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Recommended Citation
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Special thanks to photographer Roberta Drayer.
At 3:54 a.m. on a Wednesday night, downtown Bellingham has all the trappings of a ghost town. The streets are silent, devoid of any evidence of the life that flourishes during the waking hours. Streetlights still change on time, going green block-by-block, affecting nothing. Finally a car passes by, a police cruiser, slowly making its way downtown.

Further down Holly Street's southwesterly slope, voices pierce through the silence. In the awkward hours between the last of the last-call lingerers and the early morning breakfast crowd, The Horseshoe Café stays open — downtown's only business to never sleep.

A crowd of stragglers hangs around outside passing around an electric guitar with nothing to plug into, talking and smoking cigarettes. Their presence, half a dozen strong, is exactly double the number of customers inside the café.

One man sits on a stool by the counter preoccupied with his books and notepad. He is unshaven and looks as though he hasn't seen a shower since the week began. A much younger man pecks away at his laptop near the front window. On a yellowed, coin-operated computer by the door, another young man struggles to hold his head up. He is looking at pictures of Vancouver, B.C., some 45 miles away as he fights off sleep.

The linoleum under the booths is worn thin and a single playing card lies under a corner booth. It's from Apples to Apples, a game where players match the most apt noun to the adjective.

The adjective in question is “depressing,” and it could describe any number of things. KISM, the local classic rock station, plays on the radio as Jeff Richmond, 27, refills cups of coffee.

He's been working the graveyard shift, 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., for about four months now. During the day he deals cards at a casino, a job he says pays him more than enough to get by. With no tables to wait on, he mops the floor with a bucket of grey water.

By 4:30 a.m. the last of the stragglers outside the 'shoe are nowhere to be seen. No sooner are they gone than the first of the early-morning businessmen parks a new Toyota out front, finds a booth near the cash register and orders a breakfast of bacon, scrambled eggs and toast.

At 4:45 a.m., seven days a week, a tiny figure sweeps silently through the front door, her hat barely visible above the half wall that cordons off the booths. She sits at the counter on a stool near the register. Her meal, a one-egg over easy breakfast with steamed hash browns, is on the counter before she needs to ask for it. Her name is Janette, and at 94, she's been eating breakfast here since moving into the old Leopold Hotel 15 years ago.

Richmond says she's the only house account, meaning she pays her tabs once per month. She eats in silence, occasionally mustering up a morning salutation.

“"You can set your clock by her,” Richmond says.

For a place that never closes, it's the surest sign a new day has begun.
he grumbling of your stomach indicates that it is that time again — lunchtime.

Today, unlike other days, you have actually brought with you a brown bag filled with what you perceive to be a seemingly healthy lunch. You rifle through your bag seeking sustenance and dig out a turkey and cheese sandwich between two slices of fluffy white bread, an apple and a chocolate chip granola bar.

Within 20 minutes all that’s left of your meal is an empty paper bag. The grumbling is gone and now you’re ready to move on with your day, without giving another thought to the meal you just ingested. You leave the lunch table confident that you did something good for your body. Not only did you make time to eat lunch, but you even made your own instead of falling victim to convenience foods. And furthermore, you incorporated different food groups. Overall you did well. Or did you?

A deeper analysis of the anatomy of your brown bag lunch may reveal that it is not as healthy as you think. Dr. Jean McFadden Layton, naturopathic physician at Natural Health Bellingham, says many people are unaware of what they are consuming and there are several misperceptions regarding what is healthy and unhealthy food.

“It’s not that people are making bad decisions, it’s just that they don’t know. What they think is a good choice, may not be,” Layton says. “People just need to be informed.”

Plan Ahead

The first step in packing a healthy lunch is actually packing a lunch. It may be difficult to find the time in a hectic schedule to prepare a lunch, so when you go shopping you should consider things that you want to include in your lunches throughout the week.

“Go shopping on a day that you don’t have a lot to do and stock up your pantry,” Layton says.

Tom Malterre, nutritionist and co-owner at Whole Life Nutrition, says it is also a good idea to prepare lunches the night before so you are not rushed in the morning. Slicing up fruits and portioning out snacks into baggies will eliminate some of the burden of packing a lunch in the morning.

