

Questions and Answers on Foie Gras

1) *What is foie gras?*

Foie Gras (pronounced “fwah grah”) means “fatty liver” in French. It is an expensive appetizer that is produced by force feeding ducks or geese two or three times daily through a pipe shoved down their throats. The force-feeding can cause painful bruising, lacerations, sores, and even organ rupture. Due to this unhealthy and unnatural diet, the birds’ livers can swell up to ten times their normal size and become diseased (a medical condition called “hepatic lipidosis”), and cease to function properly. The harrowing process and its effects on the birds make it difficult for them to walk or even breathe comfortably. The birds would die from the condition if they were not slaughtered at just three months old. Even so, many die before being slaughtered.

2) *Who is working to ban the sale of foie gras?*

Humane organizations and citizens across the United States and around the world are actively working to prevent the cruel force feeding of birds to make foie gras. These efforts are supported by veterinarians, ethicists, religious, political, and business leaders, including restaurant chefs and farmers.

3) *Why go after foie gras and not other farming practices?*

Unlike other food items, it is not possible to produce foie gras without engaging in animal cruelty and creating a pathological state in the animals. Force-feeding birds to make foie gras blatantly violates our society’s belief that animals deserve to be treated with compassion and respect. Indeed, a Zogby poll conducted in September 2005 revealed 79 percent of likely voters in Illinois agree that foie gras production should be outlawed.

4) *Don’t foie gras producers say that force feeding is humane and mimics the natural over eating that occurs in wild ducks and geese who are storing energy before migrating?*

There is nothing natural about forcing a large, inflexible tube down a bird’s esophagus and pumping in enormous amounts of nutritionally incomplete gruel. Migratory birds may store extra fat for long journeys, but they would never self-induce liver disease or ten-fold expansion of this organ. If they did, they would not be able to lift off the ground, let alone fly, if their livers were expanded in this way.

Myriad other complications are rampant in foie gras facilities, such as pneumonia, lacerated tracheas and esophagi, broken bills, throats severely impacted with undigested corn, a proliferation of bacterial and fungal growth on the lining of their organs, and sore feet from bumblefoot—all consequences for which veterinary care is not provided.

5) *Shouldn’t foie gras consumption be a personal choice and not regulated?*

As a society we prohibit behavior that is considered to be outside the bounds of acceptable conduct. Our culture does not condone the torture of defenseless individuals and we enact laws, such as preventing the sale of foie gras, to prohibit animal cruelty. Laws are a reflection of our culture; they define our values and set forth the standards of

behavior in a civilized society. To date, more than a dozen countries, the state of California, and the city of Chicago have enacted laws to prevent foie gras cruelty.

6) *Without foie gras, won't chefs be limited in their ability to create gourmet foods?*

Of course not. Any accomplished chef could easily work from a vast array of foods to create gourmet delicacies without using foie gras, a diseased product from a tortured duck or goose.

7) *With all the problems in the world, why focus on foie gras?*

Nobody needs foie gras. It's only eaten by a few people, and its production and consumption represent egregious, gratuitous cruelty. Prohibiting the sale of this inhumane product reflects and upholds our society's values. It is sadly ironic that in the face of vast hunger around our globe, foie gras producers force-feed animals until the brink of death to produce an expensive delicacy for the few who can afford it.