

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
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**Producer/Host: Jon Steinman
Transcript: Lisa Tang**

Jon Steinman: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman your weekly host for this one-hour exploration of our food system. The program is currently heard weekly on 25 Canadian radio stations and is available as a Podcast.

Today's show marks part II of an examination of one of the larger packaged foods companies operating in the country, and that is Unilever, headquartered in both the UK and the Netherlands. This 2-part series makes up the fourth episode in an ongoing series here on the program titled *Packaged Foods Exposed*, created to help better introduce us to the companies who are exerting the heaviest influence on Canada's food supply. As we are often presented with a constant parade of positive advertising by many of these companies, this series will examine another side to these companies that advertising dollars can't buy, and that is placing manufacturers in a more critical light.

On last week's broadcast we spent the full one hour exploring the history of margarine and some of the current issues this staple of Canadian refrigerators is involved in. We discovered Unilever's heavy influence in helping shape Canada's agricultural systems, and as is currently the case, the company's ongoing fight to repeal the last remaining margarine colouration ban in the world, where the province of Quebec prohibits the sale of any margarine products resembling the colour of butter.

And on today's broadcast I will share some interesting evidence that was uncovered just in this past week that relates to this margarine colouration ban. We will explore the historical and current health impacts of margarine, and how Unilever has responded to such health concerns. Unilever has both historically and recently had a heavy influence on life in the oceans, and we will hear from Greenpeace's Oliver Knowles about their most recent impact on the depletion of cod stocks in the Baltic Sea. Unilever also controls roughly 25 percent of the Canadian ice-cream market, and this broadcast will look into some similar tactics the company has used in the world of margarine that are quietly being applied to many of the company's ice-cream products. We will be joined by Nelson's Geoff Ross-Smith, owner of Kootenay Creamery, a small independent ice-cream manufacturer who found out first hand how Unilever has begun removing real milk and cream from their products. We will learn of a misleading website the company maintains that seemingly violates Canadian laws, and we will hear from Professor Joe

Cummins of London, Ontario's University of Western Ontario, who has been very involved in the opposition to a controversial ingredient entering into Unilever's ice-cream products around the world, an ingredient that replicates the DNA found in a fish. All of this, and more, will make up this shocking part IV of the Packaged Foods Exposed series here on Deconstructing Dinner.

increase music and fade out

On part I of this 2-part exploration of global consumer products company Unilever, we honed in on the company's influence in challenging Quebec's current ban on the colouration of margarine. Quebec has long maintained a law that prohibits the sale of any margarine products that resemble the colour of butter. Such a ban is in place to protect dairy farmers who argue that the product misleads consumers and the advertising campaigns by the many margarine companies operating in Canada even agree that it's sometimes very difficult to tell them apart.

Now as part of the research that went into this issue, I did contact one of the handful of people I know living in Quebec to ask *them*, about the margarine products they have in *their* kitchens, and you won't believe what I found. Sitting in the refrigerator of one of my family members living in Montreal is a margarine that not only is the exact colour of butter, the label indicates it's a "buttery spread," and even more shocking, does not contain the required French language written on the label. The entire product is labelled in English. The product is called Smart Balance and is produced by a company going by the name of GFS Brands. Produced in New Jersey, the product is being illegally imported and then purchased by one of the franchised IGA grocery stores operating in the Cote-St-Luc area of the city. I contacted the Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and asked them that if a complaint were to be filed, how the ministry would go about responding to such a complaint. I was informed that any complaint would need to go through the Ministry of Health's regional inspection branch, and they would then include the complaint on their list of things to inspect upon their next visit to the store. Upon recognizing the product is also not labelled in French, they would pass such information along to the province's office of the French language, who is responsible for such violations. Now, this is a process that we've chosen to not undertake, but I had contacted the manager of the Montreal IGA grocery store in question and asked him if they carried any margarine that were the colour of butter, and his response, no, we are not allowed to.

So, we can be assured of one thing, that when a province makes attempts to protect their local agriculture, there will often be both producers and retailers looking for ways to undermine such protections in an age where supporting local agriculture is of paramount importance.

soundbite

And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner. A reminder that if you miss any of today's broadcasts or did not catch part 1 of this 2-part series, you can access it through our website at cjly.net/deconstructingdinner.

Now what I know comes as a surprise to me upon undertaking the research that went into this broadcast, is that for our previous episode, we were able to spend the full one hour covering the topic of margarine, yet were also able to not cover what is probably the most well-known issue surrounding the product – health.

Goodluck commercial: You Goodluck margarine gives you both preferred unsaturates and preferred flavours, preferred unsaturates for those most concerned about in our family diet plus delicious flavor your whole family will prefer – preferred unsaturates and preferred flavouring. You Goodluck margarine gives you both at no extra cost.

JS: It was only a short while ago that trans fats became a recognized concern among processed food consumers around the world, and margarine was indeed pinpointed as one of a number of primary culprits in the mass consumption of such dangerous components in our food. As is now widely known, trans fats are formed during partial hydrogenation, a process used by manufacturers like Unilever to harden and stabilize liquid vegetable oils and prolong shelf life.

