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Letters

Garbage-can superiority

Perhaps the protagonists of "Ka-boom!" (SN: 6/6/98, p. 366) should be looking for something more fundamental than fortuitous geometry to explain the superiority of a \$6 garbage can to a \$1.2 million Hydrodyning tank as a vessel for explosive meat tenderization. It might be worth questioning whether water immersion and chemical explosives are truly key to the process or merely carried over from Long's original inspiration.

In the tank, a contained system, only the explosive explodes; everything else experiences compressive or implosive shock waves. But when garbage can containment fails catastrophically, there's a sudden decompression: The can and water explode, and the meat, trying to do likewise, is pulled apart.

I wonder what would happen to a tough cut of meat in a vessel engineered to disincorporate totally and instantaneously—but restorably. How much cleaner, cheaper, and simpler it would be to just put such a tank in a containment cage and add only meat.

*David Bortin
Whittier, Calif.*

Sorting through soy

Regarding the article "Soyanara, heart disease" (SN: 5/30/98, p. 348), there is considerable disagreement as to the nature of the active component of soy proteins. We are convinced that isoflavones have little if anything to do with the cholesterol reduction. We have, in fact, evidence that genistein may even raise cholesterol. We have recently uncovered some components of soy protein (that are not isoflavones) that are likely responsible for lowering cholesterol.

*Cesare R. Sitori
Università Degli Studi di Milano
Via Balzaretto, Milano*

In the article on soy, there is a seeming inconsistency. The caption says "Ground soy protein is one of the most concentrated sources of isoflavones." However, elsewhere the article states that in a trial, each volunteer was asked to drink a "milkshake" with 25 grams of soy protein and that some of the shakes contained negligible amounts of isoflavones. How can that be if soy protein is a concentrated source of isoflavones?

*Richard E. Winkelman
Los Altos Hills, Calif.*

Cover: Collaborating for the sake of science with indigenous peoples, such as the Hopi who make kachina dolls, may sound like a great idea, but building working relationships has proved tricky. **Page 92** (Hopi kachina by Cecil Calnimpewa, photo by Tom Tallant/Canyon Country Originals)

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The only reason that some protein shakes had "negligible" amounts of isoflavones is that these hormonal agents were filtered out by the manufacturer specifically for the experiment—precisely so that effects with and without them could be distinguished from the effects of the protein that they normally accompany.

—J. Raloff

Veggie wash

The article "Wash-Resistant Bacteria Taint Foods" (SN: 5/30/98, p. 340) referenced the use of a mixture of vinegar and hydrogen peroxide in a dip to wash vegetables. Since I'm not a grocer or restaurant owner, I probably won't need the commercial product, so would it be possible to find out the ratio of vinegar and hydrogen peroxide used by Sumner and whether the vegetables should be rinsed?

*Charles Burdine
Austin, Texas*

The new commercial dip evolved from Sumner's earlier data showing that spraying foods with off-the-grocery-shelf white vinegar and

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