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## Not Exactly Fast Food

Jerry Zezima

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# Not Exactly Fast Food

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Sunday February 25, 2024

By Jerry Zezima

I am out to lunch. This is especially true when I make lunch.

That's because, in my incapable hands, organizing the second meal of the day takes so long that I am surprised I haven't starved to death by now.

My wife, Sue, who usually eats lunch with me and simplifies matters by having an apple and a cup of tea, marvels at how I can turn something as easy as making a sandwich or a bowl of soup into something so utterly complicated.

Sue will often try to expedite matters by telling me what's for lunch.

"There are leftovers in the fridge," she will say. Or, "I bought you some turkey to have on a hard roll."

It doesn't help. If I stick the leftovers — chicken, pasta, Chinese food or, my favorite, hot dogs and beans — in the microwave, I will have to reheat them because I didn't leave them in long enough. If I leave them in until they snap, crackle and pop, they're too hot and I have to wait for them to cool off.

Or I will have soup, which takes forever to make because first I have to decide whether I want chickarina, creamy tomato or clam chowder. I will dump the soup into a pot, put it on the stove and set it at a temperature that is either too low (the soup stays lukewarm) or too high (it splatters all over the place). Then I have to raise or lower the heat and put a cover on the pot.

You know the old saying: "A watched pot never boils!"

Meanwhile, I have to decide what I want for dessert. Most of the time, I'll have yogurt. It's the only way I can get any culture.

Or Sue will tell me to eat a banana before it turns brown. If it does, I always add, much to my beloved's consternation, it won't have appeal.

Or I'll have an apple, which is delicious even if it's not Delicious.

At this point, Sue has finished her apple and sits at the kitchen table, watching as I set my place with the dessert I have picked but not the main course because, naturally, I haven't finished making it.

On some days, I will have pizza, either a leftover slice from a pizzeria, some that Sue has made or one of those little frozen jobs in a plastic bag that I can never open without using scissors. Blood loss is a definite concern.

I will place the pizza on a baking sheet or a piece of aluminum foil, which I spritz with cooking spray. I'll set the oven at 350 degrees, put the pizza in and wait. By the time it's done, the rumbling of my stomach practically rattles the windows.

On most days, I will have a sandwich. This is by far the most time-consuming part of the ordeal. That is due to my indecision over whether to have a hard roll or bread. Sometimes I forget to take the roll out of the freezer in the morning so it can thaw and I have to nuke it in the microwave (see above). As for bread, I prefer Italian, but lately I've been having whole wheat. I am afraid to ask Sue why there isn't partial wheat.

Then I have to decide what to put in it: peanut butter, tuna fish or cold cuts, which can be salami, turkey or, appropriately, bologna.

If I have cold cuts, I may add a slice or two of cheese. Or maybe not. After all, I want to keep my boyish figure.

Pickles or tomatoes? Another big decision.

After that, I have to pick a condiment: mayonnaise or mustard. If I can't cut the mustard, I'll give a mayo clinic. Or I'll just slather on both of them.

Then I slap the second slice of bread on top, cut the sandwich in two and bring it to the table.

By the time I finally sit down to lunch, Sue is already asking me what I want for dinner. It's a good thing I don't have to make it or we'd never eat.

—Jerry Zezima

Jerry Zezima writes a humor column for Tribune News Service, which distributes it to newspapers nationwide and abroad. He is also the author of seven books, *Leave It to Boomer*, *The Empty Nest Chronicles*, *Grandfather Knows Best*, *Nini and Poppie's Excellent Adventures*, *Every Day Is Saturday*, *One for the Ageless* and his latest, *The Good Humor Man: Tales of Life, Laughter and, for Dessert, Ice Cream*, all of which are "crimes against literature." He has won eight awards from the National Society of Newspaper Columnists for his humorous writing.