

OPINION/PAGES

Guest VIEW

No. 2 is king Pencils' obsolescence is still far, far away

From the Sacramento (Calif.) Bee

For anyone fearful that the relentless march of technological innovation will trample life as we once knew it, there is some solace to be found in the survival — indeed the flourishing — of a very simple and old-fashioned instrument: the pencil.

The sale of pencils, from the classic yellow No. 2 to red lip liners, reached 2.8 billion last year, up from 1.8 billion in 1983.

Most American pencils are made, and have been for decades, in the hills of central Tennessee, where there once was a plentiful supply of Tennessee red cedar, the wood of choice.

The red cedar is now long gone, and California incense cedar, imported from sustained-yield forests on the western slopes of the Sierra, has taken its place.

Revenue for American pencil manufacturers, which still dominate the market in this country, was \$161.8 million in 1993, up from \$38 million in 1973. That's not a huge industry, but the Los Angeles Times reports that it's a thriving one.

It relies on such steady customers as the U.S. government, which buys 45 million pencils a year (and will probably continue to do so for the foreseeable future, given the slow progress in computerizing its various agencies), and the New York Stock Exchange, which buys a million annually for floor brokers to mark their trading slips.

Yet it seems unlikely that the pencil, which is so reminiscent of the early school years, will be cast off any time soon.

In a fit of pique over writer's block or some vexing math problem, personal computers can't be easily snapped in two; they're too expensive, and they don't splinter as pleasingly as an old No. 2. And the computer gods have yet to make a PC that can fit behind your ear.

But let's be careful what we wish for.

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Mehsling's VIEW



Jessica KENNEDY

Cookin' a smorgasbord Life's recipe calls for work, kids, joy

Cooking's tough, you know. It's all about balance; getting the right mixture of beans, sauce, crumbs in a green bean casserole or, as I found out the hard way on Saturday, the right amount of Hershey's chocolate sauce, brownie mix and chocolate chips.

In my old age (such a ripe 21), I'm finding that life's a lot like cooking — balancing a little fun and work with family and friends and all topped off with a dash of academics.

Cooking, as a metaphor for life, makes a lot of sense. The little we pull from here and there makes up the batter (or fabric) of who we are.

Recipes for happy, balanced lives are as unique as your family's secret cookie recipe.

Traditional recipes tend to include ingredients like spouse, children, home, work, Fido, religion and minivan. But contemporary recipes might include sports, gallery openings, volunteering at the homeless shelter, ATVs and more!

So, what does it take to develop the perfect recipe for life?

Barbara Walters says "Trust your gut." If it seems like all you do is work or all you do is study, then you're probably right.

Sure, everybody's gotta make a livin', but what's the point if you're too busy or too beat to enjoy the rewards?

If you want to go for a bike ride or call a friend or take a nap, do it! Then get on with what you need to



do. Don't waste time whining or wishing. Trust me, you'll be happier in the long run. Find room in your life to have balanced, if not equal, parts of work and fun.

SARK, an inspirational writer, recommends that "if you've lost your sense of humor, find it fast."

You know it's going to be a long one when nothing makes you smile, everyone's out to get you and everything's your fault.

That's time for a big TIME OUT!!

Obviously there's something in your recipe that's not working out. Maybe you added nuts and it turns out you're allergic to them. So take them out.

If there's a person bothering you, don't take them out per se, that's bad. But do try to address specifically what's bothering you.

Laugh at yourself, and don't take yourself (or others) so seriously. In the end, how much do the stupid political games and strifes matter?

In my opinion, for what it's worth, the most important ingredi-

ent in life is the ability to dream. Dreams have the greatest potential to alter who you are and who you will become.

Author Emily Bronte writes, "I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas: They've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the color of my mind."

Dreams are like eggs. They both bind the other ingredients together, make the whole possible. Without eggs, your brownies, cookies and cake would be runny messes.

Without dreams, your career or family would go all sorts of directions. Dreams are your focus. They help you stay on track, aiding your arrival to wherever you may be going.

As things start to get hectic with midterms and spring-break planning, stop and think about what's in your recipe.

What kind of things do you need to survive? To be balanced? To be joyous?

For me it's family, sunny days, financial comfort, a few good friends, a great book and plenty of sleep. Just to name a few.

I can only hope that at some point, my actual cooking ability catches up to my metaphorical cooking.

Kennedy is a senior advertising and broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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