

## Savor

*Savor - Transitive verb:*

*To taste or smell with pleasure: (relish); to delight in: (enjoy -- i.e. savoring the moment)*

Merriam-Webster

*Eating crappy food isn't a reward -- it's a punishment.*

Drew Carey

The year, 2062. The place, Orbit City – a city on columns that is navigated by aerocars that look like flying saucers with a bubble-top. Here, the Jetson family lives in the Skypad Apartments. Made famous by the now classic cartoon/sitcom *The Jetsons\**, George lives with Jane, his wife, his daughter, Judy, Elroy, his boy, and Astro, a very happy Great Dane who talks. The food. Though Jane is a housewife, she does not cook. The family has a Food-A-Rac-A-Cycle that, not unlike a vending machine, produces “tasty food” at the push of a button. The Food-A-Rac-A-Cycle does not cook either. It pops out little food pills. Oddly, the Jetsons don’t seem to mind. They seem to greatly enjoy their food pills.

The year, 2013. The place, any random U.S. city – a city revolving around an either degenerating or gentrifying inner core that is navigated mostly by cars which drive on streets and throughways lined with residential neighborhoods, strip malls, and fast food restaurants. The food: Though most houses or apartments have a room called a kitchen and cooking shows dominate day-time TV, most people do not cook. They rely on fast food, smoothies, frozen dinners and protein bars. They eat while talking on the phone, driving, reading, working, watching TV, e-mailing, playing video games, or surfing the internet. Though many people turn to food for pleasure, solace, and/or love, few people really taste their food.

You probably know this because you live in a random U.S. city and are used to eating while you do something else. And you probably know what it’s like to find yourself with an empty bag of chips, crumbs of a Crunchy Taco Supreme®, gooey fingers from the last Krispy Kreme donut in the box, or the last trace of melted chocolate in your teeth and barely remember that you just ate.

There are some obvious downfalls to living this way. First of all, when you don’t pay attention to what you are eating, you feel deprived and are likely to eat more so that you can relish the taste. Oddly, this often leads to weight gain. Not the kind of weight you gain when you go to the gym and pump up your muscles. The kind of weight you gain when you become one with your couch and your six-pack abs dissolve into a keg. And with the weight gain, you put yourself at risk for a whole host of weight related problems including diabetes, high blood pressure, joint problems and colon, breast or prostate cancer. And here’s the rub. Most of the food you are mindlessly inhaling is really crappy. You’d probably never put most of it in your mouth if you were paying attention. Mindless eating also deprives you of the very pleasure that you are probably seeking when you dig into that piece of cherry pie (or tofu fritter, or piece of steak or whatever it is that you are craving).

It doesn’t have to be this way. You may not be able to have your cake and eat it too, but you can really taste your cake while you eat it. You can savor what you eat. It’s simple. Stop multi-tasking and focus on the food you put in your mouth. Sit down. (Standing up makes it harder to pay attention. So does driving.) Turn off the TV. Put away your laptop, tablet, cell-phone, book, paper, and anything else that will distract you from being here, now. Before you dig in, look at your food. Take it in as if it were a piece of art in a museum.

When you do take a bite, notice how it feels in your mouth. Pay attention to the temperature and the texture. Is it hot? Cold? Room temperature? Is it chewy? Crunchy? Soft? Mushy? Sticky? How does it taste? Is it salty? Sweet? Sour? Spicy? Creamy? Bitter?

If you notice that you are not enjoying this, stop. Tune in to what your body wants. Maybe you aren't hungry right now. Maybe what you really wanted was comfort. Maybe you're really angry and want to punch something. Maybe you are exhausted and want to sleep. Or maybe you are hungry, but want something else. Maybe you want fresh fruit rather than a black bean burger or lasagna rather than potato chips. Give your body what it wants and stop stuffing it full of what it doesn't.

If you are enjoying what you are eating, repeat this process for every bite. Notice when you start thinking about something else.... Anything else.... Everything else. Bring your awareness back to your food. Take your time. Let yourself have this pleasure. Savor every bite you take of your guacamole dip or Fettuccine Alfredo. When you notice that you feel satisfied, stop eating.

\* *The Jetsons* was an animated sitcom produced by Hanna-Barbera that first aired in 1962.

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