

Thank goodness for that ooey, gooey, cheesy goodness!

by Mark Pavilons

As tough as things get sometimes, I think it's important to think about the really nice things we get to enjoy as human beings.

Many of our own personal 'Kodak moments' are priceless.

We are all foodies and I think we were given senses to enjoy our meals. We were given our opposing thumbs mostly for culinary purposes, and opening those processed cheese slice wraps.

Our bodies are well designed machines and our taste buds are no exception. These small things located primarily on the tongue give us our joy. The tongue contains between 2,000 and 8,000 taste buds, each of which are made up of 50 to 150 taste receptor cells. Taste receptor cells are responsible for reporting the sense of taste to the brain.

Scientists have learned that taste buds are able to detect every kind of taste quality - salty, sweet, bitter, and sour.

Judging by members of my own household, I think we can divide people into two main categories - salty or sweet. My eldest daughter and I love spices and a variety of flavours. We are willing to try almost anything. The other three in our brood love sweets - chocolate, donuts, cannolis, you name it!

Food is our one common ground, no matter how old you are or where you are from. Food brings people together like nothing else.

How many good memories do you have where food was involved?

Food is not only our go-to love, but it brings us back to our past - those home-made meals only mom or grandma could make. It's interesting that our brains can light up and recall in great detail, those amazing childhood dishes.

'So long as you have food in your mouth, you have solved all questions for the time being.' - Franz Kafka

I find it interesting, and strange, how our ancient ancestors first discovered certain edibles on this planet. Who was the first to yank a hot pepper from the ground, munch on it, and thought it was great? What person or group made the first meal out of oysters? Who thought grabbing a fungus off a tree would be a good idea?

We all have our favourites and even 'essentials' in our home kitchens or when eating out.

I think a staple for many of us is cheese, or things that go hand in hand with cheese. Like pasta - spaghetti, penne, rigatoni, shells, elbows, fettuccini...

Of course, the Italians elevated it and brought it to the world's table. It's noted that Marco Polo brought pasta to Italy after his exploration of the Far East in the 13th century, but pasta goes back as far as 3,000 B.C.

Whether it's Mac and Cheese or nonna's special dish, how can you turn down a dish of pasta?

Don't trust me, believe Sophia Loren who once said: 'Everything you see I owe to spaghetti!' By the way, she also said it's best if you inhale it like a vacuum cleaner!

I'm a cheese-lover and perhaps it's due to my European (German) heritage. My mom loved all kinds, the stinkier the better!

When I'm at an event, I head to the cheese table to see what special offerings are available.

I love watching TV shows about dishes from around the world and how they're prepared.

Cheese is an amazing product and people in every culture have their own brand and way of making this staple. From mountain-top caves, to ancient cellars, there are cheese wheels all over the globe maturing as we speak.

No one knows when humans first made cheese, but archeologists believe it dates back 8,000 years. It's likely it was done by accident, when milk curdled and our ancestors thought it would be good on bread!

Who knew that useful microbes and molds, doing their thing, gives aged cheeses their distinctive and interesting flavors?

In a pandemic-era poll by the Parmigiano-Reggiano Consortium (the organization that guards the UNESCO-protected cheese like the Stanley Cup), it was found that Canadians can't live without cheese.

When asked, "What food could you not live without?" six in 10 Canadians chose cheese (59%). This topped a list that included favourites such as bread (56%), pasta (46%), pizza (45%) and burgers (37%). There are more than 1,800 different kinds of cheese varieties in the world. We produce more cheese than coffee, tobacco, tea, and cocoa beans combined. Cheese is also the most stolen food item in the world!

The French have a different cheese for every day of the year.

Pule cheese is the world's most expensive cheese and it comes from the milk of Balkan donkeys from Serbia. It's valued at \$600 per pound

Our ancestors sent their departed friends and relatives off to the next world with some essentials. Most were tools, weapons or clothes. Not sure if any sent them with a cheese wheel. I can put cheese on just about everything ??read, toast, French toast, on top of any meat, on an omelette and grated and sprinkled on everything!

Cheese goes with pretty much every known comfort food ??he aforementioned pasta and pizza; burgers; hot dogs; chili; in sandwiches; in quesadillas; on nachos; chunks in salad; mixed in sauces ...

I feel bad for those who don't like it or are intolerant.

If I were King of France in the Middle Ages, I would say, "Let them eat cheese!"

Hot, cold, fresh or old, pasta, cheese and pizza were made to make humans smile.

When you're down, order a pie. When you feel depressed, make pasta.

If you look in your fridge, chances are you'll find some kind of cheese.

I'm with Sophia on this!