



BROOKLYN_BORN

[Change Banner Image](#)**154,947**
SparkPoints

Info



Photos



Feed



Blogs



Awards

More



Remembering pizza - thanks to Spark Guy's Sunday blog

Monday, January 26, 2015

Today I'm thinking about all the pizza I ate while growing up in Brooklyn, NY.

Living in a neighborhood of immigrant families from all over the world, one thing we all had in common was that we ate lots of carbs. My heritage was pierogi and halusky and lots and lots of potatoes.

I was introduced to spaghetti and lasagna and ravioli which resembled pierogi but with tomato sauce.

It was about 1954 when a new food arrived on my block - "a pizza place." Pizza required a special oven not available in our little apartments.

I can't even estimate the amount of pizza I ate over the next 20 years. I wasn't alone in this. We all ate pizza - regularly - lots of pizza.

Yet obesity wasn't a problem.

We sat in front of the TV at night too. It was new after all. From the evening news until 11 PM, the TV was on. Fascinating technology to us. Addictive too, kind of like today's computer games.

Yet obesity wasn't a problem.

I know the prevailing memory is that we all moved much more back in the day.

NOTE:

I CANNOT comment on farm life or small town living or the newly created suburbs, but in the city, I believe our amount of "exercise" has been exaggerated.

Yes, we walked to school. It was less than one mile away. So what did that burn? Less than 200 calories in the course of a day?

We took public transportation. The bus stop was at the corner. So was the subway. Then we sat down, unless it was rush hour of course.

There were no shopping malls to stroll through. Department stores (downtown and reached by bus) had multiple floors, all reached by escalator.

To find playmates we just had to walk to the next apartment or out on the street. It was the baby boom. Kids were everywhere.

We played outside, but hopscotch, red light-green light and mother may I weren't big calorie burners. There was stick-ball in the street, but unless you were running the bases or chasing after a home run occasionally, mostly you were standing around. After age 12 most girls began just sitting on the "stoop" watching the boys play.

[Add a Blog Entry](#)

See Today's Featured Member Blog Posts

More Blogs by BROOKLYN_BORN

[Now I can add one more event to my "Anniversary Dates" to forget - 6/7/2021](#)

[Avoiding Our Wedding Anniversary - 6/4/2021](#)

[Multitasking for Safety - Plus Remembrance and Reflection - 6/1/2021](#)

[Taps Across America - The National Moment of Remembrance - Monday 5/31/21 3PM - 5/30/2021](#)

[View All >](#)

We did have roller skates, but using them could be dangerous. I remember attending the funeral of a 7 year old friend, hit by a car speeding to "make the light." His name was Steven. His mother brought his skates to me the following week and I used them. They were very nice skates, but I used them on the sidewalk. There were no miles of skating.

There were no organized sports.

Yet obesity wasn't a problem.

Now for the adults.

Parents ate lots of pizza too and I often hear how jobs were more physically active back then which burned all those carbs.

Maybe for the men. Some worked in construction, but most fathers on my block worked in factories – machine shops or assembly lines. Some heavy lifting required, but not much cardio.

The women? Stay at home Moms were the norm, but many worked to supplement the family income. They were office clerks, typists or sat at a sewing machine all day in the garment industry. Not very different from the computer jobs of today.

Yet obesity wasn't a problem.

If you've read this far in my trip down memory lane, thank you.

I do have my own opinion of the cause of our supersizing of society.

Lunch used to be one slice of pizza and a coke (which cost all of 25 cents back in 1956). I don't remember any toppings other than cheese either. Maybe it would have cost more, so we avoided them? The coke came in a small paper cup.

Yes, our portion sizes have increased on an unbelievable scale. As the decades went by, my serving of pizza went from 1 to 2 to 3 or four slices at a time and the pizza was now a "supreme." No longer was the source a family owned pizza place with a recipe from the old country, but a national chain with who knows what ingredients and additives.

