Chicken wing consumption spikes during Super Bowl

By Huffington Post

Rumors of a chicken wing shortage are likely unfounded, so wing fans can breath a sigh of relief. And these wing fans are serious about their devotion – the National Chicken Council estimates that 1.23 billion chicken wings will be consumed over Super Bowl weekend this year.

This is down slightly from 2012, when the NCC estimated that 1.25 billion wings would be consumed. If 1.23 billion wing segments were laid end to end, they would stretch from Candlestick Park in San Francisco to M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore – 27 times.

"Chicken companies produced about one percent fewer birds last year, due in large part to record high corn and feed prices," said Bill Roenigk, chief economist and market analyst at the National Chicken Council, in a press release. "Corn makes up more than two-thirds of chicken feed and corn prices hit an all-time high in 2012, due to two reasons: last summer's drought and pressure from a federal government requirement that mandates 40 percent of our corn crop be turned into fuel in the form of ethanol. Simply put, less corn equals higher feed costs, which means fewer birds produced."

Wings are currently the highest priced part of the chicken, which is somewhat ironic since they first became popular as a cheap byproduct of rising demand for boneless, skinless chicken breast in the 1980s. Apparently, there's such high demand for wings now that some restaurants sell chicken breast meat branded as boneless wings.

The NCC estimates that more than 13.25 billion chicken wings will be sold (as wings, not as components of a whole chicken)

throughout the year. To truly comprehend the power of the Super Bowl, the NCC has created this graph based on grocery store and supermarket 2012 chicken wings sales. It’s clear that an outsized share are sold Super Bowl weekend.

Watch when you eat, researchers say

By Mary MacVean, Los Angeles Times

Some popular diets advise against late-night snacking or even eating after 6pm. Now, there’s some research to confirm that when you eat could matter as well as what you eat if you’re trying to shed pounds.

A study in Spain followed 420 men and women on a diet for 20 weeks. They were grouped into early eaters – those who had their main meal before 3pm – and late eaters – those who had it after. (The participants followed the Mediterranean diet, in which the main meal was lunch.)

Researchers looked at what the participants ate, their activity, their sleep habits and other characteristics. The dieters also attended weekly group therapy sessions.

It turned out that the late eaters lost less weight – 17 pounds – and at a slower rate than the early eaters, who lost almost 22 pounds, the researchers wrote Tuesday in the International Journal of Obesity.

“Recent studies link energy regulation to the circadian clock … emphasizing that the timing of food intake itself may have a significant role in weight regulation,” wrote the authors, led

by M. Garaulet of the University of Murcia in Spain.

“No significant differences were found in age, gender distribution, obesity-related variables and metabolic syndrome characteristics between the early and late lunch eaters,” the researchers said. But they said the late eaters had small breakfasts or skipped breakfast – and that long period from the first meal to the second might be at work.

The researchers noted that their study was based on observing the dieters, and that more work is needed to figure out the cause of the difference between the groups.

Japan’s school lunch menu: A healthy meal, made from scratch

By Chico Harlan, Washington Post

TOKYO – In Japan, school lunch means a regular meal, not one that harms your health. The food is grown locally and almost never frozen. There’s no mystery in front of the meat. From time to time, parents even call up with an unusual question: Can they get the recipes?

“Parents hear their kids talking about what they had for lunch,” said Tatsuji Shino, the principal at Umejima Elementary School in Tokyo, “and kids ask them to re-create the meals at home.”

Japan takes seriously both its food and its health and, as a result, its school lunches are a point of national pride – not a source of dismay. As other countries, including the United

States, struggle to design school meals that are healthy, tasty and affordable, Japan has all but solved the puzzle, using a system that officials here describe as utterly common sense.

In the United States, where obesity rates have tripled over the past three decades, new legislation championed by Michelle Obama has pushed schools to debut menus with controversial calorie restrictions. But even the healthiest choices are generally provided by large agri-food companies, cooked off site, frozen and then reheated, and forced to compete in cafeterias with all things fried, salty and sweet.

