

### What About Pesticide Content?

I read with interest the article by Etherton and Kochar<sup>1</sup> in the March 1993 issue of the ARCHIVES on facts and controversies regarding coffee. I was disappointed, however, in the lack of the discussion about pesticide content. While I realized that such an inclusion in what basically was a review article would be mostly theoretical, a discussion of the potential problems and the actual amounts of pesticide residues would still be quite interesting.

It is fairly well known that coffee produced in a non-organic way is fairly liberally treated with pesticides. I am interested to know how the end product of dried and roasted beans compares with other fruits and vegetables produced in a nonorganic way. It would also be interesting to know just how "organic" a pound of organic coffee truly is.

As cancer rates continue to climb and as our world continues to become more polluted, I believe that these questions will be asked more and more frequently. Although I continue to drink coffee, I do now look for organic blends preferentially; it would be nice to have some figures to back up this practice.

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1. Etherton GM, Kochar MS. Coffee: facts and controversies. *Arch Fam Med*. 1993; 2:317-322.

In reply

Unfortunately, there is very little information in the literature on the subject of pesticide content in coffee. Cetinkaya et al<sup>1</sup> have reported a method for determination of organochlorine pesticides in green and roasted coffee. They investigated 17 arabica and two robusta coffees originating in 11 countries. The pesticide residues in the green coffee were absent or reduced to insignificant amounts during the roasting process; the degradation rates range from 85% to 100%. They believed that since the residues detected in all of the roasted coffees were insignificant, no further investigation of the corresponding beverages was necessary.

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1. Cetinkaya M, von Duzeln J, Thiemann W, Silwar R. Organochlorine pesticide residues in raw and roasted coffee and their degradation during the roasting process [in German]. *Z Lebensm Unters Forsch*. 1984;179(1):5-8.