



The fussy eater

Ariel Leve

Our new columnist knows that life is full of surprises but she doesn't want them on her dinner plate

would eat sushi every night of the week if I didn't worry about mercury poisoning. I used to eat tuna all the time but I've had to cut back. Part of it has to do with the crunch. Not the credit crunch, but the "crunch" that's now mandatory in every sushi roll. It's made from tempura batter, of which I'm not a fan. Why does sushi have to be crunchy? It was fine just the way it was when it was silent. I prefer my sushi not to make noise. That way I can hear myself talking.

I'm very selective about the sushi I eat. No sushi at an airport or in a shopping centre. Or on a conveyor belt. Or a Sunday. There are four places I'll eat sushi in London and four places in New York. There are a handful of places in LA that I like and anywhere else is a risk. The other day I went somewhere new (on a Sunday) and I didn't get sick. I was very proud of myself. I felt adventurous.

Sometimes when I'm out I'll tell the waiter or waitress I'm wheat-free and they'll ask if I can eat gluten. I'm not gluten-free because I don't have coeliac disease but there are instances when I'll just say I have it, because it's easier.



Occasionally someone will ask, "What happens if you eat wheat?" Then I have to explain that it's bad for my digestion and I feel bloated and sluggish and they'll challenge me and say, "So it's not an allergy then?" No. It's not an allergy. It's a preference. If I have to have this conversation one more time I'll chew my foot off.

Food for me is a minefield. Undetected chicken stock in soup, hidden flecks of bacon on brussels sprouts, onions lurking behind every leaf – I'm a forensic eater.

If only I were half as diligent with my career as I am with my meals, I would have had a private chef by now.

I'll eat things that are savoury as long as they're not too savoury. Anything with chilli powder, chilli sauce, or chilli

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anywhere near it is worrying. I can't have spicy food because it activates my rosacea. When I ask the waiter if it's spicy I always get the same response. They shake their head and say, "It's mild." I used to be a trusting person but I learned the hard way. "Mild" is shorthand for: you're an annoying woman and I want you to suffer. But I enjoy asking questions. And eating. I particularly enjoy asking questions before eating.

I don't trust people who say they don't think about food. How do you not think about food? The only thing worse than people who say they don't think about food is people who say they forgot to eat. It's only skinny people who say this and I never believe them. They must be on drugs. Because if you're not on drugs, and you're not thinking about food – what are you thinking of?

I've been told I'm a fussy eater but I don't think that's accurate. I'm particular.

I'm shamelessly complicated but not just when it comes to food. I like to ask questions so I know where things are going. Like when they're going downhill if it's crabstick and not real crab.

I think it's good to be prepared. There are people in this world who will try anything and are always up for new things. But I'm not one of those people. I prefer to know in advance so I'm not disappointed with my order when the food arrives. Life is full of uncertainties. One person's fussy is another person's conscientious. **OFM**

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Jamie Oliver's 20-minute meals



What is it? The daddy of all food apps, Jamie Oliver's £4.99 digital mini-cookbook was the single-most lucrative app on iTunes UK only weeks after its launch towards the end of last year.

Key ingredient? Jamie's anyone-can-do-this ethos. The result: 55 straightforward recipes, from chilli corn chowder to Eton mess with almonds, with step-by-step guides and 21 instructional videos – but who is so clueless

they need visual aids for chopping an onion? **Frustratingly techie?** Not at all. Ease of use is everything. Also, the give-it-a-shake random recipe function is fun for the indecisive.

Better than a cookbook? Yes, for relative newcomers and those unable to put knife to onion. Sure, there's no drip-feed of high-end culinary knowledge with which to delight the enthusiast. But if you're basically hopeless and in need of a "brilliant beef stroganoff", it's magic.

Download? Essential, even experts will marvel at the whole one-stop shop aspect.

THE PIE CHART

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The most commonly littered brands in the UK. Source: Litter Heroes.

