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Soylent: The End of an Enjoyable Life

Food, it’s the substance that gives many people comfort, allows us to thrive and gives us the energy we need for life. It easily consumes many people’s days. Breakfast, lunch and dinner, it seems to be all we have time for, but, what is it about really? Many people find themselves asking that question more and more these days. In 2014, the article “The End of Food” by Lizzie Widdicombe was released, it brings forth the issue of the importance of food, whether it is just purely a burden that can be solved by a simple solution of a thick shake, or whether it has an emotional and satisfying connection to it. The article introduces the idea of Soylent, which is a drink invented by Rob Rhinehart. Soylent contains all the necessary nutrients for life and would act as a possible alternative to eating regular meals. It could allow many people to eliminate loss of time from eating meals, and almost industrialize food as a utility rather than an enjoyable concept. Soylent is also rather inexpensive in comparison to other foods you may have to consume to reach all the essential nutrients Soylent contains. (Widdicombe)

The downfall, though, is the loss of any emotional connection or pleasure some receive from the variety of food and favorite recipes they possess. In my favorite meal narrative, I include details of why scrambled eggs made by my Vovo (grandfather) are so tasty and comforting to me. Food also takes away from many social interactions you receive while sharing meals with family, friends and acquaintances. Business meetings held at restaurants would occur far less often and college friends gathering for wing night at their favorite restaurant would begin to fade out. This loss of interaction could mean for a step back in communication skills and overall happiness for many individuals. While Soylent may provide more time and make it easier to receive essential nutrients, it should not eliminate food because food gives us pleasure and satisfaction; it inhibits social interactions and provides us with countless memories.

Take a minute, think about the concept of food, think about the satisfaction you get from taking a bite of a favorite meal, or first sip from a good drink. For instance, imagine a cold winter day, it is snowing outside, and you’re cozied up under a blanket with a warm hot cocoa in hand. You take a sip of the creamy delicious chocolate and instantly feel calm and content. With Soylent, that could all be gone. Rob Rhinehart’s idea of Soylent would take away all pleasure in taking that first bite of an enjoyable meal—the taste may not be terrible, but it is certainly not as fulfilling as an elaborate meal. In Widdicombe’s article, she mentions “I’ve heard tasters compare it to Cream of Wheat, and ‘my grandpa’s Metamucil’” (Widdicombe 7). Widdicombe is merely giving a statement about how most individuals find the taste of Soylent. Although it is tolerable, it is still described as “bland” (Widdicombe 7) and “grainy” (Widdicombe) and it has even been compared to Metamucil, a daily stool softener. While this may sound okay for some, eventually the taste will become redundant and you will be searching for something more. In some cases, I can see being okay with the same thing every day but in others, I think of the joys I get simply from scrambled eggs, “fluffy, magical and melt in your mouth, these scrambled eggs are the perfect food to satisfy your taste buds”. The amazing taste of such a simple food is something that would make me never want to stop having the chance to eat food for simply a drink with a tolerable taste. With food, you have options to explore. There are so many different meals to satisfy your taste buds and bring happiness to your stomach.

Everyone has a few meals that they just cannot turn down when it gets offered to them, the meals that provide comfort. The food that brightens your mood at any time you need. Whether it’s a batch of pancakes or a beautifully grilled burger, there is something about certain foods that we cannot just turn down. These foods provide us with the ultimate satisfaction we cannot find anywhere else. If Soylent becomes our only source of food, what would we do to find the contentment we so desperately desire? Many people would not be as happy as they used to be with their simple meal fix. So many people will lose the comfort they find so easily when gravitating toward the food that brings them pleasure and comfort, and for what purpose? Why should we set aside happiness for some goopy drink? In my favorite meal essay, I talk about the joy I get from taking that first bite of food, “that first bite of eggs, you are completely content and know the rest of the day is going to be a good one”. My favorite meal provides me with an amazing start to my day. It provides me with a unique kind of comfort, one you would never imagine food can give, but it does. This comfort is brought in from the meaning behind the eggs themselves. The taste of the eggs though phenomenal are not the only reason I am provided with such a fulfillment. Comfort occurs when we find something that makes us feel at home, and scrambled eggs put me right into my grandparent’s kitchen where I know everything is going to be alright, and that nothing could bring me down. Not only does food bring us pleasure and comfort, it also provides us with a way to be social and an excuse to be with those we find important to us. This could go hand in hand with time.

There is only so much time in a day, a month, a year and a life, what you decide to do with that time is what can define how your life is spent. Some want more time and others feel they have too much time. Soylent could provide the world with more time in their everyday life, but it would also take away quality time you get with wide ranges of people. In Widdecombe’s article, she talks about how much time she had during her day while taking Soylent, “time stretches before you, featureless and a little sad” (Widdecombe 14). This takes you toward the idea that yes, you might end up with a lot of time that in some circumstances can be productive, but in others it is depressing, and you don’t have enjoyment to fill that time with. With this time, you would power through working or studying, but it will take away the simple joy we have in an excuse of having to eat and enabling us to spend some time with friends. Simply instead of spending time with friends over lunch, you will already have had your meal for the time and go on to continuing with work. That doesn’t mean that some won’t be more productive and might do other things with that time but having too much time can bring out the loneliest of times if others around you are busy. Not only does it effect the time in your day and what it is filled with but, also makes you consider communication skills.

With Soylent taking away chances for social interaction during lunch, it also can take away learning basic communication skills. From experience, more kids today are having harder time interacting with others, I believe that a lot of this is due to technology but usually, when at the dinner table or out to eat is when technology gets put away. Without having time eating meals and sharing afternoons, those skills may never be created. In my favorite meal essay, I discuss about how when we are all at my grandparents, I talk about how everyone is involved, “they welcome everyone in. My brothers each have girlfriends, and I myself have a boyfriend and let me tell you, they are invited to breakfast with open arms”. When we are at breakfast with the grandparents, all phones go away. We all interact. We really look at each other and enjoy one another’s company. Interactions are made and all because of food. Not only does it affect social interaction but, also downplays and takes away opportunities for memories.

Memories can be described as moments in time that we will specifically remember forever. Food can bring us those memories. Throughout the years, memories have been made over sharing many different meals. It has been brought through food that is made specially for holidays and just generally spending time with family while it is being cooked. For a long time, I have made memories over enjoying food with the people I love. My entire family enjoys trying different meals as well as the common daily meals. We interact over it, it is something that brings us all together. In my favorite meal essay, I describe just how much food makes memories for me, “We even bought my Vovo a bell to ring, so we know when to come up for breakfast. It brings us back together again, and sometimes even brings others in as well”. This bell would be rang when the food was completely cooked. It was so loud, and I always liked to believe you could hear it from down the street. It brings me the memory of being at the pool and immediately knowing its time to get dressed and go get some amazing food, simply from hearing a bell. Although it doesn’t happen as often now it is something I will always know I have in my heart.

There are so many reasons Soylent should not be the new source of food, it should not eliminate it. Without food, we never would have the connections we have, we would never feel as much joy and pleasure that we could, and we would not have as many amazing memories. Not even just for yourself but for everyone out there. What would happen if you took away others’ happiness by only allowing them Soylent. Or if you ruined memories that you thought could continue forever and it got taken away by simply eliminating food from the equation. Remember that life is not just about being healthy and surviving, it is about living in the moment and making the most out of your entire life.

Works Cited

Widdicombe, Lizzie. “The End of Food .” *The End of Food*, The New Yorker , 12 May 2014,

www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/05/12/the-end-of-food.