Organically Grown: to Buy or Not to Buy?

There are many benefits to eating organic foods; they provide more nutrients and don’t contain pesticides and preservatives. The reality is that organic foods are more costly than the alternative. So what do you do? Malterre suggests limiting the amount of organic foods you buy to the essentials.

“If you have to limit, make sure that you are getting organically grown meats, cheeses and milk,” Malterre says.

These products, if not purchased organic, are highly processed and lacking nutrients. In inspecting the turkey sandwich
you inhaled at lunch we reveal that both the turkey and cheese are processed and contain preservatives. However, organic counterparts would have made the sandwich much more beneficial. Layton offers consumers a rule of thumb to determine if something is processed.

“If a food has more than two layers of packaging, chances are you shouldn’t eat it,” she says.

Layton also suggests that when purchasing produce, if you are limiting the organic foods you buy, avoid buying what’s referred to as “the dirty dozen.” According to the Department of Health, some produce carries more pesticides and residue than others, however there are also fruits and vegetables that carry no or little pesticide residue. Layton says that an indicator for determining what produce to buy organically is the peel or skin. Generally, the thicker the skin the fewer amounts of pesticides it contains.

Balance is Key

Lunch fuels your body for the rest of the day, so it is essential to incorporate foods and nutrients that will promote energy, Malterre says. Complex carbohydrates, such as peanut butter, barley, plain nuts and whole grains as well as proteins, such as low-fat yogurt, milk, cheese and chicken are excellent energy fuels and will help keep you going.

When packing your lunch, consider other meals and snacks you will have during the day. If your breakfast is a banana and yogurt, emphasize whole grains and vegetables in your lunch. The ultimate goal in an optimal diet is to provide your body with well-balanced foods by adhering to the food guide pyramid.

Layton and Malterre both emphasize the importance of vegetables.

“It is not uncommon for people to skip out on veggies, but the truth is that they are a key component of a healthy diet,” Malterre says.

Looking back at your lunch there were virtually no vegetables to be found. An easy fix to this would have been adding greens, tomatoes and other veggies on the sandwich. Other ideas Layton offers for incorporating vegetables into lunch dishes is making hearty vegetable soups, salads and stir-fry.

The Calorie Controversy

Calories are always the most obvious concern in nutrition, Malterre says.

But as a nutritionist he never asks people to count calories, although he does recognize two common myths associated with them: first, if you eat more calories than you burn, then you will gain weight. And second, a calorie is a calorie. Calories have the same effect no matter if you get it from vegetables or from jelly beans.

What Malterre has found to be true over time is that many things other than calories influence metabolism, and in turn influence the amount of calories that should be consumed.

“Some people will eat high-calorie diets that are based off of plant foods and actually lose weight while people eating a lower caloric density diet will actually gain weight,” he says.

Malterre says that some foods can also alter gene expression and the body’s ability to process foods. He offers nuts as an example. Although nuts are high calorie foods, they possess “magical” chemicals and fibers that alter our metabolism in wondrous ways, he says.

Despite the varying opinions and recommendations regarding calorie intake, Malterre says that a good standard is to consume higher calorie foods and meals in the morning or during lunchtime.

So don’t stress about the seemingly high amount of calories in the whole grain bread you put your veggies and organic turkey on because in the long run it’s always better than the “processed white stuff.”

The Good Bad and Ugly of Non-Organic Produce

“The Dirty Dozen”
Non-organic produce to avoid

- Apples
- Grapes
- Cherries
- Nectarnes
- Peaches
- Pears
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Bell Peppers
- Celery
- Potatoes
- Spinach

Non-organic produce that’s okay

- Bananas
- Kiwis
- Mangos
- Papaya
- Pineapple
- Asparagus
- Avacadoes
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Corn
- Onions
- Peas

Making a Bad Bag Good

Bad Bag
Pre-sliced turkey and cheese on white bread
Apple (non-organic)

Good Bag
Whole grain tortilla, pita or bread with hummus, spinach, tomatoes and cucumber
Banana
culture concoction

Story by Jake Lunden
Photo Illustration by Justin Steyer
The first time Katie Rickard tried a glass of kombucha it was paired with a heavy dose of skepticism. Floating in the two-gallon jar of her roommate’s brew was a disc-shaped, opaque brownish glob that Rickard says seemed even more unappetizing when her roommate said it was a live bacteria culture.

