

***Bite me...  
The Healthy Issue***



***The greening of grocers*** *page 4* / ***Making better humans*** *page 4*  
***Breathing with Simon Vinkenoog*** *page 5*  
***Portraits of test animals*** *page 6* / ***How healthy are you?*** *page 8*

**MUSIC:** Health on health p. 12 / **FILM:** Mike Leigh goes happy-go-lucky p. 18 / **SEX:** Healthy wanking habits p. 19

Short List .....	9
Music/Clubs .....	11
Gay & Lesbian .....	14
Stage/Events .....	14
Art .....	15
Glutton .....	17
Film .....	18
Ladywood .....	19
Classifieds/Comics ...	21

# AROUND TOWN

## Global out, local in

Real green grocers put new spin on 'health food'.

By Matthew Curlewis

On a recent sun-drenched visit to new Amsterdam grocery store Marqt, the usual street-side crates of mouth-watering produce had been replaced by a cheery avalanche of locally grown strawberry plants for sale, all bearing almost-ripe fruit. The idea was to buy the plant, grow the fruit at home and enjoy the sweet-tart pleasure of delayed gratification.

Maybe the fruit wasn't perfectly ripe and ready, like what you might find at Albert Heijn or Dirk, but buyers here are embracing the idea that their shopping choices can also directly influence the health of the planet.

The message at Marqt—and that of an increasing array of 'slow-food' oriented businesses in Amsterdam—is clear: when it comes to grocery shopping and growing, global is out, and local is in. And with this shift, health-conscious people are demanding more flavour and less of a carbon footprint from the products they purchase.

In short, 'health food', like most things *du jour*, has gone through something of an extreme makeover. In the past, organic food was eaten by 'greenies', who fell into that shapeless hemp sack with 'commies', 'hippies' and 'lefties'. These days those borders have all blurred, and more of the population is simply interested in 'good food'.

'It used to be that "eating organic" implied a whole world view, meaning you ate a particular way, and additionally you probably dressed and voted the same way,' says Merle Koomans, spokesman for Estafette, de Biologische Eetwinkel, an organic produce chain with 11 stores in the Netherlands. 'These days we have customers who fly to New York every week as business people, but upon returning home, want to shop locally. The whole idea of choice has changed.'

The organic food movement that began in the 1970s was essentially about food that was good for you, and good for the Earth. With today's heightened sense of urgency regarding climate change, more people are taking notice of how their food is produced.

For Estafette, 'good food' means food that is healthy on three fronts: for the body, planet and grower (meaning that the grower is fairly reimbursed).

'We have customers looking for a fair trade product who find themselves also leaving with something organic,' Koomans says. 'These different interests are consequently widening our customer



JOE JANSSEN

base.' And clearly, this is proving successful on a business level, as having opened only a few years ago with six stores in the Netherlands, Estafette now plans to open one or two more stores each year.

At Marqt, Quirijn Bolle, and his business partner, Meike Beeren, say they keep three key factors in mind for their food: 'Tasteful, healthy and sustainable. And in that order!'

Marqt is a new kind of food-shop for Amsterdam. Located on the Overtoom in what was once a large antique warehouse, its high ceilings and quasi-industrial feel invites comparisons to New York's Chelsea Market or the American-based Whole Foods, a natural food supermarket now found in the US, Canada and the UK. Marqt's business model is completely different, since suppliers—many of them local farmers—are partners in the business and have a say in how things work on a day to day level.

Bolle, a former Ahold employee, spent a lot of time observing how larger supermarkets conduct business, and he felt it was time to radically change the model. Because all supermarkets essentially sell the same products—the same bottles of Coke and the same bags of Doritos—their business plans constantly revolve around cost-cutting as a means of survival. Not long after a supermarket begins to accept product from a small farmer, they will have to ask if they can have the product for ten per cent cheaper, and another ten per cent the next year. Small businesses cannot survive that way.

Bolle's face lights up when describing how things are different at Marqt. 'It's wonderful to watch the growers come in and see the produce they've grown so carefully, being bought by customers who truly appreciate that effort,' he says. 'It's a win-win situation for all of us.'

At the Netherlands branch of Slow

*The end of plastic fruit and veg?*

Food, the international, non-profit eco-gastronomical organisation, members believe food should be 'Good, clean, and fair'. Arjan van Hartesveld, who heads the Amsterdam Convivia (the local chapter), agrees that consumers are hungry for modern shopping that doesn't rely so much on the idea of fast and cheap. Founded in 1989, Slow Food Nederland's numbers have recently jumped to 1,800 members from only a few hundred with the establishment of a number of new regional 'convivia'.

'This idea of good food is not an elite thing any more,' says Van Hartesveld. 'Our membership is reflective of people from all walks of life who all share in common the idea that we should care about what we eat and how we eat.'

At a recent event, Slow Food volunteers showed up at the Wednesday Haarlemmerplein Farmer's Market—a September 2007 addition to Amsterdam's map of weekly organic produce markets—to promote the idea of eating seasonal vegetables. Producers from the market donated asparagus, and the Slow Food volunteers cooked it and gave it away to customers while discussing the principles behind Slow Food.

Van Hartesveld was clearly delighted with the results. 'It's not that we're talking to a wall anymore,' he says. 'People on the street are getting it loud and clear that we have the choice.'

Marqt is teeming with customers who seem to get the message. Bolle is also impressed. 'We didn't do any market research,' he says. 'This was simply a gut reaction, a gut feeling that consumers were ready for something like this.' And with a second store to open soon in Haarlem and another 20 planned across the country, green business is clearly making good business. **W**

## Genetic arms race

How perfect do we really want to be?

By Robin Kawakami

The 1997 science fiction film *Gattaca* portrays a futuristic dystopia of new eugenics, in which embryos are genetically manipulated to produce ideal children. In the resulting society, DNA determines social class, with genetic discrimination replacing outmoded biases of race and gender. Only a decade since that film's release, scientific improvements ranging from cosmetic surgery to the Human Genome Project mean that such biological enhancements might not be that far off.

On 15 May, the Blaise Pascal Institute of Amsterdam's Vrije Universiteit (VU) will bring together an expert panel of specialists in genetics, bioethics and molecular biophysics to discuss the ramifications and limitations of human enhancement.

Dr Bert Musschenga, director of the Institute and VU professor of moral philosophy, will open the symposium with a discussion about the 'utopia of manipulability', creating perfection through human intervention. His work examines the ethics of human life extension—what some biologists predict will be possible within 25 years. 'The question is: should we want that?' Musschenga says.

Central to the human enhancement debate is transhumanism, an extreme ideology developed in the 1980s by futurists in the US. Its proponents believe that science and technology can transform humans into a more developed species—an enhanced version of *Homo sapiens* in the evolutionary line-up.

Dr Cees Dekker, a professor of molecular biophysics at Technische Universiteit Delft, who will appear on the panel, opposes transhumanism and excessive interference in human biology, warning against a 'genetic arms race'. As both a Christian and a biophysicist, Dekker believes there is a fine line between human rehabilitation and enhancement, and sees human dignity as central to his argument.

In a debate that promises to be the highlight of the symposium, Dekker will go head-to-head with Dr. Peter-Paul Verbeek, philosopher of technology at the Universiteit Twente, who argues in favour of some forms of human enhancements. Verbeek believes human dignity cannot be separated from technology, because technology makes us human. 'We should not be against [technology] per se, because that's a false form of conservatism,' he says. 'You cannot defend yourself against something that makes you what you are.'

Because of this indissoluble link between humans and technology, Verbeek believes in questioning specific kinds of human enhancements instead of rejecting