



The fussy eater

Ariel Leve

The big problem is that small just isn't beautiful when it comes to courgettes or candy bars

Tiny cupcakes, cheesecakes and tarts. Bite-sized burgers. Baby courgettes and mini lobster rolls. Food is shrinking. But guess what isn't shrinking? Appetites.

When it comes to miniature food, less is more has a literal resonance. It's easy to fool yourself into thinking that a mini treat will mean you're going to eat less. You're not. An itty bitsy cupcake might seem less fattening and indulgent but you end up eating several, or several dozen – so forget that rationalisation. And if you do forget it, then what's the point? If you're not eating cute food to save calories, why are you eating it?

The mini bite-sized cupcake is ubiquitous. But unless you're under the age of seven, a regular cupcake is not that unwieldy. When did it start to feel like a chore to eat something that requires four or five bites?

Recently I went to a bakery where you need a magnifying glass to identify the cakes. There was a mini cannoli the length of my little finger and a microscopic pecan pie. I could fit five pastries on a saucer. Which would be great – if I were eating in a doll's house.



Baked goods are one thing. They can be thought of as an exercise in self-control; a challenge to see if it's possible to stop at just one. But baby veg? The baby veg section of Waitrose is heaving with adorable versions of life-sized vegetables. There is no good reason for a baby beetroot to exist.

I blame the Chinese. Or if not the Chinese, whoever it was that came up with the mini corn on the cob that shows up in stir fry. But part of what made it so satisfying is that even though it resembled corn on the cob, there was no cob. So it was a variation of a larger food; not a shrunken replica.

The shrunken replica is where it gets too precious. The phenomenon of Sliders – mini burgers – began at White Castle in America as a way to

serve low-cost hamburgers. They've since been elevated to a more upscale degree. In London they're served with a brioche bun and a side order of mini macaroni and cheese. Is this meant to be an expensive snack? Miniature entrées means that essentially you're making a meal out of canapés.

With sweets, the concept of "bite sized" seemed like a ploy. A bite-sized Milky Way is unsatisfying because instead of leaving me satiated, it leaves me longing for something just out of reach that I can't have. Namely, more chocolate. Bite-sized bars were invented for those people who claim they can eat three peanut M&Ms and then put the bag away.

The most absurd of all manmade mini food has to be the Red Delicious apple. Why would someone create a tiny version of a normal apple and pay more for it? Nature produces a thousand sizes and shapes of apples and yet, someone had to design Granny Smith, Fuji and Red Delicious to fit in the palm of your hand. There's no excuse for this other than the infantilising of food. If it's not about portion control and it's not meant to make us feel better about ourselves – what's it about? The reduced size apple is ridiculous. It's the miniature pony of produce.

The other day I watched a grown-up father eating a tiny Golden Delicious while his baby, in an enormous buggy, ate an adult-sized banana. I stared and thought: this is everything that's wrong with the world. **OFM**

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IBBQ

What is it? Exactly what's required now the sun is out – an idiot-proof guide to cooking with fire, but with all the bells and whistles you now expect from smart phones and tablets. Free, compatible with iPhone and iPad.

Come on, it's barbecuing – how much do you need to know? Plenty. Let's face it, having evolved way beyond the caveman stage,

everyone wildly over- or under-cooks when there's flame involved. So there's a useful selection of cooking times for different cuts, as well as smart tips – such as trimming fat and marinades to reduce burning.

Recipes? A strong selection of burgers and steaks with good glazes and relishes (marmalade lamb, anyone?). There's even the odd salad.

About those bells and whistles Good use of GPS means local butchers, BBQ locations and even the weather forecast are but a few swipes away.

THE PIE CHART

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