



# FOOD OBSESSION

Food snobbery can be a good thing when quality is the motivation behind it



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IT'S probably pretty obvious by now that I'm fairly absorbed in food, bordering on obsessive at times – almost being removed from a supermarket by security for advising a customer on the benefits of vegetables from the farmers' market instead of what was in her basket – I couldn't help it. And of course the incident with the Pot Noodles (which will be revealed in due course).

My Name is Dave and I have a problem with food. I consume it and it in turn consumes me. I own a food business. I work hands on with food. I research and jot ideas for my column and blog several times a week, even if I do it at three in the morning. I read about food, am working on a book about food, argue with my friends and family about food and – oh, yeah – I cook a lot, too. So to say that I'm somewhat obsessed about food is quite evident.

But does that make me a food snob? I wonder about this quite often, as I hear the term thrown around all the time. What is a food snob? To folks who aren't into food, any "foodie" is often, by a somewhat unfair default, also a food snob. Is it the case that all foodies are also food snobs?

The most relevant definition says that a snob is "one who has an offensive air of superiority in matters of knowledge or taste." So, a food snob is someone who offensively acts superior in their food knowledge or their food tastes. OK, that's easy enough.

Merely being more knowledgeable about food does not make one a food snob. You have to be offensive about it. Knowledge can be measured objectively, and I know lots of people who know loads about food but are not at all offensive about it. Think school canteen cook VS Jamie Oliver. Of course, no one likes a know-it-all, so when you start showing off your culinary knowledge, it may become inherently snobbish. When you feel you're superior, you are a walking, talking S-N-O-B (and the fact that's just one letter from an S.O.B is not a coincidence to many).

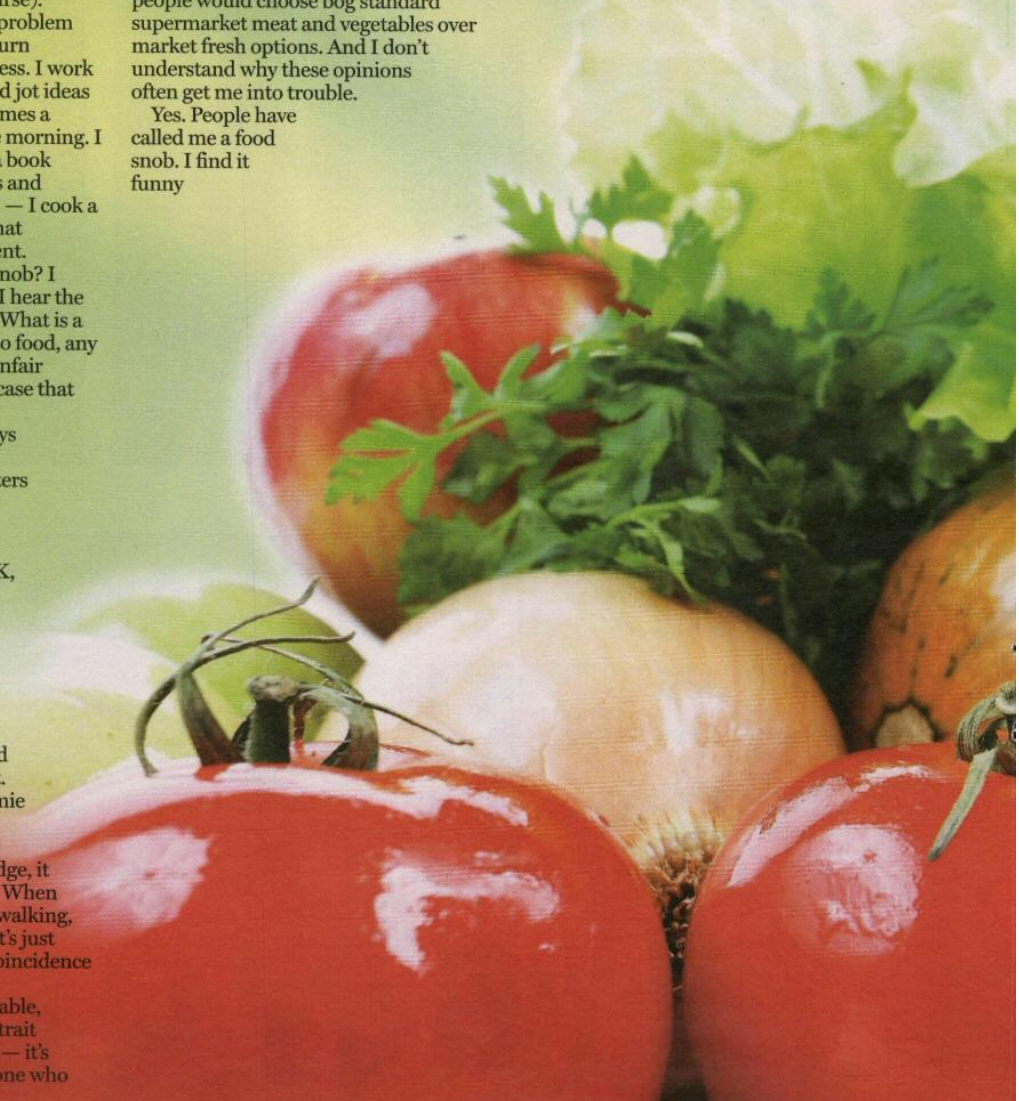
Although knowledge is quantifiable, "taste," on the other hand, is not a trait subject to objective measurement – it's inherently subjective. In fact, anyone who

