



Women and Food

by Suzy Coffee

Everything I ever learned about being female in America I learned from the media, one way or another.

Television was my elementary school teacher. But movies, magazines and books also factored heavily into my overall cultural education.

In 1953 my family, along with every other middle class American family, purchased their very first black and white TV. It was fun having this new kind of visual home recreation where we gathered together nightly to be passively amused and entertained.

My sister Jeanie and I were suckers for every new show. Like sponges, we soaked them up. Budding capitalists in training, commercials were sometimes our favorites, and we bought every recommended product that we liked and could manage on fifty cents a week.

Movies from the thirties and forties were our favorites. I closely studied the women and men in these films, ingesting huge cues as to how I should behave in the world that I lived in.

Some of the cultural innuendoes coming from TV were subtle, some were not, but early on I recognized that in most movies, women didn't eat. When offered food, they always said, "I'm not hungry." Or they'd take one feeble lick or nibble, and put the food down, or push it away with disinterest or disdain.

This was when I first realized the gaping disconnect between my female media image, and my genuine female self.

For starters, I loved to eat. I loved fried chicken, corn on the cob, mashed potatoes and Big Time candy bars. I loved the sensual bodily pleasure of tasting, enjoying and ingesting food. What was wrong with my sisters on TV, anyway?

But it figured that these women didn't like to eat because man, they were all bones and skin. No breasts, no hips, no butts, these women were straight lines when they turned sideways, an im-

age of "woman as thin" that doggedly persists. Today females of all ages are still denying themselves the pleasure of eating in order to attain this male imposed, commercially driven, unrealistic goal of being forever skinny. Physically destructive eating disorders among women are common place today because of this despotic and omnipresent cultural demand.

Why is it that male culture requires the female to be constantly reducing herself? Women's bodies are naturally built with more fat on them than men's bodies are. By making fat on the female body culturally repulsive and taboo, it puts women in the position of going against nature to achieve a false externally imposed ideal. It's an exhausting and never ending work that is never enough. It's also an ingenious racket, like selling eternal youth to an eternally aging humanity. It has created a tyrannical market that itself has grown fat and old.

Over a period of about five thousand years the female body has been wholly colonized by a dominant male counterpart. When a woman, a tribe, or a nation is colonized, it is cut off from its authentic self, and replaced with the colonizer's self. The history, language, religion, values, beliefs and traditions of the colonized ones are wiped out, initially by an act of overwhelming force, and over time, a new woman, tribe or nation is created, based on the colonizer's values and beliefs.

Since media first began, females have been framed by them, especially so with their bodies and sexuality. The sexual marketing of the female body is a bread and butter industry to compete with oil and weapons. If the sex market ever crashed, the whole country would go down, perhaps the world.

As long as media is owned and run by the dominant man, women will continue to be controlled and defined by them. Patriarchal man will never willingly relinquish his lucrative, self replenishing female product, so women must take their own bodies back.

In the 1970s, feminists understood that taking control of their bodies meant taking control of their health, and this still holds true today. Adopting fundamental good health practices like eating well, exercising and managing stress is a good place to start. Vital health is liberating and powerful. Education is liberating also, and women's health is a vast, important and highly interesting study. A lot of information is available today, often researched and written by women, which is what I trust, and always purchase.

Women often live in a future body X amount of pounds lighter than the one they are living in today. Taking control of our bodies means coming

back home to them, by living fully and sensually within the present moment. Like all human beings, women are built with five senses (her sixth sense being her intuition, or intelligence). These living, raging senses enable women to fully experience, through the body, the pleasure, pain, sorrow, ecstasy and beauty of living on this incredible planet. Life in the body is an ongoing sensual experience, of which eating is one vital part.

I have discovered that studying women's history also helps me to reintegrate back into my real female self. It is nourishing to read of the astonishing ancient history of my own gender which has moved humanity throughout time, a story forever ignored, covered up or misinterpreted by male historians to reflect the history of only men.

As part of taking control of my *collective* female body, I fight continually for reproductive freedoms. If this right is lost, women will be essentially owned by the law of the dominant man, and will never again have reproductive choice or freedom. And it is so much easier to lose freedoms than it is to get them back again.

The Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s accorded the female gender with many new educational opportunities. Thirty years later, women are a powerful economic force in the country. Sadly, it all does come down to money, and boycott is a huge and powerful way that women can be effective in making cultural changes.

Culture is big business, and money is the demon's manna. Don't feed the beast. Put it on a diet, don't give it your capital, unless the despot changes. Build and create a new woman's market, founded on the genuine woman.

Start by dumping commercial TV, a mainstay of female sexual exploitation. Boycott all media, products and institutions that persist with the status quo of dominant male culture. Support those same things that offer a more genuine representation of the true female self.

By healing women's relationship to food and by reclaiming the female connection to this vital part of life, which women are deeply tied to through breast milk alone; by redefining this connection to food on strictly female terms, women take a major step in reclaiming the sovereignty of their bodies.

Women must first be able to nourish themselves, guilt-free, before they can go forward to "nourish" the world by leading it back to its genuine *human* self, which women have done forever.

VOCABULARY FOR TODAY'S AMERICA

by Joan Manning

Have you noticed how some familiar words and ideas have taken on a new meaning?

Tough: The best way to deal with any problem.

Soft: The feminization of all the alternatives to Tough.

America: The Bush Administration

We, the People: Those forced to live with the decisions made by America.

The U.S. Constitution: A quaint, two-hundred-year-old document, badly in need of revision

The Bible: A two thousand year-old document, every word of which is relevant today.

Strident: A woman saying something a man doesn't want to hear.

Liberal: A hippie socialist who wants the government to take care of him.

Conservative: One who believes that people who don't agree with him are unpatriotic.

Medicare D: An insurance plan into which the sick and elderly pay to keep drug prices high.

Profit: An increase to the bottom line achieved by laying off workers and outsourcing their work.

Social Security: Money deducted from workers'

paychecks that belongs in the stock market.

Lean and Mean: A corporate philosophy that fires half the staff and puts the rest on unpaid overtime.

Conspiracy Theorist: One who doesn't believe everything America tells him.

Patriot: One who does.

Terrorist: A male with a funny name, arrested at random and held indefinitely without charges.

Torture: Something America doesn't do, and any official who says otherwise is in deep trouble.

War: A scheme to make huge profits, secure resources and confirm the presidential manhood.