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Cracker Saving

Courtney Bobko

A very general, yet rather fascinating idiosyncrasy I have observed in the lives of many elderly people came to me one day. An older woman was pulling her jacket on next to me, and something fell out of her pocket. As I heard the twinkling of cellophane hitting the floor and looked down, I realized old people are naturally drawn hoarding little packages of crackers. And why not? They are usually free, conveniently small, and rather tasty.

Now, I am not giving a specific age of when an older person falls into this habit. However, it has been my general observation if the person's hair is white (or slightly purplish from a dye-job gone wrong) a hobby of collecting the free packages of crackers probably consumes some of their thoughts while at a restaurant.

It is a hunch of mine, whether it be at a diner or a take-it-to-go joint, packages containing two saltine or oyster crackers are rarely used at the time of obtainment. I have noticed women in particular stealthily stash their goodies in their purses. My guess to the rationale behind this is to eat the crackers later or offer to a fussy grandchild. The problem with this good-hearted action is these crackers are usually forgotten about for too long.

It is very sweet to see a grandma digging through her purse to “see what she has” for her hungry grandchild who sits patiently next to her. As the side pocket's zipper is pulled open by slightly stiff fingers, the shiny cellophane catches the light, and Grandma remembers the treasure she removed from the napkin-lined basket at the diner “just a few nights ago”. Unfortunately, the once whole saltine crackers meant to go on her home-style chicken noodle soup (four months ago) resemble a cross between finely smashed bread crumbs and an unnatural grayish powder. She “could have sworn that wasn't going to happen again,” but the fact of the matter is there is usually no other fate for crackers that travel outside of restaurant walls in an uneaten state.

I do not see this as a societal problem or an issue to be fixed. Rather, I view cracker saving as an endearing idiosyncrasy. When I was in third grade, I became the receiver of two rare, undestroyed saltine crackers given to me by my great grandma. It was care and love in a crinkly package, a small treasure she wanted to share with me. And even though I am fully aware of the Live to Death rate of crackers in purse pocket, I will probably become one of those cracker stashing old women who joyfully gives away what should have been stirred into my soup.