

# The Unsavory Truth of the McRib and Other Fake Foods, and Why Russia Banned US-Raised Meat

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By Dr. Mercola

Over the past couple of years, we've learned the unsavory truth about "pink slime," reconstituted meat, and how the use of meat glue cheats you out of your hard-earned money at the grocery store and threatens your health.

We've also learned that fast food fare such as McDonald's hamburgers contain so many chemicals and so few real food ingredients that a burger fails to show signs of decomposition after more than a decade...

The famous McDonald's McRib also came under closer scrutiny, and turned out to be something less than mouthwatering. The McRib sandwich is a non-standard item on the fast food restaurant's menu;<sup>1</sup> its annual return is always advertised with great fanfare — last year it even made the headlines on ABC News.<sup>2</sup>

The pork sandwich is described as a tasty fan favorite slathered in tangy barbecue sauce, slivered onions and tart pickles, served on a hoagie style bun. Sounds perfectly normal, but what's it made of, really? In a November 2011 article, CBS Chicago news<sup>3</sup> spilled the beans on this seasonal favorite:

"More than 70 ingredients make up the McRib and, yes, one of them is pork. But as CBS 2's Vince Gerasole reports, there's also an ingredient that can be found in shoes... [Registered dietician Cassie] Vanderwall gave the McRib a closer look and found the McRib has azodicarbonamide, which is used to bleach the flour in bread. It has other uses. 'It could be on your yoga mat, in your gym shoes, in your anything that's rubbery,' Vanderwall said...

Then there's the pork — which is really restructured meat product. In other words, it's made from all the less expensive innards and castoffs from the pig... Vanderwall said the McRib ingredient list 'reminds me of a chemistry lab.'"

To see pictures of a 'deconstructed' McRib sandwich, check out foodfacts.info's McRib page.<sup>4</sup> It sure doesn't look so appetizing anymore once the sauce is washed off and the meat sliced in half. In fact, it can barely pass meat, which was the point CBS news tried to make in the first place.

## What is "Food" Anyway?

Two years ago, the nonprofit Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine singled out McDonald's in their advertisement against obesity-related deaths. As the ad claimed, obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol,

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So, is McDonald's fare really food?

When you consider the fact that a large number of the ingredients in a fast food meal exist nowhere in nature, but are rather concocted in a lab, the answer would have to be 'no.' Unfortunately, and to our severe detriment, ever since the advent of the so-called TV dinner back in the 1950's, the concept of "food" has expanded from meat, vegetables, raw dairy products, fruit and other such natural items to include the highly processed, preserved, artificially flavored and often brightly colored chemical concoctions. But man simply was NOT designed to thrive on man-made chemicals.

Sadly, store-bought foods you might not recognize as processed, such as ground beef, are oftentimes no better. As reported last year, approximately 70 percent of the ground beef sold in U.S. supermarkets contains "pink slime" added in as a cheap filler.

The Pepto-Bismol-colored concoction consists of beef scraps and cow connective tissues, which has been treated with ammonium hydroxide (basically a solution of ammonia in water). It can legally make up 15 percent of any given beef product, which shaves about three cents off the cost for a pound of ground beef. The trimmings used come from parts of the cow that are most likely to be contaminated with dangerous bacteria like E. coli — which is why it must be treated with ammonia to kill off the pathogens in the first place. It's really industrial food practices like this that pose very real threats to your health, not raw unpasteurized dairy products and other non-processed whole foods...

## **Russia Throws Poisonous Meat Back to U.S.**

In related "questionable food" news, Russia has recently banned U.S. meat supplies after discovering it contains ractopamine — a beta agonist drug that increases protein synthesis, thereby making the animal more muscular. This reduces the fat content of the meat. As reported by Pravda,<sup>5</sup> Russia is the fourth largest importer of US meats, purchasing about \$500 million-worth of beef and pork annually.

The drug is banned for use in 160 countries, including China and Russia, but allowed in 24 countries, including Canada and the United States. According to the New York Times,<sup>6</sup> the ban took effect as of December 7, 2012, and Russian health regulators stated that while they will initially conduct their own testing, foreign countries will soon be required to certify their meat as ractopamine-free if they want to export it to Russia. While the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) considers ractopamine safe and doesn't test for it, Russia's chief health inspector, Gennady Onishchenko, claims there are "serious questions" about the safety of the drug. He told the New York Times:

“For instance, use of ractopamine is accompanied by a reduction in body mass, suppression of reproductive function, increase of mastitis in dairy herds, which leads to a steep decline in the quality and safety of milk.”

