



A Culture of Indulgence

We live with abundance. True, hunger and malnutrition is evident in every urban neighborhood and too many hidden rural hamlets. Hurricane Katrina effectively whipped off this nation's blinders to the evidence of poverty in a nation of wealth. But even those oppressed by poverty are compromised by living in a culture of indulgence, a culture that celebrates getting as much as you can.

A culture of indulgence celebrates more and more. There is no endpoint. There is no sense of "enough". And there is a high price to pay. We are definitely paying, especially with our well being, our health, and evidently our dollars.

\$99 billion a year, \$102 billion a year, 5.7% of our National Health Expenditure, 12% of our health care budget. The cost of obesity is huge and often depends on who calculates and how they calculate. And while the monetary costs are high, I see costs far beyond the pocketbook, and far less concrete.

There are huge personal costs when we don't know how much is enough— whether we are talking about food, sleep, work, play, or any other endeavor. When we don't have enough, food often becomes a surrogate for whatever we are missing. And with so much cheap food, too many people use it to address far more than hunger.

When we do not take enough time to rest, set boundaries on the amount of time we work, limit the amount of time we commute, carve out enough time to play, use enough time to plan, or allow ourselves the time to just be, it is exquisitely seductive to use food as quick fix to calm our angst—and lose ourselves in the process.

As our food supply is increasingly more processed, more refined, more complex and more available, eating well is more challenging. In this issue I attempt to address the challenges of living in a culture of indulgence, and hopefully help all of us consider how to thrive with enough.

Morgan Spurlock Missed The Point

Eating well is just as challenging in the marketplace

Within the first few minutes of *Super Size Me*, Morgan Spurlock dismisses the marketplace as a factor in this nation's girth expansion. Just because our mothers shopped 40 years ago and still do, doesn't necessarily mean that buying groceries is the same

Today's grocery stores select 40,000 or so items to sell from over 100,000+ options. The local market of 40 years ago sold a fraction of this. In addition, our foods are

far more processed and adulterated. Added sugars and fat abound. Far less space is allocated to basic food ingredients, far more space to convenience items and prepared foods.

When Whole Foods opened a store in Santa Monica, I laughed as I realized that over half of the store area was dedicated to prepared foods. I thought, "This is the future of the urban food experience."

(see *Eating Well*, pg 2)

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Current Research Requests:

- **TELL YOUR STORY!** I am compiling an anthology of my clients' experience with insulin resistance. I would love for you to share your experience with changes in energy and well being, body size, blood tests or other health parameters. I am collecting these stories to help educate my colleagues and the public about the wide range of signs and symptoms associated with insulin resistance.
- If you are interested, please contact me at www.bonnie@muchmorethanfood.com

Eating well (con't)

Over the years more and more of my clients acknowledge “assembling” rather than cooking food, or abandoning the kitchen altogether for the convenience and expense of eating out.

Is this so bad? Not necessarily. But relying on prepared foods inherently demands a much higher awareness of what is in them in the first place. If people are to eat more prepared foods, it is even more important to get a balance of carbohydrate, protein and fat in order to feel satisfied and to know how much is enough. Here are some basic guidelines to help you navigate the aisles.

1. **Continue to think balance.** A basic approach is to purchase food so that your plate reflects at least 1/3 filled with produce, no more than 1/3 with starch, and about 1/3 with a strong source of protein. For people who burn carbohydrates up like an incinerator, you may enjoy more starch. Those of you who don't handle carbohydrate well may prefer to double up the veggies and legumes and eat fewer grains.
2. **Choose foods close to the earth.** Whole fruits and vegetables over juice. Whole grains over bagels and scones. Whole oats over more refined cereals, including instant options. Ironically it is often easier to eat more whole foods when eating in restaurants than relying on overly processed, overly packaged convenience foods in markets.
3. **Consider basic foods “everyday foods”.** Think of highly

refined and adulterated foods as “sometimes food.” These foods include chips, breakfast bars, nutrition bars, candy, desserts, and other items so refined or so compromised that they no longer resemble the food they were made from.

4. **Don't worry too much about seasoning.** Tasty foods are more satisfying. Enjoy the flavors and pay close attention to how much is enough. Overeating is the problem here, not the judicious use of a great tasting marinade or sauce.
5. **Try to minimize trans fatty acids** (partially hydrogenated fats) This will be challenging. Most restaurants and commercial food preparation units use partially hydrogenated liquid shortening in their kitchens. Trans fatty acids are also ubiquitous in the dry food aisles. (Trans-fat increases shelf life.) Far too many “nutrition bars” and snack foods use this incredibly cheap and problematic food ingredient.
6. **Consider how much refined sugar you consume.** Are you increasing or decreasing the national average of 141 pounds a year? It is well understood that eating a diet rich in sugar and saturated fat causes insulin resistance.¹ In mice it takes two weeks; I doubt it is much different in humans.

