

## Which Plate Color Makes you Overeat? Use Color and Contrast to your Advantage!

Do you think plate color can affect portion size? In a groundbreaking new study conducted during a college reunion party we found that the color contrast between the plate and food may have a tremendous impact on how much people serve themselves. Partygoers were directed to buffets serving pasta with either tomato or Alfredo sauce and randomly given red or white plates. The participants were instructed to serve themselves, after which their plates were weighed on hidden scales. The results? Participants who had low-contrast between the food and plates (red pasta on a red plate, or white pasta on a white plate) served themselves approximately 32 grams, or 22% more than participants with high-contrast food and plates (red pasta on white plates, or white pasta on red plates)! So, choose your plate wisely: if you want to serve yourself less, choose dinnerware that contrasts the color of your meal! (*Forthcoming, Journal of Consumer Research*)



## Do Cooking Shows Make You Fat? Dieters are more affected than non-dieters!

Afraid that snacking while watching the Food Network is adding calories to your diet? You might be right! In a recent study we conducted, 180 undergraduate students classified as either dieters or non-dieters were asked to watch programs with or without food-related content while seated next to a bowl of candy, which they were invited to snack on. After the program was over, researchers counted the caloric value of the missing sweets. Think that participants watching the programs with the food-related content would eat more? You are partially right: the non-dieters ate until they were full and about the same regardless of the TV program content, while the dieters were more likely to be influenced by the television program. In fact, dieters ate an average of 60 calories more than non-dieters when watching the food-related program. The bottom line: if you're watching what you eat don't snack in front of the TV! (*Appetite, August 2011*)



## Grocery Guessing: Trying Harder and Doing Worse It's better to estimate the cost of your groceries!

Shoppers on a budget are two times more likely to keep track of their in-store spending. In recent laboratory and field studies we found that shoppers use several different methods to track the total cost of their cart. Surprisingly, these studies show that shoppers who estimate the total cost tend to be more accurate than shoppers who try to compute the total price using a calculator! In fact, across all four studies including 209 participants, shoppers who used a calculator underestimated the total cost by as much as 18.9%, a difference of \$8.98. That can be an issue when on a tight budget! So, if you're watching your spending, estimate your grocery cart total instead of pulling out the calculator: estimating can save you from making calculation mistakes that will cost you at checkout. (*Journal of Marketing, March 2010*)

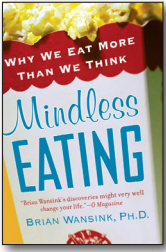


## Thinking about Exercise Makes You Hungry! It can make you over-serve and overeat!

Do you feel that exercising increases your appetite? As it turns out, so does just thinking about exercise! Recently we asked 94 people to participate in a pretended shopping attitudes study at a shopping mall. After answering a series of questions some were asked to read a scenario about exercise, followed by a few more questions about their hunger and emotions at that moment. In compensation for their time they were invited to help themselves to some snacks. We recorded how much they took and the results were staggering! Those who had been prompted to read the scenario and thus to think about exercise served themselves 55% more than their counterparts! What is so interesting about this? Exercise is certainly an important part of a healthy lifestyle but beware that it can encourage you to over-eat! (*Appetite, December 2010*)



**Our Mission: To discover Why, What, When, and How Much People Eat!**



- Intel Inside:**
- Which Plate Color Makes you Overeat?
  - Do Cooking Shows Make You Fat?
  - Grocery Guessing
  - Just Thinking about Exercise Makes You Hungry!

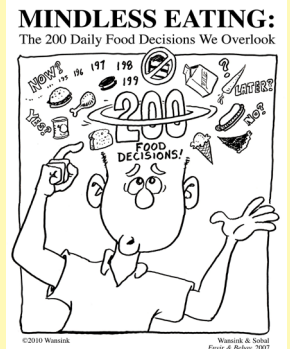


**A Message From the Director  
Dear Friend in Food,**

After we look back on the holidays, they usually bring a lot of fun experiences and happy memories. It's too bad, then, that we let ourselves get so stressed out about them. Holiday anxiety is as bad for what we eat as are the tasty once-a-year foods.

On a typical day, our research has shown that a person makes over 200 decisions about food. During holidays, I believe this goes up dramatically (though we haven't specifically studied it). We have done a number of other studies that we think you'll find useful in mindlessly eating better during the holidays and in those weight-losing months that follow.

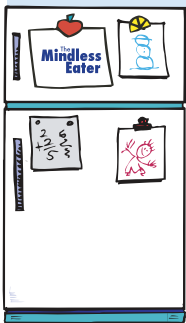
In this issue, you'll learn surprising research findings that you can use to your advantage such as: using high plate-food color contrast to control portion size, avoid snacking while watching cooking shows, not letting exercise or the thought of it induce you to overeat and, estimating rather than calculating the cost of your grocery cart.



There's a lot more coming in the near future. Stay posted and follow us on Twitter or Facebook.

Happy Holidays!

Brian Wansink



**Refrigerator Research: For the Holiday Parties – Tear-out tips for the fridge**

**1. Be Late or Leave Early**

When attending a party or a buffet arrive late or leave early. If you arrive late, most of the good stuff will be gone by

the time you show up. Leave early and you'll make it easier to avoid additional helpings of that dessert. (*Mindless Eating*,



**2. Healthy Foods First**

At the party, use the volume approach to make yourself feel full. Chow down on the healthy stuff (like broccoli and carrots) and then see if you have room for the rest. (*Mindless Eating* p. 231)



**3. Keep Serving Bowls at a Distance**

When hosting, place serving bowls and platters more than an arm's length away. Our recent study "Serve Here, Eat There" showed that leaving them on the counter results in men eating 29% fewer and women 10% fewer calories.

