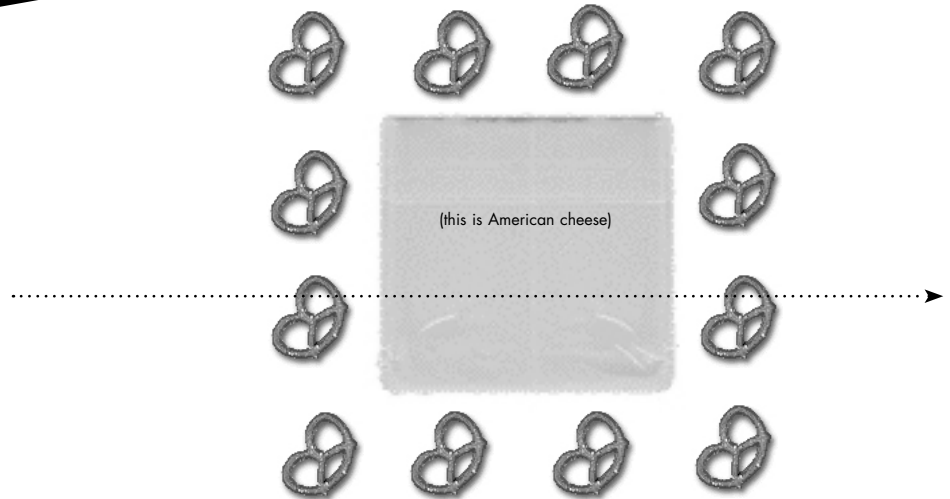


**PRETZELS AND CHEESE À LA WEEKEND:
A DISSERTATION
OR
SEE HOW COMPLICATED EVERYTHING REALLY IS?**



¹ I didn't realize I had such a ritual for eating pretzels and cheese until recently. I never even noticed it, until I did, at which point it cracked me up.² SIGH... you know, 14 years into my full legal adulthood, I still feel a little bit weird when I buy American cheese at the grocery store. 95% of me couldn't care less, but the remaining 5%, comprising innate foodie-ness/food snobbery and pointless hereditary food/class snobbery—GOD HELP ME, I'M NOT PROUD OF THIS—is thinking...euuuuw, American cheese? Ah, fuck it, who cares. It's worth noting that I never liked cheese or ate it as a kid. Cheddar cheese was enough to send me screaming—it tasted incredibly bitter. I have heard since then that this is actually one of the signs that you are a "Supertaster" (a bit of grandiose nomenclature if there ever was one). Don't know if it's true though. ³By the way, if you are like me, and are lactose-intolerant (and no, this is not some trendy nutritional club I joined just to be difficult—I get a little tired of all the ha-hah lactose-intolerant ha-hah jokes), you will need Lactaid or some generic equivalent thereof for this endeavor. Best (and best value) is Lactaid Extra-Strength 50s, which will still cost almost \$10 a bottle at most stores. What a racket. I tell you, though, there is nothing like the agony of being all primed for a dairy-filled meal and having no Lactaid. ⁴Now the cheese will be the perfect pliable temperature. More efficient in the end than microwaving, which reduces the cheese to a bubbling square of orange matter in about 5 seconds, even on Low. ⁵At this point your cat will come running, if your cat has an odd fondness for American cheese, as mine does. It's weird; she comes running at the first sound of American cheese unwrapping, as well as at the first sound of dental floss unspooling. Not to mention at the first sight of Christmas ribbon. I certainly try to discourage the whole dental-floss/shiny string affection, as string, of course, is quite bad for cats. ⁶You knew it was still in its plastic wrapping, didn't you? Otherwise that would be way gross. Maybe you think it's gross already; I don't know, although I don't think I care. ⁷These work best due to their larger lateral surface area. They also are the kinds of pretzels least likely to have been made "Fat Free" or "With Only 1 Gram of Fat." What the fuck is wrong with people? Pretzels were fine the way they were. They've become far too sawdusty as a result of all the usual panicky American Food Fear. It occurs to me also that these are the pretzels whose names sound most like poop. Also, of course, they are both monosyllabic with similar internal vowel sounds. Barbara Pym once pointed out that only agricultural words ("clod," "sod") really rhymed with "God" (hence hymn-writers had a hard time), but here are some more for them to use ("With these pretzel rods/We worship

INSTRUCTIONS:

Gather ingredients; remove cheese from refrigerator and take it and the pretzels into the living room with you¹. As you sit down, place one slice of cheese² under each butt cheek, so that they will warm to room temperature as you sit on them. The cheese³ is ready when it no longer feels cool to the butt, in about five minutes⁴. Remove one slice of cheese from under your butt and peel off its plastic⁵ wrapping⁶. Now take one pretzel, which should ideally be a pretzel LOG or ROD⁷. In most cases salt will need to be scraped off the sides of the pretzel to make it palatable⁸. Take one bite of the pretzel so that you create a rough flat surface⁹ - see fig.1). Press/scrape the freshly-exposed surface of the pretzel over a corner of the cheese, gathering it up, and take a bite. Continue (cheese will last a surprisingly long time) until hunger is

INGREDIENTS:

2 slices American cheese
pretzels, to satisfy hunger

Thee, O God"). ⁸This is my personal preference, of course. I have spent large portions of my life scraping salt off of all kinds of pretzels (which I love). I don't like the taste of biting into crunchy salt. Ick. WHICH IS NOT TO SAY that I like no salt; there has to have been salt ("justice has to be done, but also been seen to have been done" my mind chants along with this—why?), which has since been removed but leaves a lingering saltiness. It is similar to the way that I like my bath or my cup of tea to have been hot but cooled down—to have cooled to the correct temperature, but have been hot. There really is no easy way to scrape the salt off; I suggest using the back of a knife, scraping in long smooth down-ward motions into a trash can. You can also use your fingers, although this makes your forefinger kind of sore and calloused. The task requires more delicacy of touch than you might think. You have to sort of work diagonally, otherwise the pretzels, even the sturdy rods, will break. I once had grand plans for designing a set of tableware for little kids for eating junk food; a pretzel de-salter was going to be among them. I

also was going to design tongs for grasping fluffy Cheetos (similar to asparagus tongs), a flat 2-pronged fork for spearing crunchy Cheetos, a Ho-Ho peeler, a pistachio nut shucker, etc. Then I heard about that silver artist at Cranbrook who had already designed a set of beautiful pieces for eating junk food—opening Oreos, etc.—and I got discouraged. I still think I might design my set someday, though. Perhaps putting the idea to paper will help, not to mention protect the intellectual property rights for an important idea such as this. Anyhow, one of my slightly serrated cheap table knives works pretty well.

⁹Well, I should note that this is all MOOT, because to be dead honest in the past six months I have fallen in love with Kraft Handi-Snacks Cheez 'N Pretzels, which is all this and then some. Mmmmm. Sargento Moo Town Snacks Cheese & Pretzels, their competitor, and a superficially less pre-fabbed food product, at least in terms of its groovy-but-good-for-you kids-food packaging, is actually rather awful. I have noticed that the Moo Town cheese has gotten paler, less nuclear-ly orange, and therefore more like the Kraft cheese, but it still has that terrible sharp taste without much flavor or mellow-ness behind it. It kind of tastes like the classic potted "Bar Cheese" (most correctly pronounced "Barsheehz"), but not nearly as good. The Kraft "cheese" is a much better match with the pretzels. But oh! so expensive. This recipe ("recipe") is much cheaper.

