

Eating with our eyes: Why people eat less at unbused tables

April 9 2007

People watching the Super Bowl who saw how much they had already eaten -- in this case, leftover chicken-wing bones -- ate 27 percent less than people who had no such environmental cues, finds a new Cornell study.

The difference between the two groups -- those eating at a table where leftover bones accumulated compared with those whose leftovers were removed -- was greater for men than for women.

"The results suggest that people restrict their consumption when evidence of food consumed is available to signal how much food they have eaten," said Brian Wansink, the John S. Dyson Professor of Marketing and of Applied Economics at Cornell, and author of the 2006 book, "Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think."

The study, conducted with Cornell postdoctoral researcher Collin R. Payne, is published in the April issue of *Perceptual and Motor Skills*. It included 50 graduate students at a sports bar where an open buffet featured chicken wings during the Super Bowl; some tables were bused and some were left unbused.

To use environmental cues to curb overeating and overdrinking, Wansink suggested that college parties could encourage (or require) fresh plastic glasses for each drink and that the glasses be stacked as they accumulate for each person; dinner parties could use fresh glasses for refills while empty glasses, or even empty bottles, are left on the table.

Source: Cornell University

Citation: Eating with our eyes: Why people eat less at unbused tables (2007, April 9) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-04-eyes-people-unbused-tables.html>

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