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Cox: Opening Remarks

Opening Remarks

Contemplating College Cuisine

Every time I wander into one of the University's dining spots, I'm overwhelmed by the selections. Whether I'm contemplating pizza or pasta, a sturdy sandwich or spicy taco, soup or salad, or something new and intriguing, I'm rarely disappointed.

That, of course, is one of the beauties of SU Food Services' offerings. Carnivores can satisfy their meat-and-potato cravings, and vegans can tame their hunger with a creative twist on tofu.

I realize so-called "dorm food" has its share of critics, but I'm not among them. During my college days, I truly enjoyed the trip through the cafeteria food line. My culinary excursions were always a work in progress, dictated by the desire of the moment. For me it was an assembly-line adventure, with no telling what would be built on my plate by the end.

Another reason I liked the food was that I didn't have to cook it. Today I consider myself fairly adept at concocting a decent dinner, but back then I had neither the time nor the interest. When it was time to decide whether to live on or off campus (i.e., to cook or not to cook), I never flinched in my decision. "Bring on the dorm food!" I'd say.

This came to mind as I read "Adjusting to Off-Campus Life" (page 37) by Denise Owen Harrigan. As far as I'm concerned, students who combine cooking with studying and working deserve great respect. Cooking, after all, also requires grocery shopping and dish washing, much more time-consuming tasks than slicing and dicing vegetables or watching lasagna bake.

This became evident to me when I visited my apartment-dwelling college friends. Their refrigerators contained little more than assorted condiments (bread and barbecue sauce sandwich, anyone?); their sinks were

buried beneath ever-growing stacks of dish-ware, pots, and pans smeared with substances only a biochemist could identify; and tables were covered with leaning towers of pizza boxes. Every time one of them invited me over for dinner, the evening's entrée was inevitably spaghetti. Such encounters made me feel smug. Sure they were independent, but, after eating, the only mess I had to clean up was myself.

Some of my friends, however, did benefit from their culinary escapades. One, in particular, lost a huge amount of weight. I was impressed, believing he'd mastered a strict diet regimen courtesy of his cooking expertise. Only later did I learn that he hadn't

cooked a thing in months and was living on nothing but pizza and deli sandwiches.

Once I was cut loose from college cuisine, I quickly learned my options, which usually involved preheating the oven and tearing open a box of frozen food, or mixing up one of those instant recipes that instruct: "Just add water."

But even then there were occasions when I failed miserably. Unfortunately for a housemate, I incinerated a frozen egg roll in his microwave oven. It left behind a malodorous reminder that lingered for months, latching onto everything popped into that microwave. I also once managed to ruin a box of macaroni and cheese, one of the simplest things on Earth to make. But you'd be surprised how easy it is to do when you substitute vegetable oil and water for the required milk and butter. Hey, I gave it a shot.

Thankfully I learned a great deal during those early years of experimentation. And I could have learned more sooner by taking up cooking in college—but I'm certain that would have left a bad taste in my mouth.



mike prinzo

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