



Starving in Style

Models strut the runway as people dine on lettuce.

There's an old saying. Really old. And it goes like this:
"What is food to one man may be fierce poison to others."
— Lucretius. 95-55 B. C.

I prefer a newer saying by one of my favorite suicidal authors:
"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well."
— Virginia Woolf

It dawned on me while sitting at a fashion show. Well, actually it was a cross between a fashion show and a luncheon. Let's call it a "Funcheon." One of those gigs where you have the pleasure of eating lunch while watching a parade of stick-thin, waif-like, Keira Knightleys model the latest couture.

I glanced around the table of glamorous Houston women, and realized I was the only person eating. Yes, me. Solamente. (Which means "only" in Italian and Spanish in case you were wondering.)

The shock registered in slow waves. Not only had I eaten my entire bread roll swabbed with butter (a sin in itself, I dare say) I'd also consumed my chicken breast salad in a dizzying haste. My plate was so clean, it looked as though a St. Bernard had licked it.

Oh. My. Goodness. Could I be any more gauche? Probably not. Unless, of course, I'd shown up at the funcheon:


- Sporting a fanny pack and a Mickey Mouse sweatshirt with 'EuroDisney!' splashed across the chest in rainbow colors.
- Brought my "best friend" Tila Tequila, or, Dick Cheney as my guest; or
- Ordered an Old Milwaukee on tap, instead of a white wine.

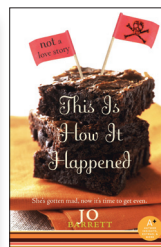
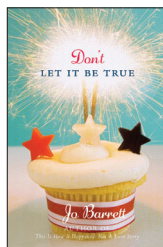
How to save face? My choice was clear. I waited for the perfect moment. As the women at my table turned their attention toward the fashion finale taking place on the stage, I hurriedly summoned the waiter.

"Bring me a new salad," I whispered. He seemed momentarily stunned. "You want another one, Ms.?" he asked, his eyes widening in dismay.

I handed him my empty plate and slipped him a small cash bribe. "Please. I beg you. Just bring me another salad so no one knows I actually ate."

He disappeared and was back in a flash with a fresh lunch. I looked down at the romaine lettuce, the small strips of lean white chicken breast, and the drizzle of olive oil – and I grinned. Yes, I was taking refinement to the next level.

Alas, my dear Houston sisters-in-arms. I leave you with this question: Since when did eating go out of style? 



Jo Barrett is a guest columnist for *H Texas* magazine. Her three fiction novels, "Don't Let It Be True," "This Is How It Happened (not a love story)," and "The Men's Guide to the Women's Bathroom" are published by HarperCollins and available at bookstores nationwide. "The Men's Guide to the Women's Bathroom" was optioned by CBS and Paramount Pictures with Hollywood actor Hugh Jackman's production company attached.



POURTRAIT: ASHLEY GARNON; SALAD PHOTO: ISTOCK BOOK PHOTOS COURTESY HARPERCOLLINS