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English 110
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The Quest for Efficiency: The Ongoing Battle Between Food And Productivity

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What if you could eliminate mealtime from your everyday routine? Would you sacrifice that delectable steak sitting on your plate for a glass of grainy sludge and nutrients if it came down to saving some time and a few bucks? In the article, “The End of Food” by Lizzie Widdicombe, [Try to reword this a bit to get away from using “Widdicombe” twice in such close proximity.] Widdicombe explores the lifestyle of Rob Rhinehart who is the founder of Soylent, a liquid solution composed of the essential nutrients for human survival.[Try to reword this sentence. Perhaps, “...who is the founder of Soylent, a liquid food-substitute composed of...”] Rhinehart is convinced that Soylent is a revolutionary product that will eventually do away with farms and industrialization as Soylent fills all the nutritional categories humans need. Widdicombe explores the tension that exists between the value of a meal, our basic need to survive, and our desire for efficiency. Rhinehart argues that the introduction of Soylent will allow humans to reach their peak productivity throughout the day as synthetic food would eliminate the need for mealtime. However, if meals are cut out from our everyday lives humans will lose an element of their humanity. Soylent would eliminate the social and emotional benefits and pleasures that come from sitting down with others to enjoy a meal, a thought explored in my favorite meal essay “The Beefiest of Stew”. The removal of meals from our everyday routine would be counterproductive for society because without the social interaction and the pleasureful taste that accompanies eating a good meal, humans will lose an aspect of their humanity because we would lose an appreciation for the comradery and emotions evoked while eating a meal.

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As humans, food is essential for our survival, and the nutrients our food supplies helps to optimize our ability to function. Survival in a minimalistic manner is the focus of Soylent founder Rob Rhinehart. Rhinehart discovered that as humans, we only need 35 nutrients to survive, such as carbohydrates and proteins. With this knowledge, Rhinehart created a mixture that utilized these essential nutrients that are key to survival: a solution known as Soylent.

Possibly elaborate on the key nutrients. Talk about how they're key to survival. Maybe give examples as to what foods we typically eat contain these nutrients to better show how Soylent is a replacement. In her article, Widdicombe describes the taste of the Soylent based off of reviews she's heard from people that have tried the product, explaining, "The liquid is smooth but grainy in your mouth, and it has a yeasty, comforting blandness about it. I've heard tasters compare it to Cream of Wheat, and 'my grandpa's Metamucil'" (Widdicombe 7). Soylent swaps out the delicious taste of food for the bare necessities we need as humans to function properly, or so Rhinehart claims. Rhinehart believes that survival should be at the forefront of our minds when humans think of food, not taste or pleasure. Rhinehart argues that food should simply be used as a way for humans to gain energy throughout the day in order to function at our maximum capabilities. Add a quote showing/explaining Rhinehart's argument. However, the chair of nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health, Walter Willett, argues that although we can survive without certain chemicals or nutrients, that does not mean humans will be able to function to their maximum capabilities. Regarding the lack of plant chemicals in Soylent, Willett argues, "You can live without plant chemicals. 'But you may not live maximally, and you may not have the optimal function. We're concerned about much more than just surviving'" (Widdicombe 9). Humans strive for more than just to survive, humans strive to excel. Word choice, maybe? Soylent may seem like the perfect option to choose in order to enhance our performance abilities, but ultimately a switch to synthetic food strips humans of the everyday

pleasures and benefits that food provides us. Sure, we can survive off of Soylent, Rhinehart has been living off of Soylent for years. However, in my opinion humans want more than just to survive, we crave the opportunity to feel good, which is an opportunity a decent meal can provide. [How does a decent meal provide a person with these things?]

Soylent can be a tempting alternative to everyday food, as switching to Soylent can maximize our efficiency throughout the day because it cuts out mealtime. In Widdicombe's article, one student claims "It fills you up for five hours" and "It's good for studying" (Widdicombe 15). To any college student, the opportunity to swap hours spent in the dining hall for the chance to have more time to finish homework, study, or even sleep, is tempting.

Personally, throughout my college experience as a freshman, I can think of several occasions when a nice glass of Soylent would have been a preferable choice, merely so I could have an extra hour to study for an exam. Not only in college, but as I reflect on my experience at home, I can think of several occasions when Soylent would have been a healthy substitute that could be fit into our busy schedules. In "The Beefiest of Stew", I describe how "With our busy schedules, it became increasingly hard to find a time for us all to sit down as a family and eat a meal together. On nights where, it was nearly impossible to sit down for one composed meal, we would resort to quick meals that consisted of pizza, hot dogs, or chicken bowls, with some social interaction between my siblings, my parents, and I" (Hardy 2-3). My family was constantly buzzing around at home because our lives were jam-packed, with school and sports and clubs, so dinner was sometimes the last thing on our mind. Instead of buying cheap fast food for an easy dinner, Soylent could have been a healthy alternative that requires no time and could give us all of the nutrients we need. However, the introduction of Soylent would decrease the social interaction food allows us to have. [...due to the minimalistic and efficient nature of such...]

