

# More About That Pringle

By Carl Nelson

**I am currently deeply immersed in a book, *Ultra-Processed People/ The Science Behind Food That Isn't Food* by Chris Van Tulleken.** Suffice to say, my pantry is going to look quite a bit different soon. The book would qualify as an expose in a somewhat lower key. Written by a very credentialed scientist, operating in the highest corridors of current science, this is an author with quite a lot to say. Your diet isn't working? You might want to read this. You wonder why many of the prepared items at the store cost much less than what you can make from scratch? You might want to read this. You wonder what the hell it is with all of these hydrogenated oils and xanthan gums? You might want to read this. If the Covid-19 vaccine scandal has made you a bit more cynical about corporate 'morals', reading this might help to stabilize that view. A conservative view is that corporate morals haven't really changed in over 150 years. And also, that they move hand-in-glove with government. That's the bad news. In my



1967 Pringle's Newfangled Potato Chips

former years, I didn't believe normal people would act like this. My views have changed. But I am making this book sound too much like yellow page journalism, while it is actually fairly measured and reads quite sound. But the need for a robust defense of free speech certainly extends far beyond any current campaign cycle. It's

absolutely necessary for the health and well-being of the citizenry... all of them. This book is an excellent example of why.

But, I promised more about that Pringle.

I was excited about this particular chapter in his book, "The true cost of Pringles", because I had written a poem around this same topic. In it, I placed my individual will and self-determination up against that of a modern corporation and its Borg-like organization in a stare-down.

### **On Regarding the Pringle in my Palm**

*Pringles uses a special recipe, which doesn't actually include potatoes. Instead they are made with something called "dehydrated processed potato". They also contain corn, rice and wheat."... "Pringles aren't chips at all. They're crisps. Plus, their unique recipe makes them lighter and less greasy (meaning it's easier to eat the whole can)." – Taste of Home,*

*online*

Consider the Pringle:

a totally reconfigured spud,  
receptacle of millions in research spending  
(higher math was employed)  
and market testing, including parabolic shaping  
all in order to extend this crisp's will  
over my volition.

Presently, I've faced down corporate developer Procter & Gamble,

and, in a buyout, Kellogg,  
in a tongue and groove match  
of taste and desire, salted to please.

Spuds mushed together and glued like plywood,  
in a special sauce of post-doctorate refinement,  
a reduction in which they dismiss most of me  
excepting for the caudate singulate,  
that portion of my brain  
which will experience a strong salivary response.

I've pitched myself and my reservations  
up against corporate funding, untold hours of R&D,  
sophisticated workers, off the clock even, and after sex,

in their beds late at night staring up into their ceilings,  
wondering how better to get me  
to gobble that chip.

I really wasn't that far off in my fanciful estimations. But I hadn't the whole story in many respects, and especially this one – which shines a light on the corporate character so bright you can figuratively see the veins and arteries through it. There is much more to the crisps versus chips argument than was featured in the poem's epigram.

Apparently there exists a Value Added Tax in Britain on foodstuffs which are designated luxury items. The food corporations and the government often spar over how the corporations' food products are designated. A potato chip falls under the designation of a food purchased for the purpose of nutrition, whereas a potato crisp does not. Not wanting to pay the VAT on their potato crisps, the company argued that their potato crisps did not contain any potato at all; therefore they fell under a loophole in the tax law which pre-empts those products which require further preparation, such as a cake. And it's not just being "greasier" which makes them easy to eat the whole can.

"There are further details in the judgment: 'the unique feature of regular Pringles was that the manufacturing process causes oil to go into the spaces throughout the texture of the product replacing the water content removed during the frying. This gives the "mouth-melt" feel when it is eaten. By contrast with potato crisps where most of the fat stays on the surface.'

Now get ready to gasp.

"Are Pringles "similar to potato crisps and made from potato?" That is the question. Upon [this decision] hangs the question of rather a lot of money – as much as £100m of tax for the

past and about £20m a year for the future.”

And now you wonder why I ate the whole can?

Why does a bug collapse under a shoe?