

GWEN'S BLENDS

— SPICE HOUSE —

SPICE, THE VARIETY OF LIFE

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Happy New Year!

I hope to hear from you and, as always, I hope you enjoy this issue.

Enjoy!

Gwen

In this issue

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What's new

Why do we eat what we eat?

As I mentioned in last month's newsletter, I have been working on creating options for people who have sensitivities to certain ingredients such as gluten or fructan (the component of garlic and onion that irritates the stomach lining.)

As I have been learning more about these sensitivities, I began to wonder why there seem to be so many these days. When I was a kid, there were basically 3 major issues, peanut allergy, seafood allergy and something called PKU, (phenylketonuria) which was a genetic inability to process phenylalanine. I am not saying that there weren't others, just that those were the ones most talked about.

Nowadays, it seems like everyone is trying to avoid something in their diet. For some it is salt or sugar, which have long been known to impact blood pressure and insulin production. For others, however, it is something much more specific, such as garlic, gluten, or grapefruit (which interferes with the way certain medications are absorbed by the body).

If you ask the question "How did so many other sensitivity issues develop in such a relatively short time?" (evolutionarily speaking). You will get a variety of different answers:

1. Science got better at identifying root causes of what we used to call "sensitive stomachs".
2. As our diets changed to include more processed foods, our systems couldn't keep up.
3. As we began to engineer our food (creating new varieties, developing new methods for insect control, feeding our farm animals new diets, etc.) our systems couldn't tolerate this either.

I am sure there are many other opinions out there, and I am not here to pick a reason, but it is fairly clear that there is, at the

minimum, substantially more conversation about our food and how it makes us feel.

Perhaps a good place to start is a look at where we came from. Once upon a time, way, way back in the olden days, the first apes began to walk upright on two feet. It was slow going. For hundreds of thousands of years, our ancestors walked more like today's great apes, upright sometimes, but mostly hunched over, using their arms for balance and speed. These animals ate a raw diet, both plants and other animals (usually carrion). Raw diets take a ton of calories to consume and digest. They require large teeth and long intestines to absorb as much nutrition as possible.

At some point, about 1.9 million years ago, fire was first harnessed. With that skill, evolution kicked into high gear. We began walking more upright and using and making tools. Fire meant food could be cooked (providing 20-25% more nutrition). Fire meant warmth and protection from other animals. Cooked food meant less need for those huge teeth, and long intestines. Smaller teeth meant smaller jaws which left more room in the skull for bigger brains. Can you see where this is going?

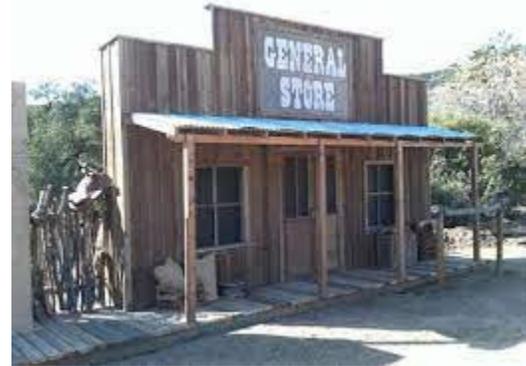
By the time that Homo sapiens had evolved, our bodies were designed to eat cooked food, our brains were more developed, our bodies had less fur, and our nomadic tendencies were short lived.

Most indigenous peoples ate a version of the same diet. Proteins obtained hunting, fishing or farming (legumes); vegetables, aromatics, as well as other spices and herbs foraged or farmed. This basic diet evolved in cultures all around the world and remained fairly constant until civilization evolved to a point where people put down roots, built permanent structures and with the time not spent moving around, began to spend time altering their food. Both by selective breeding (only using the plants and animals with the most desirable traits to procreate) and by altering the food itself. Baking was the first step, but once metal became available, the possibilities were limitless.

