LAURA ON LIFE

Cursing butter doctors and dentists

Yesterday, I found myself between two dentist appointments: One in the morning and one in the afternoon. The first was for replacing a cracked crown and the second was to extract a molar. They had done all they could, it just didn't make it. It was a day that I'd like to forget.

The two hour gap between appointments allowed enough time to get something to eat. Unfortunately, the only place to eat within walking distance was a cafeteria in a hospital. I say "unfortunately" because apparently, I wasn't the only one who noticed that this was the only place to eat.

I looked at the huge crowd of people trying to get food at the same time I was and I almost decided to skip lunch.

Eventually, I gathered my courage by reminding myself that anyone who can get through two dental visits in one day can surely make it through a middle school-style lunch line. In fact, there should be some sort of medal awarded for that.

The difference here was that the food actually smelled good and looked worth the effort.

Besides, I thought, there is

Laura Snyder

only one thing worse than sitting in a dentist's chair all day, and that was sitting in a dentist's chair all day while your stomach acids eat your innards.

The vegetable panini was probably the healthiest option, however, there was the slight possibility that I might die in the dentist's chair. I was going with the fried chicken. It came with vegetables and a whole wheat roll, so it was easy to rationalize; especially for someone like me who is an expert in rationalization.

I was almost certain that the fried chicken was tax deductible as part of my medical expenses (that is ironic, isn't it?), so I asked for a receipt from the harried cashier, who gave me a dirty look. Hey, checkbooks don't balance themselves, you know. I wondered what magical creature she hired to balance her checkbook with no receipts?

After standing in one line for my food, and another for the cashier, I had to stand in yet another to get condiments and retrieve a plastic fork from the fork dispenser. The condiments, however, did not include butter. I needed butter for my roll.

There was a man standing next to me, dressed in a doctor's uniform; the blue smock that ties around your neck. I guessed that he probably had eaten here

many times.

"Excuse me, sir. Do you know where I can get butter?"

"From a cow," he quipped without missing a beat. Then he walked away laughing uproariously at his own joke, while I stood there in shock.

I yelled, "Hilarious! Did they teach you that in medical school?" He didn't hear me over the loud buzz of cafeteria patrons.

I looked around for a semi-intelligent unit in this mass of humanity. At that point I realized that I was milling around the proverbial melting pot. There were old people trying to chew without their dentures. Young children were carrying blankets, sippy cups and stuffed Curious George dolls. There were people who didn't speak English, and those who did but, like the butter-doctor, didn't utter anything worthwhile. There were poor people who ate like they hadn't eaten in a week, and wealthy people picking at the cafeteria food as if it had turned into primordial ooze.

I decided that, after I had the tooth ripped out of my face that afternoon, I probably wouldn't be able to eat for a while either. In the grand scheme of things, butter on my roll just wasn't that important.

I sat down to savor my fried chicken and heap curses upon butter-doctors and dentists.

Laura Snyder is a nationally syndicated columnist, author & speaker. You can reach Laura at lsnyder@lauraonlife.com Or visit her website www.lauraonlife.com for more info.