

## **Food AND Fuel** as opposed to Food VERSUS Fuel

We are hearing a great deal these days about the controversy of food versus fuel. Should we be taking food and turning it into fuel? This is not a new argument. It has surfaced many times since I became interested in ethanol. In fact, that argument was no doubt the driving point for me to become such an advocate for ethanol. Back in the late 1970's, the argument was made that we should not turn food to fuel, as people would starve. I was a member of the Montana Gasohol Commission, and of WIFE (Women Involved in Farm Economics), and knew that you indeed could have food and fuel from the same kernel of grain.

We set out to prove that the argument was another of the myths associated with ethanol and I developed a presentation to prove the point. The commission had a small "kettle still" for demonstration purposes and that became the focus point. Included in the demonstration were samples of whole grain (we used wheat although corn would have the same story), and ground grain to explain that you had to expose the starch in the grain, and a sample of distillers grain. We explained that the grain is slurried with water, adding heat and enzymes to transform the starch to sugar, at which point the sugar is then fermented to alcohol. It is then distilled to remove the alcohol. At this point the starch is **gone**; it has been turned into better than two and a half gallons of fuel. BUT all the nutrients remain. It is a smaller package, reduced to 1/3 in weight. For instance, a 60 pound bushel of wheat would now be reduced to a 20-pound package of nutrients. The protein, fiber, germ, vitamins and all the nutritional parts of the grain remain in the distillers grains (DG). Now, in most cases in the U.S. today, that DG is used as livestock feed and it puts pounds on livestock that in turn is slaughtered to become part of the food chain.

However, if the original grain was a grain that was intended for human consumption, that DG could be used for human food. Wheat is more commonly used directly as a human food than is corn. When you make a cake or bread, you usually use wheat flour. Corn is in corn bread, tortillas and cereal. The presentation included a sample of wheat distillers grains that looks a lot like whole wheat flour.

We explained the process, and at the end of the explanation we served up samples of foods that had been made with the DG. These included cookies, cakes, and breads, also crackers, cereals, pizza crust, candy, and even as a binder or extender for meat loafs. Members of the Commission and WIFE put this presentation on at a number of county Fairs and farm organization meetings in 1980. Congressman Ron Marlenee saw it and asked WIFE to bring the presentation to Washington, DC to present to the House Ag Committee. That was in 1981. The presentation was shown three times in the House Ag committee. Acting Secretary of Agriculture Richard Lyng attended one of the presentations.

We also went to the Inter-Religious Task Force and the Senate Ag committee. It received huge media attention, including associated press and television cameras. One of the TV stations, seeking the other side (?) of the story went to Lester Brown of World Watch and he also appeared on the news voicing concern about the food to fuel question. So the next day, we took a plate of the snacks to his office and made the whole explanation, although I do not remember that he agreed with us.

We were invited back to Washington in 1987 to repeat the presentation. When EPAC was organized in 1991, EPAC members continued to make the presentations, and it has been done many times, sometimes as a full reception with a wide variety of foods, and most times as a smaller presentation with just some cookies and bars. Snacks made with DG are always served at breaks for the annual EPAC conference. We have developed handouts to explain more about DG and the fuel. Pictures and news articles about some of the events are available if you want to see them. Successful Farming covered one of the events, and that article can also be sent if you want it.

Talking points:

- DG can **enhance** our food. We can add protein and fiber to our regular foods with the inclusion of DG as an ingredient in those foods.
- Think of kids and the junk foods they devour. We can enhance pizza crusts, bread sticks, cereals and chips.
- Think of older people and their nutritional needs. We could include DG in the Meals on Wheels program. Sprinkle DG on the foods we regularly eat to add protein and/or fiber.
- Think of overseas programs. We send our whole grains to poor countries. Yet, missionaries return home and tell us those people often do not have a means of preparing whole grains. They need the protein and vitamins, and already have many forms of starch. So, why not keep the starch here in the U.S. and turn it into the fuel we need in this country, and send the nutritional parts of the grain overseas. Make the DG into a food bar, which can be easily transported, distributed and eaten. There are many ways to incorporate the DG into their traditional foods. There would even be a savings in transportation costs.

There should be no controversy; it is contrived to scare us from embracing ethanol fuel. The DG can be an important part of the diet for people who want to eat healthy, nutritious foods. In the United States, as well as third world countries whose people so desperately need protein and fiber, DG is a solution, not a problem.

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