“I thought she was crazy and I said, ‘I’m not drinking that,’” Rickard says.

With a little persuasion, Rickard downed her glass.

“When I drank it, I was convinced that I loved it,” Rickard says.

Originating in China over two millennia ago, kombucha is regarded as having antioxidant and detoxification properties in Eastern medicine. Sugary tea is combined with a live bacteria culture to brew the slightly fermented and carbonated elixir. The brew resonates with workers at the Bellingham Community Food Co-op, where alternative medicine and natural foods fill the shelves. The co-op sells commercial brands of kombucha and some employees brew their own, hoping for the perfect taste and the health benefits kombucha is said to provide.

Since her initial experience of trying the beverage, Rickard joined her roommate in brewing more batches. They experiment with flavors by using different teas and adding fruit juice, and store their brew in reusable mason jars or bottles. She says many of her co-workers also practice the art of brewing kombucha.

Kombucha is relatively scarce because of the bacteria culture, also called kombucha mother, needed to brew a batch. Cultures spread friend-to-friend like an obscure music download, and are difficult to obtain without knowing a brewer. As a batch ferments, a culture usually doubles or triples and forms new pancake-like layers. The cultures are strained out of the brew before the drink is consumed or bottled, and can be used again. The extra cultures can be given to friends to start their own batches.

Rickard says handling the culture has its drawbacks.

“It feels like it looks like,” she says. “It’s slimy and gross.”

A kombucha culture looks something like a junior high science experiment, which is a fairly accurate description considering the biological process of what happens as kombucha brews. The live bacteria from the culture feed on the sugars in the tea and any juice and slightly ferment the brew, giving it a negligible amount of alcohol, usually less than one percent.

Co-op employee Sean Jearns, 21, talks about his days brewing kombucha and says it takes about two and a half to three weeks to brew a one or two-gallon batch. To keep the culture from spoiling, he says kombucha should be brewed out of the way of direct sunlight, and that the brewing container should be covered with a cloth to keep out bugs or any other potential contaminants.

He started brewing kombucha five or six years ago, and says his batches always tasted good. Lately, he says he’s been buying the commercially-available kombucha sold at the co-op.

“I used to brew my own, but then I got lazy,” Jearns says.

In the cavernous refrigerators that line the co-op’s east wall, a multitude of different labels and colors reflect two brands of kombucha, each with over a half dozen flavors. Pre-brewed, commercial kombucha has been a big seller according to Charlotte Anderson, 24, since she started working at the co-op more than three years ago.

“Before, when we didn’t know how it was going to sell, we would run out of it quite often,” Anderson says.

Unopened boxes of kombucha bottles in the storeroom help to mitigate any sudden spikes in demand. Anderson says the best-selling brand, Synergy, uses a variety of fruits to make its flavors, like mangoes, cranberries and blueberries.

Anderson says she never brewed kombucha and has mixed feelings about its taste.

“When you drink it, you just kind of close your eyes and pretend it’s not happening,” Anderson says. “I’m not a huge fan.”

Despite her dislike for the taste, Anderson says she agrees with the claims that kombucha has health benefits.

“It’s good for a hangover,” she says. “That’s why I drink it. My theory is that it tastes like booze, so my body thinks it’s getting drunk again, so it makes my hangover go away a little, if not completely.”

Jearns confirms Anderson’s theory and says the brew can help on a groggy morning after a night of drinking.

On a bottle of Synergy brand Kombucha, the label claims the brew supports digestion, the immune system and liver function, among other benefits, though an asterisk leads to a note that none of the claims have been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration.

Though its health benefits are not formally proven and its palatability remains a matter of personal taste, kombucha adds to the culture of Bellingham as the skills to brew the elixir spread from friend to friend.
Get Your Elbows Off the Table:

Salad fork and dinner fork in a place setting at Western’s formal dinner.