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Although the introduction of Soylent would allow us to survive on the minimal amount of nutrients we need as a human, Soylent would eliminate the social aspect associated with food. Meals give us the opportunity to take a break from the rigorous demands of our schedule and take a moment to appreciate the presence of our peers and spark conversations. In “The Beefiest of Stew”, I justify why I claim beef stew is my favorite meal, explaining:

Besides the addictive nature of the dish due to its stellar taste, the meal acts as a symbolic pause button in my sometimes chaotic household. Beef stew can't be carried into the living room only to then be eaten on the couch while watching the football game, and it certainly can't be brought into a moving vehicle to be consumed on the drive to a late night sports practice; beef stew night means it's a sit down night (Hardy 3).

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Beef stew grants my family the opportunity to take a pause from our busy lives and talk with one another, on topics such as how good the meal tastes or how our days were. A sit-down meal gives us the chance to catch up with one another and appreciate the time and effort put into making the dish. Widdicombe describes in her article, “Meals provide punctuation to our lives: we’re constantly recovering from them, anticipating them, riding the emotional ups and downs of a good or a bad sandwich. With a bottle of Soylent on your desk, time stretches before you, featureless and a little sad” (Widdicombe 14). Possibly put this quote before your quote from The Beefiest of Stew. Soylent swaps out taste for convenience; surviving on bottles of Soylent does away with the social and gustatory pleasures of enjoying a sit-down meal. With the move towards synthetic food, we will lose the chance to take a pause from our extremely busy lives. One clear example of a lack of appreciation for mealtime and social interaction due to synthetic food can be seen in Widdicombe’s article, when Widdicombe and Rhinehart visit a college campus. Widdicombe talks to a Resident Advisor on the campus, who explains how “... the dorm is home to ‘a lot of very busy engineering and physics students’ who ‘don’t have time to do

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anything' - including eat. ...Nearby, about ten students sat around a table surrounded by laptops and problem sets, ignoring the dinnertime commotion: Soylent drinkers. Several of them clutched water bottles filled with grey goo " (Widdicombe 15). [Consider using a block quote for this. I realize it's not more than 4 lines of length, but it would look good, I think.] The college students are clutching their solution of nutrients and chemicals while laboring away over problem sets, rarely interacting with each other or the students around them. By cutting meals out of our everyday routine, humans will interact less with the people around them which in turn will cause people to lose sight the value of a conversation and focus solely on maximizing efficiency.

The consumption of food evokes human emotions and whether or not those emotions are good or bad, emotions allow us to feel. A move towards synthetic food products such as Soylent would turn us into machines; beings so worried about maximizing our potential instead of taking value from the emotions food evokes within us. While at college, I appreciate any time I get to spend with my friends because social interaction becomes challenging as I'm constantly focused on all of the work I have to get done. Dinner time has become my social time, a time to hang out with my friends and discuss the activities of our days. Similarly, at home dinner time was a time I valued most, as it allowed my family to sit down with one another and discuss the goods and bads of our day. In "The Beefiest of Stew", I described how during dinner time, "We laugh and share stories from our hectic day while smiling and dipping our potatoes into the warm broth. In spite the fact that these moments are typically ordinary parts of everyday life within my family, these are the moments I treasure tremendously because I get to spend quality time with the people I love the most" (Hardy 3). [Definitely block quote this as it's past 4 lines of length] Food evokes happiness in my household because meals like dinner time give me the chance to catch up with the people I value in my life and that I care about. In her article, Widdicombe touches on

how Soylent may have an effect on our social interactions with others, ultimately affecting our happiness. Widdicombe describes,

Soylent has been heralded by the press as ‘the end of food,’ which is a somewhat bleak prospect. It conjures up visions of a world devoid of pizza parlors and tace stands - our kitchens stocked with beige powder instead of banana bread, our spaghetti nights and ice-cream socials replaced by evenings of sipping sludge (Widdicombe 3).

Widdicombe hints at the bland lifestyle humans may potentially face if we succumb to using synthetic foods like Soylent as our energy source. Life would be bland. Humans would lose part of their humanity because a meal is an opportunity to take some sort of value out of our lives, and without appreciating the emotions food evokes in us, humans would essentially become shallow shells.

Overall, a move towards synthetic foods, such as Soylent, would be counterproductive for society because humans would become shallow beings focused solely on maximizing our efficiency instead of valuing comradery [I've seen this word used in a few essays already.
Although immaculate word choice, possibly consider using a synonym?] and conversation. Food evokes specific emotions in humans, which helps to shape our character and ultimately develop our humanity. A loss of food would strip humans of an element of their humanity, which would be ineffective for society because emotions are what makes us human.

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[Put the Works Cited on a different page for proper MLA formatting]

Works Cited

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Hardy, Olivia J. "The Beefiest of Stew." 28 Jan. 2019.

Widdicombe, Lizzie. "The End of Food." *The New Yorker*, pp. 1–18.