

Brunner

Eating **Heart** Smart





4



10



12

IN THE KITCHEN WITH BEN HALPERIN

ROYAL FAMILY OF BREAKFAST

How I Learned to Heart Breakfast

BRINNER

How I Learned to Heart Breakfast

Published by: New York Magazine

Written by: Amanda Fortini

Royal Family of Breakfast

Published by: Portland Monthly Magazine

Written by: Nina Padova

In the Kitchen with Ben Halperin

Published by: HooplaNow Blog

Written by: Stephen Mally

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Andrew Bokermann

Creative Director/Designer

Andrew Bokermann



How I Learned^{to} Heart Breakfast

The New Science of the Loneliest Meal
By Amanda Fortini Published Jun 1, 2008



"Oatmeal an American classic"



"Eating heart smart"

As meals go, breakfast is something of a celebrity. It is one of the most studied, analyzed, parsed, discussed, and advised-about subjects of nutritional science. Never more so than today, as doctors, and nutritionists, and countless articles and academic papers prescribe breakfast as both prophylactic and cure-all.

The morning meal is said to stoke metabolism, stop late-night grazing, thwart obesity, reduce diabetes risk, improve nutritional intake, sharpen concentration—even increase longevity. In March, a new study more conclusively linked breakfast with body-mass index, with weight increasing as the frequency of breakfast consumption decreased. Breakfast, it seems, is highly influential: the power broker of repasts.

Yet despite all the fussing over and fetishizing of breakfast, most of us have only the vaguest notion of what we should be ingesting. Each new study of breakfast seems to contradict the last. Are eggs advisable, or will they raise one's cholesterol? Is a meal of toast anemic or adequate? What is a whole grain, anyway? And most important, are we really making ourselves fatter, hungrier, dumber, shorter-lived, slow metabolizers by not eating a so-called proper breakfast? As the experts continue to debate, most of us shrug and make choices not out of any real knowledge

but for lack of time. If we don't slurp down a bowl of cereal at home, or succumb to the buxom muffin beckoning from the glass case at the deli, then an enormous caffeinated drink with a hyphenated name becomes our de facto morning meal.

The multifarious reasons people cite for dumping breakfast shed some light on the psychology of the meal. Some simply don't like to eat in the morning; a handful of friends, none of them pregnant, tell me that even the smell of food before eleven makes them nauseated. Chronic dieters pass on breakfast with an eye toward shaving a few hundred calories off their day. Others can't seem to squeeze in a meal amid the chaos of their morning: the dog to walk, the children to dress, the in-box fires to extinguish, the enervating commute. Still others, and I count myself among this crowd, sometimes abstain because the received wisdom about breakfast seems possibly spurious—one of those persistent nutrition myths, like the notion that you need eight to ten glasses of water per day

or that celery has negative calories: If breakfast is supposed to curb your appetite, then why, shortly after partaking, am I ravenous, unable to focus on anything but foraging for more food, hungrier than when I don't eat anything?

Eating Breakfast and Weight Management

Researchers are interested in breakfast because they are interested in obesity, and they suspect that skipping the former plays a role in fostering the latter. "The frequency of eating breakfast has declined over the past several decades, during which time the obesity epidemic has also unfolded," write researchers Maureen T. Timlin and Mark A. Pereira in an excellent meta-analysis of all the scientific literature on breakfast to date, published in the June 2007 issue of *Nutrition Reviews*. Timlin and Pereira—the pair appear to be the Boswells of breakfast—also conducted the study about breakfast and body-mass index (BMI) published in *Pediatrics* in March. They tracked 2,216 Minnesota adolescents for five years, and found that subjects who skipped breakfast were consistently heavier than those who did not.

The relationship appears to hold for adults as well. A 2003 study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* concluded that subjects who habitually skipped breakfast (at least 75 percent of the time) had a four and a half times higher risk of obesity than those who habitually consumed it. (Those who missed breakfast even once during the study had an increased risk of obesity.) And of the 5,000-plus members of the National Weight Control Registry—registrants have lost an average of 66 pounds and have kept it off for more than five years—78 percent claim to be regular breakfast eaters.