So now we have shot forward in time to about 5000 years ago. Most people still participated in sourcing their own food, (or they knew the people who did). Food was cooked, aromatics used for flavoring, but for the most part it was unadulterated. Food was consumed in the way it grew. Exploration fueled the next leap in cuisine as the explorers returned with exotic goods from around the world. New tastes, new flavors, maybe even new techniques for preserving food were shared, but our food was still basically the product of evolution with very minimal genetic meddling from humans.

As towns grew, and people began to specialize in specific trades, farmers markets replaced communal larders. People might have become more removed from the production of their food, but they still knew the producers. Refrigeration didn't exist so

shopping was a regular occurrence with large baskets and boxes full of fresh food that you picked up as you moved through the market, placed in your cart and moved on. Soon the General Stores appeared, creating permanent structures where you could pick up what you needed but food was still in giant barrels produced locally, and was measured out by the proprietor.



Oddly enough, one of the most pivotal inventions that took us from scooping grain from a barrel to grabbing a box of pasta off the shelf, was – **the Box!** Food that you could grab off of the shelf by yourself was the key to the first Grocery Store, and that would not have been possible with cardboard boxes and paper bags. One of the first, and certainly the most well-known was A&P. The full name was Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company and it is considered by many to be the OG of the modern grocery store. Decades later, we have seen the rise and fall of mom & pop stores, giant chains, and now we are in a sort of renaissance of the old school butchers, cheese shops and other specialty shops harking back to the old farmers' market days.

The difference in today's grocery stores from the old country store is the sheer number of products available, the number of shelf stable products, and the speed with which new products hit the shelves. How did we get to a point where a store can carry over 40,000 different items? There are many different factors that had an impact on food selection and that is where we will pick this up next month. Stay tuned!



Food Stories

Chicken and Waffles – who ever thought that would be a good idea? Apparently, someone very smart. While the

Pennsylvania Dutch had a version with stewed chicken and gravy, the current fried version was born in Harlem in 1938.

The first references of chicken fried in hot oil are found in “What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking” (published in 1881 and written by Abby Fisher). Thomas Jefferson’s contribution of a waffle iron brought over from France in the late 1790’s, combined with the Pennsylvania Dutch recipe for waffles laid the groundwork.

The original version was served at a place called “Dickie Wells” after its owner and founder Richard Wells (b. 1908) Richard was a tap dancer pulling in about 12 times the annual salary as most black men of the time. Realizing that his legs wouldn’t support him forever, he opened a restaurant, hoping to capitalize on his popularity with the club crowd. He ran one a very few places that served a late-night menu. Since closing time for most clubs was too late for dinner and too early for breakfast, Richard decided to serve them both at the same time (although his version usually came with a shot of bourbon).

Chicken and Waffles remained a mostly southern offering, appearing in several Harlem restaurants and in the deep south, but not too many other places until 1976 when Herb Hudson opened “Roscoe’s House of Chicken” in LA.

Hudson had grown up in Harlem and had moved west. He had ties to the Motown crowd, so his restaurant became popular with the music industry people and then, eventually everyone.

If you want to try making it on your own, try adding a little **Nate’s Nashville Hot** to your breading!

The Exchange

How about trying this?

Substitute **Gwen’s Blends Hot Chocolate** mix for cocoa in your chocolate cheesecake. (or add it to the standard one you’re doing.)

Add some **Everything Spice** or **Za’atar** to your next batch of bread or biscuits.

Sprinkle Some **Italian Seasoning** in your scrambled eggs or omelet.

Mix a tsp or two of **Baharat** in your peanut butter next time you make a sandwich.

What’s new at Gwen’s Blends

Check out our new Variety Packs!

Dip Assortment
Burger Seasoning
Chicken Seasoning
Snack mix Assortment

Each packet contains 6 single use servings of different varieties of blends to try along with a recipe.

\$15.00 each

Festivals

January

Taking the month off to re-charge.

February

February 3

South Riding Winter Festival

Community Center

12:00-4:00 PM

Know someone who would like to join us? Send their name and email to me and I’ll add them to the list.

Don’t want to hear from us anymore, let me know and I’ll remove you.

ggattsek@gmail.com



Check out the website www.gwensflavorblends.com

You never know when something new will show up in the store!