

The indiscreet charm of the foodporn #2

August 17, 2017 · admin



It is certain that foodporn triggers something in our brain. Some scientists believe that images of food only trigger the desire for the real thing. A 2012 study, for example, found that just looking at pictures of food may be enough to cause an uptick in ghrelin, a hormone that causes hunger.

One reason may be that looking primes the brain for eating. If you thinking about an action, your brain reacts like you're really doing it.

But other research has shown that when it comes to appetite, food porn may be a substitute for food itself. One 2011 study found that looking at pictures of food may turn people off from the real thing—but only if the food in the image has a similar flavor to whatever real item is about to be consumed. For example, when volunteers, in an experiment, viewed photos of salty snacks and then ate salted peanuts, they tended to enjoy the nuts less than people who had viewed photos of desserts.

According to other studies, however, when the brain knows that the stomach is full, a picture of food loses all its interest.



Taken in sum, the researches don't reveal much, in the sense that they do not say much about why people like to look at pictures of food. Perhaps the answer is in what, according to many, Roland Barthes said defining food porn as "[what] offers fantasy to those who cannot afford to cook such meals". That unattainable idea that just like in pornography stimulates imaginations and fantasies.

In 2013, the psychiatrist Valerie Taylor delivered a presentation at the Canadian Obesity Summit arguing that posting photos of meals on social media is a sign of a disordered relationship with food. The psychiatrist has stated that humans take pictures of things that are important and for some people the food itself becomes central and the rest is background.

Although the hypothesis may be valid, there are those who argue that people who take pictures of food and posting on Instagram very often want to trivially follow a trend and maybe be trendy. There are people who just like to cook and so want to post photos of what they did, as in a sort of game.

The fact is that Those pictures draw us in because they do hit something really primal in us and it is relevant for the authorised personnel.

The tricks that make food porn what it is are just watered-down versions of the elaborately staged performance that is professional food photography. Pastes of glue that look like bowls of milk and cereal, traces of berry fruit made with lipsticks, layers of cardboard hidden here and there in a pile of pancakes, sesame seeds literally pasted on sandwiches. In these cases the desired effect is to make from a fake something that seems real, perhaps more real than real.



It is undeniable that we would come to treat food not just as a source of sustenance, but also as a source of beauty that warrants psychological engagement. But food porn seems to go beyond, it is more immediate, more visceral. It is more or less what journalist Megan Garber argues when she says that some images and sites involve us because they evoke something really primordial in us. Hunger and craving and fuel and want and need come together in complicated ways but it seems certain that the Big Mac shown in a commercial spot somehow awakens a particular animal behaviour: it is more succulent, flashier, prettier than the real thing, and and that in itself is reason enough to enjoy it.

So what are the deep psychological reasons for the “food pornography”?

Source: Romm C. (2015), What ‘Food Porn’ Does to the Brain - What’s the psychological appeal of looking at food that can’t be tasted? (by) The Atlantic

Fonte: <https://www.ruralhack.org/en/the-indiscreet-charm-of-the-foodporn-2/>