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COVER PHOTOS

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12

1. Sacha Burn
2. Anna Bauer
3. Sacha Burn
4. Anna Bauer
5. Sacha Burn
6. Anna Bauer
7. Anna Bauer
8. Sacha Burn
9. Anna Bauer
10. Sacha Burn
11. Sacha Burn
12. Michelle Yu



Table of Contents

HEALTH

In Search of Frozen Yogurt _____ 04
Julie Fulop

Dairy-less Dining Options for the Lactose Impaired _____ 05
Samantha Padilla

Sugar: Obesity's Accomplice? _____ 06

GOURMET

La Grande Mystique du Truffe _____ 07
Bennett Wechsler

Trying to Save the Rainforest? How about a Chocolate Bar... _____ 09

Ode to the Apple _____ 11
Ellie Proctor

REVIEWS

Mahogany Grill _____ 12

Maxie's Supper Club _____ 13
Anna Bauer

This I Believe... _____ 14
Rachel Berman

CRUMBS

White Bean Cassoulet _____ 15
Cornell Gourmet Club

Lemon Bread _____ 15
Cornell Gourmet Club

Head to Head: Dairy

In Search of Frozen Yogurt

Julie Fulop

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream! However, here at Cornell it doesn't seem that too many people are screaming for ice cream any longer as frozen yogurt and other frozen desserts have become increasingly popular on campus. As people are becoming more health conscious and hoping to avoid the infamous college weight gain, the beloved ice cream that we all hold near and dear to our hearts is slowly being replaced.

The Cornell Dairy Bar, which offers a large variety of homemade ice cream, is not receiving a great deal of attention among the student population. While everyone agrees that the ice cream itself is extremely delectable, many have decided to substitute the 15 grams of fat for non-fat or low-fat frozen yogurts like Wow Cow or Columbo offered at Jason's Grocery & Deli or Tasti d-lite at Collegetown Candy and Nuts.

After hearing all the rave about Jason's and Tasti d-lite throughout my freshman year, I decided this year it was time to check them both out. After all, it's college and it's my time to step out and explore all my options in life (this clearly includes frozen yogurt as well). Plus, if such low-fat substitutes really were so delicious, maybe it was worth sacrificing ice cream and making the switch over to frozen yogurt? I decided to undergo some investigative research. Over at Jason's Grocery and Deli, located on 301 College Ave, I found a wide selection of frozen yogurt options to choose from. With multiple machines, Jason's offers both Wow-Cow and Columbo frozen yogurt. The Wow-Cow flavors rotate on a weekly basis, except for two staples grasshopper and angel food cake. Wow-Cow is 100% fat-free, all natural, low lactose, and approximately 12 calories per ounce. Meanwhile, the Columbo frozen yogurt is slightly more caloric with about 20-30 calories per ounce. The Columbo flavors, which never change, are low-fat simply vanilla and non-fat double dutch chocolate. While the Columbo frozen yogurt does have the extra calories, I still recommend it over the Wow-Cow because it tastes a little creamier and just has a more natural flavor. However, if you are looking for something other than the plain old vanilla and chocolate, Wow-Cow has flavors like Fudge Brownie and Cappuccino, which do excite my tongue when I'm feeling a little more adventurous.

It seems unanimous that the major advantage at Jason's is its self-service nature. You are allowed to put whatever amount of yogurt you want in any combination of flavors. Also, you can add in anything your heart desires from the extensive selection of mouth-watering toppings they have. The toppings bar includes: oreo crumbs, cookie dough, heath bar, snickers, m&ms, gummy bears, chopped nuts, peanut butter chips, chocolate chips, reeses peanut butter cups, reeses pieces, whipped cream, rainbow/chocolate sprinkles, and chocolate and strawberry syrup. Truly, there is no topping you would possibly want that Jason's doesn't offer. Finally, once you're done loading on all the scrumptious goodies, you then pay for your yogurt based on its weight. Nevertheless, there are a couple flaws I've noticed in Jason's frozen yogurt setup. For one, occasionally the yogurt machines give out icy yogurt that doesn't have the smooth texture you expect in quality frozen yogurt. Furthermore, the array of toppings may be dangerous for the health conscious individual, which is most likely the reason to be eating frozen yogurt in the first place. Like any wide-eyed kid at a candy store, I know I simply cannot resist the chocolate temptations at the toppings bar. Thus, the toppings at Jason's may seduce you to forget about your healthy dessert and splurge for some chocolaty goodness. So, in the end, you're most likely going to overcompensate for the healthy frozen yogurt with mounds of caloric-filled toppings.

After exploring Jason's, I went on to Collegetown Candy and Nuts, located on 213 Dryden Road, which offers the widely acclaimed Tasti d-lite. Technically, Tasti d-lite is considered a "dairy based frozen dessert" which is low in fat and calories. With approximately 70-100 calories per 4 ounce serving (the small size), Tasti d-lite is all natural, kosher, and "guilt-free", or so the company claims. Tasti d-lite does not have enough cream in it to be considered ice cream, yet it also contains no yogurt so it is technically not frozen yogurt either. The great advantage to Tasti d-lite is that while french vanilla and dutch chocolate remain every day as constant flavors, there are also two additional delicious flavors that change each day. There are always new flavors to try since there are over 100 different "tasti" flavors in all! Also, Collegetown Candy and Nuts offers a coupon card where once you buy 10 Tasti D-lites, you get one cup or cone for free and they will even deliver so long as the order is over \$8.

Many people who try Tasti d-lite fall in love with their first bite and claim that it's the best thing ever invented (yes, I am not lying I have heard people say this). Personally, I think Tasti D-lite tastes better than Wow-Cow or Columbo so long as you're an expert Tasti D-lite flavor selector like myself. Unfortunately, there are indeed a few flavors I could do without, i.e. banana, coconut mounds, or really any of the fruity flavors for that matter. So if you do become a true die-hard Tasti D-lite fan (you'd be surprised how many there are at Cornell!) you can get tasti flavor alerts through text message to find out the new flavors each day! I admit that on more than one occasion I've checked their online calendar to see if their rotating flavors sound appealing. While there really are so many "tasti" flavors to choose from, my personal favorites include cake batter, dulce de leche, and peanut butter fudge. As an informed frozen dessert connoisseur may be aware, tasti d-lite is highly acclaimed not only at Cornell, but also around the country. However, a major source of complaint is that some believe the flavors taste artificial or "chemically". I admit there are few which would fall in this category (i.e. the fruity flavors), but I try to stray away from those.

