



TRASH TALK

SUSAN TRIPLETT

Avoiding junk mail

In previous Trash Talk columns we have talked a lot about ways to reuse, reduce and recycle plastic. There have been many suggestions for reducing use of plastic and maybe you have adopted a belief of your own that this is the right thing to do. I personally have benefited greatly from knowledge gained since learning of the challenges we have with trash in our own communities. But for some reason, when I considered my own paper waste, I had much less concern. Why? Well, because it is biodegradable, and it can be recycled and used for other products.

Just because I can recycle it or because it will eventually break down and go back into the earth, why should I tolerate so much paper waste in my own personal life? In my journey of becoming more aware and sensitive to the amount of trash I produce, I was compelled to find my own solution to reducing paper waste.

Did you know...

- The annual production and transport of junk mail consumes more energy than 2.8 million cars idling 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- The amount of greenhouse gases produced in the yearly production, delivery and disposal of junk mail is equivalent to the output of 11 coal-fired power plants.
- Annually, more than 100 million trees are used to make junk mail — that's the equivalent of clear cutting the entire Rocky Mountain National Park every four months.
- Approximately 44 percent of junk mail goes to landfills. State and local governments (and their citizens) spend hundreds of millions of dollars annually to bury junk mail.

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BETWEEN THE ROWS

WENDY SCHMIDT

Ferns are fabulous

Recently I had the opportunity to visit the Columbia River Gorge. It is an interesting place that is home to many unique plants and geologic features. The rocks and waterfalls are all beautiful, formed millions of years ago.

The ferns are exquisite, and look prehistoric. The growth is lush, rather like a rainforest. Most ferns grow in damp, shady areas in woods, ravines, and rocky crevices. They can be recognized by the shape of their leaves, known as fronds. These have a single midrib, with small leaflets that branch off from either side. The leaflets are sometimes delicately cut into toothed edges, or they can be gently rounded into lobed edges.

Many of the ferns that we are familiar with grow from a creeping underground stem called a rootstock. Early in the spring when they first appear above the ground, the fronds are tightly curled.

As the fronds begin to uncurl they look like the neck of a violin (which is how they got the popular name of fiddlehead). Another name for the young fern is crosier, from its resemblance to a bishop's crosier or staff.

Ferns belong to an ancient group of plants that flourished before flowering plants appeared on earth. In the Coal Age, giant tree ferns grew in hot, swampy, low areas. Free forests of these ferns covered a large part of the Earth's surface and the remains of these fern forests are what make up the bulk of the world's coal deposits. In fact, imprints of fern leaves are often found in coal.

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REAL FOOD, REAL EASY

By **Daniel Neman**
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

This one is about real food. Not fancified, froufrou, food-writer food. No scallops of veal or veal of scallops, no soupcons of creme anglaise or artistically arranged swirls of demiglace.

This one is about real food. This is about the food you cook when you come home after your commute was longer than your work day, after you noticed your boss hinting about job openings you might like at other companies, when you have to take one kid to hockey practice and another to Girl Scouts and another to band practice, and you're pretty sure you only have two kids.

I asked my colleagues in the Features department about their go-to foods, the food they cook when everyone is hungry and they just don't have the time or the energy or maybe even the ingredients to make their usual Tuesday night foie gras terrine.

They responded with delightful, easy-to-make ideas that tasted great. Each one, incidentally, included a starch, a source of protein and vegetables. When you're tired and hungry and pressed for time, apparently, you want the nutritional requirements for an entire meal in one dish.

Tikka Masala Naan Pizzas begins with pre-made naan flatbreads, which you then spread with tikka masala sauce that you spoon on straight from the jar.

This dish works so well because that tikka masala sauce from a jar can be awfully good, if you like spicy food. And while the store-bought naan can't match a freshly made sample from a restaurant, it is certainly good enough for our purposes.

I added cooked chicken and sauteed mushrooms to the naan pizza (which is to say the non-pizza), topped it with shredded mozzarella cheese and added a few leaves of spinach more for visual appeal than flavor. A few minutes in a hot oven melted the cheese and browned the edges of the naan.

Sticking to the Italian-ish theme, I next made Hahnlini. This is clearly the creation of a woman who has two children: It is fast, efficient and filling. It looks nice, and it tastes good, too.

Hahnlini begins with a pretty form of pasta — bowtie, shell or fusilli (which the recipe's creator calls "scroodle noodles"). This you boil as usual, but a couple of minutes before it will be done, you add some broccoli to let it cook with the pasta.

