

The State Fair and the Case of the Disappearing Blooming Onion

So you're cruising down the midway at the State Fair. You and your fam and friends are laughing, funning around, having a great time. You're all hot and thirsty and starving. You smell the sausages and the burgers. You hear the fries sizzling. Calling out to you. Eat me. Eat me. Then somebody walks by with that incredible round thing and you remember how great it tasted last summer--crunchy, greasy, hot, sweet. Without even thinking you say: "Hey where'd you get that?!" Mouth full, he gives a head flick and mumbles "Öber dere. Dere gweat!!" And you haven't had one for a year!! But your docs stick-in- the-mud voice in your head says ""your cholesterol's too high."

But I'm only 40. I haven't had a heart attack. Yeah sure I'm a little squishy where flat and ripped would be great but pretty good for having gone over the big four-O. I'm in good shape.

Two seconds later you're looking at the cute kid behind the counter smiling in your eyes. Your bud, 20 in hand, says "How many of the blooming things do we want? You ate almost a whole one yourself last year big boy, and pats your gut—tire a little flat isn't it?!!

Sure Dad died of a heart attack but not until he was 70. Why worry now?

You had a plan before you came, to eat good stuff, stay away from the junk. Well onions are vegetables!!

What do you do?

Hold your index and middle fingers up in a V. Do it with me now, for real. When you get to the Fair, do it in your head so you don't look too weird. This is your fork in the road. The moment of choice that makes your life healthy or not is the base of the V. Win this one and you'll be stronger next time and might decide to win that one too. Index finger points to the automatic, the reflex, the old habit triggered by the memory smell, taste, pleasure, the full belly; the middle one to some vague goal of lowering your cholesterol, you can't see that, can't taste it, hear it, can't smell it.

We don't fear things years down the road. We make our habit choices based on what we feel and know and want NOW in the cave man brain! Unless... we remind ourselves of our long-term goals and make a real judgment and a real choice. Unless... we interrupt the old and connect to something we really want now! So make the fight a fair one—put some punch behind the reality of high cholesterol and heart attacks. Here's my image when I'm choosing French fries or mandarin orange salad. Try it yourself. Imagine all that grease on the blooming thing moving into your bloodstream, congealing into fatty blobs that block your arteries; you see the blobs get bigger with each bite, then one big blob breaks free and speeds down the tubes to your heart and you see the space is too narrow. It can't get through. The blood pressure starts to build. You feel a crushing weight and grab your chest with both hands but there is nothing to hold on to. Your vision fades; you're falling but can't do a thing. You can hear your wife scream your name. Your kids are crying.

No thanks. I'm gonna get myself some of that great roasted corn we just walked by, and a beer, a really cold, healthy, tasty dark one.

Your anxiety drops a few seconds later. On the way over you decide to try the corn without the butter. You can feel the hot ear in your hands, taste the sweet and crunchy. Decide to have another

one because its got just a few calories and the yellow means there's great stuff called flava-something that you heard helps you live longer, to see your grandkids born, and laugh, and sit on your lap and give you a hug.

Don't forget the baked potato for a buck in the Sand Sculpture building. Try it with lemon and some salt and pepper, and a lemonaid from real lemons. There's that yellow again.

This is Dr. Rich O'Neill with Check-up from the Neck-Up. Thanks for listening. See you at the corn stand!