



# story & a snack

by Joe 'Kirsch' Curcio  
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## **FAKE FLOWERS & FIREFLIES:**

*...mother nature in full bloom in Brooklyn NY*

One of the best things about growing up in Brooklyn New York is getting older and being able to tell people that you grew up in Brooklyn New York. As a matter of fact, a few of the best things about still living in my old neighborhood are being five minutes away from where I had my first kiss; ten minutes away from the church where I married that very same *gal*; and being endless minutes away from places where I'd rather never be.

I was born and raised and still live in a pretty special place in Brooklyn known as Greenpoint. Once referred to as *the gardenspot of the 'univoise'* it actually got its name because of the lush grassy land that stuck out as adventurers traversed the shores of the East River between the boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn. Once inhabited by Indians it remained mostly farmland until the 19th century – and today is still a pretty cool place to grow '*tamayta's*' in the backyard and wallow in the flora and fauna of my very own garden spot and get a little exercise in too.

I'm not a doctor, a nutritionist and definitely not a horticulturist. And other than the little bit of garden mud stuck under my nails, the only thing that may give me some *nutritional street credentials* here is that I've lost 70 pounds; taken my A1C level down from nearly 12 to 5.4; and I'm a *healthy and happy* retired 64-year-old guy with a full head of hair and *most of my original teeth*. As far as general health goes – just like the rest of us *some days you're trottin' like Travolta and other days you're waddlin' like Fred Sanford* – it's all relative.

Part of my success was making better nutritional choices and finding my macro *sweet spots* like staying within the boundaries of 25% carbs, fat intake of 30% or less, and around 45% protein. As we all eventually realize, it's not only about nutrition. Getting the body in motion is a key and necessary component. However, at nearly 400 pounds it was practically impossible to be much of a gym guy and so early on I tried to find exercise in my everyday activities. In the winter I used resistance bands indoors and did low impact stretching. At work I started taking the stairs instead of the elevator. At home I even measured the distance between my living room and bedroom. In Brooklyn where the real estate is at a premium, the distance was only two-hundred feet round trip! This made for a twenty-five-lap journey per mile for my indoor walking.

But then spring and summer came. The neighborhood streets became my sandbox, and my backyard my fitness playground. I learned that gardening was as robust as walking, or yoga and could burn over 300 calories per hour! So I donned my old gardening gloves, filled my watering can and headed outside. Digging, raking, bagging, planting. I soon felt an amazing boost in my energy and well-being and was definitely transformed in spirit and feeling healthier. Not to mention, I had some great *tamayta's* on the vine - which kinda leads to our story.

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This renewed burst of energy prompted me to head straight out to my favorite garden center to load up on an array of brightly colored plastic flowers and bling'd up pinwheels. I was ready to fill my dollar store *fleurs jardin* aluminum oval planters with a party pack of silk roses and Faux Bouquets all made of that fine family of poly's like *polyacrylic's*, *polycarbonate's*, *polyethylene's*, and of course bless the 70's for *polyester*. Although I was very much into the nature of it all and obviously I wasn't attempting to alter environmental habitats or reduce the Earth's ability to adapt to climate change, but I wanted my garden to pop like the lavender fields of France and so the luster of latex and nylon was definitely the way to go!

Aside from inadvertently riling up a few of my environmentally conscious neighbors I think that my display of teflon's and polymer's may have actually confused the ecosystem of some of my Brooklyn wildlife residents. Now instead of hearing the *soothing coo* of the mourning doves, I witnessed one of them soaring past a squirrel and chirping out in a very Brooklyn accent...:

“...hey, get outta the bird feeder ya shaggy tailed tree rat!...”

But all kidding aside I did notice a bee, apparently not too perceptive in the pistil department, hovering the plastic daisy's as if he were on some DEET induced pollination mission. Now obviously there was no possibility of sucking any nectar from the plastic, and unless he was just into simply whipping out his pollinator in public, there was really no redeemable return on this impromptu daytime soiree into my backyard bouquets of acrylic. But something was amiss. I also watched an ant go out of his way to leisurely walk from stem to stamen of an artificial petunia to do whatever it is that ants do to petunias -- but the best garden moment of all was the *firefly fiasco*.

