

Healtheorium®

By Mimi Borger

" Sweet addictions in the new millennium "

In the mid-1970's, Americans were just starting to feel the effects of an oil crisis and spiraling gas prices. Allegedly, we had a shortage of gas and so were allowed to buy limited gallons on alternate days. Waiting in gas station lines for 2 hours or more, 40 cars ahead and a 100 behind me at 5a.m., I began those mornings sitting in my Chevy with hot curlers in my hair. I read the morning paper by flashlight and, at dawn, put my makeup on while looking in my rearview mirror.

The economic snowball began to roll as the price of steel and steel wire escalated. Beef prices jumped since hay used to feed cattle was baled with wire. Like others, I cut down on my driving and began to eat more tuna and chicken.

Around that same time, there was spike in the price of sugar and coffee, apparently caused by unpleasant weather and political situations, spurred on by the high cost of oil and importing. In the United States, a whole new market of cheap coffee and coffee substitutes popped up. My own discerning taste buds could not accept the strange flavor of new and often bitter products, but my budget could not afford quality brand coffee. So, quickly adapting, I gave up sugar and cream (from cows that ate the hay) and began drinking my coffee black.

With great coincidence and impeccable timing, Japanese scientists were busy inventing a process that changed corn fructose (cornstarch) into glucose and then, by adding synthetic enzymes, changed the glucose into artificial sweetener. This resulting sweetener contained more fructose (sweetness) than natural sugar and thus, it was called High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS). Unfortunately, the refining process stripped the corn fructose of vitamins, minerals and enzymes, leaving only the fiber. The indigestible glucose of HFCS became a burden to human digestion, robbing stored nutrients from the body and it's consumption rapidly increased blood glucose in unnatural amounts. At half the cost of refined beet and cane sugar, it became an overnight sensation in the processed food industry. New products flooded the market. Referred to as "junk food", they were high in calories and void of nutrition.

The snowball rolled on, as years of eating useless sugar wore out the collective American pancreas. Unable to produce enough insulin to lower constantly heightened blood sugar, Americans began experiencing an exponential increase in illnesses such as heart disease, asthma, allergies, obesity, and in particular, diabetes. Natural glucose, necessary for cell function, especially brain cell function, tremendously decreased in the American diet, and rates of mental illness, especially depression, rose rapidly.

The addictive and destructive quality of HFCS spurred the economy of the health industry. A new crop of patients purchased blood pressure medication, insulin, antihistamines, inhalers, and diet products. With food label requirements, cunning manufacturers quieted the growing displeasure of consumers by lacing junk food products with chemically produced vitamins.

During the 1980's and 90's, artificial low and no calorie sweeteners became the rage and a host of new snowballs were spawned. The approval of aspartame (Nutrisweet, Equal, etc.) was one of the most contested in FDA history, taking approximately 16 years to achieve a shady approval. This chemical (accidentally discovered during research for ulcer treatment) is a triple molecule combination of *aspartic acid* (a major neurotoxin -- MSG is 99% aspartic acid), *phenylalanine* (an amino acid necessary for brain function, which in excess lowers the brain chemical serotonin and thereby causing depression) and the ever toxic *methanol* (wood alcohol). The artificial sweetener sucralose (aka Splenda) is the result of selectively replacing 3 hydrogen-oxygen groups on the sugar molecule with 3 chlorine atoms. Dextrose and/or maltodextrin are added for volume.

Now, in the new millennium, gas prices are again burgeoning. As a result of the American desire for alternative fuel, corn prices have recently doubled. Certainly, the price of processed food and junk food made with corn products will soon rise accordingly.

History and economics have taught me to drive little or walk, drink water instead of soda, and eat fresh instead of processed foods. With trepidation and fascination, I wonder where the next snowball will come from as new fuels are invented to replace the higher pollution of ethanol and new chemicals are created to drive America's sweet crude addictions.

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