



Bye Bye Bagels

Last night I dreamed about a bagel.

It was huge, covered in poppy seeds, with a tanned, shiny crust, hard enough to crack a tooth. Inside it was doughy and chewy and the two halves were filled with cream cheese an inch thick, layered with satiny lox, the old-fashioned kind, salty as an anchovy, and a slice of raw onion. Yum.

As in so many dreams, just when I got to the good part — the eating of this monstrous, gorgeous sandwich — I woke up.

Well, no more bagels for me. My decades of eating a bagel a day are over.

My doctor said so.

It's a cliché but a true one: Some people eat to live and some people live to eat. I am in the latter group. Growing up, I was not a fan of my mother's bland cooking, so when I left home, I announced, somewhat defiantly, that I would henceforth be eating pizza and Chinese food every day for the rest of my life. For 50 years, I have pretty much lived up to that promise.

Well, I won't be doing that anymore, either. My doctor said so.

Like so many quinquagenarians, sexagenarians, septuagenarians, and octogenarians, I am overweight and tottering on the edge of one of those several diseases that owe their origin in part to bad food. Carbohydrates are my particular bugaboo. Not surprising really. I love everything about carbohydrates. I am also fond of salt, sugar, and fat.

Take a look around and it's easy to spot the people who are in trouble now or who are going to be because of their diet. Sadly, many

are children. Bombarded by billions of dollars of advertising, they are eating Happy Meals, drinking sugary sodas, and wolfing down junk food. And just to ensure a totally unhealthful lifestyle, too many spend their days playing computer games when they should be outside or in a gym playing real games.

One of the good things our government has done is the two-year-old healthy upgrade to lunches in schools. That initiative mandated that schools cut back on foods high in fat, sugar, salt, and calories in favor of fruits, vegetables, and other healthier options. But now, even that program is in danger as the Big Food lobby fights back; there is a bill in the House of Representatives that would roll back this program, allowing more junk food in our schools. Yikes!

I hope all you parents out there are doing your best to instill healthful eating habits in your kids and making sure they get plenty of exercise.

I know now, too late, that I should have listened to my mother. She didn't like to cook but she knew healthful from unhealthful and made us nourishing meals. Pizza and Chinese food were treats on the rare occasions that we ate out. As for bagels, lox, and cream cheese, that was an indulgence reserved for our Sunday morning family brunches.

I think now I will be dreaming about those yummy brunches for the rest of my bagel-less life.

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