

Too many choices leads to overload

I've decided I have choice paralysis brought on by option overload. Symptoms of overwhelming confusion show up at the grocery store when bombarded with too many varieties of too many products.

Bread is made from grain, yeast, water and salt but there are endless varieties — whole wheat, oat, rye, barley, sourdough and sprouted grain, to name a few. Bread is sold in the bakery section and in the bread aisle. Some loaves are thick sliced, others are sliced thin and some have the crust cut off. Labels tell calorie count and health benefits and the price is based on store card, coupons, number of loaves bought or weekly specials. Choosing a loaf from the long aisle of bread can be an overwhelming decision.

Barry Schwartz



TASTES OF THE TOWN

Linda Dwyer

writes about it in his book *The Paradox of Choice* — “Consumers have always had choices, but today’s options have exploded beyond all reason.” The overwhelming options make shopping complicated. Once a decision is made it often feels like the wrong choice.

“There’s a point where all of this choice starts

to be not only unproductive, but counterproductive — a source of pain, regret, worry about missed opportunities and unrealistically high expectations,” he said.

The more choices, the higher our expectations. As the brain takes in more information, the planning and decision-making region of the brain becomes overloaded and shuts down. The result might be to grab any loaf or take bread off the shopping list entirely.

There are strategies for easier decision making. Determine a specific product preference and choose the first decent choice that fits. Rather than exhaustively checking all options, replace the idea of a perfect product with one that is “good enough.” Don’t compare your decision to others or dwell on what you didn’t pick. Instead take heart that

you didn’t get stuck and do nothing.

The early weeks of the pandemic produced a new shopping experience. We waited in line to enter stores and then discovered flour wasn’t available, the toilet paper was a rough single ply and there were limits on canned beans, vegetables and tomato products. Our choices were limited and we took what was available and made do.

Grocery shopping felt like an adventure and shoppers truly appreciated the store staff. Finding limited things on my list felt like a glass half full and produced more gratitude than in the past. People call this JOMO (joy of missing out). We find we are happy to have less. It’s a nice alternative to FOMO (fear of missing out), which seems to be based on wanting more.



LINDA DWYER

This strawberry parfait consists of ice cream layered with fruit and whipped cream.

Strawberry Parfait Day

June 25 is National Strawberry Parfait Day. A parfait is ice cream layered with fruit and topped with whipped cream, but there are lots of variations.

Macerated strawberries make the dessert extra special. Wash, hull and slice strawberries. Add a little sugar and let them sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes to release their natural juices. Add a splash of Grand Marnier or a bit of lemon juice or orange juice to enhance the flavor.

Alternate layers of macerated berries with ice cream, custard or yogurt. Layers of cookie crumbs, granola or cake cubes can also be added. A “make your own” parfait party lets each person decide the perfect ratio of cake/ice cream/fruit. A tall, clear parfait glass or wine glass shows off the pretty layers.

Extra time at home breeds creativity

CONFINED TO QUARTERS

Linda Dwyer

Ed & Grace Sheltering In Place

Grace enters and joins Ed at opposite ends of a table, but both facing audience.

Grace: Good morning, Ed, dear.

Ed: Maybe, maybe not.

Grace: What are you looking at, Edward?

Ed: It’s a fly.

Grace: A fly? Well, I’ll get the swatter.

Ed: No, no. Leave it alone. I’m watching it.

Grace: What? Are you kidding?

Ed: It’s interesting. I think it’s wounded.

Grace: Ed, you’ve reached a new low.

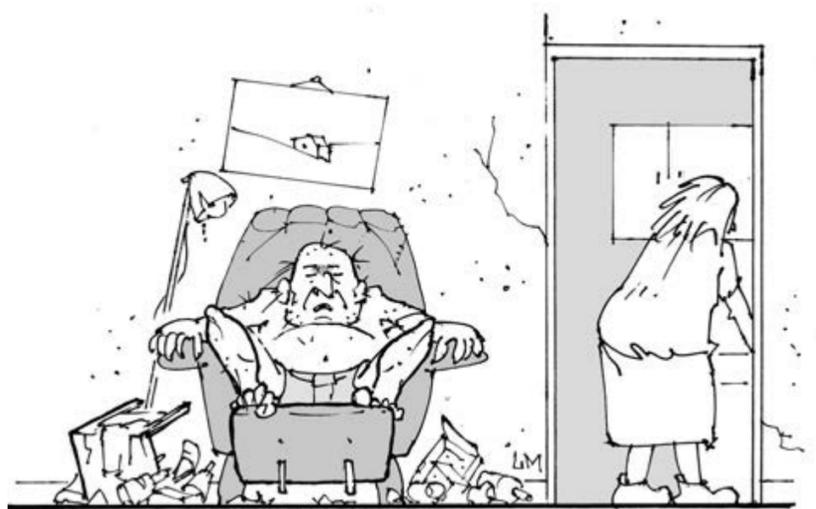
Ed: OK, what engrossing plans do you have for this, the 120th day of sheltering in place?

Grace: Well, this is Saturday, after all.

Ed: And that makes it different because ...

Grace: Don’t you remember our candlelight dinners on Saturday nights?

Ed: You mean before we got to know each other?



Anything open yet?

Nope.

CARTOON BY GARY MILLER

Grace: Yes, and you could stay up past 9 o’clock! Ed, these days you have to be creative. I have my memoirs, see.

