

Holiday Food for Thought

Deb Lemire, Epitome Magazine



Both my most favorite and least favorite parts of the holidays has always been the food.

First, there are so many wonderful smells and delicious recipes that you look forward to and wait for all year. My aunt always makes homemade chocolates and my favorites are her chocolate peanut butter buckeyes.

But my most favorite holiday food is my grandma's *potica*. A nut roll made from a recipe with Gram's own personal touch and its Slovenian roots all rolled into one; just the right mix of flavors, not too sweet with lots of nuts. Christmas would not be Christmas without Gram's *potica*. Gram would make one for each of our families. We try to make our roll last as long as possible, but it never makes it to Boxing Day. Gram had five children. And even as our individual families grew, she would continue to make one for every household; whether it was your college dorm or your newlywed apartment. From those 5 children Gram has 16 grandchildren. That's a lot of nuts! (Literally, but that's a different story.) In the last few years of her life Gram was not able to make her *potica* because of ill health, so my aunt had taken on the duty and continues to do so since Gram has passed. It's not exactly the same, but she is the one who makes the buckeyes, so it's pretty darn close!

My least favorite part starts in October. Everywhere you look it seems, there is a magazine with some fabulous, mouth watering dessert or delicacy on the front cover. As the holiday's get closer the push to create amazing meals that will delight the senses and send your family into dizzying, euphoric states of ecstasy gets more intense.

And even though it is a challenge to suddenly find time in your schedule to be that creative; even if you enjoy cooking whether or not you are particularly good at it; even though you generally are the one who has to do all the shopping for these recipes and all the clean up after the creation is complete...It would all be worth it, if you were allowed to actually enjoy your masterpiece along with everyone else.

But you can't. Because right next to that front page picture of the "latest must have on your holiday table" dessert, is a quote from inside "how to avoid those extra holiday pounds!"

So we go through the holidays being pulled in two directions. Wanting to cook something special for our family maybe because we enjoy it or maybe we just enjoy making the extra effort for them during this time of year. And at the same time we go through the season miserable because we feel guilty licking the damn spoon once in a while. We hold our wooden spoons in the air and shout "Why?!" and "It's not fair!"

And we are right. It's not fair. And I will tell you why.

Now I don't know that the women's magazines purposefully seek to betray us. In fact it is more likely their editors feel they do just the opposite. But we are so used to these mixed messages we barely recognize the damage they do to us as women in our society; a complacency rooted in our patriarchal culture. Okay, you're thinking---*what kind of feminist rant are we in for now. For crying out loud, they are just innocent magazines (and let's not forget all the fitness commercials) trying to make a buck. They don't do any harm.* But that is not exactly true. (Well the 'trying to make a buck' part is.)

What happens to us when we are subject to these mixed messages? Messages that tell us to put ourselves last, that we don't deserve the same goodness that everyone else does. We start to feel guilty. And that guilt begins to manifest as anxiety and negative feeling about how we look and how we perceive ourselves as a person. And that *is* damaging. Not just to ourselves, but to our daughters that witness and ultimately imitate our self sabotage. Ensuring the cycle continues.

So this holiday season I want you to keep in mind a couple simple things they don't tell you in those magazine or commercials. First of all, it is perfectly natural for mammals to gain some weight in the winter; just as it is natural for mammals to shed that weight in the spring. Dieting only interferes with your body's ability to take care of itself and be healthy.

And secondly, your great aunt Mary baked that homemade pie from scratch, not because she enjoys slaving in the kitchen, but because she loves you and she *enjoys* watching you enjoy it!

So sit down and share a piece of pie with great Aunt Mary. After all, how many more pies will there be? But most importantly, make sure you invite your daughter to share a piece with you too.