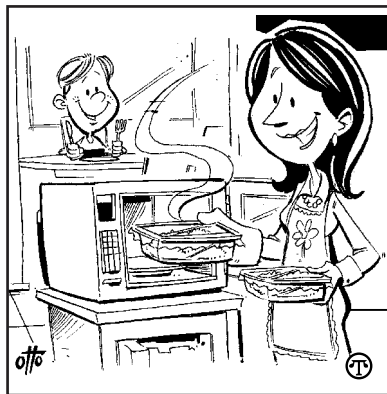


Facts and Fallacies

Don't Be Myth-Informed

(NAPSA)—We've all seen them in our e-mail boxes—those pervasive and persuasive stories about everything from gangs and guns to chemicals and cancer. Have you heard that Bill Gates will send you cash if you forward an e-mail? Maybe you've read that if you microwave with plastic it will literally drip toxic chemicals into your food? You may have learned that the Great Wall of China is the only man-made object visible from space, or that a duck's quack doesn't echo. All of these are urban myths, good stories that appear mysteriously and spread spontaneously in varying forms.

Often created by an individual with an agenda, these are perpetuated endlessly by the well-meaning. Your mother, your brother and your best friend all send them to you—and everyone else they know. *U.S. News and World Report*, in its recent cover story on hoaxes and legends, states that, "the Internet's power is more readily harnessed to proliferate hoaxes than to quash them...anybody can potentially have access to millions of people. When that anybody happens to be a hoaxer, the results can spread for years." Some modern hoaxes—even well-intentioned ones—can scare people into making bad choices.



Don't be taken in—microwave myths are half-baked.

For instance, a widely forwarded e-mail claims that a doctor said on TV that you shouldn't microwave plastic because it will drip poisons into your food. This is misleading at best, according to Barbara Mikkelsen of the San Fernando Valley Folklore Society, who explains that the Food and Drug Administration carefully reviews the substances used to microwave food. Furthermore, the director of the Hawaii Center for Health Promotion referenced in the hoax e-mail is not a medical doctor, but an administrator. There is, Mikkelsen concluded, no basis for avoiding plastic.