

KELLI LEWTON

## Americans are having a love affair with food

America has been having a love affair with food for the last century. Meals were simple in the late 1800s, and 90 percent of Americans never traveled more than five to 10 miles from their homes. With the dawn of the 20th century, new technology emerged that made travel and food storage possible and affordable.

In the early 1900s people began traveling like never before, and experienced new things and foods. Lavish 12- to 18-course dinner parties were thrown. Hershey's milk chocolate was introduced, and hamburgers and ice cream cones made their debut at the St. Louis World's Fair. Mr. Kellogg came along and changed our whole idea of morning food.

During the Roaring '20s, speakeasies and cocktail parties were the rage, along with soft drinks and ice cream. Betty Crocker was born, the first Coney Island was served in New York, Stouffer's and White Castle restaurants opened. The 1920s also brought the most immigrants in our history, and we became a melting pot of food histories.

In 1929, Mr. Birdseye developed a technique to flash freeze vegetables. Refrigerators with freezer compartments were introduced, and refrigerator sales jumped from about 10,000 in 1920 to 800,000 by 1929. Self-servo grocery stores created competition for food sales.

One-pot meals were popular. Americans experienced hard times in the 1930s, but still found ways to live food, even when it was not plentiful.

One-pot meals were served, and casseroles — which still survive as "comfort food" today — evolved to nourish our families. Hostess Twinkies debuted along with Spam and Kippie peanut butter. During the 1950s standardization of recipes and food measures became a science.

The 1940s started with short ration cards but ended with people eating a lot of meat. Mom couldn't buy enough frozen and canned foodstuffs. Foreign food was the chic food to serve when entertaining or eating out. Bouillabaisse, crepes and Lobster Thermidor were also hot.

In the 1950s we loved "I Love Lucy" and the TV dinner was born. Food "revolutions" occurred in the 1960s. Vegetarianism was en vogue, and there was a rebirth of "natural" foods and whole grains.

### Food was 'cool'

Food was cool in the 1970s. Chefs became celebrities, gourmet foods grew in popularity along with salad bars. Real men didn't eat quiche, but everyone else did.

Baby boomers became yuppies in the 1980s. Everyone had microwave ovens. Southwest cuisine and restaurants were popular.

The 1990s would prove to be the decade of health. We counted calories and fat grams, strayed from beef, ate soluble fiber and worried about antibiotics in milk, pesticides, nitrates and E. coli. We adored Mediterranean and Pacific Rim cooking, but didn't quite understand Fusion cooking.

As we enter the 21st century we are informed consumers who demand more from the food industry. We want foods that taste good but are also good for us. Thinking about new food dishes for this century, I believe food, like fashion, comes in and out of style. I always smirk when I hear someone say "so and so invented this great dish. I don't know if we chefs are really inventors of food. I think we are more like managers of it. So many dishes you see today aren't really new, but are dishes from the past, revisited and dressed up a bit."

Chef Kelli L. Lewton is owner of 2 Unique Caterers and Event Planners in Bloomfield Hills. A graduate of Schoolcraft College's culinary arts program, Kelli is a part-time instructor at the college. Her column runs on the second Sunday of the month. See recipes inside.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- Cooking with Chef Aldo Ottaviani

# Are you a snack animal?

STORIES BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS • SPECIAL WRITER

What kind of animal do your eating habits mimic?

Do you like to "graze" all day long like horses and cows or eat like a lion, enjoy a large meal and then a nice, long nap? Perhaps you're like my neighbor's dog, which is given a bowl of food each morning and eats only when he is hungry.

Mice are always in a feeding frenzy, and no human can top the shrew, which eats three times its body weight each day.

Even if your eating habits mimic these creatures, you still can learn how to be a smart snacker.

The time-honored tradition of "three square meals" a day is slowly giving way to a new trend — scattered mini-meals.

