



Old Food

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I have been led to believe that eating food that has been sitting out, sometimes for long periods of time, is a negative and unhealthy choice. There are people—people with clout—who say such things, and there are people—people with food—who believe them.

My mother is one of these food-bearing people. She takes great pleasure in trying to deprive me of one of my favorite scientific experiments: the eating of old food. I can hardly enjoy a taste of anything before she is clearing the counter, pouring out the still half-filled coffee pot into the sink, and putting the container of cashew chicken into the fridge.

I don't think this is a subtle implication that I am fat. Actually, I hadn't ever thought of that until just now, but I think, more likely, that she just likes to finish things. Tasks. She realizes that soon this ham sandwich, if left uneaten, is going to become garbage-worthy, and she's a woman of action. I feel strongly that scientific data leads her to believe she is also taking actions to keep me healthy, alive, and thus available to continue to disappoint her with my lack of achievements.

Frankly, I think this frenzy of terror over the danger of food that has been sitting out, going bad and breeding toxic bacteria is grossly exaggerated. I frequently make eating choices that are deemed not only negative, but downright foolhardy by those with more superior, expensive educations than I. Why, as I type this, I am happily eating a bowl of food that has been sitting on my coffee table for hours.

How many hours, you ask? I would estimate this bowl of rice, edamame and Safeway brand teriyaki sauce has been sitting on my coffee table half-eaten for at least seven hours. I feel fine! Yes, the rice has become slightly crispy, but at least I've relieved myself of food fatigue. I allowed myself the good fortune to experience the same meal twice, with different textures.

Had I made the boring choice to seal the food in a more accepted manner and place it into a large cold object such as a refrigerator, most likely the texture of the food would've been highly similar both times, if not exactly similar. Eating is about satisfying the senses as much as it is about providing your body with nutrition and avoiding spoiled foods. I've digested the whole bowl of now air-crisped rice, completely satiating my mouth's desire for tactile excitement, and no one is dead. I do not feel ill. Nay, I feel exhilarated.

I cheated death once again. (I'm assuming here it's possible to die of old food—this is what I've been led to believe.) Well, you're thinking to yourself, that's a pretty low-risk meal, that innocuous bowl of innocence you brazenly claim to have cheated death with. Nothing too noteworthy there.

Let me tell you something: I ate several slices of pepperoni pizza that had been on my counter for two days just a few weeks ago. I felt like one million dollars afterwards, perhaps more, but certainly no less.

I am a woman of frugality. There are perfectly good meals all around us, and we're passing them by. By we, I mean you. Because it's certain I'm going to eat that creamed corn later. The pork chop? Please, feel free to put it atop the VCR. I'll get to it in a few hours.