

Lower buffet prices lead to less taste satisfaction

September 24 2014, by Ozge Sigirci



Does the price you pay at a buffet influence how much you like the food? Surprisingly, yes! In a new Cornell Food and Brand Lab study published in the *Journal of Sensory Studies*, researchers found that when charged more for an all-you-can-eat buffet diners rated the food higher than when charged less for the same food.

In the study, conducted by researchers David Just PhD., Ozge Sigirci, and Brian Wansink PhD. author of the forthcoming book, *Slim by Design: Mindless Eating Solutions for Everyday Life*, 139 diners in an Italian all-you-can-eat [buffet](#) restaurant were either charged \$4 or \$8 for the lunch buffet. The buffet offered [pizza](#), salad, breadsticks, pasta, and soup. After finishing, diners were asked to rate the taste of the pizza and how much they enjoyed the dining experience on a 9 point scale.

"People set their expectation of taste partially based on the price—and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If I didn't pay much it can't be that good. Moreover, each slice is worse than the last. People really ended up regretting choosing the buffet when it was cheap," says Just. satisfaction with the restaurant. Diners who paid the higher price for the buffet rated the pizza as being 11% tastier. In contrast, those paying \$4, half as much for the same food, not only enjoyed the pizza less, but they enjoyed the food less and less with each additional piece of pizza. In both situations diners ate an average of three slices of pizza.

Based on these findings the researchers recommend that buffet owners think twice before setting a low buffet cost, even though cheap all-you-can-eat buffets are popular, people tend to stick to the "you get what you pay for" mentality and will rate the food lower in quality.

According to Wansink, there's also news you can use if you're a consumer, "Avoid cheap all-you-can-eat buffets. Go to the most expensive buffet you can afford. You'll eat the same amount but enjoy the experience and the [food](#) more!"

More information: David Just, Ozge Sigirci and Brian Wansink (2014). Lower Buffet Prices Lead to Less Taste Satisfaction. *Journal of Sensory Studies*, forthcoming. onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/joss.12117/full

Provided by Cornell Food & Brand Lab

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