Snacking may contribute significantly to your daily caloric and nutrient intake. Potato chips, cookies and crackers are high in fat and calories. If you don't adjust the size of your regular meals to account for snacks, you could be eating more calories than you

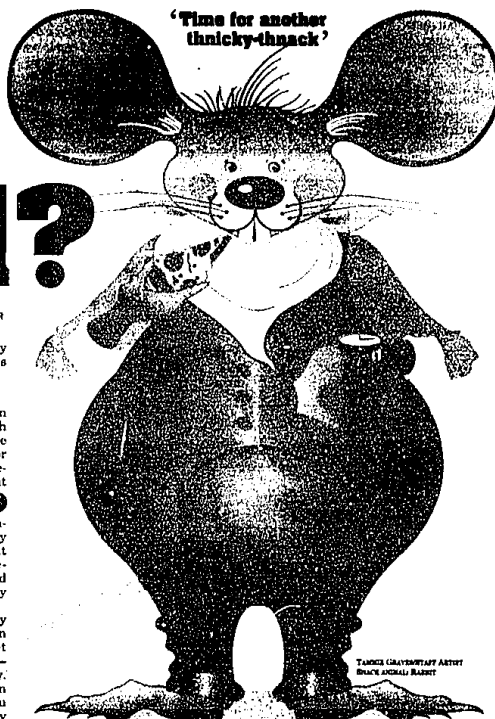
need. If you substitute poor quality snacks for meals, you may miss out on some vital nutrients.

### Smart snacks

Choose snacks that are high in vitamins, minerals and fiber such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Stock your refrigerator or pantry with plain popcorn, whole-grain crackers, fruit juice, low-fat yogurt, low-fat cheese, low-fat granola bars, dried fruits, bread sticks, baby carrots, vegetables, fruits and other healthy snacks. Researchers believe that eating smaller meals more frequently may help regulate blood sugar, cholesterol and body weight.

Since little tummies hold only small amounts of food, children need snacks to help them meet daily caloric and nutrient quotas — as long as the snacks are healthy. Teenagers also need afternoon snacks to meet their needs. If you don't plan, foraging kids may

Please see SNACKS, D2



TIMOTHY CHAVES/STAFF ARTIST  
BRUCE ANKAL BARRETT

## Do you eat like a horse, a lion or a mouse?

Are you curious about how others snack? We asked a few people to reveal their favorite snack, and the animal they most identify with:

LESA ASQUINI OF LYONIA

• **Snack animal:** "I'm a lion. I don't snack much, love to eat meat and boy, a nap sounds good right now."

• **Favorite snacks:** Leftovers — meat, cheese, lunch meats. "I don't eat doughnuts or popcorn. Give me protein."

JOE SAMATA OF BLOOMFIELD HILLS (Owner of the Asian and Thai Dishes of Michigan)

• **Snack animal:** "I'm definitely the dog."

• **Favorite snacks:** "Potato chips, although I don't eat them often. I usually reach for the popcorn or pretzels instead."

READ ASHTON OF BLOOMFIELD HILLS (Owner of the Golden Mushroom Restaurant in Southfield)

• **Snack animal:** "I guess I'm most like the dog, although because I don't snack much, perhaps the lion is more my eating style."

• **Favorite snacks:** "My favorite snack is Ben & Jerry's, although I don't eat it as often as I would like. If I do snack, it's a pastry and a glass of milk."

MOCKY MACMILLAN OF CLARKSTON (Liaison Director of the Michigan Salt Industries Association)

• **Snack animal:** "Oh, definitely the mouse. I'm always looking for food."

• **Favorite snacks:** "I love cheese and fresh baby spinach together. I'll take a piece of cheese and was spinach leaves around 4 p.m. and that's when I put out my veggies."

GENE TAYLOR OF LATHEUP VILLAGE (Writer/producer of the Dick Purdie Show on Q104.3 (WQMG-FM))

• **Snack animal:** "I'm like the rabbit. I like to eat my vegetables meal."

• **Favorite snacks:** I like baby carrots with hummus.

## The highs and lows

You can judge snacks by their "nutrient-to-calorie" ratio. The following are some high and low nutrient-to-calorie foods.

### HIGH

- Whole grain bread, bagels, muffins, crackers, cereal
- Nuts, seeds, peanut butter, hummus
- Fresh, dried, canned fruits
- Fruit and vegetable juices
- Fresh, canned, frozen vegetables
- Meat, fish, poultry, eggs
- Legumes
- Low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese
- Low-fat pudding, ice milk, sherbet
- Bread sticks
- Salads, chutney
- Homemade quick breads such as banana or zucchini

### LOW

- Soda pop
- Alcoholic beverages
- Donuts, sweet rolls, high-fat baked goods
- Pie, cake, most cookies
- Commercially prepared baked goods
- Candy
- Chips, puffed snack food
- Unenriched crackers
- Fruit roll-ups, fruit wrinkles
- Ice cream
- Chip dip

## Snack trivia to munch on

It's too early for last year's annual sales figures, but if all goes as expected, convenience stores will have pushed more than \$1.9 billion in salty snacks out the door in 1999.

