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Some foods are cooked with MSG added and others come from the manufacturers with MSG already in the products. An informal survey of local restaurants found only 27 percent add MSG occasionally. Courtesy photo

By GISEELLE ARREDONDO

- Leader & Times

The Food and Drug Administration has classified Monosodium Glutamate, a sodium salt of the non-essential amino acid and glutamic acid used as a flavor enhancer, as “generally recognized as safe” for the population, but controversy still remains.

John Erb, a developmental research assistant at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada, theorizes that MSG is addictive and a direct cause of obesity, diabetes, autism and A.D.H.D.

And Researchers at Hirosaki University in Japan have found that rats fed on diets high in MSG suffer vision loss and have thinner retinas.

However, evidence is so small that there's still plenty of room for skepticism.

Numerous well-conducted scientific studies have failed to show a connection between MSG and adverse health effects.

Even so, only around 10 and 20 grams of glutamate are consumed in an American's diet, of which glutamate from seasoning or condiments is less than 10 percent. Also, replacing table salt with MSG could reduce the sodium content of recipes, as MSG contains one third of the amount of sodium.

So which foods contain MSG?

MSG may not always read "monosodium glutamate" on the nutrition label. It can also be named as hydrolyzed vegetable protein, textured protein, sodium caseinate, calcium caseinate, Aginomoto, autolyzed yeast extract, yeast extract, natural meat tenderizer or gelatin.

Foods that contain MSG will be listed as natural pork flavoring, bouillon, natural beef flavoring, whey protein concentrate, whey protein, whey protein isolate, maltodextrin, ultra-pasteurized, barley malt, protease, protease enzymes, soy sauce, soy protein, anything protein fortified, natural flavors and seasonings.

There may be some people that don't know what they eat, but most of the restaurants here in Liberal like to keep it fresh anyway.

A recent unofficial Leader & Times survey found at least 64 percent of local restaurants use the

freshest food possible; 9 percent use MSG occasionally; and 27 percent stated that MSG is an issue out of their hands.

A Bisteca spokesman said, “We use zero MSG in all of our products. MSG is typically used in buffets, because it fills up people faster. It’s also used as a preservative, but we use fresh foods.”

A spokesman for Vallarta Family Restaurant said, “Everything is fresh, and it’s what we have on the menu. We use seasoning on everything. And some foods are deep fried. But like tomatoes, avocados and lettuce, they cut it up themselves.”

A Taste of China spokesman stated that they use “all fresh food. We don’t use (MSG) on anything.”

Only certain items like soy sauce are ordered, he added.

Varga’s Restaurant said they offer, “Una comida muy sana (a very healthy food).” The ingredients they use are on the label.

“We don’t put anything of that stuff,” Chuckwagon said. “If they want salt on it, it’s already on the table.”

Salty Dog said, “It has not really been an issue. We may use it as seasonings for chicken and steak. Every now and then we do get a customer who asks because they’re allergic to it, get migraines.”

La Hacienda said, “Todo es fresco (all is fresh).”

Hickory Stix said that they do everything from scratch and any MSG's are avoided.

"Our food is homemade by using only natural products and fresh ingredients," a spokesman said.

Other restaurants stated that they don't have much control over their consumer products. They don't have a choice or even know much information about what they are selling.

"MSG is in a food product already. If it's added, we can't do anything about it. You'd be surprised at how many people are allergic to it," a Cattleman's spokesman said.

A Sonic manager said, "It's a business. We have no control over it. We make money."

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