Now this is a pretty recent issue, it was only back in 2005 that Canada regulated the mandatory labelling of trans fats on prepackaged food. The concerns over trans fats really began heating up around 2003, but such recent concerns don't help illustrate the history of the knowledge behind trans fats.

Questions were first raised about their presence in foods dating back to 1956 following research published in *The Lancet*. It was consequently stated that hydrogenation of vegetable oils could have contributed to the causation of coronary artery disease. The issue rested on the kitchen table until the early 90s, when ongoing studies were released concluding a causal link between trans fat consumption and coronary heart disease. And so what happened here in Canada, well, the use of partially hydrogenated oils continued to increase, and by the mid-1990s, researchers estimated that Canadians had one of the highest intakes of trans fats in the world.

Operating as one of the leading margarine producers in the country, Unilever, the focus of today's broadcast, didn't budge. They continued to produce their margarine brands such as Blue Bonnet and I Can't Believe It's Not Butter, both of which contained trans fats. Now it wasn't until around 2003 that some companies began adjusting their production methods and removing trans fats from their products. In March of 2004, Unilever announced that they had removed trans fats from all of their soft margarine brands that were previously not trans fat free. While the announcement may come across as a positive one, Canada's most popular margarine, which is also a Unilever product, has never in its history contained any trans fats...and that product is Becel. Unilever also manufactured Fleischmann's margarine at the time of this announcement, which also offered non-hydrogenated varieties. But Unilever nevertheless continues to produce hard margarines that *do* contain trans fats such as their Blue Bonnet and I Can't Believe It's Not Butter brands. Now it would be one thing to suggest that consumers can decide whether consuming trans fats is a concern or not, this is often the argument by many of

the major food companies in North America – that the consumer can make their own decisions. But what happens when a company misleads the public into believing their products are trans fat free when they indeed are not?

And I'll say it quite bluntly that Unilever should be ashamed for the tactics they use on their American-based I Can't Believe It's Not Butter website. Listed under the product information for each individual product is a paragraph that among other text highlights this, "no trans fats per serving." Now this is listed under every product. But if you read the sentence before this highlighted claim, it reads this, "try the tub for a spread withno trans fats per serving." That first part of the sentence is not highlighted and is referring to the fact that each product under the I Can't Believe It's Not Butter brand comes in either a soft or hard version. The images that feature the different products feature a soft tub of the product with the hard version hiding (and it literally is hiding behind the soft version). So website visitors are able to click on the products to get more info. So I clicked on the original variety and located on the left hand side of the screen is a logo that reads "no trans fat." Beside that is the nutritional information for the soft version of the product which does *not* contain any trans fats. But scrolling down the same page, visitors arrive at the nutritional info for the hard version, which does contain a whopping 2.5g of trans fats, a figure that is in direct opposition to the misleading "no trans fat" logo listed on the top of the page.

soundbite

So let's revisit the trans fat science here for a second, because it seems as though misleading the consumer becomes a pretty serious issue when it's misleading them about a *serious* health concern.

Well for one, Sally Brown, the CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation has once stated this, "Trans Fats are not a choice, they're a killer." The foundation estimates consumption of trans fat accounts for 3,000 to 5,000 Canadian deaths from heart disease annually. In the United States, as far back as 1994, it was estimated that approximately 30,000 premature coronary heart disease deaths annually could be attributable to consumption of trans fatty acids. In 1998, a study affiliated with Health Canada determined that 11 percent of dietary trans fats were being supplied by margarine. And so here is Unilever, not only continuing to produce margarines with trans fats, but are furthermore misleading the public through, at least in this example, one of their brand's websites. And I encourage you to visit the site and check out for yourself at www.tasteyoulove.com.

I Can't Believe It's Not Butter advertisement: When it comes to cooking and food advice, there are a lot of people who want to time in. We decided to check in with the experts, and I Can't Believe It's Not Butter. To give us a little perspective on eating healthy, but also eating well, you already know, I Can't Believe It's Not Butter as the low fat alternative to the butter. But, you may that it's not about eating healthy, when it comes to taste, they're all about eating delicious too. We stop at their test kitchen in New Jersey to see what tips and advice they have to offer and to see if there is anything new that we need to know. And I Can't Believe It's Not Butter always makes sure that you don't

sacrifice great taste for healthier eating. As a matter of fact, all the taste without the guilt is kind of a company motto.

I Can't Believe It's Not Butter products are great for consumers because they provide the rich delicious buttery flavor that consumers are looking for. But, our soft products are low in saturated fat and have zero grams of trans fatty acids and are cholesterol free.

It's not secret that portion sizes are getting bigger and bigger. I Can't Believe It's Not Butter's sprays are a great way to add flavor. Just five sprays and you get a lot of flavor with zero calories and zero fat. In fact, we've come up with a lot of really flavourful recipes here in the test kitchen using I Can't Believe It's Not Butter spray. One of my favourites is the shrimp with garlic toasted breadcrumbs. You can get lots more recipes just by going to tasteyoulove.com

A visit to I Can't Believe It's Not Butter is always filled with great food, and it's good to know you don't have to sacrifice your figure or your health to enjoy it.

