



Ketchup, mustard, and meat?

Though once defined as just a stand-alone meal, meat has risen quickly up the ranks to become the nation's second most popular condiment, according to a study released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A pork chop tops a cheeseburger. "In the past several years, meat's use as a way to enhance the flavor of foods has increased exponentially," said Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns. "Ketchup is still number one, but at the rate people are putting meat on top of other meats and foods, it may very well surpass it by 2010."

"American consumption habits have made meat a necessity just so people can notice that they're eating something," Johanns added. Johanns cited the rise of bacon as a condiment as the most universal example of this trend. "By 2015, our researchers predict bacon alone will supplant condiments as diverse as mustard and Worcestershire sauce," Johanns said. "Crumbled 'bacon bits' are a classic addition to salads, and in recent years, slabs of bacon are increasingly used to wrap vegetables, fruits, and seafood. Adding bacon as a topping to cheeseburgers is old news, but now we are seeing bacon-topped meatloaf, bacon-covered chicken wings, and deep-fried, bacon-wrapped bacon sprinkled on pork chops."

Fast-food restaurants have led the charge in pioneering the new trend, Agriculture Department food chemist and study co-author Lynn Starck said. "McDonald's discovered years ago that people aren't really looking for some kind of spicy sauce to top their sandwiches," Starck said. "Quite frankly, what they really want to pile on their hamburger patty is another hamburger patty." Mayonnaise—a mixture of egg and oil—was one of the original condiments, premiering in the 18th century and growing in popularity as diners sought toppings with flavors nearly as powerful as the food beneath them. According to the report, this growth will continue into the next century, with such new innovations as smearable beef packets, kielbasa chutney, and squeeze-bottled chicken.

Pureéd-steak pump-action dispensers are already a staple at condiment stations across the country, as an estimated 79 percent of fast-food patrons now dip their fries not just into ketchup, but into meat in one of its liquid forms. High-end restaurants are also getting in on the act, with tuxedoed waiters now offering freshly ground steaktartare and lightly seasoned pork mixture along with the more traditional black pepperate every table. "In many restaurants, they'll 'meat up' almost any plate on the menu, even vegetarian ones, with an entire steak drooping over the top, at the customer's request," Starck said. "Bologna sherbet and ham brûlée are also just two of the hot new condiment-based desserts we're seeing more and more of." Kraft Foods, makers of Jell-O, are expected to release their highly anticipated pudding cups with dried veal sprinkles in November, and Baskin-Robbins is experimenting with diced frozen frankfurters and gelatinous pork orbs as toppings for their many flavors of ice cream. Celebrity chefs such as Bobby Flay have enthusiastically embraced the meat-condiment craze. "I've been dipping my onion rings in a mixture of stone-ground white cornmeal, fresh thyme, and lightly whipped bison meat for years now," Flay said. "A couple of years ago doing something like

Meat has become a popular condiment

STICKY situation

by Sarah Bowman
Staff Reporter

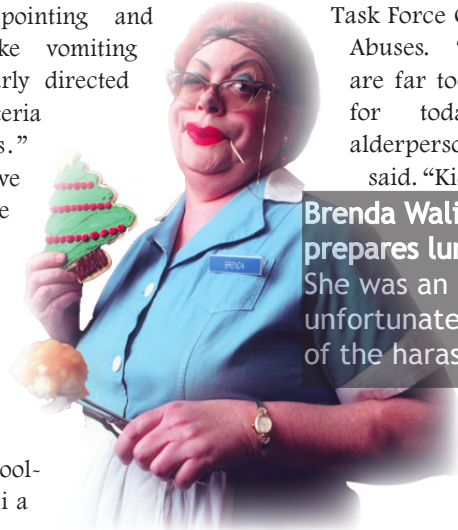
Jasper Junior High School became the site of the nation's latest incident of teen ridicule Tuesday, when a pair of lunch ladies was brutally mocked by two students while serving breaded chicken patties and tater tots with fruit cup or raspberry-cobbler surprise. The students, eighth-graders Alex Byner, 14, and Dan Mattson, 13, have been detained for questioning. They have not yet been formally charged.

Jasper, IN, eighth-graders Alex Byner (left) and Dan Mattson are detained in connection with the brutal mocking of two cafeteria lunch ladies, including 69-year-old Agatha Klogeil (inset).

