

Woolly Yarn

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voices from the mountains

The McFood Chain

I was going to write an article about the connection between being gay and being a vegetarian, but I woke up this morning in a bit of a McRage, OK, well maybe it was only a McTiff.

Over a late night snack with a group of gay friends last night, I learned that a couple of them had been to McDonald's recently. Short of Jesse Helms calling to tell me he's coming for a week of leaf-peeping, I can't imagine what might set my hair blazing more quickly. You see, I moved to Vermont because I love the unique pastoral beauty, and when I see the McMallization spreading across the state, it hurts. When I discover that my fellow "brothers and sisters" are contributing to this awful trend, I feel the need to stand high atop Camels Hump and shout out the earth gospel.

So - prick up your ears - 'cause here I go....

So what is the connection between being a vegetarian and being gay? Why do I feel so comfortable in food coops? In a nutshell, I think it has to do with sensitivity and awareness. As gay people, we learn early on that we are "not like the rest". For me, this created a sense of purpose in discovering what the world, and my relationship to it, was about. Gay people notice things, because we can't afford to take anything for granted. Like an endangered species, or any other minority for that matter, we need to be aware of how things work, so we can find our own way of working within (or against) the system.

Furthermore, as a persecuted minority, we become more sensitive to the issues surrounding power struggles. Whether we like it or not, our society, like most, has a pecking order that takes things like race, sex, gender and sexual orientation into account. As gay people, we generally recognize that our gayness makes us instantly lower on the American Power Scale than our straight friends and family. Most of us don't go into a job interview in the larger world and proclaim our homosexuality as if it were a degree from the Wharton School of Busi-

ness. And while I believe that our sexuality is irrelevant, most of the straight world still hasn't reached that level of comfort. So what does all this have to do with meat and McDeathholds?

Well, when we stop to think about the process of consumption (be it food or other "things"), we are given choices. The choice to basically take advantage of another living breathing being or to live in harmony with those who share our spinning blue marble. As a person who has felt persecuted for being Jewish and for being gay, I felt that I didn't want to inflict pain on others - or at least to minimize my impact. I know animals have feelings and I believe that by raising them to kill them we are taking advantage of them in some fundamental way. Now I am not a saint, because I do eat seafood occasionally and I consume the eggs that my chickens lay and eat the cheese produced by animals. Perhaps I haven't evolved to the level of veganism, perhaps I never will. But for me, the most important thing is awareness. If you are going to eat meat, then you should be aware of what you are doing to another creature. As a gay person, if you stop and think about ways in which we are persecuted, you might just opt for a salad instead.

As far as McDonald's goes, I can't think of a more perfect little package of destruction. Every fry you eat out of that little red box is like a nail in the coffin of the mom and pop luncheonette just a few more miles off the interstate in the heart of what used to be a village.

A shake at McD's means no shake at Joe's. And no shake at Joe's means no conversation over a lunch counter - no community building - just a wham bam, thank you mam - we'll take your money straight to the bank and off to corporate headquarters somewhere near the Mall of America. Where does the money go when you eat at Joe's - probably to a store down the street - or a bank down the street - where it will eventually make it back into your pocket as a member of the community. Again, it's about choices - and perhaps taking a risk too. The shake might

cost a little more at Joe's - or they might not have the flavor you want, but isn't it worth it in the end if we have a community to show for it?

OK - so McDonald's destroys the landscape and the community - what could be more perfect than a three punch knockout? A four punch knockout! That's right folks, because after you've taken your bite out of the landscape and the community, you've also got the destruction of land and indigenous culture far away PLUS - if you act now - the destruction of your own body! How's that for a complete package? McDonald's, and I use their name generically here (because you can get a similar compact destruction effect from any of the fast food boxes popping up), purchases beef from huge cattle operations, many of which are based in South America, that operate by clearing away huge swaths of ancient forests for grazing land. As the land is tired out, it is left behind and new forests are cut down. This is reality folks! It is an evil but necessary byproduct of the size of these operations. Small villages in the way are demeaned and devalued along with the local culture that preceded the arrival of these mega farms.

As if that weren't enough - the food sold in fast food joints is bad for you. It is high in fat and salt, as we all know. When McDonald's was introduced in Japan, the incidence of heart disease there (America's #1 killer) soared. You are what you eat - do you really want to be a piece of fried dead flesh?

All right - I'll come down off the mountain now. We all must choose our paths and ultimately should do what makes us happiest. But the bottom line is, I feel happiest when I'm living in synch with the earth. You should do whatever makes your heart sing!

- Steven Kopstein

A group of gay and lesbian vegetarians is forming in the Burlington area for casual monthly dinners. If you are interested, call Patrick at 849-6359.

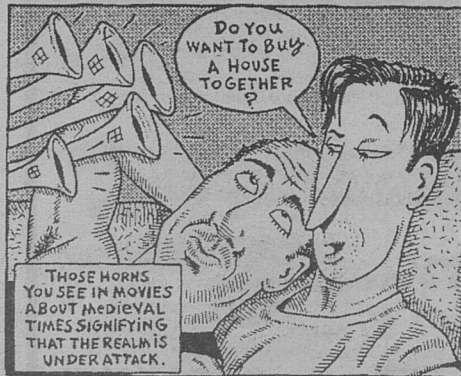
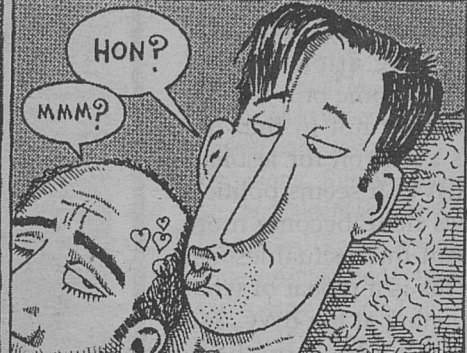
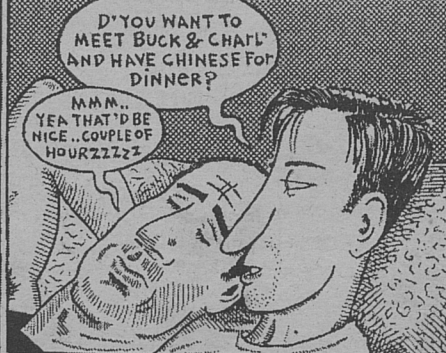
The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of Ethan Green

by Eric Orner

How to ruin a
perfectly nice
Sunday afternoon.

With your hosts, Ethan & Doug

post brunch, post N.Y. Times,
post sex, pre-dinner...



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