While conducting my ever-so important frozen yogurt research, I've noticed an interesting trend. The females on campus seem to go nuts over frozen yogurt and some even swear by it as a nightly late-night dessert. Nevertheless, the male population just does not seem as impressed. Is it that women's sweet tooth are more potent and crave frozen desserts more often? Or do men, who are simply less calorie conscious, opt for regular ice cream instead? Jonathon Bartnik '09, who as of last week is no longer a virgin to Jason's frozen yogurt, explained, "I never really get the craving for frozen yogurt. Now that I'm here though, the yogurt is instant gratification. If I buy ice cream I have to wait until I go home to eat it whereas the yogurt I can eat on the way." Bartnik, who simply choose frozen yogurt for its convenience, seems to capture the general male apathy toward this healthy dessert. On the other hand, the female demographic simply can't seem to get enough! One female sophomore living on North Campus says she frequents Jason's or Tasti D-lite usually 5 times a week even though she must go out of her way to travel to collegetown. Embarrassing? Clearly, why else would she have asked to remain anonymous? However, when you think about it, why not go frequently if you enjoy frozen yogurt? I say if you like frozen yogurt don't be ashamed! Speak out! Declare your love and be proud of your passion for a healthier frozen treat!

Head to Head: Dairy

Dairy-less Dining Options for the Lactose Impaired

Samantha Padilla

It's more common than you may think: one in four people in the United States are lactose sensitive. Milk products can weasel their way into many foods, unbeknownst to the consumer. It is difficult for people who suffer from milk allergies to choose safe foods to consume, as well as foods that are healthy and particularly rich in calcium. I have been lactose intolerant since the second grade and after eight years of dealing with this allergy, I have been able to find great alternatives. During my first few months at Cornell, I have discovered some hidden treasures on campus that are great dining options for the lactose impaired.

It is best to try vegan foods, foods that do not contain any animal byproducts, to ensure that what you are eating doesn't have any dairy products in it at all. In most dining halls on campus, foods will have tags that say "VN" for vegan or "V" for vegetarian. Avoid vegetarian foods because they are likely to have some sort of butter or cream in them. Also, Kosher Parve foods do not have any dairy products in them, many of which can be purchased at the market in the Appel Dining Hall.

Whether or not you are allergic to dairy, check out Moosewood at Annabel Taylor Hall. Moosewood prides itself on food that is local and natural, always having plenty of vegan options. My favorite lunchtime foods include a hearty hummus wrap and their award winning Moroccan Stew (voted best Moroccan by Organic Style Magazine). But what would a meal be without dessert? Moosewood has a number of tasty non-dairy treats, such as chocolate cake and berry crisps. Make sure to check out the actual Moosewood Restaurant located in the Commons at 215 N. Cayuga Street.

In general, it is difficult to find good desserts that are non-dairy, especially since milk, butter, and creams seem to be in every delicious dessert. Fortunately, I have stumbled upon a number of great, dairy-free desserts here on campus. First, the vegan brownies at the Appel Dining Hall are delectable. With a drizzle of melted peanut butter, no dessert compares. I also recommend the apple fries, slices of apples deep fried in batter and sprinkled with cinnamon, that are sold at Bare Necessities. They are a delicious non-dairy treat that you'll definitely enjoy.

Another great spot for tasty non-dairy options on campus is the Manndible Café located in the Mann Library in the CALS quad. Although it is not affiliated with Cornell (they don't take BigRed Bucks), Manndible Café has some of the best non-dairy options on campus. Try their vegan macaroni and cheese made with a variety of curry powders and tangy seasonings. Manndible Café also has vegan coffee cake, made with Tofutti "Better Than Cream cheese" instead of regular, fattening cream cheese. They have other non-dairy options including muffins, cookies, and cupcakes.

Some great off campus dining that is lactose friendly includes the Lost Dog Café on 106 S. Cayuga Street. This eclectic, super chic dining spot has some great tofu options. My favorite entree at the Lost Dog Café has to be the Southwest Tofu Cake, made from tofu, beans, corn, and peppers and it is then fried to resemble a chicken patty. Along side of the tofu cake comes your choice of vegetables, macaroni and cheese, and fries all for nine dollars. In my opinion, the perfect side dish is the sweet potato fries. Crispy and sweet, this side dish perfectly compliments the Tofu Cake. The combination of sweet and salty is sinful.

Now that finals are rolling around, care packages are starting to be shipped out. However, for the lactose intolerant, these care packages are loaded with food containing dairy products. Consider checking out BabyCakesNYC.com for some sweets during study-week. BabyCakes, located in SoHo, New York City, is a vegan bakery that pledges to allow people with allergies to be able to enjoy sweets. "In a city dominated by cupcakes overflowing with sugar, flour and butter cream, it's easy for those with delicate tummies to feel left out," explains owner Erin McKenna in BabyCakes mission statement. "BabyCakes offers all natural, organic and delicious alternatives free from the common allergens: wheat, gluten, dairy, casein and eggs." Their staple dessert is the cupcake, coming in flavors such as vanilla, chocolate, carrot, and red velvet. Also try their cookies, cookie sandwiches, coffee cakes, cinnamon buns, muffins, and pies. BabyCakes uses a substitute sugar, agave nectar, found in cactus plants. It is lower in fat than regular sugar and safe for type two diabetics. BabyCakes is available for delivery through their website, www.BabyCakesNYC.com.

Though having a restricted diet can be a hassle, it is entirely possible to find delicious, healthy alternatives. In a city like Ithaca, explore the possibilities of interesting new eats; they are around every corner.



Photo Credits (Left to Right): Goat, making cheese at Lively Run, Casey Feehan, dairy-free cake, dairy-free soup at Moosewood Cafe, Anna Bauer.

Sugar: Obesity's Accomplice?

No Author

Americans love food. It is more than a necessity for survival, playing multiple functions such as being a social past-time, or just something to do when you're bored. However, eating has had its effects on the American population. Over the past few decades, the proportion of overweight and obese Americans has increased drastically. In the late 1970s, about 7% of American children and adolescents were overweight. This proportion has increased over the years, and now, about one in every five American children and adolescents are overweight. What could possibly cause this catastrophic increase in weight gain? People have various answers. Some believe a lack of physical activity is the root of our problems. Others believe overeating at meals and snacking are responsible. Others still, attribute this weight gain to the substitution of High-Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS) in foods, claiming the increased amount of fructose affects the body's energy balance.

