



Snack Your Feelings

By Dan Kittaka

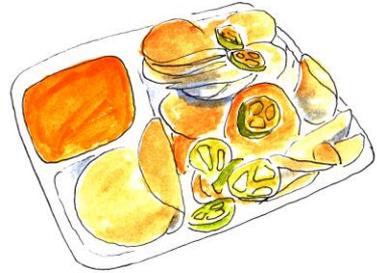


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Image description:
a clear plastic tray
holding yellow
nacho cheese,
circular tortilla,
chips, and pickled
jalapeño slices



Snack Genes	2
Snacking During a Global Pandemic	4
#SomethingCrunchy	5
Red Handed	7
Don't Yuck My Yum	10
Accessible Excellence	12

100% of revenue from this zine will be donated to the Chicago Community Bond Fund (chicagobond.org).

Cover Image description: tiled yellow and red dried squid and purple and red 3D Doritos packages

Image description: a drawing of jiaozi (Mandarin), gun mandu (Korean), or gyoza (Japanese), a pan-fried dumpling featuring a browned, pan crisped exterior paired with a piping hot, juicy filling, often eaten with a mixture of shoyu (soy sauce), rice vinegar, and chili oil, each diner preparing their own sauce to taste



Snack Genes

When I trace my eating behavior through my family, my ability to eat large meals comes from my mother's side. Growing up, my uncles would regale us with memories of legendary meals. The one tale forever etched in my mind is that of my uncle eating fifty gyoza in a meal while on tour in Japan. While my ability to eat large meals has diminished with age, my snacking ability has remained consistent.

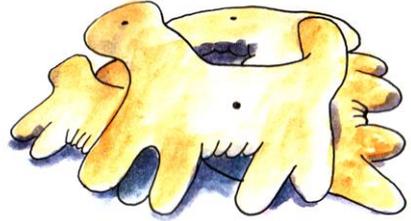
Naturally trim, my father has been more or less the same weight for my entire life. He is also a champion snacker. An hour or two after dinner, he will eat a snack. On Sundays, when watching the Chicago Bears after lunch, but before dinner, he'll indulge as well. I imagine this the natural result of a body that burns through fuel quickly.

A heritage like this means that I'm pretty much eating all of the time. While I'm not blessed with quite the same rapid metabolism as my father, I am thankful that I have running in my life to balance my snack genes.



Image description: tiled black, red, and yellow bbq chip packages

Image description: a small pile of crackers shaped sort of like animals



Snacking During A Global Pandemic

I don't want to linger on COVID-19, but feel a snack-focused work written while under government mandated "shelter-in-place" would be incomplete without comment. "Eating my feelings," is not a new experience for me. Given this phrase in the zeitgeist, it must be quite common. I've definitely participated in drowning my COVID-19 driven anxieties in snack binges. So don't feel alone if you've placated yourself with food. I hope you can take a little solace in this and by acknowledging it are able to create some space to choose to soothe with snacks versus falling into it by default.

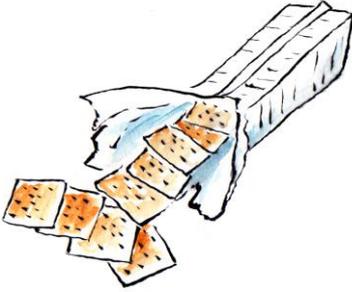


Image description: square light-colored crackers spill from a white plastic sleeve, don't put too many in your mouth at once!

#SomethingCrunchy

An essay I read a few months ago, revealed our shared taste for crunchy things. In the essay, the author wrote of their (pre-COVID-19) experience working in a grocery store. When describing the average order, what stood out to me was that among the typical, food pyramid* groups listed was a final category, “something crunchy**.” Growing up, my #somethingcrunchy was Saltine crackers, a sleeve at a time. Nowadays, my #somethingcrunchy is typically salted pretzels often paired with almond butter. Occasionally, my #somethingcrunchy is sugary breakfast cereal, the kind I had to mix with something less sweet as a kid. What's your #somethingcrunchy?

*The US Department of Agriculture has been using a “My Plate” model since 2011 so this reference definitely shows my age! For those that care, the pyramid model was introduced in 1992.

**I've lost track of the title and author of this essay so please forgive that I'm unable to cite it clearly. And if you wrote this essay or know who did, kindly get in contact for credit!



