

MediaPost's

MAGAZINE RACK

What's Hot Under Covers

GOOD

by Tanya Irwin, Wednesday, April 2, 2008

FOR YEARS, I HAVE tried to come up with a quick answer for people who ask if I'm a vegetarian or not. I was, now I'm not, but I won't eat just any old meat.

I'm not kosher or even Jewish, but I don't eat pork or beef at all and haven't for 22 years, except for one drunken hot dog at a baseball game. I was drunk, not the hot dog. Anyway, when I do eat fish, chicken or turkey, it has to be organic, free-range and preferably certified humane.

Now is about the time in the conversation when people start rolling their eyes, or if they are polite, try to change the subject. But let me tell you, thanks to a magazine article, now I don't feel so silly for my complicated philosophies about eating.

GOOD's current issue has a cow on the cover. The headline is "Happy meal. Why pampered cows make tastier steaks plus a lot more to chew on." The cow has eight human hands surrounding it and doing just that - pampering. It's being offered different grains, it's being petted and brushed. Someone is even playing a radio for it.

After the tongue-in-cheek cover, I was apprehensive that this would be an article that not only made fun of me, but had information that would negate what I was doing, perhaps explaining how free-range chickens are actually quite miserable and prefer to be cramped into cages with the dimensions of an old-school vinyl record album. But the thoroughly reported and well-written piece explores all aspects of the humane farming -- and eating -- movement. It's not often you can pay \$4.95 and feel validated, but I did.

The rest of *GOOD* was, well, good. It was the food issue and every story in it was truly an easy read, even the one about deer hunting in Los Angeles, which again I was apprehensive about at first glance. Most of the articles are one page or shorter. The handful that run two pages, like the deer hunting one, are so compelling that you are bummed when it ends. The handful of longer pieces is written by people that truly know how to tell a story and by editors who know how to edit.

But beyond page length, the magazine has great art direction and wonderful photography. The only element I could do without are the category symbols in the upper left hand corner of each page that represent the magazine's content areas: politics, business & money, health, technology, buying, science, environment, art & design, mobility, media, culture, education and finally, living. They are small and they are not intuitive, meaning, I had to keep looking back to see what the heck the teeny tiny outline picture in the circle was supposed to be representing.

The magazine's mission statement is written on the cover: *GOOD* is for people who give a damn, or as founder and Publisher Ben Goldhirsh goes on to explain. "Through a print magazine, feature and documentary films, original multimedia content and local events, *GOOD* is providing a platform for the

ideas, people, and businesses that are driving change in the world."

Another revolutionary idea: This is a company that practices what it preaches. ALL of the subscription money, every last penny, gets donated to a nonprofit. (Employees of the various charities are profiled in the magazine each issue.) They include Youth Aids, Teach for America, Room to Read, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Malaria No More and Slow Food USA.

The magazine's Web site explains this out-of-the-ordinary business practice: "Let the secret be known -- most magazines do not make money on subscriptions or newsstand sales. In fact, they spend a ton of money just to get people to buy copies or subscribe. So we came up with the idea of giving away all subscription fees and allowing subscribers to choose which organization they would like to support. In other words, we're putting our money where our mouth is and empowering those who are driving change in the world."

The magazine has the goal of achieving 50,000 subscribers and giving away \$1 million by mid-2008. They are currently at \$712,360. Make that \$712,380. They've got one more convert in me.