(above) A decoratively folded napkin that graced the plates at a formal dinner.

(below) The Solarium where the formal dinner was hosted.
Next time the boss asks you to a business dinner, you don’t have to panic. The dinner can be comfortable; just follow these etiquette tips by Mylene Barizo, a human resource manager for Enterprise Rent-a-Car.

Barizo taught students etiquette at Western’s Etiquette Dinner in February. She teaches etiquette dinners based on her experience and the knowledge she has gained from friends.

Promotions, hiring and networking occur during business meals. Follow these guidelines and you won’t have to worry about using the wrong utensils. You might still be nervous — after all, it is a dinner with the boss — but at least you will know how to conduct yourself professionally.

The Introduction

First thing first, make sure to shake the hand of the dinner guests. Make eye contact, shake with a firm, but not overbearing grip and make sure the web of your hands meet, Barizo says. The web is the dip in the part of your hand between the thumb and the index finger. Once in the shake do two pumps and release.

If you get cottonmouth when public speaking, make sure not to drink caffeine beforehand. Barizo suggests not carrying paper that could flutter around if nervous shakes happen while you speak with people.

At some events, nametags might be offered. A nametag is always worn on the right side of the body so that the handshake leads the eye up to the nametag, Barizo says.

In conversations that take place while standing, rest your arms at your side instead of folding the arms at the chest. Don’t cross your feet and make sure to stand up straight, Barizo says.
Some foods can be difficult to eat.

Here are some tips from Mylene Barizo on specific foods:

1. Tear the bread one piece at a time, butter it and then eat it.

2. Spoon soup away from you by touching the back of the bowl. This way there is less of a chance of the soup dripping.

3. If salad is too tough to eat with a fork, it is OK to use a knife.

4. Cut chicken into small bites as conversation is being held at the table.

5. Do not cut pasta. Instead, twirl two or three noodles against the plate.

6. When passing the salt and pepper, make sure to pass them together.

Source: Mylene Barizo
The Meal

Now the hard part comes — the meal. Most everyone knows not to chew with their mouth open or talk with their mouth full, but what fork to use and where to place a napkin when you leave the table are simple etiquette rules to follow.

The table is a place for conversation. Energy should be focused on the dinner guests and not worrying about which fork to use and which glass to use.

Barizo says to use this trick for using the right bread plate and glass: make OK signs with both hands then place them on your lap. One should look like the letter ‘b’ and the other the letter ‘d.’ These stand for bread and drink, and the bread is always on the left and the water glass is always on the right. This way you aren’t using someone else’s glass.

When the dinner has started, the napkin should go directly on your lap in the diagonal shape with the crease facing toward you, that way you still have adequate coverage on the lap if you lift up a corner to wipe your mouth, Barizo says.

Don’t groom yourself at the table. If you need to apply lipstick, excuse yourself from the table and place your napkin on the chair when you leave.

Nothing should go on the table linens that is dirty until the end of the meal, Barizo says. For example, if a knife is used for the salad, don’t wipe it off and put it back on the table cloth to reuse it. No need to fear if the knife if used before the main course; it is the wait staff’s job to notice the knife has been used and replace it.

When the meal is finished, it is OK to place the napkin on the table, but only if you are done eating and leaving the table.

If passing the salt and pepper, make sure to pass them together.

“Don’t divorce the salt and pepper, they move around the table as one unit,” Barizo says.

Mistakes

It happens to everyone at one point: a utensil slips off the plate and falls on the floor. Should you pick it up? No. As mentioned earlier, nothing dirty can be placed on the table, therefore the utensil stays on the ground for the wait staff to pick up, Barizo says.

Although good manners are appreciated, the wait staff does not need to be thanked every time he or she fills a glass of water or brings food to the table; it can interrupt the flow of conversation.

Following proper etiquette can be useful when interviewing or for business meals, Barizo says. Look to the host and mirror what they are doing.

These etiquette tips are simple to follow and will help make a business lunch or dinner with your co-workers easier to manage. Remember the meal is about conversation so be comfortable and have an enjoyable meal.
beautiful sunset

klipsun