

I have a piece of candy in my mouth while I sit here and compose this essay. That is not unusual. In fact, most of the people in my family suffer—if that is really the right word—from the condition euphemistically called “a sweet tooth.” And, oddly enough, given the simple carbohydrates many of us consume, the majority of us still have our teeth, are not obese, and have no symptoms of diabetes. Perhaps, my theory of food isn’t so bad. I eat all of the good things, and more, that I am “supposed” to consume—lots and lots of vegetables, fruit, and organic meat, and whole grain homemade bread. So, maybe after all that, I don’t have the capacity to eat more sweets than are I should.

It is not difficult to categorize and prioritize the sweets that call to me. I like cookies and cakes to some degree, but I don’t think I eat an exorbitant amount of either. Good pie is a treat, but I don’t bake them often, as only fresh pie attracts me, and a whole pie for the two of us one day means pie for breakfast the next morning. That seems like overkill.

But, there are two kinds of sweets that I find very appealing. I enjoy cinnamon rolls or other pastries, and there is almost no kind of candy that I would reject.

The pastries I like best are the ones I make myself. Cinnamon rolls filled with maple sugar, lots of cinnamon, some cardamom, and plenty of butter—still oven-warm, if possible—(and maybe, some raisins, dried cranberries, or dried cherries added) are probably my favorite. But, I don’t turn up my nose at coffee cakes or homemade friedcakes, either.

And, then, there is candy. My favorites are many, but, I am not the chocolate lover I used to be. I still like chocolate, particularly the dark kind, but there are other treats I prefer. The gumdrop type “spearmint leaves” are a long-time favorite. I like spice drops and gummy bears of all kinds. And, I love licorice—the black kind, of course. I have never understood why any other kind even has the name.

When we were children, our family often went to town on Saturday. The farmers gathered on the corners, at the grain elevator, or at the hardware store. Along with our mother, my sister and I usually went to the grocery store where we purchased the staples we did not have at home. I often received a nickel to buy a candy bar.

The choices were many, but I had my favorites. In those days, a Three Musketeers bar really did have three kinds of fluffy filling covered with chocolate. Along with the chocolate fluff that is the center of that same bar today were a strip of white vanilla and one of pink, probably strawberry. Sometimes, I chose a Payday bar, salty peanuts on the outside of a cylinder of caramel nougat. Or, often, I selected a bar of soft licorice.

We had candy at home, too. My dad liked hard candy, and he usually had a sack of pink wintergreen lozenges or the similar white ones that were flavored with strong peppermint. Dad kept his candy sack in a kitchen cupboard drawer—the first drawer north of the sink. All of us had access to that bag of candy, and it was seldom lacking.

And, we made fudge sometimes, too. Usually, we cooked regular chocolate fudge—cocoa, sugar, and cream—until a little from the end of a spoon dripped into a dish of cold water formed a soft ball. Then, the candy was ready to take from the stove. We set the pan in a sink of cold water, put a chunk of butter in the fudge, and let it stand a few minutes. Then, we began to beat the mixture until it thickened and began to “lose its gloss.” At that point, we poured it onto a buttered dinner plate and tried to wait until it was cool before we cut it into squares.

Brown sugar fudge—penuche, our recipe said—was also sometimes a treat we made at home. And, at Christmas time, my mother often made divinity fudge, that billowy white confection that she usually dropped in small mounds on waxed paper and topped with candied cherries or nutmeats.

If I buy a candy bar these days, it is likely to be a Mound—coconut covered with dark chocolate. Though, now that I think about it, I still like Paydays, and Skor bars are tasty. Oh—and Werther’s butterscotch drops are good, and then, we have Butterfingers yet today. And, I forgot Bridge Mix. I like that, too, and chocolate covered raisins and...