But breakfast-eating and weight-management may not be connected in the way that we think: Despite what women's magazines, and pop

"The frequency of eating breakfast has declined over the past several decades, during which time the obesity epidemic has also unfolded"





health magazines, and legions of mothers say, the mere act of consuming breakfast does not miraculously speed up one's metabolism. In fact, it's hard to pinpoint exactly why eating breakfast tends to coincide with healthier weight. It may be that eating breakfast simply creates a feeling of

diet—that may confound or influence the effect of breakfast on obesity. (Unhealthy behaviors, too, tend to stick together: Fewer than 5 percent of smokers eat breakfast daily.) In at least one study, when confounding variables were accounted for, the relationship between breakfast and

“The nature of the food we eat affects hormones in Profound ways for many hours after a meal, and that’s more important after breakfast”

satiety, which prevents trips to the vending machine or the drive-through in the afternoon or evening. (Eating at regular intervals maintains insulin and blood-sugar levels, preventing the peaks and valleys that cause voracity.) The American Journal of Epidemiology study found that adults consumed more calories on the days they eschewed a morning meal.

The real problem, from a researcher's point of view, is that breakfast consumption is a habit that tends to occur along with a constellation of other healthy behaviors—like exercising, not smoking, and maintaining a healthy

body-mass index was not significant. The eating of breakfast was only an ancillary factor, one salubrious practice among several that contributed to slimness. Breakfasting and forgoing the gym will probably do little to reduce or control one's weight. In the Pediatrics study, for example, it seemed surprising that the breakfast eaters often had a higher daily caloric intake and yet also a lower BMI than their breakfast-skipping peers, but when I asked Pereira what explained this finding—had eating a morning meal somehow increased the subjects' metabolism?—He emphasized that the eaters were exercisers as well.

This is all to say that it is not yet clear to researchers whether the relationship between breakfast and obesity is causal (i.e., breakfast consumption directly influences weight) or merely associational. Breakfast may play a supporting role in weight management, rather than a starring one. Few prospective studies (in which breakfast-eating subjects are followed over a period of time) or clinical trials (in which breakfast eating is tested as an interventional therapy, as a drug might be) have been done. This is why the Pediatrics study, conducted prospectively over the course of five years, was a significant contribution to the field of breakfast studies: We can observe the correlation between breakfast consumption and BMI over time, which approximates cause and effect.

Oatmeal or Omelet?

The warring of the diet factions continues today in a slightly more scientific fashion. A 2003 paper published in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition claimed that individuals who consumed ready-to-eat cereal, cooked cereal, or, oddly, “quick breads”—waffles, pancakes, pastries, and the like—had lower BMIs than those who ate meat and eggs or abstained from breakfast entirely.

But a 2007 study found the opposite: Obese women who ate two eggs for breakfast daily for eight weeks lost 65 percent more weight than their bagel-fed counterparts. Like most prescriptive studies, however, these two must be taken with a grain of salt (or, in the case of the cereal study, a few granules of sugar): Kellogg funded the former; the American Egg Board funded the latter. Among those in the field of nutrition research, it is widely acknowledged that, for a variety of reasons ranging from flawed study design to buried negative results, industry-funded studies tend to find industry-favorable results. For instance: The Tufts study that found that Quaker instant oatmeal (and, to a lesser degree, Cap'n Crunch) improved cognitive performance was funded by Quaker, the maker of both products.

And yet, even as they disagree on the specifics, the majority of researchers seem to agree that what we put into our bodies in the morning is a critical decision. Because it occurs after eight, ten, or even twelve hours of sleep, the breakfasting moment is physiologically unique. “The nature of the food we eat affects hormones in profound ways for many hours after a meal, and that's more important after breakfast,” said Dr. David Ludwig, associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and author of *Ending the Food Fight*. “We've been fasting and stress hormones are elevated and we're insulin-resistant, so we can use the properties of food at this time to our benefit or our detriment.” A fasting body is particularly sensitive to, say, a sugary, refined-starch, low-fiber muffin; blood sugar will soar and then plummet, leaving you famished once again.