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner and the second part of a two-part series focusing on the company Unilever. This two-part show is part of our ongoing Packaged Foods Exposed series here on the program.

Now the questionable actions by Unilever and their approach to educating the public about the health implications of their products took an even more startling turn when coming across a statement found on the company's Canadian website. Unilever's Becel margarine has long been known as a product that does not contain trans fats, and located on the Becel web page of the Unilever website, visitors are presented with this sentence, "For more than forty years, Unilever has played a leading role in helping consumers maintain healthy hearts." Such a statement leaves Canadians wondering, where has this company been for the past 40 years, where as mentioned just earlier, it is now common knowledge that the trans fats that were historically in their products and continue to remain, are proven to have deadly effects on our health. How the company justifies having played a leading role in maintaining healthy hearts is a mind-boggling statement given such accepted information that has been placed before the public.

Now Unilever's Becel has been marketing their product alongside heightened concerns over heart disease for quite some time. The marketing efforts by the company have aggressively connected the product to leading heart healthy lives. The Becel Canada website itself is riddled with more information on healthy hearts than it is filled with information about the product itself. And in just a moment we will visit with some of this information, but first let's travel to India, where Unilever maintains the largest stake in consumer goods through their Hindustan Lever division. One of the tools used by the company in India to market their products, is by promoting their Network Marketing division whereby any member of the public can sign up and begin earning rewards by undertaking the marketing of Unilever products for the company. Hindustan Lever developed a promotional video that introduces their network marketing division, hoping to recruit new marketers wishing to make some money. And the message and tone of the

video may surprise you, as it is reminiscent of the science fiction stories depicting a society that brainwashes its citizens. In fact, watching this video reminded me of George Orwell's 1984. And how the company structures the message in this video is strikingly similar to how they market Becel here in Canada. So let's first take a listen to some audio segments from this Hindustan Lever video. In this first one, we learn of the network marketing division's ability to "change your life forever."

Hindustan advertisement: We are all human, we all dream, we all aspire. Those who dream bigger and aspire more turn their dreams into reality. They seize the right opportunities and spend far more fulfilling lives both emotionally and financially. Think, what if you are presented that one opportunity that could change your life forever? That one opportunity that could turn your dreams into reality? That one opportunity that would let you get more out of life? That's what Hindustan Lever Network offers you. Hindustan Lever Networks road to success is true with incredible opportunities and every opportunity brings rewards. Don't let time pass you by. Wouldn't you want to look back later in life and know that you made the right decision and succeeded? Hindustan Lever Network offers you the opportunity to make your dreams real now. Go ahead, make the decision now. Let this decision that you make today be the start of your successful tomorrow.

JS: One of the most common criticisms of the advertising we are bombarded with daily, is that much of it is ultimately trying to sell happiness. Such efforts can indeed be dangerous, as defining what happiness is is perhaps one of the most philosophical and debatable questions facing humankind. But in this next segment we learn that Unilever is very much in the business of selling happiness, and their definition, or equation for happiness is that time, money and security is happiness – certainly a common belief, but equally certain as an equation that for many, isn't working. Take a listen.

Hindustan advertisement: Welcome to a unique and fulfilling business opportunity from Hindustan Lever Network. Let's take a look at the harsh reality of life today. The stresses of day to day life, the ever increasing costs of living, growing family needs such as education for your children, saving for your dreams and aspirations, new car, bigger home, more holidays, the list is never ending. How do you make ends meet with limited and uncertain earnings? Life passes by while you are busy earning desperate to save and invest in your family's future. But then, when does life begin? After you've grown tired trying to save for it? You need three things that make your life worth living: time, money, and security. Time into money into security is equal to happiness. If even one of these elements is missing, you are left unhappy. Leverage time to your benefit – time to indulge in your favourite hobbies, to spend with your loved ones. Establish an unlimited source of money – money to fulfill all your wishes. Enough so that you never have to worry about spending anymore. Enjoy security for generations – security so that even if you do not go to work for some time, your earnings remain stable for future expenses. There's only one way to get all three - network marketing. Hindustan Lever Network your partner in success. This is the kind of business that gives you time, the power to add more hours into your day. Money, from I cannot afford it. Your situation changes to I know how I can afford it. Security, your earnings come to you even if you are away from

work for long periods of time. This opportunity comes to you from Hindustan Lever Network a division of Hindustan Lever Limited, India's largest consumer good's company. Hindustan Lever Network, is a golden business opportunity that gets it straight from Unilever. Hindustan Lever Limited, Unilever, the parent company of Hindustan Lever Limited is a global giant in consumer goods with a turnover of more than 50 billion US dollars and products sold in over 150 countries.

JS: Let's take a listen again to Unilever's definition of happiness.

Hindustan advertisement: Time into money into security is equal to happiness.

JS: And again those clips are taken from a promotional video produced by Unilever's Indian operations, Hindustan Lever. The video is designed to recruit Indians to join their network marketing operations which provide rewards depending on how much product is sold to neighbours and friends.