¹ Insulin resistance is a major factor influencing energy metabolism and increasing risk of obesity, type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Comparing Apples and Apple Juice: What is an “everyday” food?

EVERYDAY

Fruit/Vegetable

Whole Grains

REFINED FOOD

Juices, fruit leather, frozen fruit popsicles, fruit chews, fruit drinks, vegetable chips

flour, flour products (bread, bagels, pancakes, waffles, pasta, crackers, pretzels, refined cereals)

EVERYDAY

Potatoes

Milk/Yogurt

REFINED FOOD

potato chips, tater tots, instant potatoes

flavored milks, hot chocolate, pudding, fruit sweetened yogurts, frozen yogurt, yogurt covered nuts, pretzels, etc.

Who Gets To Eat 'Whatever They Want'?

Most people can recall a time when they ate whatever they wanted without a noticeable consequence. But is it really ok to presume that as long as you are not overweight, that you can “eat whatever you want”?

Today kids have access to an ever increasing amount of refined foods. It is easy to eat an excessive amount of sugar, fat and calories without feeling overfull. And with access to such a refined food supply, we see an increasing number of overweight and obese children.

The tough part is that kids who are genetically predisposed to

being thin have this same access to refined food. They enjoy chips and cookies and a high sugar drink in their lunches. No one seems to notice a treat here *and* there. Dessert included with the kid's meal of chicken strips, fries and a soda is a celebrated bonus. These kids seemingly get away with it. For now.

It is time to depart from this narrow litmus test of body size to determine what we feed children. It does not serve any child to be given free range in this massive and distorted marketplace just because they are not fat.

Every child benefits from steady energy and a strong sense of

WHERE IS FOOD'S RIGHTFUL PLACE?

Watching *March of the Penguins* this summer I was both awed and inspired. The penguin's sole focus was staying alive, staying fed and successful reproduction. Not necessarily in that order. In one sequence, the penguin fathers did not eat for weeks while the mothers fed and the eggs incubated under the father's fur.

Have we come a long way! Most of us are no longer forced to focus on survival. The penguins walked miles to get to their food supply. It took weeks. How much time and energy do you allocate to getting your food? How much time and energy do you *expect* to spend?

My observation is that too many of us allocate the process of getting food as little time as possible unless we are "dining" or eating happens to be part of the entertainment. This lack of value for food and eating translates into many behaviors that ultimately contribute to being less healthy, less focused, more anxious and tired, and less productive in the long run.

Skipping Meals Most Common

Most frequently people skip meals. And breakfast is the most skipped. Too much time, too much effort. A pretty weak excuse when I have timed scooping cottage cheese and fruit at two minutes. Putting peanut butter on toast totaled seven minutes, and boiling a couple of eggs took ten. And for both of these preparations the cook could use the 5-6 free minutes during cooking to do something else. Of course, you have to have food in the kitchen to begin with. So, shopping is definitely a key factor in being able to throw together a quick and nutritious meal.

Ironically, most people who skip breakfast end up sabotaging their well being for the rest of the day. It is my clinical observation that breakfast skippers tend to snack on whatever is available at the office/ kitchen/ break room later on. In addition, breakfast skippers tend to overeat at the next opportunity because they often get over hungry. Sometimes the overeating happens at lunch, many times it translates into constant snacking from 3-5 P.M., and for some overeating starts the moment they get home from work or school until they go to bed. Getting over hungry is a catapult to over eating. Once you get over hungry it is just about impossible to discern how much is enough.

As little (energy) as possible

Another common pitfall is trying to eat as little as possible. Maybe a cup of cereal and non fat milk for breakfast or a bowl of salad greens with no fat dressing for lunch, a bag of air popped popcorn for dinner. These barely count as snacks, much less a meal.

The goal is not to chronically challenge yourself to see how little you can eat. The point of eating is to fuel your day. Enough protein in each meal and adequate Calories provide a steady supply of energy. Women can count on using up at least 100-120 calories per waking hour, men about 120—150. That means a decent meal is at least 500-700 Calories.

Celebrating The Problem

Eating balanced meals without overeating often means meals don't last longer than 4-5 hours. Then it is time to eat again. It makes sense to eat periodically, giving yourself stable energy throughout the day. Ironically many people eat the most at night when we need it the least. Too often by the time you get to enjoy that meal, your glycogen stores are tapped. It happens when you repeatedly put off eating despite feeling hungry. This depletion inevitably leads to overeating when food and time are finally available.

