

# A LINE ON LIFE

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## Graham Crackers, Corn Flakes and Sex \*

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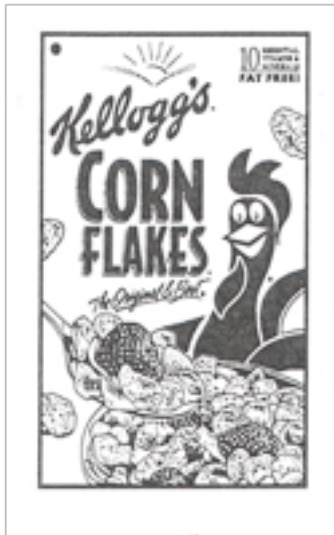
As you glanced at the title, you probably wondered how graham crackers and corn flakes relate to sex. Historically, there is a very strong but relatively little known relationship.

About 150 years ago — before Americans expressed interest in health foods like tofu and yogurt — Sylvester Graham (1794-1851) led America in its first health food crusade. Graham believed that a healthier diet led to a healthier life. However, his reasoning about health was different from our current view. He believed that ill health was due to sexual excesses — erotic dreams, masturbation or sexual intercourse more than once a month. He believed that these sexual excesses were inflamed by eating unhealthy foods.

*"All kinds of stimulating and heating substances; high-seasoned food; rich dishes; the free use of flesh (meat)...; all more or less... increase the concupiscent excitability and sensibility of the genital organs."*

Graham urged Americans to abandon meat, because it stimulates longings of the flesh. A vegetarian diet of plain, non-spicy food was viewed as the best counter-measure for erotic thoughts and sexual desires. A key element in Graham's diet was graham flour — a coarse, stoneground flour made from whole wheat or grain. Graham's teaching has been long forgotten. However, most of us have probably tasted — in a sweetened and processed form — the most lasting legacy of his attempt to reduce sexual excess — the **Graham Cracker**.

In 1863, James Caleb Jackson — another health food advocate — developed America's first cold cereal, called "*Granula*," made from something similar to crushed graham crackers. One of his disciples was Ellen White (1827-1915), founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her writings incorporated many of Graham's and Jackson's ideas on nutrition and sexual restraint. In 1866, she founded a health institute in Battle Creek, Michigan, to promote her health practices.



In 1876, John Harvey Kellogg (1852-1943) became director of the institute, and it became popularly known as the Battle Creek Sanitarium. Kellogg became widely known not only as a nutritionist but also as a sexual advisor. He not only advocated health foods, but he was the leading publicist about the dangers of masturbation.

At Battle Creek, Kellogg introduced a new health food, which he called "*Granula*." However, after Jackson sued him over the name, Kellogg changed the name to "***Granola***."

Kellogg continued experiments with different cereals. In 1898, he introduced another health food known as "***Corn Flakes***." Corn Flakes — like Graham Crackers and Granola — were designed to avoid inflaming the sexual appetite. At that time, they were not sweetened with sugar. Kellogg believed that sugar was unhealthy and associated with vice and degeneracy.

The triumph of the Graham Cracker, Granola and Corn Flakes as health foods was short-lived. At the turn of the century, Kellogg faced competition from another health food enthusiast, C. W. Post. Post introduced "*Elijah's Manna*," which later became known as "***Post Toasties***." To compete with Post, Kellogg was urged to sweeten his cereals by adding refined sugar to them. Both then and now, refined sugar was scorned by health food enthusiasts. It

symbolized poor nutrition. However, at the turn of the last century, it was also associated with rich diets that lead to sexual excesses.

Kellogg's brother, Will, did not have similar beliefs related to sexual excesses. He broke away and formed a company that eventually became known as the Kellogg Company. Will Kellogg added sugar to Corn Flakes. This marked its end as a health food. Today, the company makes no claim that Corn Flakes will reduce sexual excesses.

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**Regardless of its relation to our sexuality,  
most of us consume too much sugar.**

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In the last couple decades, the sugarless trend has occurred again. A new group of cereals has been advertised which contain no sugar. However, consumers now have the choice of cereals with or without sugar. Even so, the sugarless forms of Graham Crackers or Corn Flakes are no longer promoted on the basis of their relation to sexual activities.

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\* Adapted from Bryan Strong and Christine DeVault's *Understanding Our Sexuality*, West Publishing, 1988, page 47.