This pattern continued with other types of food as well. I remember eating a hamburger and fries when McD's first opened. It was lunch. Does anyone eat that original size hamburger for lunch today?

Then there's this problem

"even the way we look at fat has changed. The problem of over-nutrition is so severe that those of ideal weight (between 18 and 25 on the BMI index) now look malnourished to us. Obesity is so prevalent we can't even see it straight"

Source: "Prepare for the Pill that will make you thin?" (warning, a REALLY long article)

www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/prepare-for-the-pill-to-make-you-thin/ar-AA8tzBK?ocid=mailsignout

Sadder still are the comments like "Marilyn Monroe would be considered obese today." NO, Marilyn had a 24" waist. She may have been a size 12 according to 1950s sizing, but today she would be a size 4 or 6.

When the article describes hospitals having to double the size of their beds and other examples of necessary accommodations as society becomes fatter and fatter, it is very discouraging.

Even the title of the article reflects a sense of hopelessness. It's the search for a magic pill.

Perhaps it's unrealistic to expect a mass migration to Spark People, but adding some kind of magic hormone doesn't seem like a good idea to me.

So I'll end this longest blog of my whole Spark existence, have my 300 calorie breakfast, go for a run and have my post workout snack. No pizza for lunch either.

These Virginia hills are a long way from Brooklyn.

Share This Post With Others

[Report Inappropriate Blog](#)

Member Comments About This Blog Post



CD13758606

A walk down memory lane.
2325 days ago



BOILHAM

Thanks for the memories. I grew up in CT, my DW grew up in the Bronx. At 14, when she finally moved to CT, she was afraid of grass and open fields. Really. Her stories about life in the city, she's your age, are identical.

My memories of eating way back then was that we ate more as a function of life. Sure we enjoyed it. We weren't perhaps as much eating out of boredom, or purely for pleasure it seems to me. Then, the convenience and supersizing of less nutritious, more harmful food to increase that pleasure factor. Eating at those bad places becomes the hip, fun social activity. No wonder we look like we do.

For me, I battle to eat more for sustenance, and not for pleasure. It's a difficult battle, you need a strong mind and a tolerance for being considered a health nut of sorts to succeed. Hard not to buckle to peer pressure during the holidays, or even a night out with friends. But, I struggle on. Thanks for another great blog. - Vic

2325 days ago



CAROLCRC

I showed my daughter my college graduation picture (young, healthy in the 70's). She asked if I was anorexic!
2326 days ago



NANCYANNE55

I linked your blog from your daughter's blog. Which she referred to me in a comment on my blog "It's paid for whether you eat it or not". So we have a just a couple of degrees or separation, here. :-)

I recently did an interview with one of my daughters classmates for the high school newspaper. He is from Serbia and was asking my opinion, as a personal trainer and health coach, on the reason for the obesity epidemic in the US. My answer was exactly what you said here: Our portion sizes are too big. We have grown accustomed to eating too much. Super sized is now regular sized (a title to another blog I did years ago).

When I was a kid, back in the 70's and early 80's, an adult meal at a fast food chain was the size of a kids meal now. And that was a rare treat. Now, eating a double bacon cheeseburger with an extra-large fries and chocolate shake is a normal lunch for a lot of people.

Hello? That's enough calories for lunch for my whole family!

Yeah, I think they are putting garbage in our foods that wasn't there before. Chemicals and trans fats sure aren't helping. But the biggest problem is that we eat too much. Plain and simple.
2326 days ago



MISCHAKEO

That was interesting and true. We can't even recognize normal weight and consider it too skinny] today. I grew up in HI where for many years of my childhood we only had one pizza place for the whole island. Oversizing is definitely a problem..but there is a market for it, unfortunately.
2326 days ago



ICEWYNDE

<http://wholehealthsource.blogspot.com/2008/12/us-weight-lifestyle-and-diet-trends.html>

This page shows the trends:

- Obesity way up
- Total calories up by about 250/day
- Sugar and HFCS consumption up a lot (did they have HFCS in the 50's?)

