A VRG MEMBER IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST asked us about the source of the L-cysteine in the cherry pies at her local McDonald's. In January 2009, a McDonald's customer service representative named Erin told us that, since the cherry pie is not a national, 'core' menu item, no information about the pie was available. Erin suggested that we contact the local restaurants that carry cherry pies.

The VRG made several calls to random McDonald's locations in Seattle, WA, and Portland, OR. We were given a wide variety of answers, but the general conclusion was that no one knew about the L-cysteine's source because they had no ingredient information. We were directed back to the corporate offices for McDonald's.

The VRG discovered that the Bama Company supplies McDonald's with their pies. In the spring of 2009, we left several messages with Bama and sent several e-mails but received no response.

In May 2009, The VRG received a call from Kathy at the McDonald's corporate office in Illinois. She told us that the L-cysteine in the McDonald's cherry pie is derived "from an animal source." When we inquired further regarding the specific animal source, Kathy told us that the supplier did not provide any more specification. She also noted that supplier and ingredient information may change and that McDonald's guarantees no product as vegetarian.

As a follow-up, The VRG called the McDonald's consumers line again and asked if the L-cysteine in the apple pie was also derived from "an animal source." In November 2009, Michaela told us that the L-cysteine in the apple pie was indeed from an animal source. When we asked for more specification, Josie, who works in menu development at the McDonald's corporate office, called us and said that the L-cysteine in the apple pie is from "an animal source but not human-derived." When I asked for more specification (specifically, whether the L-cysteine was derived from duck feathers), Josie replied that she had no other information and that degree of specification is proprietary information.

Interested readers may refer to The VRG's article on L-cysteine, which is available here: <www.vrg.org/journal/vj2008issue1/vj2008issue1cysteine.htm>.

Readers may look at VRG's Blog or subscribe to our free e-newsletter at <www.vrg.org> for further updates on ingredients used at major restaurant chains.

Bequests

The VRG depends on the generous contributions of our members and supporters to continue our educational projects. Though the world may not become vegetarian in our lifetimes, we realize that we are planning and working for future generations.

- Your will and life insurance policies enable you to protect your family and also to provide a way to give long-lasting support to causes in which you believe. Naming The VRG in your will or life insurance policy will enable us to increase our work for vegetarianism.
- The VRG is a tax-exempt organization. Bequests are tax-deductible for federal estate tax purposes.
- One suggested form of bequest is: I give and bequeath to The Vegetarian Resource Group, Baltimore, Maryland, the sum of ________ dollars (or if stock, property, or insurance policy, please describe).
- To be sure that your wishes are carried out, please speak with your attorney specifically about writing the correct information into your will.