

One Bite = Instant Pleasure

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By Chelsea Youngberg

There is nothing like biting into a big juicy over processed cheeseburger that is smothered with processed condiments that make your taste buds scream with joy with every bit you take. While that may sound repulsive now there is no way of denying the fact that at some point and time you have eaten something similar to that and to your dismay you enjoyed it. Michael Pollan in his book, *The Omnivores Dilemma*, makes a series of arguments all relating to the ever popular topic of food. One of the arguments that he presents is the idea that as consumers we do not find pleasure in eating processed foods. Since the majority of the foods we eat are processed foods this could present a problem for us if it were true. Processed or industrial foods are those “that now feed most of us most of the time and typically culminates either in a supermarket or fast-food meal” (Pollan 17). Basically Pollan understands that processed foods are everywhere in today’s day and age, and since most people no longer grow and produce all of their own food; the fact that people are going to eat processed foods is inevitable, whether they find pleasure in it or not is entirely dependent on them. Many different components go into the fact of deriving pleasure from eating, it is not just based on the fact of it being processed or not.

When it comes to be that time of the month when the kitchen cabinets begin to look desolate, the refrigerator is empty and full of moldy leftovers, and the counter tops are no longer graced with snacks to fulfill the midnight sweet tooth; the average person just hops in the car, buckles up, and takes that long delayed trip to the local supermarket. The typical grocery store is full of all different sorts of people all trying to make the same subconscious decisions about what foods they are going to consume. This question is one for the ages but these days it only seems to have become more and more complicated and much more difficult to answer on a daily basis. In today’s day and age the number of people that only eat what they can grow and kill are few and far between, people now depend on the new scientifically created food known to the American public as processed foods. Most everything that you can find on store shelves today is processed, making it a staple in the diet of Americans.

Eating is very simple, open mouth shovel in food and presto were done. Tasting on the other hand is where it gets complicated and most people do not know all of the different components that go into what and how we taste. Robert Margolskee and David Smith in their article “Making Sense of Taste” which was published in *Scientific American*, make clear all of the different aspects of taste, and just how we taste the food that we eat. Taste is an important ingredient in understanding how we find pleasure from eating, because without taste it would be impossible to find pleasure in eating food. A major factor that affects taste is flavor. Flavor is what we derive from foods, and most often it is flavor that causes us to find pleasure from eating. Flavor is detected by the taste buds and our sense of smell. When we feel the rupture of flavors in our mouth we begin to taste, and most of the time this is the point at which we begin to feel pleasure. Think about the last time you bit into that processed candy bar that you have been craving for a week. You most likely experienced a rush of “chewy, sweet, creamy—with the signature, slightly bitter richness of chocolate as you close your mouth to swallow and the aroma wafts up into your nasal passages” (Margolskee and Smith). In essence, taste is what triggers us to experience a sense of pleasure from eating. We find pleasure from tasting something pleasurable, satisfying, delightful, and pleasing; and if this so happens to be a processed food then it is acceptable to say that we find

pleasure from eating processed foods.

The saying “you want what you can’t have” applies to food. When you know that you are not allowed to eat something or forbidden to eat it then typically we are more inclined to crave whatever food it is. Joshua Yaffa in his article “Forbidden Nonfruit”, illustrates life growing up in a household void of junk food and an abundance of processed foods. He details out his secret cafeteria trades, want a “look at my worksheet from math class...[for] an extra stash of Pringles in your lunch tomorrow” (New York Times 54), explains the thrill of sleepovers where he was able to divulge in all of the forbidden foods that his heart could possibly desire, and the pure joy that he received after biting into one of the many banned household foods. This article proves that eating processed food and junk foods is highly desired by people. If they can not eat it, they want it. Although Pollan supports his argument substantially, Yaffa is a prime example of a case where processed food is desired heavily. His longing for processed foods can be attributed to the fact that it was forbidden for him, but also if it did not taste good or he did not find pleasure in it he would not have been yearning to eat it so desperately. While processed food is known to be substantially unhealthy, it is still craved by many, eaten by most, and hated by few.

Everybody has their favorite foods and favor certain things over others, but the extent at which we find ourselves craving and liking certain foods actually affects the amount of pleasure that we receive from eating certain provisions. In an article written by several different authors that was published in the food journal, *Appetite*, the difference between food liking and food wanting is discussed. Many times whether or not we find pleasure from eating a food is affected by the ideas of food liking and food wanting. Food liking can briefly be described as any food that we enjoy eating on a regular basis or from time to time. Food wanting is basically when we find ourselves craving a particular food. Typically what happens is, when we experience food liking we do not receive great amounts of pleasure from eating, but when we are subjected to food wanting we find great pleasure in eating the food that we crave. This is why people find great pleasure in divulging in chocolate. Chocolate is a processed food that is not highly eaten on a regular basis, yet after eating even a little bite we find ourselves completely satisfied, and often times craving more, thereby seeking more pleasure from food. Finding pleasure in food is affected by “food wanting to a greater degree than it [is] liking” (“Food Liking Food Wanting 223). Because of this, consumers who find themselves experiencing food wanting for any processed food is going to receive pleasure from eating it.

From Ho Ho’s to Twinkies there is no way in denying the fact that pleasure is found in eating one every so often. The chemicals and byproducts that are found in either of these items is enough to put them at the top of the list of processed foods. The fact that a Twinkie was placed in “President Clinton’s National millennium Time Capsule... [alongside items such as] Louis Armstrong’s trumpet, a piece of the Berlin Wall, and a CD containing the sequence of the human genome” (Grindlinger 827) clearly shows its importance in American society. Brooke Grindlinger in her review of “Twinkie Deconstructed” in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* makes a brief overview of the book; listing some of the ingredients and even going into the history of one of “Americas favorite snacks” (Grindlinger 827). Twinkies are known as being processed and extremely unhealthy, but this does not stop the American public from having the momentary slip-up and eating one every so often. There is no arguing that the motivation behind eating a Twinkie is sheer pleasure and enjoyment that is found from biting into the cakey creamy household snack. Knowing how unwholesome the Twinkie is has not slowed down its sales or processed foods sales for that matter. The corporation Hostess has made its fortune off selling and distributing processed snack cakes to consumers, who despite Pollans argument, still buy, eat, and enjoy every bite. Twinkies have yearly sales around 200 million dollars (827) which demonstrates that a great profit is still able to be made from a processed food. A profit is able to made because consumers enjoy

it, they want to eat one, they find pleasure in eating a Twinkie. This goes to show that people do find pleasure in eating not only Twinkies but processed foods as a whole.

Walk in to any McDonalds and you are hit with a brick wall of smells. The smell of grease covered french-fries, sizzling so-called hamburger patties, deep fried McNuggets, and the aroma of processed foods. While it can be argued against, most would have to say that there is nothing like biting into a double cheeseburger and shoveling McDonalds french-fries into your mouth. The taste and pleasure that we derive from eating processed foods like McDonalds is amazing. There is no way to deny that we find pleasure in eating foods that are processed. While we may not like to think we enjoy and find pleasure in eating packaged processed foods, the truth is we do. Society as a whole is continuously trying to prove how bad processed foods are, we know that they are bad but still we find ourselves eating them and much to our dismay enjoying them. Many blame processed foods for our obesity problem, but it is not processed foods that cause it; it is overeating, not eating right, and lack of exercising. We need to stop blaming processed foods and instead grab a box of goodness, bite in and find some pleasure.

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