The average American consumes 11.7 pounds of chocolate in various forms each year. That amounts to over 3.1 billion pounds consumed nationwide.

Here are the top eight snacks, according to Food Distributor magazine:

- Desserts/baked sweets
- Salty snacks
- Candy
- Fruit
- Ice cream
- Crackers/bread sticks
- Muffins/breakfast sweets
- Vegetables

Potato chips remain America's favorite savory snack with \$4.59 billion sold in 1998. Not too far behind was tortilla chips at \$3.67 billion.

Speaking of potato chips, do you know how they were invented? In the summer of 1853, a guest at the Moon Lake Lodge in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., ordered french fries and complained that they were too thick. The chef sliced up another batch of potatoes, somewhat thinner, and served them. The guest rejected those, too.

The patron's actions upset the chef, who then decided to slice the potatoes paper thin. The guest was delighted. The crispy potatoes, first called Saratoga Chips, became a hit and a trademark of the restaurant.

# Onion Smothered Steak warm dish for cold days

## MAIN DISH



MURIEL WAGNER

When the TV weatherman issues a "cuddle alert," I begin thinking of foods, that according to my mother, "warm the cockles of your heart." Of course, they must be heart healthy as well.

One such recipe is my Onion Smothered Steak, which is an "Eating Younger" makeover of Swiss Steak. It satisfies my meat-loving taste buds, yet it can be a smart eating choice if the meat portion is small (3 ounces or less), and the cut and cooking method are lean.

Rump, flank and round are all lean cuts of beef, but they need to be slow cooked with liquid to be tender. You'll find this dish full of flavor, particularly when you serve it with the Almost Instant Mashed Potatoes. If you serve the potatoes liberally doused with the steak recipe gravy, your family may think that you've found a 100% cookbook that will become a recipe resource for a lot of flavorful eating. They'll never realize that they're "eating younger."

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## ONION SMOTHERED STEAK

- 1 1/2 pounds round steak (3/4-inch thick)
- 1/4 cup flour
- 4 medium onions, thinly sliced
- 1/2 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 1 tablespoon canola or olive oil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 cup fat-free, sodium-reduced beef bouillon

Trim any fat from meat and cut into 6 servings. Combine flour with fresh ground pepper in a plastic bag. Shake steak pieces in bag until well coated. Heat oil in nonstick skillet. Brown beef over low heat. Top with onion and mushroom slices. Stir in beef bouillon, bay leaf and thyme. Bring to a boil, and then reduce heat.

Simmer, covered 30 minutes or until meat is tender.

Season with salt substitute if needed. Serve steak topped with gravy, mushrooms and onions. Serves 6.

### Nutritional information, per serving:

- Calories: 178
- Total fat: 8.6 grams
- Saturated fat: 2.2 grams
- Cholesterol: 87 mg
- Sodium: 58 mg
- Food exchanges: 3 lean meat, 1/2 vegetables

## EATING YOUNGER GARLIC MASHED POTATOES

- 2 1/2 cups fat-free, reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 teaspoons light margarine (squeeze bottle)
- 2 cups instant mashed potato flakes with skins
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh garlic
- Dash freshly ground pepper

Heat broth to boiling. Remove from heat. Pour into deep-sided serving bowl. Add remaining ingredients. Stir gently with fork to blend. Add seasoning if necessary. Let stand for 30 seconds. Fluff with fork before serving. Serves 6.

### Nutritional information, per serving:

- Calories: 87
- Total fat: 2 g
- Saturated fat: 0 g
- Cholesterol: 0 mg
- Sodium: 302 mg
- Food exchanges: 1 starch

Look for Main Dish Muriel G. Wagner is a registered dietitian and nutrition therapist with an office in Southfield. She publishes "Eating Younger," a quarterly newsletter with recipes and nutrition tips. To subscribe, send a check for \$13.50 to "Eating Younger," P.O. Box 69021, Pleasant Ridge, MI 48069.