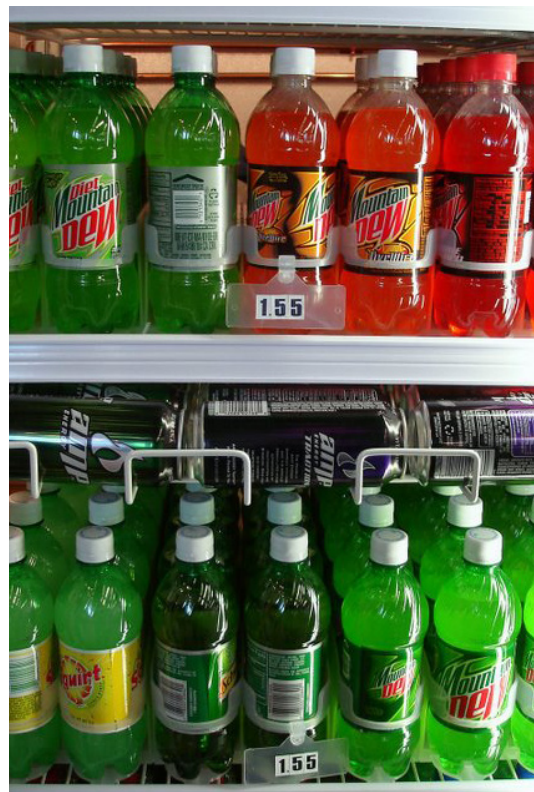
The substitution of HFCS, a cheaper sugar alternative to Sucrose (common table sugar), into American foods in the 1970s coincides with the increase in obesity in the United States. It is possible, then, to assume that HFCS is the cause of America's increased obesity. However, we have all learned that correlation is not necessarily causation. In truth, HFCS is not that different from its predecessor, Sucrose, in composition. While HFCS is a ratio of 55% Fructose, 45% Glucose, Sucrose is a 50% ratio of both.

So, is HFCS threatening our toned tummies and thin thighs? Studies comparing HFCS to Sucrose have found that the 5% increase in Fructose is not enough to significantly affect weight gain. One concern the studies investigated was whether HFCS affects hormones, such as leptin, that affect energy balance and weight gain. However, in comparing HFCS and Sucrose, no significant differences were found (Melanson et al, 2007). HFCS was also thought to affect satiety, causing you to eat more. Once again, studies have also shown no differences between HFCS and Sucrose (Soenen et al, 2007).

While HFCS has been reported as a dangerous substitute to Sucrose, it is not the reason behind the increasing obesity rates in America. However, this does not mean we should stop being label conscious, avoiding HFCS at all costs. It is healthy to monitor the sugar in your diet, but be aware that all sugars should be monitored, not just HFCS. Natural sugars in fruits, even though they contain Fructose, are much healthier than the sugar in soda and candy. So before you reach for that Snickers bar, think about that apple in your fridge instead!

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Anna Bauer



NOTES FROM THE BLOG

CGC got their baking on, for our first cooking challenge of the year... the Cookie Exchange Contest! Cookies were judged based on taste, presentation, and originality (a la Iron Chef). With over fifteen entries, it was great to see all the different cookies people came up with. Beyond the chocolate chip, entries included Pumpkin Sandwich Cookies with Cream Cheese Filling, Earl Grey Tea Cookies, Double Chocolate Chocolate Chip Cookies, White Chocolate Covered, and countless more. Here are the results:

Taste: Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Sandwich Cookies with Cream Cheese Filling

Presentation: Cranberry Pistachio Cookies

Originality (tie): Lemon Olive Oil Thyme Black Pepper Cookies AND Italian Pineapple Cookies AND Earl Grey Tea Cookies

Overall Winner: Cranberry Pistachio Cookie (Congrats Casey!)

Thanks to all who baked and judged, we will definitely need to do this again! I ate about 10 different cookies within half an hour and didn't eat dinner afterwards!

La Grande Mystique du Truffe

Bennett Wechsler

Truffles have an incredible reputation as rare and precious delicacies; they are rumored to be able to make a plain dish taste as though it's been handed down from the heavens.

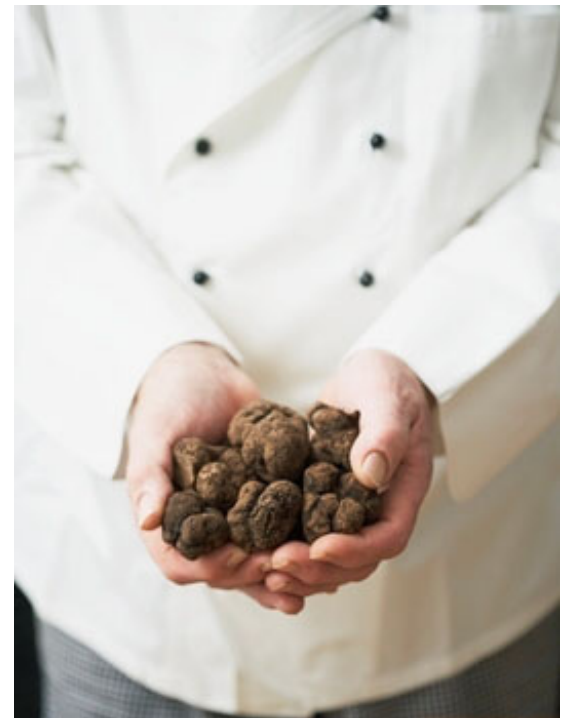
Cooper (2001) describes that on the palate, the tubers are said to be feral and woody and says that their taste often likened to that of liquorice, musk, garlic and rum. There are two major types of truffle, both of which are found underground: the black truffle (also called "black gold" or "black diamond") and the white truffle. For many years, it was assumed that truffles couldn't be cultivated. People believed that the only way they could be acquired was to go into the woods and search for them with the help of a dog or pig, who would sniff and dig them out. Thus it becomes apparent why the truffle has such a myth associated with it; most people who think of truffles envision villagers in France and Italy (the countries most closely associated with the fungi) going into the woods with their keen smelling compatriots and delivering their finds to restaurants by hand. This quaint vision involving the wild truffles of France and Italy, however, has been threatened by the increasingly unfavorable weather conditions, the rising number of truffle farms, and the flooding of the market with Chinese truffles. Yet, despite these significant changes in truffle cultivation and production, the Grande Mystique du Truffe (Cooper 2001) has been kept alive long after its cessation.

As mentioned above, the truffle is a hypogean, or underground, fungus (Lloyd 1923) whose native home is in Southern France, Northern Italy and North-eastern Spain (Cooper 2001). The rarer and more difficult to cultivate white truffle (*Tuber magnatum*) can only grow in Northern Italy (Lloyd 1923), while the black truffle is sold in abundance in France and is less expensive than its paler cousin. The black truffle is the overarching common name for four different species of fungus under the genus *Tuber*: *Tuber aestivum*, *Tuber brumale*, *Tuber melanosporum* and *Tuber macrosporium*. Although all are genetically dissimilar, they are not distinguished in the trade: any kind of black truffle is just called a black truffle (Lloyd 1923). Many people argue the regional differences in the taste of truffles, but genetic tests confirm that this most likely results from environmental influences, rather than genetic differences between the tubers (Milius 1998). The truffle mycelium forms a mutual symbiotic relationship with the roots of oak, hazel and chestnut trees (Cooper 2001) in which the fungus helps to provide water and nutrients in exchange for sugars from the tree (Maxwell 2005). The fungus is naturally introduced to the tree via animal droppings containing truffle spores (from earlier consumption) that comes in contact with tree roots. Truffles grow best in chalkier soils with adequate water drainage and a pH of around 7.9 (Cooper 2001).