So, you are right: Pizza today isn't what we used to eat back then.

Well Said!

2326 days ago



**BBEAGAN**

Too true. I see TV commercials for double and triple burgers at fast food places and wonder who eats those!? When did A burger become too little? And I have interviewed dozens of families about food over the last years, and what people consider 'cooking' has changed a lot. People think of themselves as cooking home made meals when they are heating stuff in a microwave. I grew up with 3 meals a day, all made from scratch, and no snacks, ever. I'm not convinced portions were smaller then, for me, but I still eat basically that same way.

Though I don't know much about it, I am intrigued by the claims that food itself is also very different from decades ago, contributing to obesity rates. I grew up on an organic farm - we knew exactly what was in our meat, eggs, dairy, etc. Today, I can't see how people eating commercially produced foods (not even the processed stuff, but basic meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, veg) could NOT be affected by the amount of growth hormones fed to food animals, the chemicals used on produce, and the pseudo-estrogens in the water supply, leaching from plastics etc.

In addition to portion sizes changing, I'm not sure a slice of beef today is the same thing it was 45 years ago...
2327 days ago

**TERI-RIFIC**

Great blog and so true! This blog brought back memories. Did you have skates that were metal with a skate key, that clamped on your shoes? I remember walking to the pizza place (Campiti's) with my Dad to get a take out pizza. Don Campiti tossed the dough while standing in the front window and Don Campiti was really cute! How about the fact that you used to get ice cream OR candy - not candy mixed into ice cream!
2327 days ago

**1STBUCKETITEM**

Great blog! Yes, I do remember all of those things down memory lane. You are so observant and I enjoyed all of your scenarios along the way. It's not just the portions, it's also the way the food is made today with all of the preservatives, sugars, artificial ingredients, and carbs that we eat. Don't get me going on the way the media has corrupted our thought patterns.... We have to



dig deep and go back to the simpler, old-fashioned values.
2327 days ago

**DOVESEYES**

portions are way over the top nowadays.
2327 days ago

**MARYJEANSL**

I got a lot more exercise as a kid than most kids today, for sure. I walked to school, and it was quite a long distance (not uphill barefoot in the snow, however). I know no child would be allowed to walk that far now. After school we played outside every day unless the weather was bad. In the summers we were outside at the park, all day, every day. Also portions were much smaller, no question about that. I really do think that kids today miss out.
2327 days ago

**PHEBESS**

Love this blog!

I also love pizza. When we lived on St. Thomas, we'd frequently go to a little NY pizza spot - really, the owner was a former New Yawkah. Anyway, the slices were HUGE - so our solution, DH would order one slice with sausage extra cheese. I'd order one slice of veggie pizza, minimal cheese. And then we'd share a slice of sausage, normal cheese. Minimized both of our pizza consumption, gave us that much loved pizza taste, and I got in probably 2 portions of chopped vegs. (And drank water only.)

I don't think I've eaten even a whole "personal" pizza in my life, waaaaaay too much food for me!

(And talk about super-sized foods - couldn't finish my plate of chicken rice Vietnam style last night. Ate as much as I could to feel full but not stuffed, picked out the rest of the chicken, and left the rest. Told the staff it was delicious but too big a plate for me!)
2327 days ago

**ONEKIDSMOM**

I was also thinking not just of portion size but of how long we waited between meals. We ate breakfast before school. Lunch at noon. And after school small snack at 3:30, supper at 5:30... then nothing, MAYBE a small "bedtime snack" of a glass of milk.
2327 days ago

**LIVEDAILY**

I agree with you - Portion distortion and expectations are the major contributor of obesity. One of the hardest things to get used to is correct serving sizes! There's a tremendous learning curve in retraining your mind and your mouth to be satisfied with what is considered the correct amount of food.