Schools in Japan, by contrast, give children the sort of food they'd get at home, not at a stadium. The meals are often made from scratch. They're balanced but hearty, heavy on rice and vegetables, fish and soups. The meals haven't changed much in four decades.

Mealtime is a scene of communal duty: In both elementary and middle schools, students don white coats and caps and serve their classmates. Children eat in their classrooms. They get identical meals, and if they leave food untouched, they are out of luck: Their schools have no vending machines. Barring dietary restrictions, children in most districts can't bring food to school, either, until they reach high school.

Japan's system has an envious payoff – its kids are relatively healthy. According to government data, Japan's child obesity rate, always among the world's lowest, has declined for each of the past six years, a period during which the country has expanded its dietary education program.

Japan does struggle with childhood and adolescent eating disorders, and government data show a rise in the number of extremely skinny children. But there is virtually no malnutrition resulting from poverty. Japan's children will live on average to 83, longer than those in any other country,

according to the World Health Organization.

When it comes to food, Japan has some deeply ingrained advantages. Children are taught to eat what they are served, meaning they are prone to accept, rather than revolt against, the food on their plates. But Japan also invests heavily in cultivating this mind-set. Most schools employ nutritionists who, among other tasks, work with children who are picky or unhealthy eaters.

Though Japan's central government sets basic nutritional guidelines, regulation is surprisingly minimal. Not every meal has to meet precise caloric guidelines. At many schools, a nutritionist draws up the recipes — no bureaucratic interference. Central government officials say they have ultimate authority to step in if schools are serving unhealthy food, but they can't think of any examples where that actually happened.

Funding for lunches is handled locally, too: Municipalities pay for labor costs, but parents — billed monthly — pay for the ingredients, about $3 per meal, with reduced and free options for poorer families.

Notable is what's lacking: You don't see low-fat options. You don't see dessert, other than fruit and yogurt. You occasionally see fried food, but in stark moderation. On a recent day at Umejima, kids were served the Japanese version of fried chicken, known as karaage. Each child was allowed one nugget.

Officials at Adachi Ward, in northern Tokyo, say they run a "fairly standard" school lunch program in the ward's 71 elementary schools and 37 middle schools. And because this is food-obsessed Japan, those standard meals are restaurant-worthy; in fact, the ward publishes a full-color cookbook based on its best school meals.

District officials allow themselves to brag for just one

reason, their success in cutting food waste to 5 percent. This follows the “Oishii Kyushoku,” or “Delicious School Lunch,” program they created five years ago to get kids more interested in what they were eating.

At Umejima, one of Adachi Ward’s schools, the hallway walls look like the pages of Bon Appetit magazine. Hand drawings of healthy lunches dreamed up by students hang near the principal’s office. There are charts of beans and spices. Then there’s the real food, which is chopped, diced and simmered every morning, beginning at 8a,, by a staff of 12. Shortly after noon, they’ll have meals for 760 students.

“Everything is cooked on site,” school nutritionist Kimii Fujii said. “We even make our own broth.”

Fujii has an expansive job — part educator, part chef and the point person for parent questions. Because of concerns about food contamination in the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, Fujii gives a daily account on the school Web site of where the lunch ingredients are coming from: the sardines from Hyogo, the carrots from Chiba, the bean sprouts from Tochigi.

She writes the recipes, changing them to reflect seasonal ingredients, and she’s realized, over the years, that kids will eat almost anything if you serve it to them right. They’ll eat hijiki, an earthy black seaweed, if you mix it with rice. They’ll eat small whole fish, heads and all, if they are lightly fried. Tofu is an easier bet, but just to be sure, it sometimes comes with minced pork.

Fujii doesn’t teach a class, but three or four times a year, classrooms come visit her for lunch — meaning they eat in the cafeteria, rather than their classrooms. This field trip comes with a small price: After the kids have served themselves the food, but before they can eat, they get a five-minute lecture about the items on their plates.

Lunchtime, on this particular day, begins with a call from the teacher.

“People in charge, please come up.”

Six third-graders put on their white sanitary smocks and caps and take their positions behind serving trays. One child eyes the thick reservoir of Sichuan tofu and wiggles his right arm, as if to warm up his ladling hand. A teacher shows the girl serving rice how much to give each of her classmates — between 160 and 180 grams.