What's preferable, according to Ludwig, is to choose breakfast foods with a low glycemic index (GI). The term refers to the rate at which glucose is absorbed from carbohydrates—or, put another way, how rapidly carbohydrates affect blood sugar. This is important because controlling insulin and blood-glucose levels in turn controls appetite and, ultimately, weight. In a 1999 study led by Ludwig, twelve obese teenage boys were fed at various occasions high-GI (“instant oatmeal”),

medium-GI (“steel-cut oats”), and low-GI (“a vegetable omelet and fruit”) breakfasts and lunches, and then were allowed to consume all the food they wanted for the rest of the day. The high-GI cohort, in a state of crashing blood sugar and surging adrenaline induced by the instant oatmeal, devoured 500 to 600 extra calories. (This phenomenon likely explains that postprandial ravenousness I often experience—my morning mainstays, toaster waffles and quick-cooking oats, rank fairly high on the GI list.) Low-glycemic foods may even help breakfasters achieve that dietary holy grail: speeding up metabolism. In another study, subjects kept on such a diet saw their metabolic rate shift slightly to burn approximately 80 more calories per day—not a lot, but every little bit helps.



Chef Ben Halperin in the kitchen of his restaurant, Augusta, in Oxford.

Stephen Mally for Brinner: How long have you been a chef?

Ben Halperin: I worked in restaurants most of my life. I started getting more serious about it about 6 years ago, when I was living in New Orleans. I learned on the job.

SM: How would you describe your culinary style?

BH: My style is mostly French, and I do use a fare bit of New Orleans ingredients and style. Can you explain what New Orleans style is for us Midwesterners? This is an oversimplification, but it involves specific ingredients and techniques, liking using a roux (pronounced RUE, a mixture of butter and flour used to thicken sauces and stews), and what they call the trinity: onion, celery and green peppers. The technique is definitely French, that's where it really comes from. Then there's also Creole cooking, which has African roots.

SM: Do you offer both styles of New Orleans cuisine at Augusta?

BH: I make a Creole-style gumbo – gumbo is a word for okra, using it is what makes it African-style, or Creole-style. I do some (Cajun) specialties like crab cakes and crawfish beignets. I also do down-home comfort food – steaks, fried chicken, fried catfish – basic foods, home-style, but with a Southern twist.

What is the most popular dish on your menu?

BH: That's hard to say. We sell a lot of steaks. We have a wood-fired grill with hickory and cherry wood, and just about everything that we cook in there is popular. We have a fairly small menu, so everything moves pretty well. And then I usually run specials, too.

SM: What can people expect to see as specials?

BH: We like to put a crab crust on fish, like halibut. Anytime I can, I like to bring in fresh fish. We'll bring in fresh oysters too, occasionally. Those go really well.

SM: On your Web page, you say your mission is to serve freshly prepared food from as many local resources as possible – why is that important to you?

BH: It just makes the most sense. The local product is going to be freshest, and it doesn't make sense to ship food all over the place with fuel prices so high. Of course, in the middle of the winter, it's difficult to get any (local) produce, but in the spring and summer, I buy locally from some people in Homestead, and I'll also get produce from people with the private gardens. I'll show up to work and there will be a bag of tomatoes on my door knob.

SM: Do have anything special planned for Mardi Gras?

BH: I think we're going to get out some of the New Orleans favorites – some jambalaya and red beans and rice and run them as specials.





Royal Family of Breakfast

By: Nino Padova

Old-world recipes and generations of family focus keep the pancakes fresh (and the breakfast lines long) at the original Original Pancake House.

“Now I want to start by telling you something right off the bat,” Ron Highet begins, leaning in from behind a timeworn oak desk to shake my hand. “This is the best breakfast joint in Oregon.”

Though Highet is seventy-six and moves a step slower since his brain surgery, I get the sense he could yank my paw clean off my wrist if he felt the urge. “No, I take that back: it’s the best breakfast joint in the United States. And another thing ...”

