



I Would Eat the Poisoned Skittles

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Donald Trump Jr recently caused a controversy by tweeting the image below comparing refugees to a poisoned bowl of skittles. Here's the thing though, I would eat from a bowl of poisoned skittles.

The real issue here clearly is food safety, and acceptable levels of risk. Donald Jr's comparison embraces a zero tolerance for risk when it comes to choices, be they food consumption or the entry of refugees. But we don't embrace zero risk in our food consumption choices, so why should we with immigration?

Skittles may not be poisoned very often, but many foods carry a risk of intense sickness.

According to the [NOAA Fisheries division](#), Americans consume an average of one seafood meal a week. With 324 million people in the U.S., that amounts to 16.8 billion seafood meals a year consumed in the U.S. Each of these instances was a non-zero risk choice. The CDC [estimates](#) that 589,310 people are sickened from seafood every year due to bacterial, chemical, parasitic, and viral agents. That means each meal has a 0.0035% chance of becoming sick. Does Donald Trump Jr eat seafood?

This raises the question of how much riskier refugees are than seafood. According to the [Cato Institute](#), of the 859,629 refugees who have come to the U.S. since 2001, only three have been convicted for planning a terrorist attack, and none of those attacks was in the U.S. Let's say that the marginal refugee is 10x riskier than the average refugee, because they are coming from Syria or something. How do the odds stack up? That's a 0.0035% chance that they are a terrorist, the exact same odds as seafood poisoning.

So yes, I would eat from a poisoned bowl of skittles if the bowl was big enough, and the share poisoned was as low as the risk from refugees. If Donald Trump Jr eats seafood, and assuming he enjoys the flavor of skittles which hey they aren't for everyone, then he would as well.