

עדת אש קודש

Adass Aish Kodesh



A SLICE TOO FAR

By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

Are you or have you ever been a member of the "Clean Plate Club"? This was an organization that was established in America after the Second World War with the goal of getting youngsters to eat healthily and not need to Nosh. Under guidelines set up by President Truman, youngsters would be cajoled into joining these groups in every school in the nation. The idea was that with nutritious food being scarce, it would be a good idea that the little tikes be taught to eat everything on their plate. Hence the name, by cleaning your plate you would not waste precious food, and it would keep you from overindulging between meals. Today we know this wasn't a very clever idea, a whole generation got into the habit of eating whatever they were served, and as food became more plentiful, portion sizes grew and America's waist lines did as well. Being of that generation, I well remember the glories of the clean plate club, I was a proud member and as a child served as a glowing example of its cause. Of course, like millions of others, I carried the clubs ethos into my mature years, another mishap that has now been proven to be dangerous. Just like smoking, which I remember being sold as a healthy practice, eating everything in sight is now understood to be a danger to one's health.

When we go to a kiddush and find groaning tables filled with sticky cakes, over flowing trays of kugel and cholent, it seems that everyone becomes a clean plate honorary member and devours whatever they can lay hands on. Fine, sane folk, baalabatisha Yidden known for their decorum and judgement seem to lose their minds when confronted with ten flavours of Rugelach. Chanukah is one case in point, I felt a stab of pain watching sweet Yidden stuffing their mouths with these donuts that are nothing less than gifts of artery clogging sugar time bombs. It is not for nothing that we are all a bit pudgy and that diabetes is rapidly gaining a foothold in our community. It's as if we left our ability to think at the door when faced with food, without any semblance of thought, we shove all this stuff into

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our panting muzzles. We then schlep home for a full meal, containing all the Shabbosdika delights such as cholent (again), fliesh, and don't forget the after's of sweets. Oneg Shabbos doesn't encompass a suicidal attempt of eating oneself under the table.

Today's "smoking" must be the overconsumption of food, and we are committing a grave disservice to ourselves with each unnecessary morsel.

It is time we talk about this in public. Communal events should reflect care and concern for each other. Our Kiddishim for a simcha should be paired down, simchas should be a bit more sane as well. Sadly instead, we find a trend for ever more elaborate fress and exotic dishes that quickly become "Must Haves" to insecure consumers who feel they must keep up with the latest craze.

Have you ever heard of "Wagyu" Beef? No, Oy! You don't know what you're missing. Said beef comes from a particular strain of cattle found in Japan. These creatures are treated like royalty, they are massaged with rice liquor at a young age and fed extensively with beer. The shikka behaimas are thus reared to become extra-large and their meat is considered the best. The massaging and shikking seems to make their meat marbled and especially good when broiled. In case you missed it, this specialty dish is available in some elitist glatt kosher restaurants in New York. A plate of it costs a second mortgage, but how could you deny yourself a coronary bypass for the splendour of such a tender dish.

Crazy, yes, inevitable probably, unless we bring sanity back to our eating. The authorities in America have long realised the error of their ways when they espoused the "Clean Plate" campaign. They now admit that teaching youngsters to eat mindlessly only makes for a fat nation. We can't ask our kids to eat with some sense of mature thoughtfulness when they see us grabbing a handful of chocolate mousse at a shabbos kiddish. The Torah tells us we must watch our health, over indulging is anything but that.

Readers will think that this is just Rubin climbing onto a new cause. I have no compunction, not when the entire medical world sees our overeating as a deadly epidemic.

We have instituted takonahs (guidelines) in our Shtieble to limit the kidushim to a sensible menu. We have a kiddish every Shabbos, I feel it helps bond us all together as a community. I don't think we will lose many customers if chocolate gateau is no longer available, but I insist that we start creating a positive example to our young. And yes we all need to lose a bit of weight, and there is no better place to start than our shul's.

Sorry if this is turning into a rant, but, as a Communal Rav I have to visit too many lovely Yidden in hospital when their bodies can no longer adhere to the clean plate club rules. It is never too late to turn the corner, all you need is to think before you slip that extra kugel in your mouth, "Do I really need this? Isn't better to live a bit longer?"

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