“Is this OK?” the girl asks as the first student comes by.

When everybody sits back down, the lecture begins.

“Today’s meal is made up of various ingredients, but to fill you up, you have to eat everything fully,” Fujii told the class of third-graders. “If you finish this whole lunch, it means you are taking in 21 ingredients.”

One child interrupted.

“You have to eat a balanced meal.”

“That’s right,” Fujii said. “You can get full without vegetables, but we still need them. Why do we need them? Because they have Vitamin C, which makes you stronger.”

Japanese food, contrary to the common perception, isn’t automatically healthy; it includes crispy chicken, rich bowls of salty ramen with pork belly and battered and deep-fried tempura. But, like most cuisines, it can be healthy.

Japan began emphasizing healthy food for its students in the aftermath of World War II, when the government prioritized education and health as a way to catch up to the modernized West. For a decade after the war, school lunch food was still coming from international donations. Many older Japanese remember postwar school meals of powdered skim milk, bread and

daikon radish. But by the 1970s, the school meal came to look much like the modern-day standard. These days, ethnic food (such as Korean or Italian) is mixed in once or twice per week.

Japanese government officials say no other country has copied Japan's system of made-from-scratch meals eaten in classrooms, or even tried to.

"What is most difficult for me to explain is why we can do this and other countries cannot," said Masahiro Oji, a government director of school health education.

Oji mentioned that last year he attended an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation workshop in Moscow on school lunch programs. Japan sent members of its education ministry, Oji said. Most other nations sent members from their agriculture or farm ministries.

"Japan's standpoint is that school lunches are a part of education," Oji said, "not a break from it."

Yuki Oda contributed to this report.

K's Kitchen: Butternut Squash and Cauliflower Soup

By Kathryn Reed

I came across Cookin' Canuck by chance. Someone on Twitter or Facebook had mentioned something about not liking a food site anymore. Others recommended other sites. Before I knew I was searching for recipes and forgetting all about work.

Of course I convinced myself if I found a recipe that sounded good, tried it and would want to publish it on *Lake Tahoe News*, then I was working. It was research.

The recipe below is not only a great winter soup, it's healthy and easy.

This is what the Cookin' Canuck website says, "Dara Michalski is the writer, recipe developer and photographer behind the award winning site, Cookin' Canuck. Dara has been sharing her easy, innovative and healthy recipes with her readers since April 2009."

This is the only recipe of hers that I have tried. But based on how good it was I'm ready to peruse the site again to see what else Michalski has come up with.

Butternut Squash and Cauliflower Soup

2 tsp olive oil

1 medium onion, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 carrot, cut into thin half-circles

1 celery stalk, thinly sliced

¼ tsp dried chile flakes

½ tsp dried thyme

¼ tsp salt

1 T tomato paste

¾ pound butternut squash (about 2½ C)

½ pound cauliflower (about 2 C)

1¾ C vegetable broth

1¾ C water

2 bay leaves

¼ C minced Italian parsley

Salt and pepper, to taste

Heat olive oil in a large saucepan set over medium heat.

Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion just starts to soften, about 5 minutes.

Add the garlic, carrots, celery, dried chile flakes, thyme and salt. Cook until the vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes.

Stir in the tomato paste and cook for one additional minute.

Stir in the butternut squash, cauliflower, vegetable broth, water and bay leaves. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer, partially cover the saucepan and cook until the squash and cauliflower are tender, 15 to 20 minutes.

Let the soup cool for 10 minutes, then transfer 2 cups of the soup to a blender. Puree until almost smooth, then stir the mixture back into the soup.

Stir in the parsley, add salt and pepper (if desired) and serve.

K’s Kitchen: Roasted winter veggies

By Kathryn Reed

The butternut squash kept calling to me. And I kept ignoring them. Then I bought one and put it on the counter. Finally, I couldn’t keep ignoring it. Hunger will do that to you.

I knew I didn’t want to put anything sweet on it – like brown sugar. And I knew I didn’t want it alone.

