

Weight makes for tastier food

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Dutch yoghurt dessert. Credit: Vijverln via Wikimedia Commons.

(Medical Xpress) -- Want your food to make a good impression? Then use a heavier bowl or plate.

That's the suggestion from research by Charles Spence from Oxford University's Department of Experimental Psychology and colleagues in Oxford and Spain, recently reported in the journal *Food Quality and Preference*.

The researchers asked 50 adults to taste yoghurt from three identical-looking bowls they held in their hands. The volunteers were asked to taste a spoonful of the yogurt and rate it for flavor, quality, and how expensive they thought it was - as well as saying how much they liked it.

But whilst the Greek-style yogurt was the same for each tasting, the three bowls had very different weights.

"We found that people rated the yogurt as being significantly denser, as tasting significantly nicer, and they perceived it as being significantly more expensive when they tasted the yogurt from the heavier bowl as compared to the lighter bowl," Charles Spence explains.

"These results provide an example of sensation transference. Namely, that the multisensory attributes of the packaging - its appearance, feel and in this case weight - influence our perception of what is inside the packaging, or the food served in the plates and bowls from which we eat."

The effect is unlikely to be limited to foodstuffs. Charles tells me that further research may confirm what many wine writers have long suspected; that good wine comes in heavy bottles. He has recently submitted a study showing that, for wines up to £35, the average bottle weighs an extra 8g for every £1 increase in price.

"There is a very exciting area of research now starting to open up at the interface of design and psychology. This is one example of that approach, where psychological experiments can help to demonstrate the impact of certain design decisions. In fact, the first author on this paper is a designer from Spain," Charles tells me.

"No one previously has thought too much about the consequences of how we always eat from a plate or bowl placed on table. These results suggest that our experience of food can really be enhanced by actually holding in our hands the plate or bowl we are eating from."

The researchers are now working to develop a dish that cannot be rested on a table, forcing diners to hold it in their hands and experience its

weight.

Charles adds: "We are also investigating whether the fact that the food from the heavier plate was rated as denser might result in people needing less [food](#) in order to become sated or full, opening up a potential health angle."

More information: [www.elsevier.com/wps/find/jour ...
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