

Guilty Pleasures _____

I love eating. What can I say? My James and I are both good cooks, enjoy food and wine, cooking, entertaining friends, and the treat of going out to eat now and again. It's all good.

WELL... not ALL good. I suppose we all know that the problem with loving food (and perhaps with American-sized portions) is that somehow it mysteriously leads to our clothing being a size too small when we try them on the next season!

The book *French Women Don't Get Fat* inspires me. It has recipes that taste great and aren't that difficult, and the little bits in between are fun to read. I think that the author, Mireille Guiliano, is spot on with her observations.

I was looking for a breakfast recipe in this book this morning. In the recipe search, I came across a chapter entitled "Bread and Chocolate." It reminded me of issues that students, friends and roommates have had in the past.

In this chapter, Guiliano talks about American women's overwhelmingly difficult relationship with chocolate (the whole chapter is on bread and chocolate). To her, one of the biggest problems is that American women eat chocolate and other treats *en cachette* ("in private"). The idea of eating on the sly and having guilty pleasures, per Guiliano, is antithetical to the French.

In France, if you get pleasure out of something, then it needs to have a place in your life. One needs to "maximize the rewards of pleasure while minimizing the costs." Guiliano discusses how "guilt-ridden scarfing" seems to typify American women's relationship with chocolate, whereas in France, one takes a morsel of chocolate as almost a religious experience; savors it on the tongue; eats it "on purpose."

This leads to a discussion of "sensory awareness" with respect to food. If you are "scarfing" your food, you are very unlikely to be able to reap the rewards of taking the time for all your five senses to revel in that dish. This can lead you to feeling cheated. Again, to quote Guiliano, "To know how to appreciate that burst of delicate flavors, that supreme smoothness of texture as it melts in your mouth and begins its way down your throat, is to me a great accomplishment of sensual eating. It's an experience that could not be more remote from eating a Snickers bar on the run."

What is your relationship to food? Are you scarfing food on the sly? Are you standing up at the sink, eating without a plate, fork, and napkin? Are you eating in the car? If so, and you wonder where the pounds have come from, it's time to make eating an experience that you're proud of, and that you take pleasure in every day. Slow down. Gaze at a food's beauty. Sniff, then inhale its essence. Taste and savor. You are

likely to eat less, and enjoy more. For more on this subject, check out the website mindfuleating.org — in their “Living CAMP” section, you can practice mindfully eating chocolate (or a banana, or even a donut). This is a great “reality check” on how you are addressing food, and reminds you to thank everyone in the “food chain” when you sit down to eat. Did you know, for example, that it takes 8-10 months to grow a banana? Each banana is cut and carried by hand, separated by hand from other banana bunches, crated and transported carefully to avoid bruising, shipped from a foreign land and monitored closely... how’s about thanking all those people, and even the banana tree, that gestated that banana longer than your mother gestated you? Take stock of your relationship with food.
