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munch 'em, fry 'em, save 'em for years

By [redacted] | Contributor to *The Christian Science Monitor*

It turned 75. Considering that 500 million of them are sold yearly, it seems obvious that Americans are crazy for these sweet, spongy cakes. The question is - why?

Understanding my loving Twinkies is obvious - they taste so darn good," says Debbie Rizzo, a publicist in San Francisco..

"Simply my favorite food group," says Denise Dorman, a Twinkie connoisseur in Florida. "I craved Twinkies during my recent pregnancy and used them for my son's christening cake made of Twinkies."

People think Twinkies taste great. But why have the squeezable yellow cakes endured as an American cultural icon?

"They've gone on because of the emotional response they evoke as part of our [long-term] memory," says Tom Collinger, associate professor of communication at Northwestern University in Chicago.

Someone once thought of a Twinkie as the perfect food: "You could hold it in one hand. You didn't get crumbs on your fingers or your mouth. You could eat the filling inside - biting, licking, and slurping or sucking."

Mr. Delaplaine, a 50-something professor of American cuisine at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in Hyde Park, N.Y., grew up eating Twinkies.

"It's a nostalgia thing," says Mr. Delaplaine, who recently made his wedding cake with Twinkies. "Where I work, there are pastry chefs who would tell me a substantial wedding cake for 150 guests would cost \$1,200."

Mr. Delaplaine decided to go with a Twinkie cake instead. Saving money wasn't really the motivation, he insists. "We wanted something fun that would bring a smile to our faces just for ourselves but for our guests as well."

Mr. Delaplaine has also had a continuing effect on Delaplaine's life. "On our monthly 'anniversary,' I stop off at the convenience store and pick up a box of Twinkies to bring home to my wife, Pam. With Twinkies, you don't have to freeze the wedding cake" to enjoy it together later.

ve been featured in major movies, including "Ghostbusters," "Grease," and "Sleepless in Seattle."

eries "All In The Family," Edith put a Twinkie in Archie's lunchbox each day.

esident Clinton and the White House Millennium Council selected the Twinkie to be included in the nation's Millennium representing "an object of enduring American symbolism."

nsumes more Twinkies per capita than any other city in the US.

minutes to bake a Twinkie.

aking Corp. bakeries can produce 1,000 Twinkies in a minute.

kies were first introduced, the price was two for a nickel. In 1951, a package of two cost 10 cents; in 1966, 12 cent  
ges from two for 99 cents to two for \$1.29.

u might think Twinkies would be a big no-no among nutritionists. But some don't condemn it at all.

dividually wrapped, and has a lot of flavor and satisfaction if you are looking for a portion-controlled treat," says Madelyn Fernstrom,  
irector of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's Weight Management Center.

s per Twinkie, Dr. Fernstrom says, it's a great choice for those seeking a "real dessert" without a lot of extra fat and calories - a Tw  
fat, although it is high in sugar. She's not arguing that nibbling on a Twinkie is better than eating an apple. But if the choice is a piec  
ie versus a Twinkie, she recommends the latter.

admits to watching what he eats, but he isn't concerned about Twinkies: "There are too many other things for me to worry about in  
t's in my Twinkie."

Twinkie that causes its phenomenally long shelf life (rumored to range from years to decades, although officially it's 25 days)? Ferr  
ly to the absence of dairy products.

o loved Twinkies as kids and try them again as adults wonder what in the world ever attracted them to the snacks. Have their taste  
are Twinkies different now?

for the Twinkie are the same today as they were when introduced, except for the filling, says a spokesman for Interstate Bakeries C  
contained banana creme filling. When bananas were in short supply during World War II, the company changed to vanilla creme fil



1,000 A MINUTE: Hostess Twinkies are packaged at the Interstate Baking Corp. facility in Schiller Park, Ill. They were invented in Chicago 75 years ago. TIM BOYLE/GETTY IMAGES

