

Cereal, a taste of nostalgia at a crossroads

By Kim Severson, New York Times

King Vitaman and I were tight when I was young. Sweetened cereals were a rarity in my house, so beating my siblings to breakfast was the only way to make sure the king and I would have some time together.

I got up early to follow his animated adventures on the back of the box. Even the ingredient list, with its parade of unintelligible words and the promise of a full day's supply of vitamins and iron, seemed endlessly fascinating. I was rapt until the bowl was empty and his sugarcoated golden crowns had turned the milk to syrup.

Now, I watch my young daughter stare at her cereal box in the morning, pondering a stalk of organic wheat or the plight of a koala. I wonder if she will ever have the sentimental pleasure of her own King Vitaman.

Breakfast cereal, both as a cultural marker and a profit center, is at a crossroads. Since the late 1990s, its popularity has been slowly fading. Sales, which totaled \$13.9 billion in 2000, dipped last year to about \$10 billion.

Read the whole story