



The Health Nugget

In the Distance Between

Clarence Saunders is considered the father of modern retailing. In 1916 he opened Piggly Wiggly, the first self-serve grocery store. Before this time, the produce man, the butcher, baker and candlestick maker, all had separate shops of their own. A local grocer sold canned goods, potatoes, large burlap sacks of flour, grains and sugar, drums of molasses and slabs of butter from which he would package your shopping list. Those who lived in more rural settings farmed their land and knew how to store food for the winter. Their occasional trips into town supplemented their own stocked cupboards.

Economically speaking, Saunderson's idea of a one-stop, help-yourself grocery store was a good one. Piggly Wiggly grossed \$110,600 in the first six months. In modern lingo that would translate into over \$2.5 million dollars in profit in that short time! Within five years he opened 1,000 more stores. Convenience came not only in food location, but in food production as well. Post World War II food manufacturing machines designed for storage, longevity and ease of preparation of food, rather than on nutrition, found a new niche in food production for the civilian, and not merely for the soldier at war. America has not eaten the same since.

Now, in the 21st century, weekly rituals of entering through automatic doors, jockeying crowded aisles, making our selections amidst brightly colored packages each vying for our attention, we at times can barely see the farm. While bulk grain bins and produce stands survive, these items are not what are overflowing American's shopping carts. The distance between the farm and the average table has gotten farther. Detours into the laboratories of scientists and the experimental kitchens of food

manufacturers have resulted in concoctions that would be unrecognizable to the farmer. Grocery store shelves are now largely occupied by what could be labeled as "Frankenfood."

Frankenstein's production was mythically created out of dead body parts, and when hooked to a machine, supposedly came to life. He seemed strong and yet was empty. While I am loath to draw comparison to such a hideous imaginary character, I see in likeness, a stark reality, in what we have done to our food. Food is meant to be life-enhancing, enjoyable and truly nourishing. Yet, in some cases we have turned it into a monster. Have we reached a point of no return? Will the majority of the average American's food budget always be spent on highly processed foods? Will "Frankenfoods" prevail?

I believe it is time for a culinary revolution. No longer is it safe to merely think in terms of convenience. The battle between real food versus food-like must be waged. The distance between the farm and the table shortened. Too much has been swept under the rug, even in the name of "natural," "healthy" or "vegetarian."

The variety of sweeteners, artificial flavors, food coloring, factory-created fats, preservatives and chemicals that alter texture and taste are added to replace what processing methods have taken away from whole foods. Manufacturers use more than 3,000 food additives to enhance the look and taste of food and prolong shelf life.

A revolution and overhauling of the way we eat can be a source of anxiety for many people. Fear of change and loss of pleasure keeps our heels dug in deep. We picture austere dinner plates and monotonous munchies. Take those initial conscious thoughts and resistive urges and

realize that they are not based on reality. Rethinking the way we eat will positively impact our health and how we feel. This is because altering the way we think about food is what propels us to change the way we eat. Amp up the energy level, enhance mental acuity, elevate happiness, reduce stress, boost vitality and make healthier living attainable by returning back to the garden. This isn't deprivation. This is liberation.

How to make this practical is simpler than you might think. All you have to do to avoid the long list of undecipherable, unpronounceable ingredients is to simply purchase whole foods and do the mixing and experimenting yourself in the kitchen. Instead of letting food manufacturers have the monopoly on creativity and concocting for you, get innovative yourself. With whole food ingredients you can be as simple, or as imaginative, as you desire. Trust me, you don't have what it takes to come up with "Frankenfoods" on your own. Let the gastronomically focused chemical engineers do that and eat it themselves.

The majority of us have grown up accustomed to foods and ways of eating that will eventually bite us back if they haven't already. Choosing today to include more fresh fruits and vegetables in your day, for example, or to not drive your shopping cart down certain aisles, is a place to start. I encourage you not to embrace some rationed plan or formula that looks good on paper but is as foreign as Kathmandu. Your ultimate goal may appear that far away, but when movement towards healthier living is progressive, then the momentum to discover new ways of eating will stay alive.

Take my husband as an example. He grew up eating certain foods that he thoroughly enjoyed. At a critical juncture in life he chose to make changes

in his diet. He found replacements for his comfort foods and came to enjoy them just as much. Recently though, he realized that even some of these substitutes were as far from the garden as what they had replaced. He recently became inspired to continue the journey towards healthier living. His simple qualifier of how he is choosing healthier options is to assess the length of the ingredient list. He has found that, typically, the shorter the list the better; a simple step away from human tampering to lessen the distance between.

In reality, our separation from the garden began with Adam and Eve accepting the enemy's enticement to indulge their appetite. Ever since, mankind's indefinable soul longing is the homesick herald, expressing our inner desire to return. But how? There is only one answer. "The distance from earth to heaven may seem very great, for sin has fixed a great gulf; it has separated man from God, and has brought woe and misery upon the human race. But Christ throws himself into the gap."¹

What a Savior! We may feel as did hopeless Jacob, who felt like he had reached a point of no return. But Jesus reveals Himself as the Ladder, bridging the distance. Scripture speaks of "a great people, and strong" who will grab a hold of the Ladder with everything they've got. Before them "the land is like the Garden of Eden, . . . behind them a desolate wilderness" (Joel 2:3, NKJV). Eden is their goal. They are returning home. Every step is diminishing the distance between.



¹ White, Ellen G., BEcho, *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, January 15, 1889, par. 8.