Now as Canadians, one would probably be left assured that such manipulative and archaic tactics of using the stresses and challenges of daily life to help sell a company's products would not exist here. But taking a visit to Unilever Canada's Becel website at becel.ca suggests otherwise.

Located on the main page of the website are dozens of references to our hearts, including among others, the Becel slogan – “Love Your Heart.” But of the four main options to choose from at the top of the page is one titled, “Your Heart.” Upon selecting the option, a number of subcategories appear, Women and Heart Disease, Physical Activity, Stress Management, Smoking Cessation, Heart Healthy Living, but wait a minute, was that stress management. How does a margarine product relate to stress management, and wasn't this also a heavily used reference in the Hindustan Lever video. Users who venture in to this page on stress management are greeted with a long list of many serious issues that many people are faced with. One of these options is titled “How to Nurture Your Relationships.” That's right, Becel is consulting their customers on how to manage relationships. They suggest spending quality time with your family, writing letters to far-away loved ones, volunteering at your place of worship or scheduling a date night with your partner. But here is what's most manipulative, that at the bottom of the page, and that goes for each page relating to managing stress, are 1 or 2 links to other articles relating to food – a convenient strategy to connect the stresses of everyday living to, well Becel. So in this case, upon advising customers about how to nurture relationships, visitors are then directed to a page that suggests how to choose heart healthy margarines.

Let's take a look at some other suggestions a global food company has on managing stress. One page is titled *channel your anger*. Unilever indicates that “Anger is a natural emotion.” The page suggests options for channeling your anger such as problem solving, assertiveness, and diversions. And there, at the bottom of the page, is a link to an article titled, Share the gift of nutrition, which includes links to dessert recipes using Becel products.

Now these marketing tactics go on, for quite some time. Using these tactics to quickly explore the rest of this section on Stress, Unilever seems to be suggesting that Becel can help solve sadness by eating Becel Salt Free Margarine. Becoming happier can be achieved by purchasing Becel Margarine or Becel Oil. Managing stress in ten minutes or less can be achieved through using Becel whenever possible when preparing baked goods.

You can check out more on these marketing strategies by visiting becel.ca. And to wrap up this segment, here is the manipulative Unilever advertising that takes the cake (that is of course cake made with Becel). Listen to this recent advertisement, and pay attention to the position of the words right at the end of the ad.

Becel advertisement: Follow it. Break it. Change it. Don't do it if it's not in it. Get it pumping. Pour it out to someone. Keep your loved ones close to it, whether it's cold, warm, or made with stone. Take good care of it. Exercise and listen to it. It's the most important thing you'll ever own. Becel, love your heart.

JS: And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner a weekly one-hour program produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman. Today's broadcast marks the second of a two-part series on global consumer goods company Unilever, who, headquartered in the UK and the Netherlands, operates their Canadian operations from Toronto. The focus up until now has been on Unilever's significant stake in the country's brands of margarine, including Imperial, I Can't Believe It's Not Butter, Blue Bonnet, Becel, and Fleischmann's.

But there's another line of foods that the company removed from their lineup within the past year, and that is Unilever's former European frozen fish brands known as Igloo and Birds Eye. Now while the company has since sold these brands to a private equity firm, a look into Unilever's management of these brands up until the end of 2006 is important in order to better get acquainted with this company who exerts such considerable influence on Canadian agriculture, food, and health.

Now the role this company has had through these brands of frozen fish can actually be connected to the company's historic production of margarine (and you thought I was done with margarine). When Unilever began producing margarine in Europe in 1878 (although it was not called Unilever until 1930), producers were using among other ingredients, Whale Oil. Prior to World War II, the margarine of Great Britain and Germany was about 40 percent whale oil. Whale oil was even being used in margarine products and ice-cream up until around 1960. Around that time, in one year, floating whale factories processed 6,158 blue whales, 17,989 finback whales, 2,108 humpback whales, and 2,566 sperm whales (and these are only those that were reported).

Now in a 1940 book titled *Whale Oil*, Karl Brandt of Stanford University indicated that the large proportion of the whale oil output was purchased by, you guessed it, Unilever. And yet again in a 1994 publication titled *Living Off the Sea*, the author writes, "behind

the scenes, the world's biggest food producing company, Unilever, was pulling the strings.”

So as we can see it, Unilever had a significant stake in the widespread pillaging of the ocean for whale oil, which as most are probably aware, led to a dangerous decline in the population of many whale species and an eventual worldwide ban on commercial whaling commencing in 1986.

Unilever's willingness to deplete stocks of sea life continued up until just recently, because Birds Eye, a company they owned from 1957 until 2006, along with the brand Igloo, had been pinpointed by Greenpeace as one of the major purchasers of illegal cod being fished in the Baltic Sea.

The cod stocks in the region are on the brink of collapse, with advice coming from scientific advisory boards being ignored by the countries in the region setting quotas. On top of what are said to be insufficient protections, is the ongoing illegal harvesting of cod, which in a recent report released by Greenpeace titled “The Cod Fishery in the Baltic Sea,” indicates that 30% of the cod caught fits into the illegal category. One of the major scientific advisory boards to the European Union is known as ICES – the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea.

