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GOOD MORNING, MICKEY D!

Lately after taking walks at the mall, or otherwise getting my morning exercise, I've been taking the easy way out for breakfast.

McDonald's, years ago, in its eternal quest to maximize transaction flow, opened its doors in the a.m. with a breakfast menu. And despite Mickey D's reputation for contributing to the largeness of a new generation (ref. the movie, *Super Size Me*), the fare is quite acceptable.

What's more, it's cheap. Two people can have a substantial meal—two breakfast burritos and one Sausage McMuffin®—for \$3.70.

Can one make a cheaper egg and sausage breakfast at home?

So, I goes—sorry, too many Ally G episodes—into the kitchen and checks prices. Well, prorating the costs of eggs, bread, cheese, sausages, I determine, yes, you can make our similar meal for less than a dollar total.

So what's that? A four-to-one price advantage if making your own stuff. Still there's the value of my time. But as a budding middle-aged author, the money measure of my time is currently based on speculation alone. Then, I'm lazy. So there!

A \$1.85 breakfast is cheap in my book, by any standard.

How good are the Mickey D breakfast comestibles?

Well, they taste okay. Let's do a quick look on the nutrition tables: nothing too excessive in the fat department. The ingredients—wow!, that's a veritable potpourri, isn't it?—surely won't be killing me within the next several days, at least not in the small quantities eaten.

A friend points out that hydrogenated vegetable oils (trans fats) are good to be avoided, but in small quantities are probably not deadly.

Gives me 500 calories, too, plenty to get me into early afternoon, where a light protein snack sustains me through a modest 400-calorie workout at the YMCA.

Quality?

A virtue of franchising is you can be confident that food content and preparation will be uniform throughout the country. Theoretically, if I eat a sausage burrito in Little Rock, Arkansas, I'll have the same risk of becoming a successful brain surgeon as if I eat one in Rockport, Maine. I must say, in my vast American roads-scholar experience, I've never gotten ill dining with Ronald McDonald.

Quantity?

See, here's where the health and quality of life issues come to the fore.

You can slam the corporate machinery for giving us SuperSizeMe portions, but people have to make their own decisions to pay up. The Mickey D website is all sweetness and health; I give the corporate PR people snaps for being so concerned about people's dietary well being.

Sure, behind the scenes some perverse corporo-government incentives are in play. In this case, agricultural subsidies have led to massive surpluses of corn sugar, and Big Ag has to unload it somewhere.

But be smart out there.

Just say no to the drug of excessive portions. And let me start my day with drivethru convenience and a light, inexpensive meal from the fast-food behemoth. And tasty, too, especially if you grab the Hot Picante sauce.