Editorial

Keeping the Doctor Away

When I was very young – during the 1940s, my parents, in an attempt to convince me to eat fruits, cited an English saying, “an apple a day keeps the doctor away”. I always argued with them that why it had to be an apple as, at that time, an apple was something that the one who bought did not eat, and the one who ate did not buy, since Thailand could not grow apples, and those which were available were all imported at such a high price.

Somebody, probably not a doctor, later invented another saying, “a banana a day keeps the doctor away” as he probably did not want to be away from his patients. Of course, this cannot be taken as a generalized case, as most doctors do not have such selfish idea.

Both statements were useful as they encouraged people to eat fruits, a kind of food that provides people with essential nutrition such as: vitamins, minerals, and instant energy in the form of fructose - a natural fruit sugar, with very little of stored energy in the form of fats and carbohydrates. Fruits also contain a large amount of fiber that facilitates the excretion of food residue outside our bodies, and also the removal of all toxic microorganisms that cause intestinal cancer.

When I was young – during the 1950s, my famous professor, Luang Suwan Wajokkasikit, who tried to convince Thai people to eat chicken eggs, came up with a new saying, “an egg a day keeps the doctor away”, and it worked! Thai people during the 1950’s up until the 1970s, consumed more eggs than before, and as a result, Thailand later became one the leading countries in producing not only egg-laying chickens, but also broilers. It was the doctors who came up with the idea during the 1980s that eggs contained high amounts of fat, particularly cholesterol, a substance blamed by many heart doctors to raise high levels of cholesterol in the blood serum, and believed to be the cause of heart disease. Naturally, people believed them, only to learn recently that it was not true, as the egg’s fat is useful and does not cause heart disease if consumed in moderate amounts; moreover, it is essential for young people, as it contains the protein required of people their age. It is one of the best-valued foods compared to its cost. In fact, we now know that cholesterol is not the only cause of coronary heart disease!

When I was middle-aged – during the 1980s, I was told by the doctors not to consume coconut oil and coconut cream, because, according to them, they are the cause of coronary heart disease as they contain saturated fats. These American-educated doctors were excellent advertisers for American soybean! They influenced Thai people to consume soybean oil and other vegetable oils such as: sunflower oil, safflower oil, corn oil, etc. and avoid “tropical oils” such as: coconut oil and palm oil, because the former is polyunsaturated oils in contrast to the latter, which is saturated oils. According to these doctors, saturated oils contain high amounts of cholesterol, while unsaturated oils do not. However, all evidence we now have indicates that people who consume soybean and other vegetable oils are affected with higher incidence of cancer, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and scores of other diseases. On the other hand, our forefathers who consumed coconut oil and coconut cream did not have such a high rate; and this is true of people in most other Asian and Pacific Island countries. The recently found fact is that coconut oil contains 50% lauric acid; a medium-chain saturated fatty acid, the same as that in the mother’s milk, which provides immunity to the newborn babies. Virgin coconut oil extracted fresh from the coconut without any chemical treatment and high temperature also contains vitamin E, an effective antioxidant that fights against free radicals that damage our cells. Coconut oil and coconut cream, once consumed in the body, are utilized as energy, and at the same time raises the body’s metabolic rate in such a way as to reduce fat already stored in the body. Surprisingly enough, coconut oil is a fat that reduces other fats stored in the body. A few modern doctors now advise their patients to consume coconut oil to reduce weight. Thus, a new buzzword is, “Eat Fat - Lose Weight”, but that particular fat must be coconut oil. My own advise for all my friends is, “a coconut a day keeps the doctor away”.

Now that I am old, I am trying hard to “keep the doctor away” through exercise and good foods with less vegetable oils, but lots of coconut oil and coconut cream, as well as having less stress in life with lots of fun, because laughter is the best medicine. So, be on your way to healthy and happy living with this top April Fool’s joke of all time, “a joke a day keeps the doctor away”!