

Obese diners choose convenience and overeating at Chinese buffets

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When dining at Chinese Buffets, overweight individuals serve themselves and eat differently than normal weight individuals. This may lead them to overeat, according to a recent study by Cornell University's Food and Brand Lab. Compared to normal weight diners, overweight individuals sat 16 feet closer to the buffet, faced the food, used larger plates, ate with forks instead of chopsticks, and served themselves immediately instead of browsing the buffet.

"What's crazy is that these people are generally unaware of what they're doing – they're unaware of sitting closer, facing the food, chewing less, and so on," say Brian Wanink, lead author of this study and of the book "Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think."

The study was published in the journal Obesity and includes observations of 213 diners at 11 all-you-can-eat Chinese restaurant buffets across the country. Study participants included a range of normal weight to obese diners, none of whom were Asian. Major study findings include:

- 27% of normal-weight patrons faced the buffet compared to 42% of obese diners.
- Overweight diners sat an average of 16 feet closer than normal-weight diners.
- 16% of obese diners sat at a booth rather than a table compared to 38% of normal weight diners
- 71% of normal-weight diners browsed the buffet before serving

themselves compared to 33% of obese diners
-- 24% of normal-weight people used chopsticks compared with 9% of overweight people

"When food is more convenient people tend to eat more," say coauthor Collin R. Payne, New Mexico State University.

"These seemingly subtle differences in behavior and environment may cause people to overeat without even realizing it."

Source: Cornell Food & Brand Lab

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