

Food Psychology Tip Sheet

Why, What, When, and How Much We Eat



Bottoms Up! The Influence of Elongation on Pouring and Consumption Volume

Beware of the shape of the glass you use. You could drink much more than you think. Studies at "Weight-loss Camps" (and with veteran bartenders) show that visual illusions unknowingly cause us to pour an average of 34% more into short wide glasses than tall narrow ones.



Exploring Comfort Food Preferences across Age and Gender

When you crave a comfort food do you crave steak or ice cream? Researchers show that comfort foods can consist of both snack-related foods and meal-related foods. Females tend to prefer snack-related comfort foods while males prefer more meal-related comfort foods.



Interactions between Forms of Fat Consumption and Restaurant Bread Consumption

Hidden cameras at Italian restaurants show that people who put olive oil on a piece of bread will eat more fat and calories than if they instead used butter. The good news... they eat fewer pieces of bread. After observing 341 people at Italian restaurants, researchers found two surprising facts 1) olive oil users soaked 26% more olive oil onto their bread and 2) olive oil users eat 23% less bread over the course of a meal.



How Visibility and Convenience Influence Candy Consumption

The farther you have to walk the less you eat. College secretaries ate twice as many chocolate kisses (9 versus 4) when these kisses were placed on their desk than when they were placed 6 feet away. They were also more likely to lose track of how many they had eaten.



Profiling Nutritional Gatekeepers: Three Methods for Differentiating Influential Cooks

Great domestic cooks are "nutritional gatekeepers" who can unknowingly help define their family's taste preferences and can facilitate healthy eating. A nation-wide study focused on 440 "great cooks" showed that not all are created equal. Indeed, within the United States, most great domestic cooks can be categorized in one of five categories: (1) Giving Cooks, (2) Healthy Cooks, (3) Innovative Cooks, (4) Methodical Cooks and (5) Competitive Cooks.



Do Descriptive Menu Labels Influence Restaurant Sales and Repatronage?

A six-week controlled cafeteria study found that descriptive menu-item labels increase food sales and improve the attitudes customers have towards both the food and the restaurant. Using descriptive menu labels such as Black Forest Double-Chocolate (vs. chocolate cake) increased sales by 27% and improved attitudes towards the food, attitudes towards the restaurant, and intentions towards repatronage.



Does Stockpiling Accelerate Consumption?

The Wholesale Club Store Curse: buying in bulk causes you to eat these visible foods more frequently. In a study of 219 adults, researchers found that stockpiled products are more frequently used when they are visible and seen as versatile. Products are frequently purchased and forgotten – out of sight out of mind.



Can Package Size Accelerate Usage Volume?

Five studies with 691 adults across 48 product categories show that people pour more out of larger packages. Large package sizes increase consumption an average of 22%. This stems from a deep-seated perception that per-unit cost is cheaper in larger packages.



At the Movies: How External Cues and Perceived Taste Impact Consumption Volume

External cues such as packaging and container size can powerfully and unknowingly increase how much we eat. Chicago moviegoers who were given large-size popcorn containers ate 45% more than those given medium-size containers. This even happened when they were given stale, 10 day old popcorn. Big packages encourage us to eat more, even if we don't really like the food.



Changing Eating Habits on the Home Front: Lost Lessons from World War II Research

These hidden secrets from WWII show a lot about adopting unfamiliar foods, like soy. Gatekeepers and incremental introductions are particularly important when encouraging healthy eating. Changing your family's eating habits – such as eating more fruits and vegetables – is easier to do gradually than abruptly.



Antecedents and Mediators of Eating Bouts

In a study of 178 adults, researchers explored what stimulates and influences dramatic increases in the volume consumed of certain foods or "eating bouts." When foods are sitting out, we tend to "graze" and eat them more frequently. When we have to get them from the cupboard instead, we eat them less often, but we eat larger servings (or handfuls).



The Mystery of the Cabinet Castaway: Why We Buy Products We Never Use

In-home pantry reports of 423 American households show that unused products were not bought because of sales, ads, coupons, or impulsivity. They were bought for recipes that were never made, or for special occasions that never occurred. This study found that most of those unused products are really the result of our over-optimistic plans when we shop.

For more information about these studies and others, please visit

<http://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/>

