce normal live births from 500 to about 300 per 1,000 pregnancies.

*James A. Doilney
President, Wellware Corp.
(radiation mitigation technology)
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Blaming young victims

We were very disturbed by C.E. Wright's suggestion (Letters, SN: 3/2/91, p.131) that in some cases child abuse results from the behavior of the child rather than the behavior of the adult, and by Wright's call for research "to determine where the abuse cycle starts." This view joins in the venerable tradition of victim blaming, which apparently needs to be continually challenged.

We already have a rough understanding of the dynamics that lead to the repeated abuse of some children. "Deficient social skills" are all that abused children have had modeled for them in the home, and skills learned outside the home don't work there. Anger and "high levels of aggression" are in a sense appropriate responses to abuse. Placement in a foster home is a new and anxiety-filled situation, and

children come to it with the only behaviors and coping skills they know. Foster parents are not trained to help children learn new coping skills, or even to know exactly what to expect. Abused children often can't tell what their limits or boundaries are until they are beaten up, and may push to that point in order to find out. In fact, they may have learned no other method for getting attention. Parents frequently apologize and give children extra attention after beating them, compounding the child's confusion and compulsion to elicit beatings. The intent of this "repetition compulsion" is to avoid becoming the victim, although its effect is further victimization.

What is surprising, given all that they have going against them, is that *only* about "one in three abused children displayed unusually high levels of aggression and deficient social skills" ("Charting the aftermath of child abuse," SN: 1/12/91, p.29).

Victim blaming may be a common reaction to situations in which people feel horrified and helpless to help the victim. If people realized why they have victim-blaming gut reactions, they might be able to step back and view these situations more clearly and constructively.

*Sioux Hall
T.J. Ellermeier
Cambridge, Mass.*

CORRECTION

In "Memories Might Be Made of This" (SN: 5/25/91, p.328), a mechanical production error transposed the top two pictures in the series showing how protein kinase C moves through the hippocampus when baby rabbits first open their eyes.

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