I do think we were more active when we were younger though. I was always outside in the fresh air - roller skating, riding my bike, walking, swimming, playing with friends. Even in jr. high, the

neighborhood group would get together during the summer to play flashlight tag at night. The parents were all for it, we had boundaries, and there was never any hanky-panky (we were still innocents back then!), but we were running around and keeping busy!!

There aren't a lot of similar opportunities for adults to play the way we used to as kids, so we have to exercise. I'm still searching for my favorite exercise to do. I enjoy walking, but don't do nearly enough.

Good blog!

Blizzard here in NJ!!
2327 days ago



ALICIA363

Wow! Great blog!



2327 days ago



LINDAKAY228

You are so right about what has happened to America! Sizes are so much bigger. I grew up in a small town and I was overweight but not as big as I later became. My mom cooked with lots of carbs and margarine and for an army I think. But I also remember lots of exercise including walking wherever I needed to go and riding my bike and the roller skates with the key we wore around our neck. We roller skated in areas that were safe. Grocery stores were closed on Sundays and I remember doing tricks on my bike in an empty parking lot on Sunday afternoon. Lots of walking. I was an avid reader but also spent so much time outdoors. Your post of the "old" days really brings back memories.

2327 days ago



WUMPASTAR

Very very interesting article, thank you for that.

2327 days ago



ADRIENALINE

What an awesome blogger you are! I loved reading your perspective.

I am Manhattan Born but we walked every where because we couldn't stand giving up the parking space. In a vacation to NY recently (we live in Cali now) My husband and I walked over 20,000 steps each day that we were there. Mass transit definitely gives you more steps than walking to the garage to get in your car that is right outside your kitchen. And we certainly ate a lot less back then.

2327 days ago



KANSASROSE67

Your blogs are always so thoughtful and interesting. I'm the demographic of your daughter and although I grew up on a farm where I did do occasional heavy labor, it wasn't all the time or every day. Like her, I spent a lot of time reading, watching tv, playing board games or playing recess games that didn't burn a lot of calories. And also, like her, we ate out rarely, and when we did, it was a small portion.

Another factor I think is huge is snacking. The way I was raised, there was no constant grazing on snacks. We sat down and ate three meals as a family, and we were allowed a snack in the afternoon, but that was it.

2327 days ago



PHOENIX1949



2327 days ago



ROSEWAND

Our societal issues with obesity are complex to be sure. You definitely touch on the most significant reasons. We have been convinced to turn our food preparations over to those whose main motivation is not our health but their bottom line.

Both "Salt, Sugar, And Fat: How The Food Giants Hooked US" and "The End Of Overeating" do a great job of explaining what is going on in food manipulation.

I have found the more we cook at home from scratch, the less overeating is an issue. The average person has been conditioned that cooking is time consuming and clean up is a nuisance. Neither has to be true.

We can reclaim our right to eat healthy food in





moderate amounts and reap the benefits.
2327 days ago



GIVEUP30

I could eat anything when younger I was thin but ate the potato, ice cream all the goodies I could get after marriage that was out outing with the boys and we ate so much pizza but then age 55 came and I notice my clothes were getting tighter hummm still like pizza once in three or so



years...
2327 days ago



FORZACHANDMATT

I grew up in Queens in the 70's and I can relate to most of what you wrote in this blog - I truly think it's the portion sizes and expectations
2327 days ago



SUBMOM2

Great post!

I agree, portion size has a lot to do with it, and I also think people in general are eating out more. Even people who "cook" at home use a lot more packaged, processed items than our moms did. That convenience comes at a price!

2327 days ago



DR1939

Just a reminder, the adults you are talking about lived through the depression and war years when food was scarce for many people. This had a lasting impact on their weight and height.
2327 days ago



KELLIEBEAN

Well Said! EXCELLENT BLOG!!!!

I think back to my childhood in the mid-70s and coming of age in the early 80s and yes, the portion sizes are ridiculous now compared to then. My two sisters and I shared a medium size (medium size back then) fry with our small hamburgers.