According to school officials, lunch ladies Birgit Szlach, 54, and Agatha Klogeil, 69, were ladling gravy onto the trays of Byner and Mattson when the youths opened fire with a barrage of insults, "giggling, pointing and making fake vomiting sounds clearly directed at the cafeteria employees." "What we have here is a couple of kids looking to exploit the inherent

1997, Mattson was sentenced to one day of after-school detention for calling lunch lady Edith Greil "Edith Whale." That same month, Mattson was sentenced to two days detention when he placed a pea on his chin in the same spot where Klimt has a mole. In May 1998, Byner was sent to the principal's office in connection with an impersonation of lunch lady Patricia Grosbeck, whose speech is mildly slurred as the result of a stroke. The site of over two dozen mockings since 1995, Jasper Junior High School has developed a reputation among district administrators as a "trouble spot" for lunch-lady-related juvenile crime. Because lunch-lady derision is generally considered a "gateway mockery," leading to humor at the expense of other, more serious institutions in later life, a number of Jasper alderpersons are calling for the school to be classified as "high-risk" by the Mayor's Special Task Force On Lunch-Lady Abuses. "Lunch ladies are far too easy a target for today's youths," alderperson Irene Heep said. "Kids need to learn that just

Brenda Walick prepares lunch. She was an unfortunate victim of the harassment.



dumpiness of school-cafeteria workers for their own humor purposes," school principal Milton Leyner said. "Trying to make themselves feel like big men by picking on the lowest of the low. It's sick, that's what it is." While most details of the mockery are still not known, it is believed that the teens focused primarily on the lunch ladies' appearance, cracking wise over their leathery skin, hideous hairnets and shapeless, mustard-yellow frocks. Particularly amusing to the teens was the German-born Szlach, who, with her squat, blockish frame and tree-trunk ankles, resembles a barn.

Also mocked by the teens, sources said, were the indifferent flips of the lunch ladies' wrists as they haphazardly ladled creamed corn onto tray after tray, splattering everyone in the immediate area with the vile substance, as well as the overall impression of world-weary despair they exuded as they plodded through their daily labors without the slightest glimmer of enthusiasm. Both Mattson and Byner have histories of lunch-lady mocking. In November

because lunch ladies are among the most depressing people in our society, they should not be singled out for ridicule." PTA treasurer and concerned parent Brenda Severson agreed. "How would these kids feel if the tables were turned and, God forbid, they had to go through life as one these bovine lunch ladies, shunned and reviled by decent folk?" she said. "Maybe they wouldn't laugh so hard if such a fate were to befall them." "Though you'd never guess it from their emotionally deadened, reptilian countenances, lunch ladies have feelings too," Jasper Junior High principal Martin Lovell said. "With their fungoid facial phenotypes and lack of human dignity, these poor troglodytes are vulnerable to mockery and derision of the most base and callous sort. Our society should be shocked and deeply pained by what these youths, in their childish, savage cruelty, have done." Due to the unusual severity of the mockery, Mattson and Byner are expected to be tried as tenth-graders. If found guilty, the pair could face up to two months' cafeteria clean-up duty.

Gibson in rehab following arrest

by Sarah Bowman
Staff Reporter

Academy Award winning actor-director Mel Gibson entered a rehab program after his arrest on suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol, his publicist said Monday. "He has entered into an ongoing program of recovery," said the publicist, Alan Nierob. Further details were not immediately available. The movie star's troubles mounted Monday as a Web site reported Gibson had been stopped twice before for reckless driving and let go. Meanwhile, Hollywood speculated about the fallout from Gibson's reported anti-Semitic and sexist remarks. Authorities involved in his arrest continued to fend off suggestions that they had

"sanitized" a deputy's report. (Watch the official denials of special treatment -- 3:00) As the details of Gibson's arrest dominated water cooler conversations, the future of his high-profile projects came under question. The projects include a Mayan-language film called "Apocalypto" due later this year, and a miniseries set during the Holocaust. TMZ.com, which broke the story that Gibson had been arrested early Friday, reported Monday that the actor was stopped twice previously in the past three years "for reckless driving" but was let go without being cited. CNN could not immediately confirm the report by TMZ, which is owned by CNN parent company Time Warner. Gibson's representatives had no comment. Gibson issued a statement over the weekend saying that he drove and should not have after drinking alcohol on Thursday night