Ractopamine is also known to affect the human cardiovascular system, and may cause food poisoning, according to Pravda.<sup>7</sup> It’s also thought to be responsible for hyperactivity, muscle breakdown, and increased death and disability in livestock. While other drugs require a clearance period of around two weeks to help ensure the compounds are flushed from the meat prior to slaughter (and therefore reduce residues leftover for human consumption), there is no clearance period for ractopamine. In fact, livestock growers intentionally use the drug in the last days before slaughter in order to increase its effectiveness.

According to veterinarian Michael W. Fox, as much as 20 percent of ractopamine remains in the meat you buy from the supermarket. Despite potential health risks, the drug is used in 45 percent of U.S. pigs, 30 percent of ration-fed cattle, and an unknown percentage of turkeys.

Mexico and Brazil have announced that they will comply with Russia’s demand for ractopamine-free meats.<sup>8</sup> The US has shown no sign of coming to an agreement, however. Instead the US has accused Russia of violating World Trade Organization (WTO) rules — an accusation Russian Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich has dismissed as being part of business as usual, since “all WTO members break these rules.”

## How to Identify REAL Food

There are major incentives to center your diet on real foods as opposed to “food-like” products, the primary one being that real food is essential for optimal health. Real foods also taste delicious, and when bought from sustainable sources help to protect the environment. But with all the sneaky tricks being employed, how can you tell the difference? Here’s a listing of the characteristics and traits of real food versus processed “food products.”

| <b>Real Food</b>                      | <b>Processed Food-Like Products</b>  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| It’s grown, and sold “whole”          | Produced, manufactured in a factory, and sold in neat, convenient packages                         |
| Variable quality                      | Always the same (no quality or taste variance)   |
| Spoils fast                           | Stays “fresh” for extended periods of time   |
| Requires preparation                  | No preparation required, just heat and serve   |
| Vibrant colors and rich textures      | Contains fillers, additives and preservatives to make otherwise dull and bland mixtures appetizing |
| Authentically flavorful               | Artificially flavorful   |
| Strong connection to land and culture | No connection to land or culture   |

## Shopping Guidelines for Real, Health-Promoting Food

As the U.S. agriculture industry now stands, antibiotics, pesticides, genetically engineered ingredients, hormones and countless drugs are fair game for inclusion in your food. So if you purchase your food from a typical supermarket, you're taking the chance that your food is teeming with chemicals and drugs — even those that have been banned in other countries due to adverse health effects.

So please do your health a favor and support the small family farms in your area. You'll receive nutritious food from a source that you can trust, and you'll be supporting the honest work of a real family farm.

It all boils down to this: if you want to optimize your health, you must return to the basics of healthy food choices. Put your focus on WHOLE foods — foods that have not been processed or altered from their original state — food that has been grown or raised as nature intended, without the use of chemical additives, drugs, hormones, pesticides, fertilizers, and “mystery concoctions” of discarded scrap parts.

It's really as simple as that!

And it's not nearly as daunting a task as it may seem to find a local farmer that can supply your family with healthy, humanely raised animal products and produce. At [LocalHarvest.org](http://LocalHarvest.org), for instance, you can enter your zip code and find farmers' markets, family farms, and other sources of sustainably grown food in your area, all with the click of a button. Once you make the switch from supermarket to local farmer, the choice will seem natural, and you can have peace of mind that the food you're feeding your family is naturally wholesome. That said, regardless of where you do your grocery shopping, these are the signs of high-quality, health-promoting foods you want to look for:

1. It's grown without pesticides and chemical fertilizers (organic foods fit this description, but so do some non-organic foods)
2. It's not genetically modified
3. It contains no added growth hormones, antibiotics, or other drugs
4. It does not contain any artificial ingredients, including chemical preservatives
5. It is fresh (keep in mind that if you have to choose between wilted organic produce or fresh conventional produce, the latter may actually be the better option)
6. It did not come from a factory farm
7. It is grown with the laws of nature in mind (meaning animals are fed their native diets, not a mix of grains and animal byproducts, and have free-range access to the outdoors)
8. It is grown in a sustainable way (using minimal amounts of water, protecting the soil from burnout, and turning animal wastes into natural fertilizers instead of environmental pollutants)

If the food meets these criteria, it is most likely a wise choice, and would fall under the designation of "real food." Keep in mind that reclaiming your kitchen is part and parcel of healthful living, so you know exactly what you're putting in your body. If you need help to get started, see Colleen Huber's helpful tips on how to eat healthier organic food on a budget. And if you're "hooked" on fast food and other processed foods, please review my article [How to Wean Yourself Off Processed Foods in 7 Steps](#). It's one of the absolute most positive life changes you could make!