

Tonight is pizza and a movie night in our house. This is a good thing and something I look forward to because it allows my husband, my stepson, and I to reconnect and “transition” into the weekend together. We order the pizza online (how cool is that to be able to get junk food delivered right to your door with no exchange of cash whatsoever?), change out of our work clothes, and watch a family-friendly movie in our darkened living room with our plates balanced on our knees.

Sounds cozy and relaxing, doesn't it? Overall it is, but there is one small fly in the ointment that mars my anticipation; the fact that I will likely encounter one of the very few foods I absolutely detest – the disgusting, totally repulsive fungus humanity has decided to call the mushroom. I have never understood why people love mushrooms so much. I mean, once science classified them in the same category as mold, what possessed people to keep eating them? Add to that the fact that picking the wrong one could be a fatal, and I mean fatal as in you could die, mistake and it makes you wonder about whether humans really are the most advanced species, or, more importantly, how we ever got this far in the first place.

So I think we can all agree that there are solid scientifically-based reasons to avoid mushrooms. So now we can address the texture. Firm enough to still have a presence but approaching mush and slimy, definitely slimy, slippery, even. I really hate the way they hide beneath other things just to sneak in my mouth. And there is no fooling me, either; I can detect a mushroom even if it's buried under six types of Tuscan cheese and a pint of spicy marina sauce. I know a mushroom the nanosecond I bite down on one – even a little piece of one – and I reflexively spit it out.

My intolerance of mushrooms would definitely make it onto my husband's “top five things that don't really thrill me about my wife” list. He loves them; can't get enough of them. He's missed them dearly since he married me. And I feel bad about that. I hate depriving my husband of something he loves so much. So, as a compromise, we order a pizza with half covered in mushrooms, which, as I've stated several times already, I loathe, and the other half covered in olives, which he doesn't particularly like, but which he doesn't go into spasms of disgust when one accidentally slips through.

So there we are, being mature, flexible, compromising people. The problems start when my husband dishes up my pizza for me. I know what you other wives are thinking, “You have a husband who dishes up your food? You don't know how lucky you are!” Listen, you don't have to tell me how lucky I am; he's the best thing that ever happened to me. But, and here's the part where I sound like an ungrateful whining shrew of a princess, he doesn't always pay close attention to which side he's taken the slices from, so sometimes I end up with a mushroom slice (eeewww! spit out loudly into napkin while gagging dramatically) and he's eaten all of my lovely coveted olives without even noticing.

If you are a mushroom lover like my husband, I know exactly what's going through your mind right now; the same thing he's always telling me – “if you would just give them a chance, you'd love them!” But I *have*. I have given them many chances, in fact. I *want* to like them. I'm pretty sure my hatred of mushrooms has held me back in life. I believe I would be a totally different person if I liked them.

Gourmet cooks with sophisticated pallets love to use mushrooms in everything – mushroom risotto, mushroom quiche, mushroom tartlet. They all sound so glamorous, sensuous even. And let's not forget

mushrooms in salads. I picture a luscious salad with all the colors in the rainbow – rich vibrant reds, deep-hued greens – and I agree from a design perspective that the subtle white button of a mushroom can add missing depth and complete the spectrum. I wish I could learn to pretend that a giant portabella mushroom is a steak instead of wanting an actual steak. I wish I didn't always think of worms whenever I see those long black shitake mushrooms in hot and sour soup (I swear they slither!).

People who eat mushrooms lead the kind of lives I wish I led. Passionate, fiery Italians in the countryside discussing Dante and the meaning of life over mushroom risotto and bottles of rich Chianti. Lean, blond, Californians putting mushrooms in everything and getting nearly orgasmic about them. Funky Japanese youth in Tokyo setting trends in music, fashion, and text messaging gobbling tempura mushrooms. I want to be more like all these people. And I know the reason I'm not is because of my hatred for mushrooms.