argues that taste is objective is likely arguing that they know what "good" and "bad" taste is, which may by default make them a snob. But I digress. Based on the dictionary definition, I would argue that acting superior about your food tastes earns you your official "Food Snob Merit Badge."

So, the question now turns to, "Am I a food snob?" My other half certainly thinks so, and it's not because I know more about food. It's because every once in awhile, I find myself judging others because of their tastes and what is in their cupboards. I get scolded for looking into people's shopping trolleys. I don't understand people who refuse to try new things (and I'm talking adults). I don't fully comprehend why, given a choice, most people would choose bog standard supermarket meat and vegetables over market fresh options. And I don't understand why these opinions often get me into trouble.

Yes. People have called me a food snob. I find it funny

considering the fact that many of these people have absolutely no idea of the provenance of the food on their plates nowadays. People have become complacent. People are being hoodwinked and it is getting increasingly difficult to see when and how. Just because the name of the 'trusted' product is the same it doesn't mean that product is being produced in the same way it was 20 years ago. Look at the global companies literally buying the brand names of products we have become to trust. (Look at the back of the next pack of premium brand sausage or cooked ham you buy. Ask your butcher about the (unlabelled) chicken



fillets on display. You are a paying customer. Don't be afraid to ask. If you are not happy with the answer, bring your business elsewhere)

I can understand when people simply don't like something. My partner dislikes — no, abhors — raw onion. There's a lot of other things he doesn't like. I can understand that, as he's tried them several times and just has decided he doesn't care for them. A complete food snob would think that it's now his duty to continue trying these 'horrible yokes' until he grew to like them. I'm not that bad — yet. I sometimes expect that of myself, but not others. I hated scallops. I now tolerate them. I might come to really like them.

Ultimately, I think being a food snob occurs when your beliefs and actions fall quite far outside the mainstream, and the actions of the masses irritate you. It's not that you don't like the same thing as everyone else, it's just that you always think there's something better. I actually eat McDonalds, Supermacs and Chinese takeaways every now and then. I'll eat a

frankfurter (even if Niamh thinks i'm being hypocritical). Hell, I even give in to a battered sausage and chips after a night on the town. But everytime I eat those, I'm thinking of what I COULD be eating that would be so much better. And every time I go to eat these foods, I wince (sometimes a delayed reaction until the morning after) — as I know the food I get from the farmers' market is a lot better (i.e. more flavourful and healthful).

My milk comes from Cleary's farm in Killeigh - Glenisk, My meat from Jimmy Mulhall in Arles - Coolanowle, My vegetables from Oliver Clooney in Durrow and my sweet treats and jams from Lynn and Mary at Portlaoise farmers' market. I know and trust the people who provide me with what I eat. My chickens were born and reared in Kilkenny. The only thing added to my food is the knowledge, love and care of these producers.

Can somebody tell me what the hell is so snobby about that?

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[www.musingsandrecipes.blogspot.com](http://www.musingsandrecipes.blogspot.com)

## A MATTER OF FACT

### Organic food in Ireland

Organic Farming has been around for a long time in Ireland. Prior to the introduction of man made chemicals farming was carried out using natural materials in traditional ways. With the advent of synthetic fertilisers - particularly since the 1940s - we have witnessed a decline in the quality of food and the environment. Industrialised farming has led to the manipulation of the food industry by corporations gaining increased global control of the food chain.

IOFGA - (The Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association) believe that organic farming offers a way to produce quality food full of all the essential goodness that humans need. Furthermore, organic foods are produced in ways which complement natural ecosystems and work in harmony with the environment and nature's cycles.

At the end of 2006 there were 1,104 farmers and growers and 156 processors registered in Ireland. The total area of land managed organically was 39,665 hectares - or about 0.9% percent of utilisable agricultural land. The average farm size was 36 hectares.

As of November 2007 in Northern Ireland there were 226 organic operators farming 11,080 hectares - about 1.1% of agricultural land.

There are many benefits of choosing organic food including:

- Supporting environmentally friendly farming in rural Ireland
- Endorsing farming that places animal welfare as a top priority
- Rearing farm animals without the routine use of drugs, antibiotics, and
- wormers that are commonly used in intensive livestock farming
- Prohibiting the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)
- or irradiation of food
- Prohibiting the use of artificial chemical fertilisers and severely restricting the
- use of pesticides
- Developing a healthy, fertile soil.

