

The worst foods to eat over a keyboard:

We all do it, even though we know we probably shouldn't.

Whether it's merely snacking to help pass the time or voraciously devouring lunch while trying to restore the CEO's files we inadvertently deleted, we all eat at our keyboard. On any given day, my keyboard is assaulted with fragments of chocolate, drops of coffee, blobs of spaghetti sauce, and those long, stringy things that fall off bananas.

During a recent keyboard degunking attempt, I found myself musing on what would constitute the absolute worst foods to eat while typing. In making this determination, three factors have to be considered:

- \* The propensity of the food to fall
- \* The likelihood of the food becoming attached to or inserted into the keyboard
- \* The degree of difficulty associated with the removal

With these factors in mind, here are my worst-food nominations:

\* Plain whole grain rice. It falls easily and it's likely to end up inside the keyboard, but removing it is relatively easy to accomplish if it is allowed to thoroughly dry before the attempt is made.

\* Angel hair pasta. Although not likely to fall, angel hair pasta exhibits a distinct proclivity for trailing. If the trailing strand of pasta should happen to be coated with a sticky sauce, it is likely to adhere to the keys, or even descend between them. Removal from keys is not challenging unless the pasta disappears completely from sight – if that occurs, removal is almost impossible. If an end is protruding, grasp it firmly between forefinger and thumb and gently extract. This process may have the added benefit of picking up other small fragments which have fortuitously adhered to the sticky pasta.

\* Sunflower seeds with shells. It is impossible to eat more than 12 sunflower seeds without losing at least one shell fragment somewhere under the space bar, although this does somewhat depend upon the seed-shucking method employed. Once in the keyboard, sunflower seeds are notoriously difficult to remove, as inverting the keyboard usually does little more than relocate the offending fragments from the base of the keyboard to the cavity inside a key.

\* Rice Bubbles (with or without milk). Dry Rice Bubbles go everywhere. One slight puff of air and they are in your hair, on your desk, and infiltrating the nether regions of your keyboard. Removing them is relatively simple, however; type vigorously for a few minutes to reduce them to Rice Bubbles dust and then apply suction. Wet Rice Bubbles are more stable but more difficult to extract. Even when the sodden Bubbles have dried out, they tend to resist extraction by holding fast to your keyboard's innards. Rice Bubbles treats are a safer alternative.

\* Jelly. Jelly is inherently unstable and apt to become separated from its means of transportation. Once blobbed on a keyboard, jelly has a tendency to stick to the keys and slide between them, particularly if the maker of the jelly was a little overgenerous with the water. Removing jelly is a sticky, nasty business frequently resulting in keys that never quite rebound as they once did. Sugar-free jelly made with approximately two-thirds of the

recommended water is more likely to bounce than stick.

\* A Flake bar. To fully appreciate the flavour-enhancing effect of the unusual texture, this delicacy must be experienced at least 20 or 30 times a month. Eating a Flake over a keyboard is an extremely hazardous operation, usually detrimental to one's enjoyment of the experience. It is a scientific fact that it is impossible to bite a Flake without causing a minor chocolate meteorite shower. Although the pieces of chocolate don't interfere with typing or cause any unusual keyboard noises, Flakes still qualify as one of the worst keyboard foods because losing so much of this delicious chocolate is simply tragic. Flakes should be eaten only while lying on one's back, over a paper towel to catch and recycle the crumbs, or in a large bowl of vanilla ice cream. If you must eat a Flake at your keyboard, which is quite understandable, try substituting its less volatile cousin, the Flake Luxury – a chocolate-covered Flake. Yep, chocolate-covered chocolate; life doesn't get much better than this.

#### Keyboard cleaning tips

Canned air is your friend – brilliant for removing dry particles from the keyboard. Have a dog handy to eat the crumbs as they are blasted into space.

Alternatively, use a vacuum cleaner to achieve the same result, but make sure your keys are firmly attached. It's just no fun digging through a bag of grot searching for the missing keys.

As strange as this may sound, some people advocate the use of the dishwasher for thorough keyboard cleaning. I haven't tried it, but you can check out this link for detailed information on how to perform this intricate operation.

Grubby keys can be cleaned with screen wipes. Be sure to power off the computer first (pressing a key repeatedly as you clean could have some undesired results). Individual keys can be removed and scrubbed with hot, soapy water for a more thorough cleaning.

For dirty or dusty environments, it may be worth investing in keyboard covers, although these do tend to make typing a less pleasant experience.

Or you can buy a new keyboard...seriously, they are not that expensive. As a courtesy to new employees, I always wipe down their monitors and supply them with brand new shiny mice and keyboards. There is nothing more unpleasant than wondering precisely what that is poking out between the T and Y keys.