I decided to chunk up half of it. Then I added about the equivalent in red potatoes. Both were cut into bite-size pieces.

To the 9 x 13 baking dish I added chopped carrots – not quite as much as the other two veggies.

I wished I had a red onion, but used yellow instead.

Then I peeled a few garlic cloves. The large ones I cut in half or thirds length-wise. I had about 10 total.

All this I mixed together in the dish.

The amount of spices you use will depend on how many veggies you use. I just started shaking the sage and white pepper. It’s always better to start off conservatively because you can add more. Too much spice isn’t always possible to rectify, though in this case adding veggies would work.

I used lavender sea salt because it’s been in the cupboard since I bought it last fall in Buellton. Sue and I had been

biking in this Central California town and came across the Andre Lavender Farm. The aroma made us want to stay there all day, but Sue made me get back on my bike after my purchase.

The saleswoman said to use the lavender like I would any sea salt.

I mixed all the spices into the veggies.

Then I cut the butter into pieces and distributed onto the veggies.

Put into oven at 400 degrees. After about 10 minutes, stir the veggies so the melted butter coats them. In all, the veggies will cook for about 1 hour – though that depends on the veggies you used, elevation and size of the pieces. In the last 15 minutes, add the Brussels sprouts. Stir.

Taste the veggies as you go along to decide if seasoning needs to be adjusted. When all the veggies are done, you are ready to serve them.

I used this as a main course, but it would make for a great side dish.

Roasted Veggies

½ butternut squash, peeled and chopped

Red potatoes, chopped

Medium onion, chopped

Carrots, chopped

Brussels sprouts, cut in half

Garlic

Sage

White pepper

Lavender salt

½ cube butter

Chaos in California could be boon for Wisconsin cheesemakers

By Rob Schultz, Wisconsin State Journal

MADISON – Wisconsin's cheese producers are poised to profit – perhaps mightily – from a feud that has buckled the knees of California's dysfunctional dairy industry.

California cheesemakers have prospered for decades because the price of milk used to make cheese has been set lower than what competitors from other states, including Wisconsin, pay. Now, California's financially strapped dairy farmers are saying their future depends on whether their state's cheese producers can be forced to pay the same price as everybody else, according to a Wisconsin State Journal report.

If California cheesemakers are forced onto a level playing field, sales of Wisconsin cheese – estimated at about $5

billion – could increase by $200 million, according to a top dairy industry executive from Wisconsin.

“It could be very significant,” said David Fuhrmann, chief executive officer and president of Foremost Farms, a Baraboo-based company that is Wisconsin’s No. 1 cheese producer. Foremost makes cheese and other dairy products for sale worldwide.

At issue is that California sets its own milk prices, and those prices are usually lower than those paid in the federal system followed by most states, including Wisconsin.

California’s dairy farmers didn’t complain about the low prices until recently when feed costs began to soar. Most farms there don’t have room to grow their own feed, so they must buy it, usually from another state. Factor in higher regulatory costs, and environmental and water concerns, and it all led to more than 100 of the state’s 1,600 dairy farms closing in 2012, according to Michael Marsh, CEO of Western United Dairymen, a group that represents about 65 percent of California’s dairy farmers.

California cheese is as much as 10 to 15 cents a pound cheaper.

“That’s huge,” he said.

Nobody knows that better than California’s dairy farmers.

The thought of California producers losing that milk-price advantage has Wisconsin cheesemakers salivating.

“If they have to pay more for the milk, and get on a more level playing field with us, we will gain market share because the majority of their cheese is being shipped to the Midwest or the East, and we have a huge transportation advantage,” Fuhrmann said.

“That should allow us to be a lot more competitive and gain

market share at their expense.”

Award-winning Placer County winery expanding

By Jon Tourney, Wines & Vines

AUBURN – After expanding wine production and sales for five years at its original location, Lone Buffalo Vineyards has roamed to a larger property in Placer County and built a new and larger winery and tasting room that opened Jan. 11.

