

Another Ash Wednesday, another jelly-bean binge

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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[Like a lot of Protestants](#), I've never been one to take the fasting element of Lent all that literally. But while I never set out to intentionally do the *opposite*, it sometimes seems to happen.

This morning, I ate half a bag of jelly beans. I haven't done that in years. Then, with my brain exploding with sugar and my mouth with fantastic artificial flavor, I remembered what day it is. It's as if I got the Fat Tuesday memo a day late, and also missed the part about using up *perishable* bad-for-you food, not junk you couldn't spoil if you tried.

Oh well. At least it's an excuse to remember this short "food review" I wrote several years ago for [McSweeney's humor site](#). The original doesn't have a dedicated link (it's on [this page](#) somewhere), so I'll repost it below.

I hope the first few hours of your Lent have been at least as solemn as mine.

Reviews of New Food: Confectionery Lane Spiced Jelly Beans

When people insist that Christmas is a Christian holiday, what they really mean is that some of those who celebrate the six-week holy feast of reciprocal generosity take a short break to remember an unrelated story about a baby. Easter is culturally somewhat less absurd, its consumerist trappings limited mostly to pastel baskets, stuffed bunnies, and obscene quantities of cheap and delicious candy.

Protestants tend to conceive of Lent—which culminates in Easter Sunday—in positive terms: instead of denouncing bad habits, we pick up good ones. Last Lent, I picked up a fantastic Confectionery Lane Spiced Jelly Bean habit.

Starting on Ash Wednesday, the drugstore across from my office devoted the better part of an aisle to Easter candy. Inexplicably, half of this shelf space was taken up by a huge inventory of Confectionery Lane Spiced Jelly Beans. Because I was always the only kid who preferred the spiced beans to the fruit-flavored variety, my ingrained sense of duty seems to have interpreted the store's bounty as an obligation to personally buy and eat the majority of these off-brand, nutritionally vacant treasures.

I'm very into healthful, sustainable, delicious food; I'm also very into the church. Here is a typical lunch during the church seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost:

- Mixed greens (w/o dressing)
- Beans and rice
- Seasonal vegetable soup

And here's a typical lunch during Lent:

- Mixed greens (w/o dressing)
- Beans and rice
- Seasonal vegetable soup
- Entire bag of Confectionery Lane Spiced Jelly Beans

I'm feeling jumpy, bloated, and more than a little penitent. My teeth hurt. I await the joy, renewal, and changing retail priorities of the Easter season.