Once depleted—even after eating a moderate meal — you may still feel unsatisfied. Too often you'll find yourself craving sugar. And you know what happens next.

Getting over hungry and then over eating only works in times of survival. Go ask the penguins.



Whatever they want (con't)

well being. It starts with eating enough protein for satiety at every meal. Even snack time calls for protein if the next meal is more than 1-2 hours away.

It is equally important to couple protein with a mix of fruit, vegetables, beans and legumes or maybe some whole grains for energy. Include a moderate amount of healthy fat—it helps you feel satisfied longer. This is the core of balanced eating. It also is the foundation of learning to eat enough without overeating.

In the long run, most people eventually pay the price of not learning these basic tenets of eating well. For kids who are prone to a

stockier body type, they struggle to maintain a positive sense of self in a ruthlessly judgmental society. For thin kids, the day of reckoning usually comes decades later. The picture is not pretty.

Most people feel betrayed when they no longer "get away with it." Then they need to work through their feelings of anger and frustration, as well as come to terms with the reality of eating with limits and working with their body. Letting kids think it is their birthright to eat whatever they want just because they are thin is a set up.

After all, most of my overweight clients were thin as kids.



NutritionWorks
530 Wilshire Boulevard Suite 310
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Phone: 301-395-4822
Fax: 310-917-2274
Email: bonnie@muchmorethanfood.com

Celebrating food in its rightful place

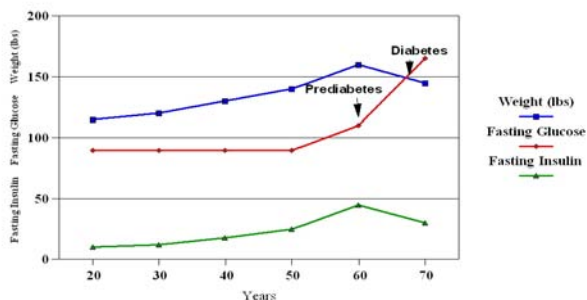
NUTRITIONWORKS NEWS BITES:

INSULIN DRIVES WEIGHT GAIN

No one is suggesting that we dismiss the laws of thermodynamics. But it is increasingly clear that those who insist that fat loss is basically an exercise in math (eat less, exercise more) are losing ground to much more sophisticated thinking.

- In the Sept/Oct 2005 issue of *Health At Every Size* a wonderful model of the progression of insulin resistance driving weight gain was discussed (replicated below). The bottom line: **the widespread assumption that excess body fat is the simple and direct cause of type II diabetes is wrong.** Insulin drives the weight gain. You develop pre diabetes and diabetes when you can't maintain insulin production. In the meantime the excessive insulin production drives overeating, craving for carbohydrates (both sugar and starch), complaints of fatigue, and truncal fat gain (more belly fat). Insulin also blocks fat loss. Good thing we have strategies to turn this around.

How Insulin Resistance Drives Weight Gain



- Jim Hill, of the Center for Human Nutrition in Denver, Colorado scripted an editorial for the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition titled, "Obesity treatment: does one size fit all?" (June, 2005) His point? No. Even this champion of "calories in vs. calories out" has come to realize the value of different approaches to weight management for different people.
- Another "breaking" concept was printed in the July 2005 edition of *Diabetes, Obesity, CVD (DOC) News*, suggesting that we shift from asking diabetics to adapt to diabetic treatment. Better to fit the treatment to the person. At last! The authoritarian approach is being questioned.
- Researchers at CDC reported that thinner is not necessarily better in the April 20, 2005 edition of The Journal of the American Medical Association. Ironically, people with a BMI of 25-29.9 (what is commonly thought of as "overweight") actually have a lower risk of death than those "normal" weight folks with a BMI of 18.5-24.9. Maybe someone is going to figure out that BMI categories based on ht/wt charts that were based on old people who had wasted muscle mass but lived a long time is not an effective standard to assess healthy adults.
- *Health at Every Size* has hit the mainstream with an article by Jon Robison on *Medscape: Endocrinology and Diabetes* (July 12, 2005). The *Health At Every Size* effort continues to address the core issues of health and disease, and more importantly, encourages health care practitioners to step away from the bias of weight and BMI numbers. People are able to tell us more about themselves than then numbers ever will.

◀Adapted from Paul Ernsberger, PhD. *Health At Every Size*. September/October 2004., ps 67-70.