To first learn more about this issue, I spoke with Oliver Knowles, an oceans campaigner with Greenpeace UK based in London. Oliver first describes who ICES is.

Oliver Knowles: Well, I mean ICES is the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, and they are essentially the body charged with recommending to governments in Europe and around the world recommended quotas for particular types of seafood and fish species. ICES only of course makes recommendations to governments and for governments to heed the advice or otherwise. But ICES is certainly in the view of Greenpeace that represents the best available science on the status of fisheries around the world, and we do encourage governments strongly to heed the advice given by ICES each year.

JS: ICES has been the leading body advising the nations of the European Union on recommended quotas for fishing cod out of the Baltic Sea. Oliver Knowles outlines these recommendations.

Oliver Knowles: ICES has been recommending a zero catch of cod in the Eastern Baltic for about five years. So it's very clear the sign is suggesting there is a looming crisis in this particular fishery. The overall biomass is massively reduced its original status. Unfortunately, what we have here are governments routinely ignoring that advice given for a variety of different reasons not least the pressure brought to bear on them from the fishing industry itself, which tends to operate in a very hand-to-mouth way. In actual fact, Greenpeace is not anti-fishing here what we want to see is a sustainable fishery in this part of the world and into the future, but of course that means taking some urgent and quite difficult decisions at this stage in order to protect the stock into the future.

JS: As the quotas recommended by ICES have long been ignored, there is an even greater concern given that on top of the actual quotas set, a significant catch of cod is being extracted above and beyond the quotas themselves.

Oliver Knowles: Again, the ICES advice was clear that the catch should be zero, but the quotas were set at many thousands of tons, although I don't have the statistics in front of me. A significant amount of cod was being taken out of the Baltic Sea, and each year, which of course is further exacerbating the problem. And of course the issues around illegal fishing in this particular part of the world are further exacerbating the problem. And there is great evidence to suggest that there is an awful lot of inaccurate recording of landings and many vessels are fishing over their quota. But there are transshipments at sea which allow vessels to land more than just their quota. So we have not just a quota which is in contradiction of the scientific advice, but we actually have illegal fishing which is taken way above the limits set by the government. In fact, we have a situation of real chaos at sea where a massive number of fish continue to be taken each year.

JS: Now coming back to Unilever's role in this when they were managing two of Europe's largest frozen fish brands up until the end of 2006, Oliver Knowles indicated that tracking how much of this illegally caught fish was ending up in the company's Igloo and Birdseye brands was too difficult. Greenpeace nevertheless approached Unilever and have pinpointed them on the number of processors sourcing their cod from the region.

OK: We've had a long history of working with Unilever, and in fact, Unilever's involvement with fisheries is long-standing and instrumental in sending out the green stewardship council which of course one of the leading independent eco labels for fisheries products. We've worked alongside them for a number of years. It was clear that Unilever were instrumental in cod crises. They were a very large company taking a very large amount of fish from this part of the sea. The situation of course now has changed and Unilever has sold all of its frozen food brands Igloo and Birdseye to a private equity company called Primera. So the situation has changed but Unilever in a sense were a well recognized brand, and therefore quite responsive to pressure from Greenpeace over the longer term. Greenpeace's role was to attempt to move companies performing in an unstable way away from these fisheries. It's often a very difficult thing for these companies to do and to actually make these policy changes work on the ground.

JS: One of the responses Unilever gave to Greenpeace's pressure placed upon the company was the following, "Unilever felt comfortable purchasing from the region, given European Commission proposals that fishing continue there, and added that withdrawing from fishing in that area would increase the pressures in other fisheries." Oliver comments on this response.

OK: I don't think that's any kind of excuse for continuing to fish stocks where the scientific advice is very clear that there is a problem. There is an issue about something of pressure around the world. But what we have to be doing, and I think collaboratively between environmental groups like Greenpeace and big companies like Unilever and

others, is finding a way to first of all, to identify those stocks around the world which we can fish, we can manage sustainably. It's not just Greenpeace's role to find those fisheries; industry plays an important part of that role as well. I would suggest that it is something of a fudge of the issue for Unilever to claim as an excuse for continuing to fish from a massively overfished stock.

JS: Now Canadians know all too well what happens when a cod stock collapses. There was much prediction when the stocks off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland collapsed that they would eventually return. There are now many saying that this may never happen. In closing out my conversation with Oliver Knowles of Greenpeace, he addressed the seriousness of this similar scenario in the Baltic Sea.

