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MY TURN

■ Wayne Chan



A diet fit for a frog

I am on a diet.

I feel like I say that a lot. Actually, you can probably figure out how old I am by the number of times I say I'm on a diet every year. It's like counting the rings in the cross section of a tree.

Ah, you see on this ring here, in 2007, he was back on a diet, but if you look closely, he falls off the wagon here after going to an all-you-can-eat pizza place. Then you don't see another ring until late 2008, which we unfortunately refer to as the pasta-zoic era.

So yes, I'm back on a diet. This time, I'm on a low-carb diet. It's not Atkins. It's not the caveman diet or the Mediterranean diet. If I recall, it is called the "If-it-looks-good-and-is-full-of-flavor-it's-absolutely-not-allowed" diet.

The problem I'm having with this low-carb diet, being Asian, is that it's not easy counting calories or carbs when eating Chinese food. Before you say it, I know I could live to age 100 if I just decided to eat only bok choy and tofu. Wait, Bok Choy and Tofu? Is that an Asian hip-hop group?

And yes, I know fried rice and noodles are loaded with carbs, so those are off the list. Setting aside the thought that a life without fried rice or noodles leaves very few reasons left for living, I try my best to figure out what is okay to eat.

It's not as easy as you think.

For example, take lotus root. I like lotus root. My wife Maya knows how to cook it with some pork in a dish that's just out of this world. But is lotus root high in carbs? It's a root, right? Well carrots are a root and they're low in carbs, but so are potatoes, which are high in carbs. So, which is it?

Of course, I'm sure a bunch of you are already on your smartphones looking up how many carbs are in lotus root. Don't worry — I've done it for you.

According to my internet search, raw lotus root has 1.4 carbs per 0.3 ounces. That's the answer, right? But there's the problem — I have no idea. Why is it specifying "raw" lotus root? I've never eaten lotus root raw. I haven't been in a situation where I went swimming in a pond, happened upon a lily pad, and started gnawing on the lotus root underneath. I eat them cooked.

So what happens to the carb count when one cooks lotus root? I cannot locate that information at all. Does the carb count skyrocket to 10? Does it drop to zero? Why would the carb count change based on whether it's cooked or not? And if the answer is that it doesn't, then why even specify raw at all?

These are the questions I have, and that's just for one vegetable! Later I read that lotus root is loaded with starch, but it is low on the glycemic index. Wait, what? So, what they're saying is that lotus root, while it may have a lot of starch — which until now I thought meant it was high in carbs — it has a low glycemic score that means it doesn't raise your blood sugar quickly, which is a good thing?

Well, if that's the case, I need to find a lot of starchy foods with low glycemic scores. Let's see ...

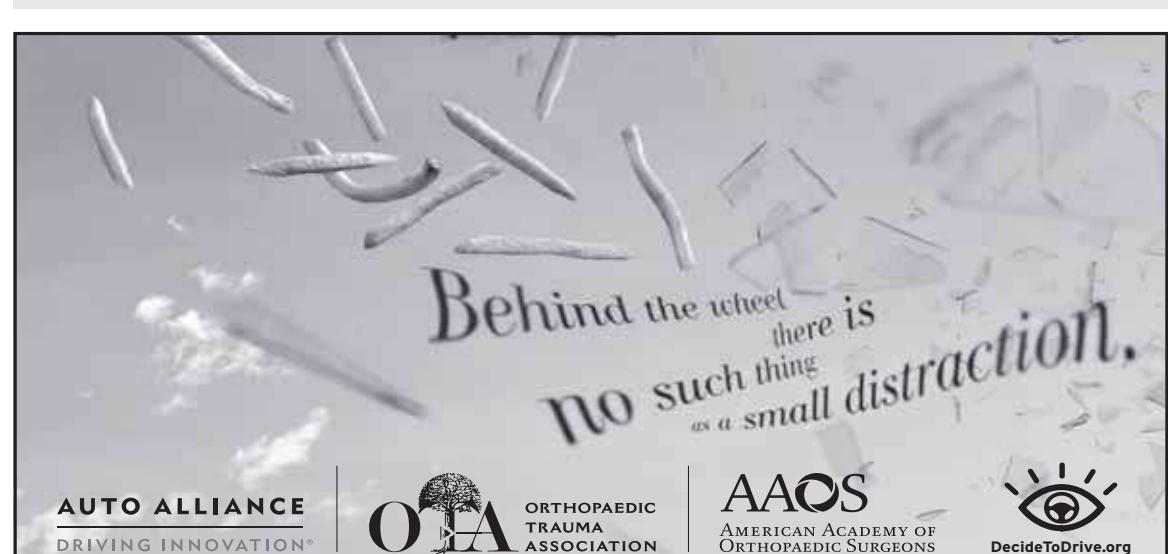
- ♦ Donuts! Nope.
- ♦ Pizza! Nope, not that either.
- ♦ Hash Browns! Shoot.
- ♦ Donuts! I just wanted to check again to be doubly sure.

Apparently, lotus root is one vegetable I like that actually fits in my diet.

So tonight I'm eating roasted lotus root covered in a delectable sauce of puréed lotus root, accompanied by mashed lotus root sitting on a medley of sautéed lotus root.

And for tomorrow, bok choy and tofu.

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