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Eating and Investing

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Watching your portfolio grow larger is one of life's greatest pleasures. Watching your stomach enlarge is not so much fun, although the process—eating delicious food—is extremely joyful. Investing and eating are two of my favorite things. Could there be a correlation?

Alan Hirsch, the neurological director of the Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in Chicago, claims that there's a parallel between your personality and the snacks that you prefer. He gave 800 people personality tests, and then asked them to choose between eight different types of snacks. Surprisingly, people of the same personality type chose identical snacks 95 percent of the time.

According to Hirsch (as reported in *Utne* magazine's Sept-Oct '07 issue), this makes biological sense: "Food preferences reside in the olfactory lobe, the same part of the brain where the personality resides."

If you can tell a personality type by the snack you choose, maybe you can also figure out what kind of investing style works best for you. Below are Hirsch's findings with the snack/personality connection, and my extrapolations as far as investing is concerned:

Tortilla Chips: The chooser of this salty snack from south of the border is a successful and ambitious perfectionist who plans ahead. People who opt for this dipping favorite are socially responsible and despise injustice.

Investment Type: You're a perfect candidate for socially responsible mutual funds. These investment vehicles, controlled by activist managers, purchase companies based on social, moral, religious, or environmental beliefs. The long-term horizon of mutual fund investing fits perfectly with your compulsion to plan ahead. One problem—these funds haven't performed as well as their socially irresponsible counterparts, so your success may not be comparable to your less conscious peers.

Pretzels: If you opt for these three-ring snacks, you probably bring the circus with you everywhere you go, since you're often the life of the party. But according to Hirsch, you tire quickly of routine and become bored. You have a tendency to begin new projects before finishing old ones.

Investment type: This looks like the perfect personality for day trading, an investing style I don't recommend. Since you're often in and out of stocks in one day, you needn't worry about boredom. And the only routine you'll experience is dropping plenty of Alka Seltzer on a daily basis to soothe your anxious stomach.

Cheese curls: Whether you prefer puffy or crunchy, you enjoy treating people fairly and have highly developed morals and ethics. Hirsch claims that you're organized and methodical.

Investment type: Here's a long-term buy and hold investor if I ever saw one. You have the personality and the good judgment to research companies, find ones with good fundamentals, and hold them for a long, long time. Crunch some numbers while you're crunching your Cheetos. This technique has proven to be the most effective way to accumulate wealth, short of birthing an Internet start-up.

Potato chips: The granddaddy of snacks, the potato chip, attracts someone who's successful, enjoys achievement, and is competitive. This natural leader gets easily annoyed when things don't go her way.

Investment type: Whether you prefer Wise, Lays, or Pringles, mutual funds should be in your bag of investment tricks. You'll have instant access to a diversified basket—or bowl, if you prefer—of stocks. If one company falters, the other ones in the portfolio can pick up the slack. You'll need to keep an eye on expenses and management, however, to make sure that you're getting the best returns for the money that you salt away.

All this speculation is making me hungry. It's about time for me to have a quick snack, and follow up on the success of my portfolio.

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