OK: I think it's very clear that we have a major problem in the Eastern Baltic Sea. The ecosystem is changing dramatically as a consequence of overfishing which has been in place there. People these days tend to think of cod as a relatively small fish, about the size of a fish you have on top of chip. But, of course it wasn't so long ago that cod coming out of the seas were substantially larger, even just going back to the 1960s, an average cod was around 1.25 metres and that's an awful lot more than the cod we are pulling out the sea right now. It's quite clear that there is massive and rapid change taking place within this ecosystem and rather like the situation that occurred off the Grand Banks, there are fishermen, there are scientists and academics who are warning of the potential collapse of this cod's stock. So all the ingredients for disaster are there and it feels a little bit like we're waiting for that collapse to happen. Greenpeace is calling on politicians to heed the ICES crisis and really stop this fishery, stop the fishing effort, to give these stocks a chance to recover.

soundbite (advertisements of Birdeye)

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner, and that was Oliver Knowles, an oceans campaigner with Greenpeace based in London, England. You can learn more about Greenpeace's efforts by visiting the links on the Deconstructing Dinner website at cjly.net/deconstructingdinner.

As we continue on with our examination of global food manufacturer Unilever, we arrive at another line of products the company produces around the world – ice-cream. Here in Canada, Unilever controls about 25% of the market with brands such as Breyers, Ben and Jerry's, Klondike, Good Humor, Cadbury, Reese, Skor and Oh Henry Ice-cream Bars.

Unilever's approach to their ice-cream products doesn't differ so much from long-standing efforts to move the Canadian population off of dairy products such as butter. Now you may ask how an ice-cream producer could possibly do this take Canadians off of dairy, but to an extent, they are, and we can look back on two previous broadcasts of Deconstructing Dinner when we explored the increasing presence of modified milk ingredients being found in Canadian dairy products.

Pick up many cheeses, yogurt, or ice-cream products, and one may not find any mention of milk or cream, but instead find modified milk ingredients. As was learned during our April Packaged Foods Exposed feature on Kraft Foods, many manufacturers are choosing to bypass the more expensive fluid milk products and are opting for ingredients such as milk protein concentrate (or MPC) an ingredient which begins as skim milk, but then passes through a membrane to remove everything but the protein in the milk itself. In 2004 alone, the Canadian ice-cream industry experienced a 48 percent rise in imported butter oil and other milk ingredients. These ingredients have now displaced over 50% of the milk for the ice-cream market in country. And so just as dairy farmers have taken a significant hit by the introduction of margarine in 1949, one of the same company's responsible for this, Unilever, is now also increasingly doing the same with their ice-cream products. As long been the protection for dairy farmers in Canada, our supply management system has ensured that any imports of milk products require heavy tariffs that in most cases restrict any desire to bring them into the country in the first place. Many of the modified milk ingredients now making their way into Canadian foods are bypassing these tariffs and entering the country tariff free. From 2005 to 2006, protein concentrates imported into Canada tariff free grew by 82%. Such increases have resulted in annual revenue loss for Canadian dairy producers increasing from \$58 million in 2005 and to \$110 million in 2006. Now there are efforts currently underway to prevent this from happening, but in the meantime, companies like Unilever are taking full advantage, and have been doing so without letting the Canadian public know about it. One of the most recognizable ice-cream brands on grocery store shelves and in ice-cream freezers is Breyers, a company founded in 1882, and purchased by Unilever *from* Kraft Foods in 1993. Since then the quality of what used to be known as all-natural ingredients in Breyers products, has gradually disappeared, and one retailer of Breyers ice-cream noticed the difference within the span of one-week.

Located just outside of Nelson, British Columbia and not far from our radio station, is Geoff Ross-Smith. Geoff had long operated an ice-cream stand in the community of Ainsworth, where he sold Breyers Ice-cream. Within a span of one-week, Geoff recognized a significant change in the flavour and texture of the product, yet no indication on the label suggested any difference.

I invited Geoff Ross-Smith into our studios to share his story with Deconstructing Dinner.

Geoff Ross-Smith: I was running a roadside stand in Ainsworth called Fruit of the Moon. The first year I served Breyers. It was great, all natural ice-cream. My second year, at the beginning, the first couple of weeks Breyers was still the same as the year before and then the next week I bought it and now it was double churned with extra creamy taste instead of the all natural. It was the naturally flavoured.

JS: I asked Geoff to describe what differences he noticed in the ice-cream.

GR: The texture and the taste and the way it unfogged. With the all natural ice-cream, it was more of a melt. It would let itself get even all around. This stuff just staying in the shape that it was put there. I want to feel right about the food that I serve to people. Once

I realized that the recipe had been changed I really didn't want to serve Breyers much at all.

JS: Following Geoff's discovery that the recipe and quality of the Breyers Ice-cream had indeed changed, he contacted the company regarding this change, and Unilever indicated that the product line had been discontinued, but as Geoff points out, the label never changed.

GR: I made enquires to the company and they told me they were no longer carrying that product line although the packaging for that product line hadn't changed at all. They had the blue and white which was the classic and the black and white which was the all natural ice-cream. And now they have the blue and white and they have the black and white, but it's no longer all natural, it's naturally flavoured. But, to a person who has been buying it for the last 10 years who has all natural ice-cream, they're just looking at the package, they're not necessarily looking at the ingredients. And this company Unilever, took over the company Breyer, once they changed the ingredients, they had no interest in going back to the old recipe because it's not very cost effective.