Genius, right? You drain the pasta-'n'-broccoli and toss it with chunks of cooked chicken, garlic salt, butter and shredded Parmesan cheese.

As the recipe puts it, "serve on pasta plates, bowls or regular plates. and tell your family to be happy about it."

Next up is instant ramen with a difference. Perfect Instant Ramen takes your standard packet of ramen — I bought one for 25 cents — adds broccoli, poaches an egg in it and tops it with butter, scallions, sesame seeds and, um, American cheese.

And finally, I made a quesadilla that is defined less by specific ingredients than whatever you happen to have left over in the fridge. That's what happens when you're pressed for time and you need a go-to dinner.

TIKKA MASALA NAAN PIZZA

Yield: 4 servings

- 4 naan flatbreads
- 1½ cups tikka masala simmer sauce (from a jar)
- 4 chicken thighs, cooked and diced
- 1¼ cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 6 large mushrooms, sliced and sauteed



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Quesadillas

- ½ cup fresh spinach, washed

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place the naan on baking sheets and heat for 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from oven and spread with the tikka masala sauce. Top with the chicken, mushrooms and cheese. Place whole leaves of spinach on top. Bake until cheese is melted and naan is browned at the edges.

— Recipe by Gabe Hartwig

HAHNILINI

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

- 1 pound bowtie pasta, shell pasta or fusilli
- Florets from 1 head broccoli, chopped into bite-size pieces
- 2 to 3 cooked chicken breasts, diced
- Garlic salt, to taste
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Cook pasta according to package directions. During the last 2 to 3 minutes of boiling, add the broccoli. Drain. Add chicken, garlic salt, butter and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Toss. Serve on pasta plates, bowls or regular plates, and tell your family to be happy about it.

— Recipe by Valerie Schremp Hahn

PERFECT INSTANT RAMEN

Yield: 1 serving

- ¾ cup broccoli florets
- 1 pack ramen noodles with flavor packet

(save on sodium by using ½ packet)

- 1 large egg
- ½ tablespoon butter
- 2 slices American cheese
- ¼ teaspoon toasted sesame seeds
- ½ scallion, green part only, thinly sliced on the bias

1. Bring 2½ cups of water to a boil in a small saucepan. Add the broccoli and cook for 2 minutes. Add the noodles and cook 2 minutes. Add the flavor packet and continue to cook 30 more seconds.

2. With the broth at a low simmer, carefully add the egg. Do not stir; pull the noodles over the egg and let sit for 3 minutes to poach.

3. Transfer everything to a serving bowl, add the butter, cheese and sesame seeds, and mix everything all together. Garnish with scallions.

— Adapted by Amy Bertrand from a New York Times recipe by Roy Choi

WHAT'S IN THE FRIDGE

QUESADILLA

Yield: 1 serving

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 2 flour tortillas
- 1 cup cooked broccoli florets
- 4 sliced mushrooms, sauteed
- ½ large tomato, diced
- ¼ cup shredded cheese, such as Colby Jack

Note: These fillings are only suggestions. Use whatever you have leftover in the refrigerator.

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Sometimes you just can't go back

They say that you can't go back.

I believe that I attest to that in so many ways regarding home, school and work as I look back over my life in relationship to these days of the past.

Why it cannot be, we question, but would we really want to go back to the situations in which we found ourselves if given the choice?

Normally we would say "Yes!" with enthusiasm and then rethink the negatives against our memories of the good.

The house in which I was born still stands but it's not the same in that it has been en-



DORY'S DIARY

DOROTHY SWART FLESHMAN

croached upon on both sides by other buildings and its front porch removed. The house has aged along with myself and I question the wisdom of such a return. Besides, I'm no longer three to seven years of age and

my parents aren't there. Should they be and I but a child, look at how much of life I would have lost. Would I want to be a child forever?

The house on the hill that I loved so dearly for more than 50 years still stands as well, but without my family and the strength of youth I can see why I could not stay. It was memories of my families that had made it special.

In between these two homes were many more, apparently some rentals where memories tie me to "Can I go back?" and each one shakes its head for one reason or another, primarily in that they no longer exist whether home, school, or work.

The dwelling on Adams Avenue where the highway formed the town's main street, was removed with a motel built in its place. The huge Goodnough house in Island City with its many rooms was cleared away for storage units and that town's three-room school with its hand-powered merry-go-round lost its battle against time and place.

You can't go back.

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