The new 12-acre property is located northwest of Auburn, and north of Interstate 80, placing it within the Sierra Foothills American Viticultural Area and closer to a more heavily traveled section of the expanding Placer County Wine Trail. The new site is within three miles of a cluster of newer wineries and tasting rooms that include Dona Dal Cielo Vineyard and Winery, PaZa Vineyard and Winery and Wise Villa Winery.

Family-owned and operated by Phil, Jill and Jocelyn Maddux, Lone Buffalo began commercial operation in 2007 at a smaller, off-the-beaten path property with a one-acre vineyard south of Auburn.

Phil Maddux is a native of Sonoma County who practices real estate law, but he is increasingly devoting more time to the winery. He began making wine in 1971 and has taken winemaking and chemistry classes at UC Davis and Sonoma State University, and cites Sonoma County winemaking legends Dick Arrowood and Cecil DeLoach as mentors.

Maddux was an award-winning amateur winemaker for many years, and Lone Buffalo wines are now winners in commercial wine competitions. Most recently, Lone Buffalo won medals for each of its five wines entered in the 2012 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition, notably taking a gold medal for the 2010 Sierra Foothills Thunder Beast Zinfandel.

Jill Maddux, with a 25-year career in sales and marketing, manages Lone Buffalo's sales and accounting and assists Phil with vineyard management, including managing three 1-acre vineyards in Placer County, where the winery sources grapes.

Their daughter Jocelyn Maddux handles public relations, manages graphic media and the winery's website, electronic and social media in addition to operating her own marketing consulting business – jbrandmarketing.

All three Madduxes staff the tasting room on weekends. "Each of us brings our own skills and strengths to the business," Jill said. "We're a three-legged stool, and we complement one another in how we divide up the duties."

Success enables move Lone Buffalo's success and growth enabled the move and expansion.

"We've been profitable since our third year in business," Phil said, "and we'd been looking for a new location for almost two years."

Direct sales through the tasting room, a wine club and the website account for a significant part of sales, with the remainder of production sold through local retailers and restaurants along the I-80 corridor from Sacramento to Lake Tahoe. The new location on the Placer County Wine Trail is expected to draw more customer traffic.

Red Hawk Casino takes a gamble on foodies

By Cathie Anderson, Sacramento Bee

Let gamblers enjoy the card tables and slot machines at the front of the house at Red Hawk Casino. Foodies would prefer to play in the rear.

Evan Smith holds the keys to much of this domain as the new vice president of food and beverage. His is the largest department, 400 of 1,400 workers. Six restaurants include Henry's Steakhouse, Pearl and Waterfall Buffet.

Smith took me behind the scenes where we chilled with salads and hors d'oeuvres in the garde-manger. He asked the head butcher to take a break from cutting beef short ribs to show me the prime short loins and rib-eyes that hang out in the dry-aging room for 25 to 30 days.

When we finally arrived at the front of the house at Henry's Steakhouse, he pointed out the $2,100 bottle of Louis XIII cognac and wines that sell for $20 to $400.

Smith basked in the activity of each kitchen. His formal culinary training was with an Austrian chef at Contra Costa College, and he also worked for a French chef at Le Marquis in Lafayette.

"I worked six days at the restaurant, and I went to school five of those days," he said. "I pretty much lived, ate and breathed culinary arts every day of my life."

After college, he worked for two years at Chez Panisse in Berkeley before venturing out as a chef. He worked for 20

years in Lake Tahoe casinos, but he comes to Red Hawk from Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino, north of Fresno, where he led the food and beverage unit.

As a senior manager at Red Hawk, Smith works closely with general manager Bryan deLugo to help improve the casino's fortunes. Owned by the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians and managed by Lakes Entertainment Inc., Red Hawk has struggled amid a poor economy.

The downturn heightened demands on food and beverage managers, who already faced stiff competition from a growing number of regional casinos, said Jean Hertzman, assistant dean of operations at the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration at UNLV.

"Because a smaller percentage of the casino's revenue is from gaming than it used to be, particularly after the last recession, now it's switched to where food and beverage also needs to be profitable," Hertzman said.

Casinos have stopped using $3.99 buffets as loss leaders to draw gamblers. Meals now go for about the same price as those at comparable local eateries. Red Hawk's buffet ranges from $10 to $20.

