

“No, I’d like a small fry”

I know this is an old-school rant, but I just had a run-in with this situation and thought I’d mention it.

So, I’m in the Student Union, in line to get my usual ¼ pounder, lettuce only, small fry and bottle of Pepsi.

Except the menu has changed and I hadn’t noticed.

And for my lack of awareness, I’m punished with a stupid comment.

“We don’t have small fries anymore, just Medium and Jumbo”

I looked at the cash register jockey as though she’d suddenly grown another head. And she might have, for all I know. I was temporarily blinded by her foolishness.

Granted this has happened to me before – at other restaurants. In those cases, though, the person at the register just figured it out for me, doing the “translation” on the fly.

If the options are “Medium, Large, Biggie size” and I ask for a small, I’ll end up with a medium. Et Cetera.

But not this time. The counter-person simply waited for me to choose a valid size. I grumbled for a moment, and then requested a medium.

I got my smaller size of fries with my order and went on my way.

It did get me thinking, though. Granted, it’s all about marketing – the idea that we’ll “think” we’re getting more for our money when we get a “bigger” size. But what does it really mean?

It means that our labels – some of the basic concepts of ordering and evaluating that we learned as children – are being over written.

We learn:

Small, Medium, Large
Beginning, Middle, and End

And though that may expand to include X-large or Prologue, the essential components of the system remain.

With one item, there is no label. It simply is what it is.

With two items not the same size, one becomes small and the other large. They are compared to each other.

With three, a medium is introduced. It too is defined - by those that surround it.

So, then, how can there be a medium without a small and a large? What is it compared to? What defines this particular size – where is the balance?

And where does Jumbo fit in? Shouldn't there be a large and maybe even an extra-large as well?

By trying to be clever and fool us with marketing – they've simply reduced the whole thing to Size 1 vs. Size 2. Which sounds a lot like Small and Large to me.

What's the solution? Raw truth in advertising. Tell me the sizes – in real numbers – and let me decide exactly how many fries I want. As consumers, I think we're finally smart enough that we aren't, by in large, fooled by such cheap tactics.

I think it's time for some new, cheap tactics.

And I also think I'm in the mood for some fries.

Make that an Extra-Medium, okay?