

Is It OK to Sneak Food Into the Movies?

MOVIE SNACK PRICES ARE OUT OF CONTROL. DOES THAT MEAN YOU SHOULD JUST BRING YOUR OWN TREATS? **BY JUSTIN O'NEILL**

You and your friends are settling into your seats. The new Spider-Man movie is about to start, and you've got the essentials: soda, popcorn, and gummy worms. Sure, you spent your entire allowance on these snacks, but hey, food is part of what makes the movies fun.

Just as the lights dim, you catch a whiff of . . . tuna fish?! You twist your neck, searching for the culprit. Then you spot him: A couple rows back, some guy is chowing down on a homemade sandwich.

How'd he get that in here? you wonder. You want to pelt him and his stinky sandwich with pieces of your popcorn. Then you remember how much you paid for it.

Your Right to Snack

Sneaking food into a movie is pretty tempting. For one thing, the options at the concession stand are almost always junk food—nachos, candy, giant greasy pretzels.

Then there are the prices. Why pay \$5 for a bag of M&Ms when you can get them for a buck at the corner store? Besides, it's not like

you aren't already paying big bucks for your ticket.

Earlier this year, a Michigan man decided to fight for his right to snack. Joshua Thompson is suing his local AMC theater after it banned outside food. He argues the ban violates a Michigan law that prevents businesses from charging outrageous prices.

"He got tired of being taken advantage of," Thompson's lawyer told the *Detroit Free Press*. "It's hard

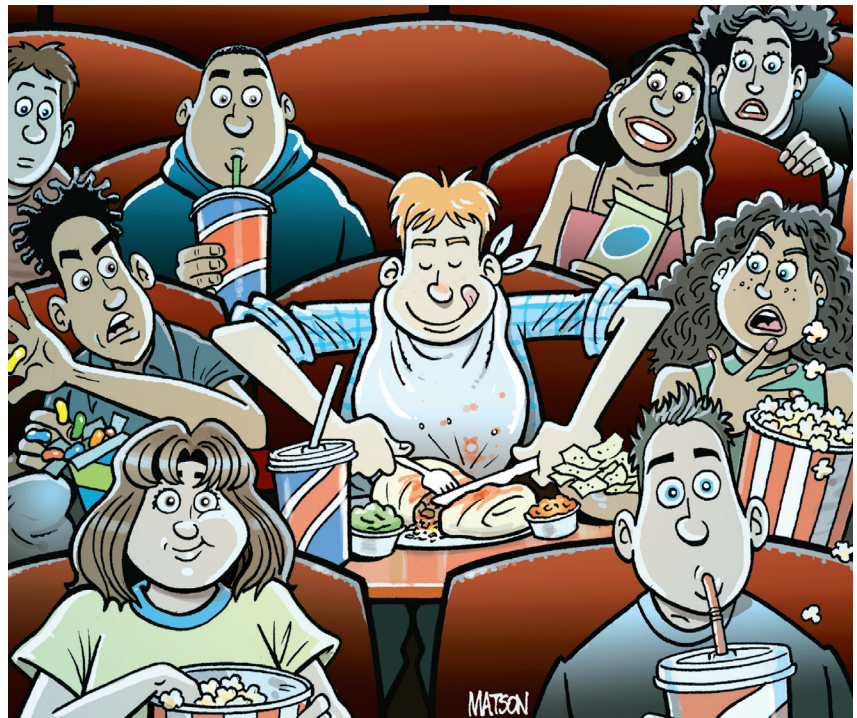
to justify prices that are three and four times higher than anywhere else."

Most legal experts believe Thompson has little chance of winning his case, but he does have a point; 85 cents out of every dollar of treats a movie theater sells is pure profit.

How do they get away with it?

The Snack Business

The truth is that movie theaters



are more in the snack business than the movie business. A huge chunk of what you spend on a ticket goes to the Hollywood studio that made the movie. This makes sense, since studios fund the production, hire the stars, and pay for the advertising that draws crowds to the movies in the first place.

But that often doesn't leave much cash for the theater, which has its own costs. Theater owners have to pay their employees, keep their buildings clean, and provide the latest high-tech projection equipment. "If we can't keep a majority of that ticket price there's only one way that we can pay for everything . . . and that's at the concession stand," says movie theater owner Jon Goldstein.

If customers stopped buying food, owners would have to raise ticket prices even higher.

Rules Are Rules

Of course, there's another reason to think twice before sneaking food into the movies: It's against the rules. Breaking those rules can have severe consequences too. Some theaters will kick you out if they catch you. Worse, you could be banned from ever coming back.

Even without the threat of punishment, the truth is that we follow rules all the time—out of respect. Sneaking food into the movies is kind of like bringing your own pasta to an Olive Garden. It's just bad manners.

Here's a radical idea: Eat before the movie. ●

What Do You Think?

Is it OK to sneak food into the movies?

Use evidence from the article AND your own ideas to support each side of this debate. Write the information on the lines below.



YES

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

1 *You save money on snacks if you bring your own.*

2 _____

3 _____

NO

IT'S SO RUDE!

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

EXAMINE POINTS ON BOTH SIDES—AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BELIEFS AND EXPERIENCES. Decide what you think. Is it OK to sneak food into the movies? State your answer in one sentence below. This can become a thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

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