



Flesh wounds

A row over new anti-cancer dietary guidelines – which recommend a limited meat intake – has experts seeing red, but everyone agrees we should eat more fruit and vegetables.

ANGIE KELLY reports.



IN ONE camp, a group of respected academics say if Australians ate a diet rich in a variety of plant foods and not much meat, we could prevent around 30,000 cases of cancer every year.

In the other, equally notable nutrition experts say red meat is not the bad guy when it comes to causing disease and describe the new guidelines "outdated".

In a statement – on Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) letterhead – titled "Cancer Experts Slam New Food Guidelines", the pro-meat camp directly contradicts the position of the Australian Nutrition Advisory Council (ANAC) – a body convened by the Sanitarium food company – that a diet high in red meat could increase the risk of bowel cancer.

"Clearly, there is a strong body of scientific evidence that shows red meat is not the villain it has been portrayed as," said Paul Davey, from the Victorian Anti-Cancer Council. "International studies confirm that bowel cancer is not caused by eating red meat, rather its primary cause is not eating enough fruit and vegetables."

It also says meat is one of the best sources of iron, protein, zinc and vitamin B12 and to limit its intake is

to risk deficiency of these nutrients.

And while the scientists argue, we are left to try to make sense of which advice to actually take. To make matters more confusing, when it comes to scientific back-up for their arguments, both sides are equally convincing, citing studies galore to prove their points.

Independent dietician Sue Radd said a vast amount of research showed that populations which eat meat-rich diets experience more disease compared with people who have vegetable-rich diets which include only a limited amount of meat or none at all.

The new ANAC guidelines are based on the weighty World Cancer Research Fund report, which results from a review of 4,000 research projects on the link between diet and cancer.

The MLA supporters cite the latest report of Australia's peak research body, the National Health and Medical Research Council, which says risk of bowel cancer can be cut by a diet high in fruit, vegetables and wholegrain cereals but says cutting down on red meat is unnecessary.

The gist of the ANAC guidelines is that between 30 and 40 per cent of cancer cases here could be prevented

if we ate more fruit and vegetables, rice, pasta, bread and legumes.

How we cook food also has an important role to play in protecting against cancer. Steaming, boiling, stewing, baking, and micro-waving were recommended. Grilling, long periods of charring, roasting at very high temperatures and exposing protein foods such as chicken, meat and fish to direct flames such as on the barbecue were not.

The guidelines said eating food after prolonged storage should also be avoided.

At least seven daily servings of grains such as rice or pasta, breakfast cereals, legumes, root vegetables and breads are considered protective, as are five or more servings of fruit. Nuts were especially protective, it said.

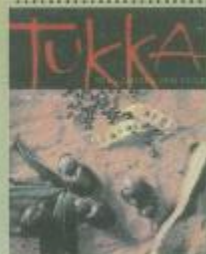
According to the ANAC, research shows green leafy and yellow vegetables protect against lung cancer, while further studies have linked soybean-based diets with low rates of breast cancer. Tomato sauce, which contains the protective nutrient lycopene, got the anti-cancer green light, as did broccoli, brussel sprouts, cauliflower and cabbage.

The ANAC said after cardiovascular disease, cancer was the second most common cause of death among Australians. However, the council pointed to a declining incidence of cardiovascular disease – due in no small measure to improvements in the Australian diet.

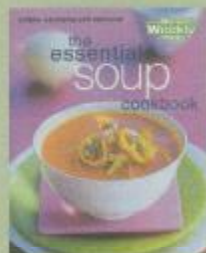
He said about 50-70pc of cancers were related to dietary and lifestyle factors, while 30-50pc were linked to inherited factors.

When it comes to red meat, if you eat it at all, the guidelines allow for 80g per day, an amount equal to about the size of three matchboxes. The guidelines say it is preferable to choose fish or poultry.

For a free copy of the *Food For Cancer Prevention* booklet call 1800 673 392 or ask an expert at the website www.mynutritionist.sanitarium.com.au.



If you want to surprise (shock?) your overseas guests here for the Olympics, serve up some authentic bush tucker. In his book *Tukka* (New Holland \$38.40) chef Jean-Paul Bruneteau offers four wjuti grub meals: grubs with peanut sauce, a wjuti cocktail, garlic-flavoured grubs and a soup named grubuccino, made by blending cooked grubs, vegetables and chicken stock.



If grub soup doesn't do it for you, *The Women's Weekly* cookbook series has a new *Essential Soup* edition (on sale in newsagents at \$12) which offers a host of traditional and trendy variations on this cold weather comfort food.



Broad beans pack a nutritional punch being high in carbohydrates, fibre, phosphorus, iron, niacin and vitamin C. When compared with other bean varieties, they are noted for their beta carotene content, the plant form of vitamin A. Sometimes called Fava beans, they'll keep for up to seven days stored in the refrigerator. Nick from Martelli's of Oatlands says expect to pay between \$3 and \$4 a kilo.



Fresh food tips from the Sydney Markets: Coriander roots, a Thai cooking must, can be frozen for up to three months. Cut pumpkin keeps longer wrapped in plastic and with the seeds removed.

Calorie Counter

Choosing vegetarian products doesn't always guarantee low fat. Kikkoman firm and soft 100g tofu has 10g fat – but the 85g Mori-Nu Lite firm tofu has just 1g fat.