Unlike many other fungal fruiting bodies, truffles cannot spread their seed via wind and thus they must coax animals to dig them up from five to six inches underground - thereby enabling them to spread their spores (Lloyd 1923). The subterranean masses release a pheromone called alpha-androstenol, which is commonly found in the urine of women and the armpit sweat of men (Maxwell 2005). This factor is assumed to be one of, if not the, reason why humans like the taste and smell of truffles. The scent of truffles is also highly attractive to female pigs because of its similarity to male pig pheromones (Cooper 2001). Originally, pigs were used to hunt out wild truffles, however, they would often end up eating the precious fungi. Many a truffle hunter "lost fingers trying to stop their overexcited sow from scoffing the spoil" (Cooper 2001).

Most wild hunters dismiss the idea of using pigs for this reason and instead use trained dogs, which are more careful not to eat what they seek out. The dogs will smell the surface of the ground for the truffles and, upon finding one, will dig a few inches underground. The dog's master will then take the truffle and give the dog a treat for its efforts. Like all else in the truffle industry, these dogs can be very pricey (Lloyd 1923). In 2005, white truffles were valued at \$2,000 dollars a pound (Maxwell 2005). At these prices, it is not surprising that truffles are likened to gold and diamonds and are used in dishes only very sparingly. Unfortunately, the incredible aroma that truffles give off begins to fade within 48 hours (Black 2006). This fact not only limits exports to fairly localized areas, but also limits the time of year that dishes with wild truffles are served. Truffles begin to grow in the summer and fully mature in the fall. White truffles mature about a month earlier than do black truffles. Despite these differences, October is the prime truffle hunting month for both varieties (Lloyd 1923). Therefore, truffle season is bound to a very select few months and restaurants must plan their menus according to the available supply of fresh crop.

There have been a few occurrences that have threatened the wild truffle farming, thereby causing the number of wild truffles out on the market to diminish. An important factor in this change has been the decreased yield of truffles. 10,000 years ago, there was an incredible decline in the number of truffles, leaving fewer truffles to reproduce and carry on the fungal progeny (Milius 1998). Over the last 100 years, there has been a steady decline of the already rare fungus. *T. melanosporum* harvests were at 2000 tons annually in the very early 1900s, but are now just 100 tons. To make things even more frustrating, the demand for truffles has increased consistently and noticeably with time (Yun et al 2004). There are many theories as to why the annual yields of the fungi have decreased as of late. Some suggest that a large amount of knowledge about truffles and truffling were lost during the two world wars. Others point to issue of the environment - blaming increased number of pesticides used, deforestation, global warming, acid rain and overharvesting of the fungi. Despite these formidable hypotheses, no one is completely sure why such a decrease has occurred (Cooper 2001; Maxwell 2005) (Continued on pg. 8).



(Continued from pg. 7) Due to the increased demand for the tubers and the low yields from wild harvests, in the 1970s trufficulteurs in France asked the aid of scientists to help create a more accessible and reliable crop. Researchers effectively infected oak and hazel trees with *T. melanosporum* spores (Cooper 2001). This completely revolutionized the industry, as it easily enabled trufficulteurs to farm the fungi on plantations instead of having to traipse out into the woods to collect them. Although the exact process whereby trees are inoculated with truffle mycelium is a well kept secret, the basic method is as follows: the spores are taken out of a truffle and applied to the roots of a tree seedling (Cooper 2001). In order to minimize contamination by other fungi and bacteria (which can decrease fungal yields) the entire operation is done under sterile conditions. Once infected with the fungus, the tree seedlings are planted in tight, neat rows. Two hazel trees are then planted for every oak tree and the plantation is left to grow and mature – thus yielding fresh truffles (Cooper 2001). Not only does this method have the obvious advantage of having ones crop farmed and controlled, but it also induces truffle formation after only five or ten years, whereas wild trees take more than 15 (Cooper 2001). Because of the immense yields that occurred from this practice, 80 to 90 percent of French truffles are grown on plantations. Alas, it seems as though the romanticized vision of harvesting wild truffles will be gone forever.

Although truffle inoculation methods were originally a French secret, they have subsequently spread to all ends of the earth. Sweden, Croatia, New Zealand and Tasmania are just a few of the countries that have recently entered the truffle farming game. Even in the U.S., truffles are being cultivated in Oregon, California and North Carolina (Cooper 2001; Maxwell 2005). These international farms are very much a recent aspect of the industry; the first non-European truffle plantation only began in 1993 (Cooper 2001). Cultivation on the Southern hemisphere has its own great advantages: because the winter down there coincides with the summer in Europe and the U.S., fresh truffles can now be gotten during the offseason. This essentially puts an end to truffles' uni-seasonal past. Although all of this is a truffle gourmand's dream, it seems to squash the charm of the tubers (Cooper 2001). They used to be a local prize – only available to eat during one season. However, with the new technologies, the fungi can be eaten almost where ever and whenever one has the wallet to support the cravings.

In addition to these new sources of truffles is the Chinese black truffle, *T. indicum*. *T. indicum* looks just like the European tubers, yet it is said to be relatively tasteless when compared to those originating in Europe. (Beech 2005). These truffles are called “pig-snout” fungi, as they were used by locals to feed to their pigs - that is, until foreigners came and were willing to pay incredible amounts of money for them. Because of the very strong euro in the past few years, many high-class restaurants have begun using the less expensive Chinesetruffle in their dishes. The Italian government has already taken action against the impostor by passing laws forbidding the sale of *T. indicum* and the French government requires labels explicitly denoting the origins of tubers. The Chinese apparently dislike the “inadequate” truffle just as much as the French do; when asked if they ate the truffles, they said that they did only when really hungry, and only if slathered with an array of overwhelming spices and sauces (Beech 2005). Because of low labor costs, the Chinese afford to use humans to search for the fungi on their plantations instead of using dogs like Europeans do. Despite its relative insufficiency, the Chinese truffle is becoming a more attractive alternative because of its low cost. In addition, it is has been theorized that spores from exported *T. indicum* will outmatch and potentially eliminate its competition because it is a more aggressive and stronger species than its European cousins. (Beech 2005).

