
Wiley, Andrea S.


Looks great!

In this article, Wiley primarily does two things. She first outlines a history of milk consumption, primarily in the United States and in China. The history begins with small farmers supplying milk and cheese mostly for themselves and their villages, but as the 19th century dawned on Europe and especially America, dairy production took off. The growth can be linked to certain causes, but she highlights the malnourished inner city children of the late 19th early 20th century and the discovery of the nutritional benefits by Edward McCollum. Until McCollum, there wasn’t much evidence as to why or how milk products were beneficial. Technological evolution of pasteurization in the late 19th century and homogenization in the mid 20th century certainly helped things along as well. The former was more important for the spread of milk because it was much safer to drink. Homogenization helps milk taste better.

The second thing Wiley does is to compare and contrast milk consumption and production habits between the US and China. Not surprisingly, some of the difference has to do with history as well. Milk (and milk based products like yogurt and cheese) in China was and still isn’t the staple it is in America, but the growth in China is astounding. She explains that the dairy industry in China is growing by 25% a year. In America and Europe, production has flat lined and in Canada it has even dropped a bit. This is pretty interesting and strongly indicates a shift in the global economy of milk products that only the future will fully reveal. The methods used to stimulate growth in China aren’t too different from the ones we used in America in the early 20th century when we were the quickly industrializing nation. In both cases, the government was instrumental in changing consumption patterns and China is using the same nutritional propaganda to sell it to the consumers. Wiley calls this the milk-growth relationship.

There isn’t really anything too surprising in the article, though. It’s interesting, but it doesn’t seem to present any new ideas. An industrializing nation needs a food substance that can provide relatively cheap growth-stimulating food for the children of a burgeoning middle class. (It may not be true, but I liken the present growth of dairy in China to the growth of beef in Japan after WWII) We did it 90 years ago or so and China is doing it now. Not only that, but China is using the same methods of promotion. They highlight the nutritional benefits, attach the consumption of milk to the betterment of the individual as well as the country, and use people that children admire in order to sell more milk. What is the most interesting about the article is a short piece before the conclusion about the new trend in the United States about selling milk as a weight loss item. The United States is in a health frenzy and milk is 3% fat after all. Whole milk sales are declining and low fat milk sales are rising, though overall fluid milk market share is shrinking relative to yogurt and cheese. Not only that, but everyone and their uncle (too informal...perhaps give an estimate from a source, which would be easy to find) is overweight in the United States, so selling milk as a way to grow big and strong isn’t the brightest marketing tool. Well in China where there are not as many overweight people it may make more sense. Scientifically speaking, there isn’t much evidence to back up the correlation between low/no fat milk products and weight loss, or at least there wasn’t much in 2007. Perhaps this is jaded, but the shift in milk marketing is genius (word choice) from a marketing standpoint. People on the whole are trying not to purchase fatty foods. Too much milk in your diet can make you gain weight because of the fat and caloric content, but the marketing strategy is not to replace your diet, but merely to supplement it. It’s a good strategy, especially considering the declining sales of milk before the campaign switch.