

## What Have You Got to Lose?

Yesterday on the television, on a quiet Sunday in May, assuming you were in the mood for such an overload, you could have watched the Redwings skate against the Blackhawks, the Celtics-Magic game or the Lakers-Rockets game, women's professional golf and men's professional golf, the Twins against the Yankees and the Brewers playing the Cardinals. All of this was available without any extra sports package or pay per view specialties. Throw in those niche outlets and you would have added softball, tennis, wrestling and poker, billiards, Italian cycling, trap shooting and soccer. I'm sure NASCAR was somewhere on TV but that's more like watching someone play a video game. I'm gaining weight just thinking about it.

It was a perfectly beautiful afternoon but a zillion and one Americans were inside the house watching someone else do something, anything. Recliners were reclined, chips were chomped, beer was belched and several thousand citizens crossed the line from borderline into diagnosable diabetes. Welcome to carbs country where people feed themselves from comfort and habit, where the idea of "food" is so refined and twisted that it's not food any more.

Here's a rule of thumb given to me by a dietary specialist over at Gundersen Lutheran. She said, "Don't even go through the rows in the middle of a supermarket. The stuff you will buy in this section of the store is made almost entirely from high fructose corn syrup, modified food starch, trans fats and sodium. That stuff will kill you. Period." It turns out that those ingredients are the cornerstones of industrial food. Why? Because they are easy to manufacture, package and ship. You can mold them into food shapes, put them in boxes and bags, truck them from Anaheim to Albert Lea and let them sit in Aisle 7 for as long as it takes to sell them. They're a lot like paint and motor oil. Nice shelf life. Bad food.

Oh but they're so good. Those crispy, salty, chewy, colorful, happy edibles from Monsanto and Cargill go down mighty easy. The prep time to open a bag of artery clogging goodness is measured in seconds. No muss no fuss. I saw a worker named "Katie" on her lunch break in a local store. She had a package of Lunchables, a Coke and a cigarette going.

Chances are she'll be feeling bad every day by the age of fifty, that she'll be diagnosed with one of the big three (heart disease, diabetes or cancer) by her sixtieth birthday and laid to rest by her heartbroken family before she can retire. Thanks Beatrice. Nice work Kraft. What were you thinking, Katie?

It took us years to admit to ourselves that the tobacco companies were lying to us about the risks inherent in their products. They lied because it was profitable. Simply put; more money good, less money bad. It will be the same with the industrial food companies. We will know the truth long before they admit it and long before we change our habits. It's a perfect little circle from either point of view, the consumer or the producer. In our world, if it tastes good, we eat it. In their world, if it sells, they keep making it. Our disregard for our own well being is matched only by their focus on the bottom line. We're made for each other.

But it doesn't have to be that way does it? The information we need is all around us. Franciscan Skemp and Gundersen Lutheran have racks full of pamphlets and periodicals. They're free. Google any ailment you have a concern about and you will find more information than you know what to do with. It's free. Turn off the TV every hour or so and go mow the lawn, rake the leaves, walk up and down the stairs a few times, plant some flowers, walk down the road, walk back again, teach your kids how to steal second base or how to run a give and go. It's all free.

It's really quite a stark choice isn't it? Stay on the couch and eat yourself to a tasty, early death or get your tush outside and have some fun. What have you got to lose? Except everything.