Image description: tiled red, yellow, and green Ring Pop packages

Red Handed

There is no way to eat Hot Cheetos without the risk of being caught literally red-handed. For me food and guilt are intertwined and in the case of this particular food (if we can call it that), I feel a particular guilt.

When I was young, we lived next to a family with two children around the same ages as my siblings and me. I'm not sure if it was my parents' strong encouragement or my insecurity - likely it was a combination of both, but I really didn't like hanging out with these kids. The only time I was interested in spending time together was when there was an opportunity to have a taste of Hot Cheetos, a snack that was never stocked in our household. Our neighbors would often come over to play in our yard with snack-sized bags of Hot Cheetos. I would act nice just to have one or two curls.

Like many playground wrongs, I never explicitly apologized for being a terrible person, but I can take a few things away which hopefully can make the world a better place. First, do not underestimate the power of Hot Cheetos, for a taste, I became a manipulative maniac. Second, don't force friendships onto people, they end up acting like assholes.

Image description: bright red Cheeto curls are scattered near the mouth of an open package

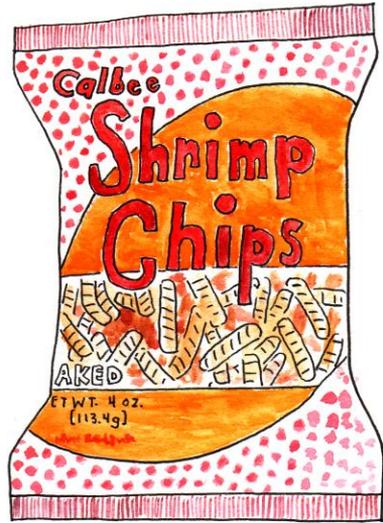




Image description: tiled yellow and red dried squid packages

Image description: the classic pink, white, and yellow package of Calbee brand shrimp chips

Don't
Yuck
My
Yum



You've heard this story before, well maybe you've heard this story before, it happens to immigrants, kids of immigrants, and in this case the great-grandkid of immigrants, me. Maybe it also happens to other people, too, though aren't we all immigrants?

I prefer savory snacks over sweets. For me shrimp chips, pork rinds, and tortilla chips really scratch my snack itch. It was a special day in my classroom and everyone had brought a snack. I didn't bring the shrimp chips, but I sure was enjoying them until someone made a classic "ew, gross" type comment. "Yucking my yum," as my friend Eva likes to say. I kind of hate that phrase, but it's totally appropriate - let's not do this so we don't have to use that phrase ever again.



Image description: tiled pink, white, and yellow shrimp chip packages

Image description: an Oreo sandwich cookie, a cookie comprised of two crispy, chocolate sub-cookies which are black in color that sandwich a layer of sweet, white “creme” filling.



Accessible Excellence

The thing I love about many packaged snacks is that they're accessible. Setting aside a discussion about equal access to healthy, nutritious foods in the States, the very best packaged snacks are available for just a few dollars and in nearly every community. The Oreo is the pinnacle of this access to excellence.

The Oreo is the very best sandwich cookie that money can buy. Sure, there may be cookies made with higher quality ingredients, but I have yet to find a sandwich cookie that can surpass the exquisite texture of an Oreo. Sorry, Stuf lovers, I'm not talking about the filling, I'm specifically referring to the crispiness of the cookies. Biting into an Oreo is a nonpareil experience thanks to the supreme crunch of the finely tuned cookies. I absolutely love that for less than two dollars anyone can purchase a six-pack of these delights.

Acknowledgements

Image description:
pretzels spill from
an open
rectangular
package with the
text in red, “Dot’s
Pretzels”



Thanks to the folks who shared their favorite snacks with me via Instagram!

The wildest variety of Hot Cheetos - Chloe Chen

Classic shrimp chips - Charlene Choi

Animal crackers - Elias Gonzalez

BBQ Chips - Robby Haas

Dried shredded squid - Joann Hutto

3D Doritos - Ian La Belle

Rousong and PB on an English muffin - Cori Lin

Dots pretzels - Kati Petry

Nacho cheese - James Weissensel

Thank you for reading!



Image description:
English muffin
halves topped with
peanut butter and
rousong (pork fuzz)