JS: Now as any responsible company should do, even if it is a company discontinuing a product and replacing it with one packaged the same way, some form of apology or consolation is certainly called for. Geoff Ross-Smith describes how the company responded to his concerns, and how he then decided to stand up to the company and begin going into the production of ice-cream himself. Geoff launched the company Kootenay Creamery.

GR: They were willing to send me some gift certificates. There, you can try another one of our crappy products. It's like well forget it. So I bought an ice-cream machine it's just a little 2-litre one so I could make two litres at a time everyday cause I have to throw it into the freezer in this bowl surrounded by gel so it freezes up. So I started out that way and then I bought a little Cuisine Art, which makes a quart and a half at a time every hour and a half though so that it enabled me to do a little bit more ice-cream. I still had to because of the demand, I had to supplement the ice-cream that I was making with a Breyers, unfortunately. There was nothing I could do, unless I was going to buy Häagen Daaz, at 7 dollars a container. The ice-cream that I was making was selling for sure because people... it was forced on people initially. Hey try this try this, it's fantastic. And then I just had too much demand, and I couldn't produce enough. And then in my third year, I got three more of the Cuisine Arts, so I tossed out Breyers altogether. It went out the door.

JS: Geoff's decision to challenge the decline in the quality of Breyers Ice-cream by creating his own is an inspiring story to say the least. But in an age where the quality and safety of Canada's food supply is seeming to decrease at a steady rate, Geoff's decision is perhaps a sign of hope in a sea of cheaply made and bland food. But of course there are difficulties, as Canadians have allowed such massive companies like Unilever to slowly assume control of more and more of our food supply, launching a small-scale ice-cream operation is a difficult venture, and Geoff describes the success of Kootenay Creamery.

GR: It's definitely hard pressed to say I'm making a living out of it. I have a wonderful girlfriend who supports me basically from last year. It's relatively popular. I got about ten stores. I definitely feel good about the product that I make. I use all natural ingredients so the costs definitely are higher and I'm a much smaller company so the work is all done by me basically and all my labelling and packaging. It's really hard to get the company to that next level.

JS: And that was Geoff Ross-Smith, owner of Kootenay Creamery, an ice-cream manufacturer based here in Nelson, British Columbia. Contact info for Geoff will be posted on the Deconstructing Dinner website.

This issue whereby Canadian ice-cream is seemingly becoming less and less like, ...well, ice-cream, is one of a number of examples of how the major processed food manufacturers are influencing the food available to Canadians. As we learned in part I of this 2 part series on Unilever, the company is one of the world's leading purchasers of vegetable oil products – margarine, Hellmann's mayonnaise, Bertolli olive oils, soap, the list goes on, but ice-cream has also tended to contain some vegetable oil as well, and one would wonder whether Unilever's aggressive marketing of margarine and their steady replacement of Canadian dairy with imported modified milk ingredients, is a suggestion that ice-cream is heading in the same direction. Now we can rest assured that there are laws in Canada that state that ice-cream must contain a specified percentage of solids from milk fat in order for it to be called ice-cream. On part I of this Unilever expose, we heard from Therese Beaulieu of the Dairy Farmers of Canada, and she indicates that there are indeed products in grocery store freezers that resemble ice-cream but are not actually ice-cream. I asked her if such an idea could be true – is Unilever abandoning its reliance on dairy, and if they started to use vegetable oils instead, what would the product be called.

Therese Beaulieu: It wouldn't be called ice-cream; it would be called frozen desserts when oil is used instead of butter fat. The debate is whether they are trying to replace ice-cream or dairy products or something else, or they're just trying to provide a different product. That's up for debate what the reason is for those products to be there. But yes, there are products that are up on the shelves in the stores.

JS: Sure enough Therese is right. As many Canadians may be unaware, there are a number of Breyers products that are not legally allowed to be labelled as ice-cream, yet certainly appear to *be* ice-cream. I wanted to explore what some of these products were, and as I looked through the Breyers Canada website, I came across yet again, some very misleading information being presented to consumers. Located on the left hand side of the webpage are the Breyers product categories – one of which is Packaged Ice-cream, and located under the packaged ice-cream heading were at least six products that are not legally allowed to be labeled as ice-cream in Canada. One of these products is Breyers Double Churned Extra Creamy Fat Free Cappuccino Chocolate Chunk (and yes, that is seriously the entire name). And while this product looks like ice-cream, it is by law only allowed to be labelled as a frozen dessert. Another one of the products that cannot legally

be called ice-cream but has snuck it's way into the company's ice-cream category on the website contains ingredients such as palm oil, soybean oil, vegetable oil, and margarine.

And so as we did during our last Packaged Foods Exposed broadcast on Kraft Foods, we will yet again file a complaint with Advertising Standards Canada regarding Unilever's misleading website. You can stay updated on the website and track any progress of this complaint, or stay tuned to future broadcasts of this series when we will provide an update for you then.

soundbite

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner. To wrap up this second and final part of our Unilever expose here on the program, we will continue on the topic of ice-cream, but focus in on an ingredient that Unilever has begun using in a number of their ice-cream products around the world, an ingredient that may shock you.