Highet has spent thirty-seven years as a fry cook bent over a five-hundred-degree griddle in one of the busiest breakfast kitchens in the city: you don’t clock that kind of time without knowing how to control the tempo, without cleaving straight to the heart of a situation. “Another thing” turns into a dozen things: vivid spurts of history and insight, some topical (“pancakes are a recession-proof business”), some trivial (“we were this close to opening a restaurant in Abu Dhabi”), and others downright fictional (“you realize my wife was

once a member of the Swedish secret police”). Restaurant is theater, and in this theater Ron always plays the lead. When he goes off, it’s best to sit back and enjoy the show.

The “best breakfast joint in the United States” opened in June 1953. Right away it was a success. Within the first two weeks customers lined up out the door and along SW Barbur Boulevard to snag a taste of the old-world recipes as delivered by Ron’s dad, Les Highet. Les had a second-grade education and had worked his way up through the



restaurant ranks, donning aprons at the grand Davenport Hotel in Spokane and the old Town Tavern at SW Ninth Avenue and Stark Street before scraping up enough money to open the seventy-two-seat Original Pancake House. From the beginning, his philosophy was simple: give people honest, wholesome food made from scratch and they'll show up in droves.

“You’re definitely going to want to spread on more of that butter.”

Business soared and, two years later, the first franchise opened in Salem.

In those days business franchising was a relatively new concept, relegated more to automobile manufacturers and quick-service concession stands;

but, like any dogged entrepreneur with a vision, Les saw opportunity. Today there are 110 Original Pancake Houses across the country, from Miami to Chicago to Dallas to Honolulu. But the *original* Original is right here. “My father figured out how to market the food of middle-class European housewives to a mass audience,” says

Ron. “The average person at that time had never seen big, fluffy pancakes with apples and cinnamon—at least not in a restaurant. Our biggest competitor for years was the home kitchen. And we’ve all but won that battle.”

Their secret weapon? Ron’s mother, Doris Highet. A physician with a PhD in biochemistry, Doris devised a way to break down the gluten in the wheat flour used in pancake batter. In doing so, she made a notoriously difficult substance easier to work with. The result: light, airy, pancakes with flavor and body, quite a contrast to the limp, gummy discs that show up on so many breakfast tables. Her precise formulations, along with the original recipes for OPH’s five core batters (German, French, Swedish, buttermilk, and waffle), are locked away in a stack of bound volumes. The only people authorized to view them are the franchise owners and the prep cooks, though there’s been only one prep cook in the last fifteen years, Tito Lopez (whom the Highets call “Super Tito” because he’s an indefatigable, egg-cracking, batter-mixing miracle of

nature). When I ask Ron if I can sneak a peek at the recipes, he pretends not to hear me. And anyway, he’s moved on to the next subject: ingredients.

The Secret

Unlike most restaurant chains, where profit margins outweigh quality, the Original Pancake House cuts no corners when it comes to ingredients. The 6,500 or so eggs the restaurant cracks each week are AA-grade; the cooks use five to make a single omelet. Their famous apple pancake calls for two whole Granny Smith apples (that’s nearly seven hundred apples a week), hand-cut and doused with imported Chinese cinnamon. Same goes for the

caliber of the milk, sugar, flour, yeast, bacon, juice, and just about any of the other breakfast essentials it takes to toss out a good, hearty morning meal. What’s more, all the OPH franchises are contractually required to use the same superior ingredients.

“Take our butter,” says Ron. “We use ninety-three score. That’s the best butter you can buy. No restaurant in its right mind would use the quality of butter we use at the volume we do. It’s too expensive. Not only that, we clarify it ourselves, by hand. Do you have any idea what that entails?” The pancake that flipped me was the Dutch Baby, a hulking concoction of

egg, flour, sugar, citrus, and vanilla, baked until it puffs out like a hot air balloon before collapsing into a beautifully golden caldera-shaped pancake. Light and flaky at the edges, rich and custardy in the center, the Dutch Baby is one of the Original Pancake House’s staple dishes. It’s been on the menu since the beginning.

The Secret to a pancake is, serving it on a nice clean plate,” Liss says. “There’s no room for hoopla, whether it’s Wall Street trends or the latest food fad. It’s breakfast. Don’t overthink it.”





Brunner

Breakfast...Morning....Noon....and....Night