The low yields of wild truffles, the European and international cultivation of truffles on plantations, and the foreign imposters all seem to destroy la grande mystique du truffe – the charm of both locally harvested and eaten wild truffles. This mystique, however, only fully existed over one hundred years ago. French truffelfarms existed as far back as the 1850s. In the early 1800s, Joseph Talon developed a method of cultivating truffles, whereby he would set up seedlings in known truffle hunting areas. There, the trees would be inoculated with spores of truffles already present and produce tubers of their own. In 1868, after the insect phylloxera devastated the French vineyards, the peasants turned to the truffle as an alternative to wine as a crop. They adopted Talon's method of cultivation and started planting oak forests for hunting truffles (Black, 2006). Thus, in France, the industry has been controlled for the last 150 years. In addition, the popularity of truffles boomed during this time because of the economic focus the French had on it. Yet Italy remained distinct from France in this aspect; in the Italian countryside the main source of truffle is the white truffle, which hasn't yet been cultivated. Therefore, white truffles are harvested from the wild (Black 2006).

There are indeed a few legitimate reasons why people fear the end of the mystique du truffe. For one, the exportation of truffles certainly didn't exist at one point, solely due to the inability to get very far within the 48 hours that the fungi are fresh (Black 2006). The technology that exists today does certainly create an international presence of truffles that slightly impedes upon the romantic image. In addition, the farming of truffles throughout the world damages the original notion of wild truffles solely collected in France and Italy. The decreasing truffle yields in the wild were already very low during the first-half of the century and, as mentioned before, the number of wild truffles bottlenecked 10,000 years ago. The mystique of the truffle, therefore, was half-baked to begin with and has had little application to the truffle production of the last century. But should the romantic view of wild truffle hunting be revisited? Having tasted truffles myself, I can say that I wouldn't mind losing a semi-veritable mystique if it would mean cheaper and more accessible tubers. And Although I haven't tried pig-snout fungus, if it tastes anything like the European blacks, I don't think I'd mind having a dish with them occasionally.

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Trying to Save the Rainforest? How about a Chocolate Bar...

No Author

The narrow dirt road that my rancho followed, past shanty bamboo houses and wide-eyed, barefoot children, was more reminiscent of a Unicef pamphlet than the far away world of gourmet chocolate.

Yet in a day where well-heeled urban foodies are increasingly insistent on quality and willing to pay high prices to get it, it's entirely possible that Caimito and other coastal rainforest towns will soon be receiving some attention. We stopped in town center to let off men coming home from the fields and women bearing hundred-pound baskets of wet laundry. As my ride sat waiting under the scorching midday sun, a smell of acrid fermentation quickly reached my nostrils and filled my lungs. "Over there" my friend Katie pointed to what looked like a bomb-blasted cement house foundation, refloored with piercingly reflective aluminum and covered with thousands of olive-sized brown beans. Katie explained that this cacao has already undergone a week of fermentation, and was now being dried. Drying takes up to several weeks depending on weather conditions, though a few more days of today's brutal sun should finish the job. The beans will then be picked up by cacao traders, who will pay 45 cents a pound and ship it several hundred kilometers south to Guayaquil, home of Ecuador's largest chocolate factories.

Caimito, population roughly three hundred, is a town whose livelihood depends on these pungent little beans, and yet few of its residents are aware that their cacao's final product is reputed to be some of the highest quality chocolate in the world. As a matter of fact, few of its buyers are aware either. Ecuadorian chocolate is manufactured and sold largely in Ecuador. It reaches a handful of national supermarkets in the larger cities, but is virtually nonexistent in the Esmeraldas and Ecuador's other impoverished, rural provinces. Most of the people in Caimito had probably never seen a chocolate bar in their lives. A little further down the road, my friend said goodbye to me and hopped off the rancho. Katie Joyce is a peace corp worker I met in Cabo de San Francisco. A twenty two year old gringa with curly blonde hair, freckled skin and blue eyes, she can't help but stand out in a crowd of dark-skinned coastal Ecuadorians, and I was curious to find what brought her to the remote fishing village where I had been living and working for the past month. She told me she was working for Ecocacao, a small foundation that has been attempting to network local cacao farmers, and ensure fair prices for the seeds they sell. After explaining that I had been working with a conservation group and had spent my last two weeks on a cacao orchard, we quickly became friends. Both of us were, we discovered, examining different facets of the same problem: a marginalized group of farmers producing something truly extraordinary and receiving minimal recognition.

"Why should Ecuadorian chocolate not quickly gain its rightful status in the eyes the world's chocolate aficionados?"

Yet why should Ecuadorian chocolate, if my bold assertion of its superiority is true, not quickly gain its rightful status in the eyes the world's chocolate aficionados? The answer is complex, but we can begin to understand by looking at the alien, South American fruit I was becoming so familiar with. There are four different varieties of

cacao, but *forestero* is what most of us have grown up enjoying through Hershey kisses, Nestle cocoa and its various other derivatives. In fact, this hardy fruit has come to dominate the chocolate scene and now accounts for close to 90% of commercially sold chocolate. *Forestero* is comparatively large, reddish purple fruit, and produces chocolate known for its relatively mild, earthy flavor. *Forestero* cacao also grows readily in large monocultures and full sunlight, and is therefore produced abundantly in the sunny, clear-cut cacao plantations that cover swathes of West Africa. Ecuador's national variety is known to produce chocolate with a richer, more intensely chocolate flavor. And yet these smaller, bright yellow fruits have been struggling for centuries to keep their name from disappearing.

The problem, I soon discovered, stems from the ecology of Ecuador's unique national cacao, patriotically named *nacional*. Its tree is believed to have first been developed by the Mayans, and was planted across Ecuador beginning in the 19th century. It thrives in Ecuador's coastal rainforests, which have, in recent years, been almost completely logged and given way to monoculture cacao plantations that mimic their West African counterparts. *Nacional* is an under-story rainforest tree, meaning it needs the shade provided by a variety of taller tree species to be healthy and bear fruit. The ubiquitous solution has been to grow *nacional* anyway, reap poor yields, and log more forest to make up the money. Or simply replace *nacional* with *forestero*, which does not like Ecuador's high-canopied rainforests but does quite well in the country's ever-expanding clear-cut fields (Continued on pg. 10).



Anna Bauer

“I rarely gave much thought to the mysterious tropical fruit that was so far removed from the brownies I was baking.”

(Continued from pg. 9) The dichotomy of this problem is an interesting one in that it has a seemingly elegant solution. Teach farmers to grow nacional the way it has evolved to grow, in a fully canopied rainforest. Producing better yields goes hand in hand with conserving nacional's natural habitat. From a consumer standpoint, buying high quality chocolate suddenly becomes a whole lot more justifiable. Better tasting and helping preserve a rainforest? With such qualifications, Ecuadorian cacao may soon be well on its way to securing a niche among the world's environmentally conscious chocolate lovers. Tato, a tall, dark-skinned man in his early forties, who runs a fifty hectare cacao orchard that I had been helping on, was one of the more successful farmers in the region. Two days before my bus ride I had helped harvest cacao, a task that left me completely exhausted and a little more grateful for my relatively sedentary college-student lifestyle. Cacao fruit grows in small, football shaped pods off the trunks of its trees. It turns from green to yellow, to orange or red when ripe. We collected several hundred healthy looking fruits, discarded a few dozen more diseased ones, and set to the lengthy task of removing the cacao seeds from the tough, woody cascara. Removing seeds is here accomplished much the same way it has been for hundreds of years: by expertly chopping the fruit open with a machete. I left this task to Tato and stuck to the safer, albeit messier work of removing pulpy white seeds and throwing them in a burlap bag. We hauled roughly a eighty pounds of seeds off the farm and brought them to a local buyer, for which Tato received \$36. Not a bad salary in a town where the average worker makes \$5 a day.

