



Food Values

Fanaticize, we must.

My face is washed with blueberries and cream; my skin scrubbed with almonds and oatmeal, my body layered with banana and tangerines. Where am I? On a tropical island? A bit part in *9 1/2 Weeks*? In the middle of a food fight? Nope. I'm just taking a shower.

Every day women use tastebud-tantalizing body products in hopes of smoothing, cleansing, and peeling away any signs of age, hair, or, for that matter, identity. It seems that, according to Clairol Herbal Essences Organic shampoo ads (read orgasmic), that a woman can enjoy (publicly no less), the epitome of sexual pleasure through the simple steps of wash, rinse, repeat. (I tried it, it didn't work).

We come away from our baths smelling like a balanced meal, and yet, our empty bellies belie the fullness we should feel. In a culture of denial, we are no more eating these foods than we are publicly experiencing orgasms. In fact, it seems like what we are buying for and using on our bodies, are reminders of some of the very things we aren't allowed to eat or to experience, at least not without a full serving of guilt.

Once upon a time, being "bad" meant doing something off limits sexually. Today, when a woman says she's been "bad" or "good" it usually means she's either broken or stayed on her diet. But, vicariously at least, through the right combination of bath products, she can feel as if she's yielding to her yearnings without widening her waistline.

But what does this tell her? What does this naming bath products after foods really mean? I think it means that we are reminded, in the simplest of ways, that some foods are alright and some are off limits; that we must, at all times, maintain self-control, or else we will surely fail to live up to the social definition of what is beautiful – meaning unrealistically thin. Taunted, teased, and tempted as we are to indulge in that crème caramel soufflé, we can maintain our waistlines and self-respect by buying it as a bath gel instead of delving into it as a dessert. Eat, we may not. Fanaticize, we must.

That sucks. Now, has anybody seen my double chocolate soufflé lip-gloss?

Debra Merskin, Ph.D. is an associate professor in the School of Journalism & Communication at UO.



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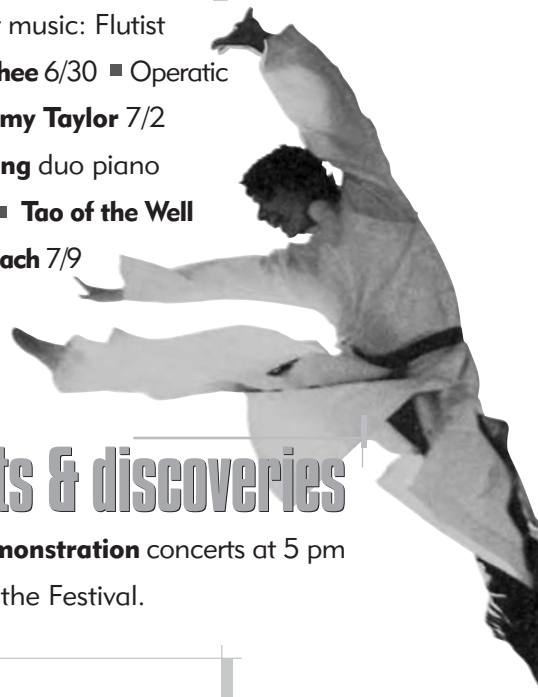


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