

The doughnut seed dilemma

At the end of gardening week at Collin's preschool, his teacher, spunky and creative, gave each child a blue packet labeled "doughnut seeds." On the outside was a picture of powdered mini donuts. Inside were frosted Cheerios.

The whimsical side of myself was amused at the cleverness behind the trick. We were to plant the Cheerios, excuse me, "doughnut seeds," in our garden. Then, when Collin wasn't looking, we were to lay doughnuts on the soil for all to enjoy. The fun in it made me think back to the magic I believed in as a child and the memories it created for me.



An older cousin told me that my stuffed animals could talk, but only while I was asleep. I'd shut my eyes each night and breathe heavily, trying to hear the conversations between my favorite scraggly stuffed terrier, Arkie and a nameless purple and white cat who morphed into a rabbit when I pulled the attached long-eared hood over his head. They never made a peep, but I still believed.

That sense of wonder is a secret of happiness. It's why even the most curmudgeonly adults can buy in to the Christmas spirit. It's up to the adults to keep magic alive with stories and games and, yes, even doughnut seeds ...or is it?

The health fanatic in myself thought that doughnut seeds were a bad idea. As a farmer's wife and vegan, teaching my children that the foods that are good for them come from the earth is one of my greatest responsibilities. What would I be teaching them if they believed sugary pastries came out of the ground from seeds planted and nourished by the earth and the elements? Would he think God invented donuts?

I'm no angel when it comes to steering my children away from sweets. There was a time period when we engaged in daily Dunkin' Donuts trips - just because. Now in our world of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins, donuts exist as a rare treat. There are the coconut cream donuts Collin and Frank enjoy on the first Sunday of the month after Mass. Once or twice a month on a particularly good day, we may on a whim take a trip through the Dunkin' Donuts drive-thru. Though I avoid using food as an incentive, every once in a while a cooperative grocery store experience will end with a reward covered in pink frosting and sprinkles. But will there be fresh picked donuts at our breakfast table?

Patrick and Collin planted the seeds in our front flower bed. Collin was so excited, he ran around the house, listing all the ways he learned in school to take care of his plant-in-progress. "The seeds are going to sprout! Then we'll see shoots! Then..." I didn't want to ruin the moment. I didn't want to break his heart and force him to

develop a distaste for horticulture in general. (Not a good idea in a farm family!) Patrick told me he was going to buy doughnuts to put out there. I told him to wait. I hadn't decided whether doughnuts could come from seeds.

So, I said nothing about the seeds in the hopes that he'd figure out for himself that donuts come from bakeries, not gardens. If he asks, I'll tell him. But, I don't want to crush his imagination just yet. So, instead I redirected him to two My First Gardening Sets from Crayola (I purchased ours at Wegman's for \$3.99. I haven't found them anywhere else). We planted the sunflower and daisy seeds and placed them on the kitchen windowsill beside the grass and beans he started growing at school.

Every day, Collin checks his plants and squeals over their progress. He checks on his doughnut seeds periodically, but is bored by their lack of progress. He only remembers them on rainy days, still hanging on to the last nibble of his dream. I know that it wouldn't take long for Collin to realize that junk food doesn't grow on trees, but I'd rather not delay such an important lesson. Soon, we will grow a vegetable garden right alongside the doughnut seeds. Collin will be amazed as he watches his dinner emerge from the earth. This time, fantasy and reality will coincide - in nature.