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From the desk of super food sleuth

by Dan Barclay

(Biology 1100)

Friday, January 14, 1949

The night was dark some two years ago and the wind blew as cold as my steel .38 and the frozen beef patties in my basement freezer. The name's Wheresdabeef, Sullivan P. and I am the world's best food sleuth. I had just wrapped up a case for the slimy rat that lived just past the Clark St. alley. Rats... sooner or later they all want the skinny on which wise guy tosses away the best table scraps; only this particular rat was different. He was the picky type; said certain foods made him gassy. The only reason I took the job was because my wallet had made friends with a few low-life moths and I was eager to introduce him to some classy guys by the names of Jackson and Benjamin. The details of the rat's job are, unfortunately, confidential but I'm sure the last few drops from my whiskey bottle would gladly sing the details for you.

Anyway, there I was, on that dark winter's night, thumbing through the old Sunday section when a tall blonde dame came walking into my door. I opened the door, got her an ice pack for her face, and had her sit down. She told me she had a problem and from the looks of her, I wasn't surprised. She said that some members of a certain society had suddenly gone missing without any word or idea as to what might have happened to them. I asked her the names of the missing saps; it's always good to know their names, makes it easier to find them. She told me they tagged themselves as Mr. Protein, Mr. Lipid, and Mr. Carbohydrate; wise guys if you ask me. She also said that these three stooges were last seen on a dinner plate at Chachiano's restaurant some two nights before; I was getting kind of hungry so I wasted no time.

The long walk to Chachiano's gave me some time to think and I remembered that I forgot to pick up my dry-cleaning. When I arrived at the restaurant I met with Fabrino and asked him about Mr. Protein, Mr. Carbohydrate, and Mr. Lipid. Fabrino wasn't talking. I know Fabrino and getting him to clam up was no easy job. I knew something funny was in the air; maybe it was just that limburger cheese special. Whoever heard of limburger cheese in an Italian restaurant? I was about to give up when Fabrino pointed toward a balloon-shaped man sitting in the corner of the restaurant. I knew his condiment-stained face the second I laid eyes on him: Callways Hungry, burger heavy-weight of the west, and that's an understatement.

I wandered over to his tables; he usually had to sit at two or three at once. I picked one and sat down. He told me he knew exactly why I had come and slid a plate over to me. On the plate was a soft sesame seed bun and inside was a juicy, medium rare piece of meat topped with lettuce, tomato, cheese, and mayo. I scraped off the mayo; if I wanted a heart attack I'd have gotten married. Callways told me that the only way to learn what happened to my missing maroons was to eat the burger he set before me. I'm usually not the kind of guy who lets a suspect tell me what to do, but that burger did look delicious and I was running out of time; NBC had a Christmas special starting at ten. I asked him what I was going to learn from eating this burger. He told me that Mr. Protein, Mr. Carbohydrate, and Mr. Lipid were all part of nutrition racket working through the digestive system. I've heard of that system before; those mugs made a killing off of Tums and Ex-Lax. I began to see where this was going so I took a bite and suddenly everything became clear; I knew exactly what happened to my missing molecules two nights ago.

It all started like this, Mr. Protein, Mr. Carbohydrate, and Mr. Lipid were all part of a burger that was served on a plate in this very restaurant. The burger entered someone's mouth and was

chewed into small pieces. It was here in the mouth that salivary glands were activated to moisten the food and the enzyme Amylase began to cleave the starch from the bread. Seems Mr. Carbohydrate got his first. The chewed burger then went toward the Pharynx, which swallowed the whole mess and sent it through the esophagus transport tube to the stomach; this is apparently where Mr. Protein took a beating. The burger made a stop here and the stomach began to churn. HCL then activated enzymes, like Pepsin that cleaved the proteins and broke up the food while killing off germs.

While this whole massacre was going on, Liver had sent Bile into the gallbladder to wait for orders. When word came over that Lipid was traveling on some cheese, Bile was sent off through the duodenum to give him a beating. Pancreas, which regulates blood glucose levels and neutralizes stomach acid, also wanted to take a swing at everyone coming through. So he called his enzymes Trypsin, Trypsin's cousin Chymotrypsin, and Carboxypeptidase to cleave Mr. Protein; Amylase to cleave the Mr. Carbohydrate, and Lipase to cleave Mr. Lipid. Enzymes are some pretty tough characters. These scrubs all met up in the duodenum and escorted the molecules to their doom in the small intestines where they finished the job.

Now, everyone knows that Bile has always had it out for Mr. Lipid and boy if he didn't let him have it in the small intestine. Bile and Lipase both did a number on Lipid; digested the nutrients right out of him. Protein and Carbohydrate each got the same treatment; Protease took care of Mr. Protein while Sucrases cleaved Mr. Carbohydrate's sugars and Amylase cleaved his starches and glycogen. Once all the nutrients had been beaten out and completely absorbed, the digestion was over and all that was left of Mr. Protein, Mr. Carbohydrate, and Mr. Lipid was taken to the colon.

The colon is where wise guys like Mr. Protein, Mr. Carbohydrate, and Mr. Lipid are put after those goons in the digestive system have taken care of them and have absorbed all of their nutrients. These poor mutilated molecules, now wasted, sat as the last bits of water, ions, and vitamins were absorbed out. Now, usually attached to the colon is the Appendix. This guy stores immune system cells that reboot the digestive system boys if any of their bacteria die off. Sadly he started causing trouble for the system a few years ago and they had him taken out.

This is where the story ends; the wasted remains of the burger that once contained Mr. Protein, Mr. Carbohydrate, and Mr. Lipid were sent from the colon to the undertaker known as Rectum to be expelled through the anus and sent on to be processed by the city's public works department.

I sat back in my chair and looked over at Callways; he had a smile on his face somewhere between the barbeque sauce and the mustard. I thanked him and shook his greasy hand before I went on my way. The case was closed and my job was done; Mr. Protein, Mr. Carbohydrate, and Mr. Lipid got involved in a burger that found its way to the digestive system and were never seen again until they turned up wasted in the city's treatment plant. What a way to go. I walked out into the night; the air was still cold but I was all warm inside. It was a long walk back to my office but I was feeling quite content to make the trek. Another day awaited me the next morning and I was all prepared to sleep right through it. I have had many more food cases since then, and I hope to crack the lid off of many more before I am through. Until then, I will always remember the case of the missing molecules as an educational and downright delicious experience. Now, if you'll excuse me, "It's a Wonderful Life" is about to start.

Work Cited

Signed, Sullivan P. Wheresdabeef, Food Sleuth