

PERSPOOKTIVES

Not all candy is created equal

All candy has a place; candy corn, for example, belongs on another planet



This story has a theme that I would like to make immediately clear: Candy corn should be removed from the planet.

I don't care if they burn it in a giant oven, send it to Pluto in a rocket or feed it all to Keiko, the sickly killer whale, but I think candy corn has no role in a post-industrial society.

Many people think it wouldn't be Halloween without candy corn. Not true. It wouldn't be Halloween without candy. Those horrible little incisor-shaped, yellow-orange pieces of sugar do not constitute candy.

On the other hand, the season does offer some worthwhile treats. While I didn't repeat my earlier pizza feat by eating nothing but candy for three days, I have sampled my unfair share of the sticky-sweet stuff.

Even when you remove candy corn from the scale, not all treats are equal. For example, Mentos, "the fresh maker," make me retch. A lot of it could have to do with those commercials in which a cocky Aryan flaunts authority in pantomime and badly dubbed dialogue.

Come to think of it, most candy commercials need to follow candy corn to a sugary grave. In fact, the only television spot that I remember fondly is that Snickers ad featuring a guy in the ocean who loses his swimsuit. The tagline: "Not going anywhere for a while?"

As it happens, Snickers also happens to

be one of the better types of candy out there. It's not because Snickers is "packed" with a half-dozen peanuts; it's because Snickers features chocolate.

Most candy can be cleanly divided between the good, chocolate category, and the bad, non-chocolate category. There are exceptions: Nerds and Gobstoppers are convenient ways to inject high levels of sugar into your system, for example. For the most part, however, chocolate is the only reason to pick up a piece of candy.

The reason is fairly simple: Real fruit tastes better than fruit flavoring. There is something comforting about that fake grape and apple flavor you can get from Jolly Ranchers, but most of the time I'd rather eat an apple than an inch-squared, rock-hard piece of sugar with "immense" flavor.

Within the realm of chocolate bars and other brown treats, there are still divisions to be made. My

friends have insisted that I exclude "quality" chocolate from the list, and the distinction seems fair. Once a person ventures into the realm of \$10 chocolate bars and coffee-flavored truffles, you aren't really talking about Halloween candy anymore. (Although if someone tells me there's a house giving out Ghiradelli bars, I'm going to pull on a clown costume and grab a garbage bag.)

Even if you exclude gourmet chocolate from the list, there is still a sharp distinction between good, fair and bad. If you are going to eat plain chocolate, it has to be good chocolate. There is no point in buying a Hershey's bar, which tastes little better than carob, when you can pick up a Three Musketeers bar and treat yourself to indescribable fluffy sugar on the side.

For the most part, good chocolate is synonymous with dark chocolate.

A Hershey's Special Dark costs the same as a regular Hershey's but tastes profoundly better. The differ-

ence is akin to the distinction between receiving a professional massage and having a

monkey throw ripe oranges at your back.

There is tasty milk chocolate as well. My personal favorite among the mainstream cocoa compounds is the Symphony bar. The commercials are still annoying, but the candy itself is smooth, creamy and far removed from monkey chow.

Generally, though, I would rather have the dark chocolate version of most candy bars. A Milky Way Dark is miles above its pale twin, and when it comes to Mounds and Almond Joy, I never feel like a nut.

All this consideration of candy might make it seem like I'm something of a glutton. Well, I admit my diet isn't waistline-friendly, but I don't run to 7-Eleven for a Kit Kat break every night. Most of the time, I don't want any candy.

Around Halloween, an innate urge to scrounge for safely wrapped goods comes over me, though. I wish I could have fond memories of apples and fresh-baked bread instead of Mars bars and Hershey's Kisses, but society and my sweet tooth have prevented that.

Oh well. I could certainly start a tradition of baking muffins every Halloween, but I'm content to drink a beer and eat a Baby Ruth.

And when I finish, I can lie back in my chair and dream of the day when barrels filled with candy corn are sealed up and sent to the bottom of the ocean.

Mike Schmierbach is the editorial editor for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

OPINION



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