

What helps people make food substitutes?

Background

Did you ever think that it would be easy to cut the sugar in a cake recipe? It is. All you really need is some applesauce.

Families around the country can begin to think differently about the foods they eat. In turn, they can enjoy mealtimes more, while also becoming healthier overall. But, how do you expand the minds of your family and the amount of situations in which your family would eat healthy foods?

A study of 460 adults used fake advertisements showed that comparing a particular product to products within the category you want your family to eat can increase usage of a product. For example, consumers were shown ads of a new steak sauce that would replace the traditional ketchup on hamburgers.

If the food is similar to what's in the mind of your family now, showing differences makes the ideas more believable. For instance, crispy apple chips will replace potato chips as an afternoon snack. If the food is especially different, try and show the similarities to the substitute.

Key Teaching Points

- Comparing products that are similar, but not too similar, can create interest in children.
- Children may switch to new products once they understand the reasons why the new product is superior.

Student Demonstration

At the beginning of this session show the students a variety of normal and perhaps new food items.

- For example: tofu, hotdogs, burgers, dried apple slices, potato chips, Boca burgers, soy cheese and Velveeta.

Ask the students to pair as many of the items as they can, being careful to choose items that are different, but not too different. Write the pairs on the board and encourage the class to come up with their own pairs of foods.

Next, let the students read or discuss the study that was done at the University of Illinois. Emphasize the fact that many people have no problem switching to foods that are similar, but not too similar, to one another.

Finally, ask the students to come up with their own pairs of foods that fit the same criteria. Have them place their pairings on the board as well and discuss why the pairings would or wouldn't work.

Wansink, Brian (1994), "Advertising's Impact on Category Substitution," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31:4 (November), 505-515.