Inaugural ball food: from foie gras to peanuts

By Tim Carman, Washington Post

Even in 1889, as crews prepared for President Benjamin

Harrison’s inaugural ball under the eerie artificial light of the Pension Building’s newfangled incandescent lamps, planners had a bad case of Gotham envy.

Hired to mastermind the massive feast for the ball, Philadelphia hotelier George C. Boldt told a *Washington Post* reporter that he was “determined to show the New York Delmonico idolaters that there was no monopoly of the feasting business in that city.”

Now, I can’t vouch for the accuracy of that quote because, despite describing the evening’s dresses, grand marches and banquet preparations with the kind of baroque detail that would make Michener blush, the *Post* reporters assigned to Harrison’s inauguration apparently couldn’t be bothered to use quotation marks when interviewing sources. But I can safely assume that Delmonico’s, then our country’s best gustatory stab at French sophistication, could not match the spread that Boldt and his team had prepared for the new president and his 15,000 guests.

According to the paper’s account, the throng gobbled down 40,000 raw oysters, 20,000 steamed oysters, 20,000 oysters a la poulette, 300 gallons of consomme, 7,000 chicken croquettes, 7,000 sweetbread patties, 7,000 roll sandwiches, 300 gallons of chicken salad, 200 gallons of lobster salad, 150 beef tongues, 150 Virginia hams, 150 turkeys, 1,000 quail, 800 pates de foie gras “a la Harrison,” 500 pounds of terrine of “game a la Morton” (a reference to Vice President Levi Morton), 300 quarts of Roman punch and 300 gallons of terrapins.

Compare that sumptuous 19th-century banquet to the food expected at President Obama’s Commander-in-Chief’s and Inaugural balls on Monday at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. According to the Presidential Inaugural Committee, the reception-style meals will include “similar items from previous years, including an assortment of pastas

and crudites."

The architect of the 2013 inaugural ball menus will not be a self-made millionaire like Boldt, who virtually invented the luxury-hotel lifestyle. It will be Centerplate, the giant food service company better known for feeding us roller-grilled weenies at ballparks. The food appears to be such an afterthought that neither the Presidential Inaugural Committee nor Centerplate is releasing menus for review.

Organizers, however, did feed us a little spoonful of sugar to help the crudites go down: "In keeping with our efforts to keep the costs down and make this accessible to the American public, the menu is both celebratory and appropriate given the nation's ongoing economic recovery," a committee spokeswoman e-mailed me.

So how did official inaugural balls go from a feast fit for the four-star appetite of Diamond Jim Brady – or at least the mythical Diamond Jim Brady – to one that requires a trip to the Mickey D's drive-through afterward? Most people I spoke to indicated that budget and security have been the driving factors in keeping food in check.

Eric Michael, co-founder of Occasions Caterers in Washington, remembers when he attended one of Ronald Reagan's official balls in 1981. It was held at the Kennedy Center and, unlike some sumptuous soirees tied to the Great Communicator's inauguration, this one offered a spread of peanuts and pretzels, Michael recalls. There was a cash bar, too.

"I think it's, frankly, an economic issue," Michael says. "They want to keep ticket prices as low as possible."

Design Cuisine of Arlington has supplied snacks for seven official balls, all at Union Station, dating from the '80s. "With the first one and second one, it was a little bit more food, but from then on, it began diminishing," says co-owner Bill Homan.

Although Obama's inaugural ball food is meant to signal gustatory austerity in tough economic times, other presidents have used their grand celebrations to make different statements. Historical accounts credit James Madison in 1809 with the first official inaugural ball held at Long's Hotel on Capitol Hill, a party that attracted 400 of Washington's elite. A *Washington Post* retrospective look at balls in 1933 pegs first lady Dolley Madison as the instigator of this tradition. "She loved society and all its doings," wrote an unnamed author.

Subsequent galas sometimes had a more egalitarian air, like President Lincoln's second-term ball in 1865. Tickets were $10 each for the party at the Patent Office, but as a *Post* story told it, "each gentleman could bring as many ladies as he chose and some brought half a dozen." The scene turned ugly during a midnight supper of terrapin stew, foie gras, leg of veal, cakes and tarts.