I do realize that with only two months to live AND procreate, there's already frenzy and confusion within this *glowing bug* community. I mean they can't even figure out what they're called: *Firefly*, *lightning bug*, *beetle*, *glowworm* -- I even think that I heard that wise guy dove refer to them as *a bunch of little Bic flickers* .... anyways...

At about 3am, I gazed out through the bedroom window in a *sexagenarian* stupor, which incidentally is my new word for age 64 because it makes me sound *healthy and vigorous*, I mean with all the hair and almost all the original teeth thing. But I was startled by the site of a miniature Macy's fourth of July like display of flashing and flickering fireflies next to the bling'd out dollar store pinwheels.

I later learned that apparently when the *guy* firefly sends out a pattern of flashes to the *girl* firefly as a potential mate, if she's into a *quick date* she'll mimic the pattern back to him and bingo it's time to hit the theme song to *The Love Boat*.

Now just imagine this poor *guy* firefly with the mirrors of the pinwheel bling reflecting his own flash pattern right back at him and he under the notion that it's the *gal* firefly flickering back -- thinking “OMG, I'm definitely going to need the keys to the bird house really soon!”

Well, I'm not sure how it all ended up but by the end of the week the evening light show had ceased, and my little glow buddies had presumably *set sail* on their literal destiny to the isle of *'til death do us part'*. And although I continued to get my daily garden cardio from weeding and whacking, I had apparently gained a few pounds. You see, along with the abundance of Brooklyn *tamayta's* my garden harvest also yielded a bounty of *BLTs* on white bread with a bit too much emphasis on the 'B' and the mayo.

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But as it is true with *our* collective journey and challenges to feel *healthy and vigorous* we have to recognize and grow through our temporary setbacks, refocus on moving forward, and like a benefit not reserved for the fireflies, realize that tomorrow is indeed another day – and as for me - who needs the country life when Mother nature, fake flowers, fireflies and all is always in full bloom in my beloved Greenpoint Brooklyn USA.

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# Sweet Berry's & Milk.

📊 Calories: 127, Net carbs: 16g, Fat: 5g, Protein: 4g



This one was a total accident. I had such an urge for a bowl of cereal, or something cold and sweet! I gotta tell ya, you can bet ya berries that this totally will do it for ya.

## 📖 THE STUFF:

- 1/4 cup blueberries
- 1/4 cup raspberries
- 1/4 cup, 1% low fat milk
- 1 tbs crushed nuts
- 1 packet Equal
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tbs sugar free whipped topping

🍊 To start, I took a few blueberries and raspberries and squished them up with a fork. I wanted to get some natural sugars, a little juice, and even some color in as a nice base.

🔨 I then threw the rest of the berries in the bowl and wrapped a few peanuts and an almond or two in a paper napkin. I used the flat business side of my meat tenderizer hammer to chop them up a little which I think that I may have gotten my wife a little twisted because she was watching 90-day fiancé or something like that while I was in the kitchen hammering like some crazed contractor.... anyway...

🥛 I poured the low-fat milk in. Stirred in a tablespoon of that sugar free, Cool whip kinda stuff, a packet of Equal and just a sprinkle of real sugar, which I probably could have eliminated.

😬 I gave it a good stir and put it in the freezer with the spoon still in the bowl (an old ice cream parlor trick) while I cleaned up -- maybe 5 minutes.

🍴📱 Wow! This was terrific! It even had that *big finish* you get after the cereal is gone and you get to drink down a big swig of ice cold, sweet milk. So far, I've had it with bananas & strawberries, and fresh pineapple with blackberries. As long as the fruit is good, and your other half isn't hitting YOU with the hammer, you can't miss! Enjoy...

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