Unilever has patented an ingredient that is making its way into a number of Breyers products found in the United States, Mexico, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, an ingredient that is created through genetically modifying a yeast that in turn produces a protein that aids in the creation of a product that can withstand longer transportation without losing its consistency. Transporting ice-cream long distances can indeed be hard on any frozen product, and what is being labelled on products as an ice-structuring protein is the replication of the dna found in the blood of the ocean pout – a fish that lives in arctic waters and can withstand extremely cold temperatures. You heard it here, there are proteins created through the genetic modification of yeast that mimic the DNA found in a fish! Now understandably this has raised intense controversy and was mildly covered by American media about a year ago. In the UK, this controversy has really heated up in recent months as Unilever has been attempting to get the ingredient approved for the market there.

Two of the most outspoken groups opposing this ingredient are the UK based Independent Science Panel and the Institute of Science in Society, home to one of the most well-known critics of genetically modified food, Mae Wan-Ho. On the board of the Independent Science Panel is Professor Emeritus of Genetics, Joe Cummins of the University of Western Ontario based in London, Ontario. Joe is one of the earliest critics of genetic engineering.

I caught up with Joe Cummins to learn more about what ice structuring protein is and where it is coming from.

Joe Cummins: The ice-structuring protein is isolated from an arctic fish, the ocean pouter. They isolate the genes from the pouter because there just aren't enough pouter around to supply the needs even though they don't use a lot in ice-cream. But they take the genes from the pouter and they have to fiddle them a bit to change certain sequences and alter gene sequences and alter them in subtle ways. And then they insert them into baker's yeast and grow them up in fermenters and isolate the resulting protein from the yeast.

JS: Now any Canadian is probably wondering if such an ingredient exists here, and Joe responds to such a question.

JC: The protein was approved by the US FDA roughly ten years ago. One company has pretty well taken over the market in these ice-structuring proteins and that's the Unilever which makes most of the brands of ice-cream used in Canada and in fact, our collection of Unilever products. The approval of the product in Canada was having a really hard time getting anyone to acknowledge and approve the product use in Canada. But the reviews from New Zealand and Australia, indicate the product is approved in Canada, but they haven't really been very active to disclose the use of genetically modified product in the ice-cream.

JS: As Joe Cummins is confident that the ingredient exists here in Canada, I did choose to verify such suggestions with Unilever themselves. Upon contacting Unilever's head office in Toronto, I was told that the ingredient has not been approved for use here and is not in any of their products.

Ben and Jerry's, another Unilever brand, has broken ranks with their parent company and publicly announced that the ingredient will never make its way into any of their products, a sigh of relief for anyone who consumes their flavour that contains miniature chocolate fish.

But one of the major concerns posed by the Independent Science Panel and the Institute for Science in Society, is the adequacy with which the testing of the ingredient was put through.

JC: The issue is that they haven't really tested it on animals or extensively on human subjects. Their testing on animals is very minimal and very short termed, so they said earlier that because people in the Arctic ate a lot of pouter fish that it must be safe, but the fact is it matters that it's not really the same thing, it's a synthetic approximation of what the people in the arctic are eating. It's kind of a quick and dirty way of dealing with the issue. But I thought in the area of genetic modification there's a lot more public relations and there is actual experimentation. You just have to really look at it carefully because the long term consequences are profound.

JS: Now the first question that comes to mind when recognizing how inadequate testing was on this controversial ingredient, how could those at the United States Federal Department of Agriculture for one, approve such a product. And Joe Cummins comments.

JC: FDA for example, and I have been fighting with the approval in the US, these bureaucrats have very outvoted opinion and that opinion is that the molecules DNA and RNA are completely harmless and it's just a false belief. They always go back to these poor very old studies from 20 years ago, and in the meantime they found that many many DNAs, particularly the DNA from bacteria that is used a lot in immunology these days,

one of the side effects is that it can kill people. The RNAs they find in small RNAs, which are the ones that get into this product they say is safe because they are small, but the small ones are the most dangerous. They find out that these small RNAs... they went into some experiments with mice. They treated the mice expecting that they would either be effective in producing or just harmless and what happened is they killed off all the mice. They were so dumbfounded they just went out and killed hundreds of mice. And they prepared 20 to 30 small RNA preparations and they *all* killed the mice. And yet, you go back to the bureaucrats and the FDA and they seem to suffer some horrible brain death because they simply refuse to acknowledge this and it's so strange that they do that.

JS: And that was Joe Cummins, Professor Emeritus of Genetics at the University of Western Ontario located in London, Ontario. More information on this issue will be posted on the Deconstructing Dinner website at cjly.net/deconstructingdinner. Previous Packaged Foods Exposed episodes can also be found archived on the website, and this is an ongoing series, so do stay tuned for future broadcasts.

ending theme

That was this week's edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded at Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I've been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant John Ryan.

The theme music for Deconstructing Dinner is courtesy of Nelson-area resident Adham Shaikh.

This radio program is provided free of charge to campus/community radio stations across the country, and relies on the financial support from you the listener. Support for the program can be donated through our website at deconstructingdinner.ca or by dialing 250-352-9600.