"As soon as the doors were thrown open, one thousand hungry persons tried to push their way in at one time," The *Post* account relates. "The crush which followed can better be imagined than depicted."

Incoming presidents seemed to play a game of one-upsmanship with their inaugural balls in the mid- to late 19th century: James Buchanan, James Garfield and Harrison each staged parties with Brobdingnagian banquets worthy of NFL training tables. A Los Angeles Times report noted that Garfield's 1881 inauguration dinner featured 15,000 "assorted cakes." Only Rutherford B. Hayes, whose controversial election was confirmed only days before his swearing in in 1877, did not have an inaugural ball in that era.

The 20th century, that period of world wars and psychoanalysis, coincided with American presidents casting a cynical eye on inaugural balls. Woodrow Wilson, in fact, canceled the whole affair. It took Harry Truman – that

Missouri farm boy – to revive the official ball in 1949, and John F. Kennedy took it to new heights. He attended a then- -record five balls, one featuring two 500-pound cakes decorated with the president's and vice president's visage in icing.

Leave it to Jimmy Carter, who lived in public housing for a year, to bring the inaugural ball back down to earth. He refused to call them balls. To him, they were "parties." The final touch for Carter's parties? An homage to his roots and staple of his family's business: peanuts.

To Carter, the peanut was a sign of hope. He had reversed his own fortunes with the lowly legume, but the snack would turn out to be a metaphor for the food to come at future inaugural balls: It would soon be "peanuts."

K's Kitchen: Popcorn for dinner – why not?

By Kathryn Reed

Popcorn by itself is a fairly healthy snack. Air popped has 31 calories per cup.

I eat popcorn by the bowl. Not like a soup bowl, but a bowl a family might share. I also don't just eat popcorn. It must have butter on it. Real butter. Fattening butter. Salted butter.

Then I call my bowl of buttered popcorn a meal.

I don't count my calorie intake on those nights.

And I don’t like to share, but I will make a separate bowl if I’m asked to.

Today is National Popcorn Day. Though, clearly I don’t need a day to give me permission to indulge.

When I told my mom I was writing about this, she immediately sent me the recipe below and an article form *TV Guide* from Aug. 16, 1975. The article has Paul Newman saying butter must be “spattered” with a knife to get each layer.

While I don’t use a knife, I do apply the butter as it’s popping into the bowl so it’s all covered. And then when I’m getting close to the end of eating the bowl, I take the popcorn and rub it into any butter that may have pooled at the bottom.

There is actually a national Popcorn Board. The website says there is some confusion to the exact Popcorn Day. It’s always been toward the end of January and used to be associated with the Super Bowl. But now that the game is in February (Feb. 3 this year), popcorn aficionados don’t seem to know when their day is.

They should do like me – eat it pretty regularly.

According to the board, about 4 billion gallons of popcorn are consumed in the U.S. each year. I’m sure I ingest more than my 13 gallons worth each year.

I have cut back a bit because I know all that butter is not good for me. And I’m not about to give up the butter.

It makes me wonder if it’s the butter I want or the popcorn. I say this because I even like the weird yellow stuff squirted onto popcorn at movie theaters. I’m not sure that’s butter – but instead some greasy butter flavoring.

It must be a Reed thing to not treat popcorn as a healthy snack. One of my dad’s favorite ways to eat popcorn was when

it was turned into carmel corn.

With the Super Bowl coming up, this is a good snack to serve. The recipe below is from Janet Robinson, a friend of my sister Jann’s.

Carmel Corn

2 C brown sugar

1 C melted butter

½ C light corn syrup

1 tsp salt

1 tsp soda

1 T vanilla

7 quarts popped popcorn

Bring first four ingredients to a boil for about 5 minutes. Stir occasionally.

Add soda and vanilla.

Put popcorn in one large pan or two 9 x 13 pans. Pour mixture over evenly.

Bake at 200 degrees for one hour; stir every 15 minutes.

Store in tightly covered containers.