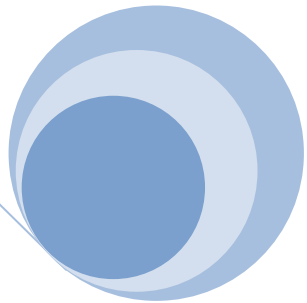


The Bite

A weekly information sheet from the NIU Literacy Clinic

The NIU Literacy Clinic wants you to enjoy reading and be healthy at the same time.

We are offering this informational flyer for you and your family to read and discuss things you already know about foods and to learn new information.



Healthy Eating

Does allowing one package of all-natural Twinkie-style cakes make me a bad parent?

No. It's not that healthy brands of sandwich cookies (or cheese puffs or crackers) are inherently so terrible, it's that they're hogging caloric space. Think of it this way: If your child's nutritional requirements are a train, junk foods are taking the seat of rightful passengers.

"When you look at food you should 'see nature'. The stem on an apple recalls its attachment to a tree. The rough blown flecks in a cracker recall rippling fields of wheat. The neon orange of an artificial cheese puff recalls clown wigs, costume jewelry, Rit-dye. Likewise, ask your child if she's ever seen a stuffed food, like a marshmallow or cheese puff, hanging from a vine. "The more it looks different from nature, the more it's been processed, and the less healthy it is."

Karen W. Cullen, pediatrician, Children's Nutrition Research Center

Five ways to make food fun

- 1. Brighten up Mac and cheese with the help of squash puree or peas.*
- 2. Add fresh blueberries to oat bars or oatmeal cookies.*
- 3. Top French toast with fresh apple chunks or blue berries*
- 4. Use cookie cutters on traditional sandwiches to make creative shapes*
- 5. Stuff tortillas with vegetables or other filling of choice, and then slice diagonally to make sandwich sushi.*

Natural Selection

By Catherine Newman

If it's in a natural foods store (or aisle), it's gotta be good for you, right?

Um, no. Brian Wansink, author of *Why We Eat More Than We Think* and director of the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab, worries about what he calls the "health halo" at work here. He means those wholesome words and bucolic scenes on the packaging (a phenomenon called, cynically, greenwashing"). "Low fat, organic – people end up believing they have a license to overeat" is how he explains it. In a study of Wansink and his colleagues, one group gobbled 49 percent more of the same granola than another group simply because their bags were labeled "low fat." If your child's (or, ahem, your own) fingers are a blur between cracker bag and mouth, the fact that those crackers are baked – or that the cheddar came from Happy Holstein farm or that 1 percent of the company's profits are donated to homeless armadillos – is a moot point. Eat too much of something marginally more wholesome and you cancel out its benefits.

Organically grown foods planet. And the larger the methods, the greater the Michael Pollan, author of it "That is tens of American landscape that atrozine poured on them and the cost to farm exposure to those



are inarguably better for the company using organic environmental gain. As *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, put thousands of acres of the will not have chemicals like and pollution of the water workers that comes from chemicals." Plus, it may be

healthier for your body – especially cumulatively - not to ingest the pesticide residues of conventional farming methods. But for the exposure to gain critical mass for kids, they would need to be eating a lot of organic sandwich cookies. Which they shouldn't be...because they're not actually healthful. How's that for a nutritional catch 22?

In summary: If your kids like to occasionally munch cheese puffs (or chips or cookies), then it makes sense to switch to the healthier ones. The key word here is **Occasionally**. Use junk food to teach your children moderation...and the strange pleasure of eating something wonderfully – but terribly—delicious.

Visit these web sites for more nutritional information

www.mypyramid.gov www.kidshealth.com www.kidinfo.com

Questions? Contact the NIU Literacy Clinic at 815-753-1416

Healthy snacks donated to the Literacy Clinic by Jewel-Osco