The seeds I helped harvest were at the beginning of a multi-week journey that will result in a finished chocolate product completely unrecognizable from the original fruit. Fermentation is the first step in this process. Cacao seeds are piled high and left in a warm, humid place for several days to ferment. Generally, farmers pile seeds in wooden crates and cover these with banana leaves, which help trap heat and moisture. Fermentation transforms the flavor of the beans, and within 2-7 days they are ready to be dried. At this point they are spread out by hand on a heat-trapping surface such as the aluminum sheets I had seen. Drying takes 1-2 weeks of full sun, during which time the beans change color from purplish-red to dark brown. It is at this point that most farmers say goodbye to their cacao- once the beans are dried, chocolate manufacturers buy them and continue processing.

Tato's farm has always done remarkably well, but he's privy to a few trade secrets that can explain some of his success. His cacao grows in a canopied forest, among fruit trees of all shapes and sizes, many of which he received for free from conservation groups. His cacao trees are healthier and more productive than those of his neighbors, and he earns added income from the oranges, mangoes, papayas, avocados and other fruits that grow in his 'cacao rainforest'.

My work in the Esmeraldas, Ecuador's poorest province and home to a large portion of the country's cacao production, was short lived, but taught me to look at the dark, silky treat many of us rank among our favorite comfort foods, in an entirely different way. I always knew that chocolate was made from cacao, but I rarely gave much thought to the mysterious tropical fruit that was so far removed from the brownies I was baking or the hot chocolate I'd sip on a frigid winter morning. Cacao is more than a means to an end, as I once thought of it. For these secluded rainforest farmers, cacao is a way of life. It's part of a fragile, rapidly disappearing ecosystem.

But saving nacional and its rainforest home will take more than educated cacao farmers. It will take conscious buyers, true chocolatiers who know the difference between a dark Hershey bar and the full, bitterly nutty flavor of Esmeraldas 77% cocoa treats, and are willing to look a little harder for true chocolate ecstasy.



Anna Bauer



Ally Spier

Ode to the *Apple* Ellie Proctor

My roommate is a madwoman for applesauce. She flies like a bat out of hell to the stuff when we're in the dining hall, and I can see why. When you eat a fresh, crisp apple in the fall there's almost nothing better, whether it's in applesauce or straight from the tree. This fall, I realized how wonderful this fruit truly is.

Here at Cornell, we're pretty fortunate to be in a state known for its delicious apples. Right down the road at the Orchards we can buy apples fresh from the vine in a wide variety of flavors and colors (and even get free samples). I put a trip to the Orchards on my fall to-do list, and was able to get there a few times in the height of apple season. The earthy smell of the place, the array of fresh local products, and the friendly folk who work in the store made me almost giddy. After downing a few samples of the apple cider and testing out a Honeycrisp, I came home with a bag of Cortlands and a jug of that beautiful cider. I couldn't pull myself away from those two items until they were completely out, for then it became a fix that I couldn't get enough of.



Sacha Burn

Another fall fixture in Ithaca in addition to the Orchards is the Apple Festival in the Commons. It was silly to have eaten lunch before heading down to the festival, because it was difficult to keep away from the caramel apples, apple cake, and abundance of cider. Although the prices were a bit steeper than I had expected, the apple cake was moist and flavorful with warm fall spices and the unadulterated taste of pure apple. It was heaven in a loaf pan, and certainly worth the \$9. It did have a rival though, in the form of a sinfully good pumpkin funnel cake right out of the fryer. On my way out, I wanted to capture this apple extravaganza so I took home a little jar of apple butter to last me through to when the snow starts to fall. I still have it on gingersnaps in the morning, and I'm hoping it will keep until the end of the semester if I have the willpower to not gorge the rest of it in one sitting.

So with all of this apple exposure, I couldn't help myself from cooking up something myself. There's a classic dish of pork chops and apple sauce, but the way that my mom and I make it is a bit different while still making use of this traditionally delicious combination. Start by browning up a few thick cut pork chops seasoned with salt and pepper in a heavy cast iron pan. After each side gets a rich brown crust, take them out of the pan and set aside. Slice up two of your favorite crisp fresh fall apples and cook them in the same pan with a knob of butter and a sliced onion. I love the play of savory and sweet in this recipe, and the onions and apples meld so well together that the sweet/savory line is blurred. When the onions and apples start to brown, sprinkle in a dash of cinnamon, nutmeg, and fresh thyme to the pan. These flavors work exceptionally well with the pork. Finally, deglaze the pan with a splash of cider and a half cup of chicken stock. Place the pork chops back into the pan to cook the rest of the way through and reduce the sauce until it reaches your desired consistency.

REVIEWS



Anna Bauer

Mahogany Grill

114 N. Aurora Street



Mahogany Grill, located on Aurora Street in the Commons, provides friends and family with an appropriate ambience and decent food that won't be too hard on a college-student's budget. One should expect to pay \$20-\$25 for an entrée. This may be a little steep, but since the meal portions are exceptionally large, the price is still well worth it. For the most part, the food was a nice break away from standard Cornell dining including the appetizers, entrées, and desserts.

The staff on hand were excellent, as they speedily accommodated our needs, unfazed by our large number and our friend on crutches. The waiter impressively took our orders by memory and brought out the drinks and appetizers quickly. Additionally, the waiters and waitresses were extremely polite whenever they had to reach over our heads and they frequently asked if anything was needed.

We first ordered appetizers to begin our meal. The chef was generous with the clam and vegetables in the clam chowder and for once, did not ruin the soup with excessive chunks of potatoes. The marinara sauce that accompanied the fried calamari was nothing special, but the calamari itself was quite tasty and not too oily. The Italian sampler, consisting of Italian meats and olives, had a strong variety. Mahogany grill put a twist on the classic bread and butter by adding honey to the butter, complementing the bread beautifully. The biggest disappointment was the shrimp and lobster martini, although it was still considered decent: "The shrimp weren't that great but still good, it's shrimp and lobster after all," said Amber Hultgren.

The menu had a large selection of entrées, salads, sandwiches, and burgers to choose from. In the sirloin and gorgonzola salad, the sirloin was not too flavorful, however there was an enjoyable abundance of gorgonzola cheese, an ingredient many chefs skimp on. The vegetables in the salad were fresh and the balsamic vinaigrette, a specialty of the restaurant, provided an extra kick to the salad.

