



THINK, THEN EAT

All Things In Moderation, says Rona Gindin

Increasingly busy, on-to-go schedules can make it difficult to eat healthy. But getting back to basics and eating real, whole foods can make all the difference in creating a healthy life, says Rona Gindin, Winter Park Magazine's dining editor and TV personality. The popular and respected foodie is mom to one son.

I'd been pondering for days how to word my advice about eating well when I came upon this: "Give some thought to where your food comes from." That's a tip from Michael Pollan, an author determined to wean Americans off processed foods and onto natural provisions raised on local farms. It's part of a 2011 book called *Food Rules* with a lighthearted approach, yet a big message.

What's that? You're dashing to the cupboard for a snack because what-to-eat lectures by naggy grandmothers make you anxious? Let me guess: Your comfort item of choice is a salty chip that is coated with chemicals, or a plastic-wrapped sweet made with preservatives so it'll still taste good after you leave for college.

There's my point. If you're like me and your father, your childhood is filled with packaged munchables. That's bad! The names of these devilish delights may be different now; I liked Shake-a-Puddin' in the '60s while your dad practically lived on Pizza Lunchables in the 2000s. (I'm not proud, and I'm a little surprised he grew so tall.) But the essentials remain. Meals and snacks that come from a factory will fill you up and even conquer certain cravings — but they won't do what food should.

Real food will. What's real? It's food that hasn't been mucked up by corporate recipes, machines and additives. Apples and cheeses and turkey slices and cucumbers and almonds are all good.

The healthful options don't need to be that simple. Bread is great, especially if made by a person who adds one ingredient at a time and none of those ingredients was "discovered" in a laboratory. Ditto for pasta, soup, stews, roasts, casseroles, stir-fries and granolas.

Think about it — about each "it." Picture how the insides of your body will welcome foods that humans were meant to eat. I suspect the organs and muscles and tissues greet bell peppers and corn kernels and salmon sashimi and orange juice and even steak with glee; the world is balanced, because those foods and you and me were designed to partner together. Your body will extract nutrients to make you strong, refer the protein and fiber and calcium to areas that need it, and release the rest.

Then imagine those gizmos in your interior when they're hit with concoctions not provided by Mother Earth. Here's an example from Cheez-Its, which have been around for decades: paprika oleoresin and tbhz. And in Chips Ahoy, another long-timer: dextrose, partially hydrogenated cottonseed oil, "natural and artificial flavor." Imagine the reaction to soft drinks; you're ingesting bubbly monstrosities of chemicals added to create a fake flavor; change the color and allow the can's contents to last for years — plus a dash of refined sugar or faux sugar to sweeten the tang. You can't really want





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foreign substances like that in the one and only body you'll ever have.

Once you picture what these manmade mutants might do to your delicate insides, you won't be so quick to gorge on them. I mean, how would your liver, stomach and intestines handle oddities never meant to be ingested? Wouldn't they start acting funny, rejecting parts, stocking up toxins?

I'm not saying to never down a Dorito again. That's unrealistic. You'll encounter junk food at parties, at friends' houses and at school. Just stop and think before you nibble. And, don't overdo. A mugful of Doritos will cure your desire; a family-size bagful will be an obscene insult to your components.

That advice follows my mantra-at-large: everything in moderation.

I didn't believe in that theory myself way back when. After a childhood rich with Twinkies and Devil Dogs, I became an over-the-top proponent of a "health food" diet, which is essentially what I'm asking you to consider now. But my rules were rigid: no salt, sugar, bleached flour, chemical additives, ever.

That was going overboard. A slice of pizza with sauce that may have a dash of sugar in it isn't wrong; neither is a buttery croissant, or a New York City street pretzel, or a chocolate soufflé. The world is filled with scrumptious foods and I urge you to enjoy them. They're for occasions, though; maintain a pattern of eating more natural meals as your diet's foundation.

Young people often feel infallible, so you'll probably find it hard to believe that the corporately concocted food-like products you consume today might affect your future in any way. I get that. And I beg you to follow my advice anyway: Choose real foods. Eat moderate quantities of them. Splurge on bits of the unnatural ones now and then. And you are more likely to live a long and healthy life. 💧