True, we weren't running around enough to be considered in the calorie burning zone but compared to my nieces, nephews and their friends' activity levels now, we were burning it up back then. It is very sad.

You are always spot on my friend!

2327 days ago



CD4114015

BOTH you and DD wrote excellent blogs today and her comment is awesome! You and I are approx the same age so I know of what you speak! I STILL remember going to the pizza "parlor" and having that pizza brought to the table...ooeey and gooey! My DAD loved it but he was always naturally thin!

I am going to save your blog for reference and DD's comment and the LONG article after I read it. I feel that learning about THIN and HEALTHY eating is even more "fun" now at my age since it is the first time I am learning it all when I should have learned it all 60+ years ago. I appreciate EVERYONE's great blogs like this!



2327 days ago



GINIEMIE

You know, the wheel chairs have to be wider too, and Erik and I have had to refuse pushing some chairs. I can't because of my back and Erik's right side is paralyzed and where he can control a standard chair with a "normal" sized person he cannot steer a wide wheel chair. I grew up one of 10, we got television when I was in the 8th grade, we were chased outside a lot to play neighborhood ball, rake leaves, work in the garden, (me) to get the laundry from the basement then hang it and then my younger sister and I would go gather it, fold it-not much energy there, and take it in the house. I remember the first time I went to McD was when I had my driver's license and I drove my younger brother (a paper boy) to cash in his gift certificate. I'm sure we spent more on gas than it was worth. I got a basic burger, we shared his fries and I didn't drink coke-dad said it was bad for us. But you are right we didn't move around as much as we thought we did. BTW I rode the bus to school.

Saving the article for later. Thanks for a reality check





2327 days ago

Comment edited on: 1/26/2015 10:31:38 AM



MJZHERE



Perception - what has changed and what has become accepted. Along with giant portions, big sizes masquerading as smalls, there are so many other things that have also changed...and I don't think they are all for the good. Personally I am tired of having to pay for the accommodations of other people's choices.

2327 days ago



HAYBURNER1969



If I could find an animated GIF of clapping hands, I would add that, too.

Even living in the suburbs in the 1970's and early 80's (and of course, you know all about this, since you are my mother!) we didn't move around all that much. I walked home from a school. A mile. I went to skating lessons and gymnastics lessons once a week, but again, most of the time was spent standing and waiting for a turn. As you well know, I was not exactly Elaine Zayak or Mary Lou Retton, practicing triple jumps and back flips. Almost none of us in those classes were.

Soccer, softball team - again, quite a lot of time just standing around, waiting to see if the ball would come to you. (and in my case, praying it didn't.)

ETA (edited to add): My friends and I were not "outdoors all day." I spent a ton of time watching TV, reading, or playing board games (and later computer games) with my friends. We would also play outside too, on the swingset, or play group games where we'd chase each other around, but it's not like we did that for hours at a time, every day. Maybe once a week?

Your observations about the portion sizes are all too true. I remember what a treat it was to even GET to go to McDonalds, or the pizza place, or the ice cream place - and when we did, I got a cheeseburger, or one slice of pizza, or a SINGLE scoop of ice cream in a cone - which was not the gargantuan "single" scoop of today. It looked like a single scoop.

And you know - it was enough!

E again TA: Check out what a "serving" of the pie I served after dinner is these days...

http://www.sparkpeople.com/mypage_public_journal_individual.asp?blog_id=5862816

2327 days ago

Comment edited on: 1/26/2015 9:35:53 AM

Add Your Comment to the Blog Post

Leave encouragement, a question, or anything else relevant to this post. All blog comments must abide by SparkPeople's [Community Guidelines](#).

Subscribe to this blog

ADD AN EMOTICON

SPELL CHECK

Post Comment

Disclaimer: Weight loss results will vary from person to person. No individual result should be seen as a typical result of following the SparkPeople program.