Meanwhile, the Mahogany burger was slightly undercooked to the eater's liking, but again, was generous with portion size and amount of bacon provided. The regular french fries were received with mixed feelings, and we agreed that they required more salt. Furthermore, the sweet potato fries did not have nearly enough flavor, much to our disappointment. The chicken sandwich was cooked well and was enjoyable, although it was nothing out of this world. Unfortunately, the filet of beef was heavy on the sides and provided little meat. The mashed potatoes "tasted as if they came from Appel," according to Elaine Qian, yet the meat was still flavorful. Similarly, the ahi was delicious, although possibly a little too dry. The tenderloin kebab was phenomenal, cooked to perfection. The hearty portabella mushroom that accompanied the kebab was also cooked appropriately: very tender and juicy, almost like meat itself.

To conclude the meal, we shared a raspberry mousse. It was more like custard in consistency and did not share the lightness of a mousse. Nevertheless, it was still a delicious end to the meal.

Maxie's Supper Club

635 W. State Street



Anna Bauer

It is as if I am in New Orleans. The food is hearty and soulful. The music is a laid back jazz only heard on the delta of the Mississippi. I am experiencing food euphoria. This restaurant is the epitome of perfect, yet it is a Yankee restaurant nowhere near the South. Even before arriving at Maxie's, I spent my time walking down Seneca Avenue not talking to my companion, but imagining our food and the restaurant's atmosphere. Like most dreams and fantasies, mine did not become reality.

I am sad to say, my dinner at Maxie's Supper Club and Oyster Bar was mediocre at best. If you are a seasoned Cornellian, then you must already think my writing is spewing lies. So let me repeat: my experience at Maxie's was disappointing. Even I was caught unawares by my reaction; in these thirty odd months I have inhabited Ithaca, I have only heard good reviews of Maxie's. Maxie's was supposed to be undeniably delicious and as authentic as the Creole in New Orleans. It was supposed to be one of those places you had to eat at before you graduated, just like Madeline's, the Heights, and Moosewood. Granted, experiencing any Southern style food in Upstate New York is unusual and therefore Maxie's is appealing, but for overall value and satisfaction, it cannot compete with the other Ithaca notables. As I said, I walked from the Cornell campus to Maxie's with Isaac, a good friend of mine. Before we departed for the evening, I called Maxie's for its thirty minute call-ahead seating. Already I could tell the restaurant was a busy and active place. I could barely hear the receptionist, and she could barely hear me. She screamed, "Sarah Baker for a table of six?" To make things easier, I only corrected the party number to two and not six a few times before she could understand what I was saying. The incorrect name was not an issue after I decided I would have an alias for the evening, and instead of being Anna Bauer, I would be Sarah Baker.



Anna Bauer

Before even asking the receptionist, I knew every table, every chair, and every stool at the bar was occupied. The clientele ranged from college students to elderly couples. The only demographic that seemed to be missing were children. After a minute or two of being pushed side to side, as if you are walking too slowly in a New York City Subway station, the receptionist came to her podium. I mentioned I had a reservation and that I had called earlier. She said a name; it had the same number of syllables as Sarah Baker and close pronunciation, so I just agreed it was me. There was no use in trying to correct someone you will only see once. The receptionist pointed out a table finishing dessert and suggested a drink at the bar. I asked Isaac if he would like a mint julep or bloody Mary (typical Southern alcoholic beverages), but he wanted to go outside. With only a moment's thought, I agreed because discussions where you have to yell while feeling like a sardine are best saved for fraternity parties.

The interior of the restaurant was plagued by New Orleans clichés. There was the bar, so basic it looked homemade, enveloped in mirrors, fronted by rows of half used liquor bottles, and gleaming black because it was covered in more paint than our table. Masses of red velvet curtains hung in swags and covered the windows while embossed tin ceiling tiles, painted beige, were not only on the ceiling, but on the walls as well. I almost felt I was on a paddleboat cruise waiting my turn to gamble or watch a burlesque show, for the lighting was perfectly conducive to such risqué actions. The lamps, hung from the ceiling or sconced on the wall, caused the room to be engulfed by shadows. Was the restaurant just merely trying to imitate the restaurant stereotypes of New Orleans, or did the owners sincerely, but unsuccessfully, want to create a space for a Creole experience? Savors to the foul interior were the Maxie's logo artwork and advertisements. These broke up the overpowering amounts of tin and velvet and served to inform patrons of Maxie's specialties. One of these advertisements declared the day's specials. This menu included a mini plate of scallops (\$14.99), blackened salmon, another southern fish plate, and a chipotle brownie. I immediately became excited over the brownie, for though I had seen the combination of spice and sweet in chocolates, I had yet to come across it in a restaurant. When the waitress approached for our order, my inquiry into the dessert resolved to a sad ending; they were not only out of the brownie, but they also did not have salmon.

As I had been fixated on dessert, I did not know what to order for my meal at the moment, so I ordered a Diet Coke (\$2). When the beverage arrived, the cup was a glass version of a 7-Eleven Big Gulp. It was huge, at least thirty-two ounces huge. It was bigger than any glass I had ever seen, and I was impressed. A server, not our own, brought us two pieces of cornbread as we looked over the menus and discussed what we would have. Isaac and I were thinking the same thing, so we decided one of us would order the crab cake po' boy (\$12.50), and the other would get the gumbo (\$7.95 for a bowl). We were ready to order, but our waitress had not returned to take our orders, so in the mean time, we ate the cornbread. Maxie's cornbread is truly some of the best cornbread. Cornbread is often known for being dry and crumbly, but these pieces were nowhere near that. They embodied the moisture and the texture of cake. The cornbread tasted so good, that when I placed the sour cream infused butter on top of it, I knew I had made a mistake. Butter, jam, honey, or any topping on this cornbread is unnecessary and it can, as the butter given to us did, detract from the pleasure of consuming such a delightful cake.

Before we finished the cornbread, the waitress took our orders, and within ten minutes of ordering, we had our dishes. We were surprised by this promptness. However, as both Isaac, a Hotellie, and I have taken restaurant management and operations classes, we became suspicious of the quick delivery of the crab cake. Was it previously frozen? Could it have been already formed? Is it like McDonald's and the patty just sits in a warmer until it is ordered? Despite our questions, Isaac said his crab cake was fine, though not extraordinary. His fries, cut into the delightful waffle shape, were spiced up by the generic Cajun seasoning mixture; it was a pleasant

(Continued on pg. 16)

REVIEWS

(Continued from pg. 15)

addition.

