



## Too much on your plate can weigh you down

Did you realize how portions have grown in the last 20 to 40 years? This is something of a phenomenon and it certainly has increased our waistlines. According to the U.S.D.A, about 65% of Americans are overweight or obese today, compared with 47% in the early 1970s and 45% in the early 1960s. The same statistics reveal that Americans' total daily caloric intakes have risen by almost 150 calories per day since 1980. This amount reflects an extra 15 pounds every year. That's right! Surprised when you go to the doctor's office for the annual physical and you've gained ten pounds? That's where it's coming from. Those extra "bites" that you consider harmless.

What is Portion Distortion? It actually came about as a marketing tool. Fast food companies were concerned about making money – so they increased portion size; we think we're getting a deal and it doesn't take much more for them to produce. So, they get rich while we gain weight! For example, a \$1.25 bag of French fries costs \$1 to produce. The potatoes, oil and salt cost only 20 cents and the other 80 cents goes toward other non-food expenses. If you add 50% more French fries to the bag and sell it for \$1.50, the non-food expenses stay the same and the extra food costs the franchise only 10 cents. So, what happens? The fast-food joint makes an extra 15 cents in pure profit, and we think we're getting a good deal. This concept actually works with all types of food – potato chips; "all you can eat" fried shrimp at Red Lobster and those super sized candy bars. This is why 7-Eleven can sell the 64-ounce Double Gulp -- half a gallon of soda and nearly 600 calories -- for only 37 cents more than the 16-ounce, 89-cent regular Gulp. Another fact? M&M/Mars has increased the size of candy bars such as Milky Way and Snickers four times since 1970.

Whose fault is it? The restaurateurs or ours? A study conducted through Penn State in 2004 showed no matter how much food that was put in front of diners, they ate it. On different days, a restaurant served ziti with a pesto stuffed tomato and a roll. On some days, the serving was 50% more, but cost the same. If the serving size was bigger, participants ate an average of 172 calories more. Both groups rated the serving size as appropriate.

What this means is that there is no magic rule – I can tell you all the ins and outs about what to eat and what not to eat, but it still boils down to portion. We cannot rely on the restaurant to put what is considered the right amount of food on your plate. The research also shows that you cannot rely on your appetite either. Most participants in the study did not notice changes in portion even if they were given 50 or 100% more food.

What is a portion? A "portion" is how much food you choose to eat, whether in a restaurant, from a package, or in your own kitchen. A "serving" is a standard amount set by the U.S. Government, or sometimes by others for recipes, cookbooks, or diet plans. There are two commonly used standards for servings: My Pyramid Plan: Steps to a Healthier You, the FDA and the U.S.D.A.

Well, then how do you avoid the portion trap? There are a couple of rules to stick to in order to be a savvy eater. Cont'd on next page

### What's in a serving?

- 1/2 a cup of fruit, vegetables, pasta or rice = a small fist
- 3 ounces of cooked meat, poultry or fish = a deck of cards
- 1 tortilla = a small salad plate
- 1 medium bagel = a hockey puck
- 1 muffin = a large egg
- 1 baked potato = a computer mouse
- 1 ounces of cheese = your thumb
- 1 teaspoon of margarine or butter = a thumb tip
- 2 tbsp. Peanut butter = a golf ball

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Cont'd from page 1

Put everything you're going to eat on your plate before you eat it. Have separate serving dishes and serve plates on the stove and off the dinner table, unless it's healthful veggies or salad. Put those dishes on the table to encourage seconds.

Try to serve yourself from the package. You can easily lose track of how much you're eating if you eat right from the bag. Instead, check the serving size, serve yourself that amount and then put the package away.

Try to eat without doing other things. Watching TV, doing email, even driving increases the amount you eat!

Share a meal with a friend. Or bring home a doggy bag so you have lunch for the next day.

And if you're still confused, start with only eating half the portion.

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Have you been eating enough fish lately? The current recommendation in order to properly obtain the healthy omega 3 fatty acids is to eat fish two times per week. Many of us feel stuck when it comes to some healthy and flavorful fish dishes. Try this one; it has a lot of flavors and the preferred fish is halibut—a nice fatty fish that is very good for us!

## Moroccan Fish Tagine with Peppers and Olives

Servings: 4

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ¼ cup parsley, fresh, chopped
- 3 large garlic clove, chopped
- 3 tablespoon cilantro, fresh, chopped
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 2 teaspoon turmeric, ground
- 1/8 teaspoon saffron
- 4, 4 oz. Halibut, (or orange roughy)
- 1 pound carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 1/2 pound tomatoes, thinly sliced
- 1 large onion, thinly sliced
- 1 lemon, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 3/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 medium red bell pepper, cut into 1/4-inch strips
- 24 Kalamata olive

Mix first 7 ingredients in medium bowl. Add fish and turn to coat. Refrigerate 2 hours, turning fish occasionally.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Arrange carrot slices over bottom of 13x9x2-inch glass baking dish. Layer half of tomatoes, half of onion and half of lemon over. Season with half of salt and pepper. Bake until veggies are only half done. Arrange fish and marinade over veggies in a baking dish. Top fish with remaining tomato, onion and lemon slices. Season with remaining salt and pepper. Top decoratively with red pepper strips and olives. Cover dish with foil. Bake 40 minutes.

### Nutrition Facts (per serving)

Calories: 376  
Total Fat: 13 grams  
Saturated Fat: 1.7 grams  
Cholesterol: 37 grams  
Sodium: 1639 milligrams  
Carbohydrates: 33 grams  
Fiber: 4 grams  
Protein: 30 grams



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