

Is This a Meal or a Snack? External Cues Provide us the Clues!

Imagine yourself at a reception or at a party. How do you know if it is a meal or a snack? Your answer will influence how much you eat. In a recent study, 122 participants uncovered 22 food and environmental cues that give us clues for whether we think we are consuming a meal or a snack.



A meal includes eating with others, eating for a longer period of time, sitting, eating off of ceramic plates, and eating healthy food. On the other hand, eating a snack is associated with eating alone, standing, eating for a shorter time, using paper plates, and having unhealthy food.

People who thought they were eating a snack filled their plate and still ate more calories of less nutritious food than their meal-eating counterparts.

The bottom line: if you don't know whether the buffet is a meal or a snack, make it a meal. You'll eat a bit more, but you won't eat later. (*Appetite*, February 2010)

Blame Your Spoon! Measuring Medicine with a Kitchen Spoon is a Bad Idea

Seventy percent of us use spoons when we dose medicine. We found the dose of liquid medicine varies depending on the size of the spoon onto which it is poured. We asked 195 former cold and flu sufferers to pour one teaspoon of nighttime flu medicine onto both a medium-sized spoon and a large-sized spoon.



(Jason Koski/University Photography)

Participants underdosed the medicine by 8.4% when pouring onto the medium spoon, and overdosed by 11.6% when pouring onto the large spoon. Our conclusion? Use a measuring cup or special dosing spoon—not kitchen spoons—to dose medicine. This is especially important when pouring medicine for children. (*in Annals of Internal Medicine*, January 2010)

Serve it Here; Eat it There: Serving off the Counter Results in Eating Less!

Leaving food on the counter even just a few feet away from where we are eating can make us eat less! We measured the serving sizes, intake, and food waste in a study where 78 participants helped themselves to pasta, applesauce, and pudding. Some participants served themselves from bowls located on the counter, and some from bowls on the table where they were eating.



The results? Men ate 29% less and women ate 10% less when the bowl was on the counter. Use the "dish here; dine there" technique at home to encourage intake of healthy foods and discourage intake of unhealthy foods. Trying to cut back on cookies? Keep the box far from where you are eating. Want the kids to eat more fruit and vegetables? Put the bowl on the table conveniently within reach. (*abstract, FASEB J. 2010 24:741.4*)

Change Your Environment and Lose Weight! Results of the Mindless Eating Challenge

The results on the effectiveness of weight-loss tips suggested to participants by our Mindless Eating Challenge are in! In our analysis we focused on adherence and actual weight loss among 2000 participants.



(<http://smallplatemovement.org/>)

When given environmental change tips (i.e. use an appetizer plate for the main dish), eating behavior tips (i.e. eat healthy items first during dinner), or food choice tips (i.e. eat fruit for an afternoon snack), people followed the tips which altered the environment the most, and followed tips which altered eating behavior the least.

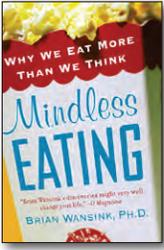
This suggests that the first step toward weight loss should be to alter your environment. For example, start by using smaller dinnerware or changing the layout of your kitchen. (*abstract, FASEB J. 2010 24:557.3*)

For more tips and information, check our websites
FoodPsychology.cornell.edu, www.MindlessEating.org and Smarterlunchrooms.org

Questions? Contact us at:

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



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

I wanted to give you a heads up on something very exciting. I think it could end up being one of the best things to happen to school lunches in the last 30 years.

It's a new Center that's focused on changing the way kids eat in school cafeterias. Professor David Just and I will be the co-Directors. Using behavioral psychology, we will continue discovering and implementing – in schools across America – easy, low-cost/no cost changes that can nudge kids to pick up an apple instead of a cookie.

The ideal lunchroom – the smartest lunchroom – would be the one that led children to make healthy choices in the

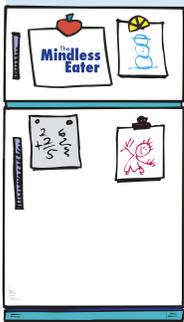
face of some more tempting options. For example, one school in upstate New York was able to increase consumption of salads by close to 300% by simply moving their salad bar six feet from the wall, placing it near a natural bottle neck in the check-out line. Another school increased fruit sales by 105% by moving the apples and oranges from stainless steel bins into a well-lit and attractive basket.

This million dollar Center was announced by the US Department of Agriculture at 10:30 on October 12, 2010. You can learn more at the websites:
<http://BEN.Cornell.edu> and
<http://SmarterLunchrooms.org>

All my best,
Brian Wansink



Refrigerator Research: Tear-out tips for your fridge



1. Make the Bad Stuff Hard to Get

Pre-portion unhealthy snacks when you're not craving them. Before you eat it, cut a pie into 10 smaller pieces instead of 6.

That way, when you're unable to resist hitting the fridge for a snack, you'll have a better chance of eating less. (Wansink, *Mindless Eating*, p. 75)



2. Beware of Leftovers

"The more side dishes and little bowls you bring out of the refrigerator, the more you will eat. If you're bringing out carrot sticks, this probably doesn't matter—but are you? The second danger of leftovers? They signal that you made too much—and probably ate too much—of the original meal." (Wansink, *Mindless Eating*, p.76)



3. How to Survive an All You Can Eat Buffet

Survey all of the offerings before plating your food. If smaller plates are available, use them. Take no more than two different items per plate. Use a small plate for the meats and desserts, and large plates for salad and vegetables. (Wansink, *Obesity*, Vol 16, 8, 2008 p.1957)

