

Is It a Good Food? A Bad Food?

There's one nutritional concept that seems to make a healthy relationship with food particularly difficult, and that's the idea that some foods are good while others are bad. Labeling a food good or bad stops you from questioning and discovery. If you label a Twinkie as bad, you are not able to observe its effects on you, and you lose the opportunity to learn from it. On the other hand, if you maintain a neutral attitude, you can watch your response to that Twinkie.

You can be more perceptive to its flavor, noticing whether it really tastes good to you or if it was just the idea that tasted good. Perhaps you learn that it doesn't satisfy your craving—that there was something else you really wanted that the Twinkie can't provide. Perhaps you become more sensitive to your taste buds toning down after the first few bites, making the next bites less pleasurable. Or perhaps you notice that half an hour after indulging in that Twinkie, your energy crashes and you start craving sugar again. This information will ultimately affect your taste for Twinkies in the future.

Is eating that Twinkie good or bad? It all depends on how frequently you eat it, how much you eat, what else you eat it with, whether you were attentive to it. . . . Rather than eliminating these variables, we need to listen to them. By staying connected to your body, some foods may lose their appeal or you may no longer feel driven to over-indulge.

So, in answer to the question, "Is [fill in the blank] bad?," the response is, "Of course not." We simply need to respect it. Let it teach us whether or not we want to indulge or when enough is enough.