

Let's Have a Snack...Or Not!



When I was 9 years old I was given permission to make my own favorite snack of the summer. It was called Jello 1- 2 -3.

Strawberry was my favorite. I liked all three layers. Foam on top, sauce in the middle and jelly-jammy on the bottom. Truth be told, the sauce was really my favorite and the jelly-jammy was really just Jell-0. The science of dessert. Jell-0 excelled that year. They excelled in marketing too. Foam, sauce and jelly-jammy. It was all just a ploy.

As much as I loved Jello 1-2-3, my mom only let me make it about once a week. Was that because our pocket book was tight? Or was it because my mom was controlling my snack intake? Probably both.

These days, snacking has become an epidemic. This 2010 article was written by a mother desperate to get her point across that childhood obesity isn't the kid's fault. It's a parent/school/community problem.

Our food culture has changed quite a lot over the decades. As a kid, when I finished up a game of organized summer softball put on by the city recreation department, I wasn't taken to McDonald's to celebrate. I walked home.

After school, there were usually some snacks in our pantry but if there weren't, I didn't go complaining to my mom.

Why? Because I already knew what her answer would be – “Go outside and play til dinner.”

So that's what I did.

No kids brought treats to school to celebrate their birthday. We got a carton of milk each day at our desk. We didn't get anything to eat with it. Our meals were served in the cafeteria. We couldn't have *any* food at our desk.

On Valentine's Day we passed out little cardboard Valentines. There were no candy hearts involved.

Was I deprived? Did I have bad dreams because snacking was not part of our culture when I was growing up? No.

I had plenty of dessert. Our parents let us run after the ice cream truck (back then it was called the Dilly Wagon). Sometimes we had money to buy ice cream. Sometimes we just ran after the truck.

I got a cake on my birthday. My mom even let me pick the flavor of the cake and the color of the frosting roses that would be on top.

She also let me make chocolate chip cookies starting at age 6. I made them most weekends during the winter.

And yet I didn't snack nearly as much as kids do these days. I didn't have a weight problem as a young child and at 12, when I thought I had a weight problem, I didn't, really. I was a normal 12 year old who had a misguided perception that “super-thin” was in.

Read this article that includes some statistics related to how bad our childhood obesity problem is and for extra credit and a face full of scariness, watch Chef Jamie Oliver's TED Talk on what the kids get to eat at school and beyond. It's frightening.

But there's hope. When savvy adults change what kids eat, the improvements are dramatic.

Here's some inspiring food for thought:

Psychologist Stephen Ceci writes about an experiment showing how eliminating processed food positively effects IQ:

"In one large-scale analysis of approximately 1 million students enrolled in the New York City school system, researchers examined IQ scores before and after preservatives, dyes, colorings and artificial flavors were removed from lunch offerings. They found a 14% improvement after the removal. And the improvement was greatest for the weakest students. Prior to the dietary changes, 120,000 of the students were performing two or more grade levels below average. Afterward, the figure dropped to 50,000."

To me, this reinforces how important a healthy diet is to our health – not only for us, but for our kids and loved ones.

Cheers,