Gumbo, as Isaac put it before we even ordered, is often hit or miss. He has eaten really good gumbo and slurped down tomato soup called gumbo. Roux, a mixture of butter and flour, along with tomatoes, andouille (a Cajun sausage), and crawfish are supposed to be the basis of this thick soup. It is also traditionally served over a large portion of rice. Did my gumbo represent the book definition of the dish? It was nowhere near it. My first issue with the gumbo was that it was overly smoky and even burnt tasting. As I was eating it, I felt I was consuming the burnt scrapings from a cast iron pot. At one point, I literally got a charred tasting, flakey disc in my mouth. But that was not all. My main concerns with the gumbo were that it was the consistency of chicken broth with minimal chunks of protein floating in it and that it was placed upon a couple tablespoons of rice. This rice later turned into suspended inclusions instead of acting as the base to absorb the broth. Maxie's gumbo was a definite miss.

As I waited for Isaac to finish his heaping portion of French fries, the waitress eagerly came to take away my dish. At the same time, she asked me if I would like another Diet Coke. Yes, I had finished the giant soda, but despite my initial excitement, the cup was probably a quarter soda, the rest being ice. Those thirty-two fluid ounces were drastically cut down to eight. Usually, when I am asked if I want another soda, and not a refill, I am a bit apprehensive. I was right that night; the waitress told me that refills were not free. This annoyed me. Isaac agreed with the stupidity of not having free refills: a gallon of soda costs less than twenty cents. Isaac had not even finished his French fries when our server grabbed his plate and then asked him if he was done with his meal. It was apparent that the priority of the restaurant, and therefore the servers, was to turn tables as quickly as possible. Annoyed with the perceived hurry, we decided not to look over the dessert menu, but to leave a place where we felt unwelcomed.

On our way up the hill to Cornell, we discussed our meal at Maxie's. We both entered the evening excited to eat at a restaurant specializing in Creole cuisine, hoping to reminisce about our travels in the Big Easy. Maybe our expectations were too high. Maybe it would have been better if we had not experienced authentic New Orleans food and known so much about the restaurant industry. Still, other Ithaca restaurants successfully deliver magnificent food in ideal settings at various price points. If you want food of better quality, in greater portions, in a fast paced and energetic atmosphere, then I would suggest Applebee's or Chili's over Maxie's. At least at these chain restaurants, you can expect value, consistency, and free soda refills. Maxie's hurriedly delivered mediocre food in tawdry surroundings.



Anna Bauer

This I Believe...

Rachel Berman

I went out for food last night and once again my family called me "psycho". While I usually would not describe myself in such a way, I admit that when it comes to food, I have some semi-psycho-like tendencies (but really this isn't a bad thing...let me explain).

Food is good. Scratch that – good food is excellent. Take a turkey sandwich for instance – my family's classic "make-fun-of-Rachel" example. They always question why it takes me 10 minutes to make a turkey sandwich. So here's the deal - I like turkey. I hate fat. HATE IT. People don't realize though that when turkey is sliced on a sandwich, there still may be fat around the edges. People just eat that sandwich and eat the skinny slivers of fat along with it. Yet, what people don't realize is that without those fat slivers, the sandwich is a billion times better! So I say you must rip that turkey apart and get all the fat out!! Well then, you also must have Russian dressing, cole slaw, AND potato chips. NOT baked potato chips (like baked Lays) but the regular, greasy ones – it's better, I swear! And that my friends, is a good turkey sandwich – the ONLY way to have a good one.

So to answer my family's question, I always ask them - why should I settle for a mediocre turkey sandwich that takes 5 minutes to make when I could just spend an additional 5 minutes and make that sandwich the best it could possibly be? Get it? Why eat something that's just good when you can make it something that is GREAT? Yes, it's true, when I look at a menu, I don't just skim through and pick what sounds good. I scrutinize that menu - I examine it all. I pick the best thing on it and yes, sometimes I am that annoying person who asks for no cilantro or no tomato, because I hate cilantro and I hate tomatoes and YES, they DO bring down the meal.

So if the meal's not going to be great, why eat it as just "good"? Make it great. It's so worth it. Instead of feeling satisfied that you're not hungry anymore, you'll have an additional sense of satisfaction. You'll not only have satisfied your hunger, but you'll also have enjoyed a delicious meal. I believe everything can be better – if you put the effort in to make it better. Have a little patience and wait the extra couple minutes because those couple minutes could turn something just "ok" (like an "ok" meal) into something you will forever remember. I'm not just talking about food (although I will always remember the baby back ribs I had at Sticky Fingers in South Carolina and the best key lime pie I have ever had was in the Florida Keys), I'm talking about life. Make life good. If you'll settle with just an "ok" 5-minute turkey sandwich, then fine. But satisfy yourself. If you want that "great" turkey sandwich – take 10 minutes – and make it excellent.

White Bean Cassoulet

I adapted this recipe from a traditional French bean stew. I often think of it as French chili, and is a perfect dish on a cold winter's night. You can easily and inexpensively cook this warm pot of bubbling goodness for one or ten, and it makes great leftovers. (In fact, this dish will taste even better the next day!)

Ingredients:

1 Tablespoon Extra Virgin Olive Oil
 1 piece of pancetta, sliced ¼" thick, diced into small cubes
 ½ medium onion, diced
 1 clove of garlic, minced
 2 Tablespoons of tomato paste
 ½ teaspoon dried Italian herbs
 2 15oz cans white cannellini beans, strained and rinsed
 Chicken stock (approx. 2-4 cups or enough to cover)
 Salt and Pepper

Procedure:

In a medium pot, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the pancetta and allow it to cook until crispy, about 5 minutes. Add the diced onion, sprinkle them with a pinch of salt, and sauté until soft and translucent, about 6 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Next, add the tomato paste and allow to cook until it reaches the color of dark-red bricks. Constantly stir the tomato paste or it will burn. Add the white beans and gently stir them with the tomato paste mixture in the pot. Once they are coated, pour in enough chicken stock to just cover the beans. Sprinkle with the Italian herbs, and salt and pepper to taste. Raise the heat to high, and bring the liquid to a boil. Once it reaches a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 15 minutes. Serve as hearty lunch or side dish. For a heartier cassoulet, add chunks of meat and/or sausage.

Lemon Bread

This is a family classic – it is really delicious, especially warm out of the oven!

Ingredients:

1 ½ cups flour
 1 tsp. baking powder
 ¼ tsp. salt
 1 tbsp. grated lemon rind
 ½ cup butter
 1 cup white sugar
 2 eggs
 ½ cup milk

Drizzle:

1/3 cup sugar
 ¼ cup lemon juice

Procedure

Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Stir in the lemon rind. Cream the sugar and butter in a new bowl. Add the eggs to the sugar and butter, beating well after each addition. Stir in flour mixture, alternating with milk. Pour into buttered and floured loaf pan. Bake at 350°F for 50 minutes. In a small bowl, stir sugar into lemon juice. Pour on bread while hot. Let bread cool in its pan on a rack for 10 min before turning out to cool completely



