

New Taste Buds



While on this diet I have developed a wholly enhanced sense of taste. For a food writer, that's saying a lot. I thought my palate was sensitive and somewhat talented before. Now it's down-right fine-tuned.

My husband was always the one who could decipher what mystery ingredient was in a dish. That was not a talent I possessed.

I was, I thought, fairly good, but he was better. He could identify a bit of oregano when I just knew it was Italian. I could taste a wine and know there was lemon, or pineapple or even hints of vanilla. I could tell if a red wine had tannins, plum overtones or even some earthly elements. I thought I was pretty good.

Now, I can tell the nuances in apples. That's news for me.

I've never been a big fan of apples. I preferred bananas. They were portable and peelable. I could eat the middle and toss the rest. When it came to apples, watermelon or even oranges, if it squirted juice that got on my face or left me with a sugary "smile" I was not happy. That aversion started as a child at backyard gatherings. When they fed us kids a piece of watermelon it didn't come with a wet rag. We were expected to

eat and enjoy and then go play. I hated having a sticky face and fingers. Big yuk. So after that I didn't want to bite into an apple either. I hated peeling oranges because they squirted and I had to work around the pith. I had no tolerance for pith, so an orange was a project. I'd rather eat mandarin oranges from a can. I probably sound like a finicky kid and I was never labeled that. I just wanted to eat food that didn't involve me getting sticky. It wasn't just fruit. You can add barbecued ribs to that list too. This particular trait has carried on into adulthood.

With this diet, an apple for dessert has become a mainstay. I can slice it up. I can sprinkle stevia on it, then some cinnamon or better yet, pumpkin pie spice and I feel like I'm almost eating apple pie. My newest discovery is to sprinkle on some vanilla powder that I bought once at a specialty store. Vanilla apples are a real treat.

I was a Granny Smith eater until recently. Growing up, we ate Red Delicious. I decided years ago that I didn't like the Red Delicious skin. My "boyfriend" at the time (who later became my husband), turned me on to Granny Smith apples and I was hooked. I baked and cooked with them for decades. With the advent of the diet I have expanded my horizons. I've tried some Galas. Love the color. Not hooked on the apple. I'd rather decorate with them. Golden Delicious is a wonder. I love that one because it has a very delicate skin. The skin chews well and doesn't end up stuck in my teeth. Love that. A mild apple. And my newest favorite is Honeycrisp. It's the crunch that got me. I bit into that thing and went slightly deaf for a second. The crunch was loud. And juicy! I was standing in the grocery store at a taste-testing table and even though the juice ran down my chin, I was still happy! I bought a bag of those darlings on the spot. I could taste the difference, too.

I know the apple experts out there are laughing right now. The variety of tastes in apples has been known long before I went on this diet. Why else would grocery stores stock so many? I've always wondered that very thing. I wonder less now.

Cheers,