



Paula Deen and the American Obesity Machine

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Chef Paula Deen has been in the news lately, and the picture hasn't been pretty.

The recent allegations that brought her to such popular media prominence are outside the scope of this article -- but the spotlight that the controversy has thrown on Paula Deen Cuisine is right up my alley.

As an NLP Life Coach I've worked with countless clients with weight issues, many of whom feel overwhelmed by the tide of sugary / fatty / salty foods they are presented with as modern Americans.

Most people tend to focus on fast food / junk food / packaged foods that they eat outside their homes, but Paula Deen suggests that we should bring the enemy into our own kitchens.

Food prepared the Paula Deen Way is a perfect example of how far off the healthy track American eating habits have strayed -- and how difficult it can be for Americans to re-establish a healthy relationship to healthy food.

Any discussion of Paula Deen's cuisine has to begin in the kitchen -- with her recipes that are contained in the four cookbooks she has authored and countless video presentations of her cooking on Food Network shows and guest-chef appearances on other television shows.

What *does* Ms. Deen suggest we eat?

Perfectly illustrative are her famous donut-bun bacon hamburgers topped with butter-fried eggs, but even more insidious is her *Paula Deen's Cookbook for the Lunch-Box Set* which is designed to appeal to children.



Even the usually cordial Barbara Walters found the dietary recommendations of the *Lunch-Box Set* disturbing, saying in an interview with Ms. Deen, *"You tell kids to have cheesecake for breakfast. You tell them to have chocolate cake and meatloaf for lunch. And french fries. Doesn't it bother you that you're adding to this?"*

Ms. Deen clearly believes that Americans -- already surrounded with sugary / fatty / salty fast-food and prepared foods laced with a breathtaking array of chemicals, artificial flavorings, colorings and other additives -- should double-down on their bad diets and bring the least healthful foods into their own kitchens.

Famed chef Anthony Bourdain recently commented on the Paula Deen concept of home cooking saying that he *"would think twice before telling an already obese nation that it's OK to eat food that is killing us."*

But it's not just celebrity chefs and news pundits who are taking issue with Paula Deen Cuisine -- the medical community is now joining the discussion.

Susan Levin, M.S., R.D. and the education director for PCRM -- the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine -- has this to say:

"The high-fat meals in these cookbooks are real recipes for disaster...it's scary that despite all that we know about the close link between high-fat foods and obesity and diabetes, cooks like Paula Deen continue to tout unhealthy meals..."

To be fair, it probably should be noted that her recipes are concocted with real ingredients -- although when you have a zillion-calorie bacon and fried egg burger served on a sugar-coated donut I'm not sure that should offer any real consolation...



How can I make meaningful permanent changes in the way I eat?

This is the central question that many Life Coaching clients ask, and the answer -- while not easy -- is simple: changing yourself begins with changing your mind.

There is no "diet" that can permanently resolve weight issues because, sooner or later, everyone falls off a diet and -- surrounded with fast and packaged food and Paula Deen Cuisine -- no American will ever lack for temptation.

Many of us regard high-fat, high-sugar, high-salt foods as "comfort foods", and we consume them to make us feel better and meet emotional needs that aren't being met in healthy ways.

NLP Life Coaching is targeted at the roots of the issue: our emotional relationship to food as a substitute for healthy emotional sustenance from relationships with others, body image issues and an inability to consistently experience happiness.

Once these emotional issues are properly addressed, weight loss and maintenance occur organically.

Ironically Paula Deen may inadvertently be offering us a great illustration why the time to address weight and diet issues is *now*, not at some undefined point in the future.

It has recently become public knowledge that two years ago Ms. Deen was diagnosed with Type II Diabetes -- a form of the disease that has been directly linked to consumption of exactly the type of high-sugar high-fat high-sodium food that she so loves to consume and has so successfully sold to countless others.

I certainly wish her well personally, but if all of her cookbooks and cooking shows suddenly disappeared we'd all be better off!



Of course, you could say the same thing about the Burger King strawberry milk shake that has 1230 calories, 31 grams of fat and 191 grams of sugar -- that's about 7 ounces of sugar, or roughly four times the maximum daily intake recommended by the World Health Organization -- but that's a different article...

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