Ed: But you’re making stuff up now.

Grace: Yes, like your early sex life.

Ed: ... What’s that noise? I think I heard the mail truck.

Grace: Oh, good. I’ll get it.

Ed: You got it yesterday. I’ll get it.

Grace: Oh, I forgot. The free hearing test.

Ed: You should do that.

Grace: What’s to hear? I know what you’re going to say.

Ed: What’s for lunch today?

Grace: Leftovers.

Ed: We had that yesterday.

Grace: Yes.

Ed: It was peanut butter. Grace: Extra crunchy.

Ed: What are you going to do this afternoon?

Grace: I’ll do the jigsaw puzzle.

Ed: Again?

Grace: Easier this time. How about you?

Ed: Checking the air pressure on the golf cart tires.

Grace: Again?

Ed: Slow leak I think. What else you got?

Grace: My toenails still need some more work.

Ed: Didn’t know you could reach them.

Grace: Is that supposed to be funny?

Ed: Just trying to loosen up the mood a little, sweetheart.

Grace: How about if I loosen up your teeth a little, dear?

Ed: What about our gin rummy game?

Grace: No, I’ll be watching the Jeopardy rerun.

Ed: Again?

Grace: I’m getting some of the questions now. How about after?

Ed: That’s my nap time.

Grace: Aren’t you reading something?

Ed: I’m reading *Lonesome Dove* again.

Grace: Anything change?

Ed: The binding is coming apart.

Grace: My God, Ed, what are we coming to?

Ed: Do we have any friends left?

Grace: Even your mother has stopped calling.

Ed: I loved her, you know.

Grace: Look, here comes the news. Let’s hear what he’s saying.

Ed: I saw it before. The coronavirus is gaining, unemployment is up and the locusts are coming.

Grace: Home sweet home.

Ed: Get out the cards.

Grace: It’s your deal.

Ed: Don’t hurt the fly.

Grace: Put on your mask.

Answers to frequent library questions

BIBLIOFILES

Dana Hendrix

enjoy. You can also place items on reserve and then wait until you receive notification they are ready for pickup. That way you can just pop into the lobby and ask for your materials at the circulation desk, then pop out with them. And if you have items to return while you’re here, please pull through our drive-thru book drop in the Ninth Street parking lot.

Q: Do I have to wear a mask to come inside the library?
A: The library staff all wear masks to protect the public from potential virus transmission in case one of us had COVID-19 but didn’t know it. And we do highly recommend you wear a mask, but we do not require it. Masks help protect those around you — other visitors and our staff — from the virus. The CDC website says, “Cloth face coverings may slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from trans-

mitting it to others.” We are very grateful to all the library visitors who come in with their masks on — thank you for helping to keep others safe.

Q: How can I read e-books or listen to e-audiobooks?

A: As long as your library card is a resident or non-resident type, you have access through our library to materials using the Overdrive/Libby and SimplyE apps. There is information on the library’s website about these and other options at library.georgetown.org/ebooks

Q: Are you accepting donations?

A: Well, it depends on what you are offering. We are accepting monetary donations at the library circulation desk. We have recently begun accepting books and DVDs for our Second-Hand Prose bookstore, which is open. But we are not accepting magazine donations yet. Managing donated magazines is a job normally done by volunteers, and we do not have enough staff to do that in the absence of volunteers.

Q: I turned in my book,

but I still got a notice about it being due soon. What’s up with that?

A: When books are returned now, we are quarantining them for at least 24 hours before we check them in. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website states that the main way the virus spreads is person-to-person, though “it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes.” So out of an abundance of caution, we quarantine your materials before we check them in. In the meantime, you can disregard any automated messages and don’t worry about fines — we don’t charge late fines anymore.

Q: Can I come in to use a computer to check my email?

A: Unfortunately, not at this time. We do not know when we will have computers available to the public again.

Q: Can I come in to get something printed?

A: Yes, so long as you can print it from your own de-

vice — your phone, tablet or laptop, for instance. Make sure your device is on our Wi-Fi network, COG-Public, and then pull up the item you want to print. We have a handout in the library with instructions for printing from both Android and IOS devices. Copies are 10 cents per page.

Q: Do you have tax forms?

A: This year’s extended tax deadline is coming up on July 15. We do have copies of some tax forms on a table in our lobby. Help yourself, and if what you need is not there you can find it on the Internal Revenue Service website and print it or ask a staff member for assistance.

Q: Are you offering tax preparation help like you usually do?

A: No, due to the pandemic nothing that requires or encourages staying in the building more than 30 minutes is offered right now. But we are referring people to United Way of Williamson County and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), which are offering “free drop off, pick up first-come, first-serve tax prepa-

ration services in Round Rock from 10am-2pm on Wednesdays and Saturdays May 30-July 15.”

Q: Can I reserve a study room for a virtual meeting?

A: Unfortunately, our study rooms and meeting rooms are not open to the public currently.

Q: When will I be able to ... use a computer? A meeting room? A study table? Let my kids play on the Jeep in the kids’ area?

A: In other words, When will life be more normal again? We really, really wish we knew but because we don’t, we are not setting target dates for these services. It all depends on the virus and how well we all work to contain it. For now, stay home as much as you can, wash your hands often, observe physical distancing and wear a mask when you are with others. And keep a stack of good books close at hand too, of course! Stay well.

Dana Hendrix is the Fine Arts Librarian at the Georgetown Public Library.