

# Are adventurous eaters healthier?

July 31 2015

---

When it comes to food, I'll try anything at least once. As I [documented before](#), I've dined on tarantula, frog, crickets, snake, raw clams, red ants, and durian fruit – and that was just on a single trip through Asia! When back on home turf, I enjoy oysters, sashimi, tripe soup, beef and salmon tartare, foie gras, and other acquired tastes. For the record, I wasn't always this adventurous with food; as a kid, I consumed a relatively narrow range of foods – mostly of the eastern European and Greek variety. But sometime in my early adulthood curiosity got the best of me – frequent travel has provided ample opportunities for additional experimentation. And today, I'd say I'm reasonably adventurous; at least willing to give anything a try.

That's why a new paper by Latimer and colleagues, assessing whether [food](#) adventurousness is associated with [body mass index](#) (BMI; a rough measure of overweight/obesity) and other health behaviours, caught my attention.

A total of 501 non-vegetarian women (average age =  $26.8 \pm 3.13$ , average BMI =  $25.96 \pm 6.17$ ) from the general US population participated in the study.

Food adventurousness was assessed with one simple question asking participants whether or not they had previously eaten any of the listed 16 reasonably uncommon foods: kale, seitan, quinoa, seaweed, [bean sprouts](#), beef tongue, eel, quail eggs, rabbit, kimchi, tempeh, venison, polenta, liver, raw oysters, pork belly. Next, the sample was split into two groups (adventurous and non-adventurous eater) based on whether they had

tried more than half ( $\geq 9$  of the 16) of the foods listed.

Here's what the authors found:

- Participants who were more adventurous eaters had a lower BMI than non-adventurous eaters (*Nerd Alert: this was derived using regression analysis, not by dichotomizing the sample as for the following comparisons*)
- Adventurous eaters reported higher levels of cooking to connect with their heritage
- Adventurous eaters were less likely to be influenced by celebrity diets
- Adventurous eaters were more likely to host friends for dinner
- Adventurous eaters reported being more physically active
- Adventurous eaters were less concerned with low price, ease of preparation, and nice packaging of their food

Thus, overall, individuals who tend to eat a greater range of foods, particularly more esoteric ones, appear to exhibit a number of healthy behaviours and a lower BMI. The reasons for these observed associations are anyone's guess.

Finally, however interesting the findings, it must be noted that these results are preliminary and should be interpreted with caution.

First off, the sample was composed exclusively of young women – who knows if these results hold up in middle-aged men.

Also, the foods included in the measure of adventurousness were nutrient-dense, relatively healthy foods (e.g., bean sprouts) rather than energy-dense nutrient-poor foods (e.g., ice cream). If the scale of food adventurousness instead assessed the variety of pop or potato chip

flavours someone had tried, a very different relationship between food adventurousness and BMI may have been observed.

Finally, most of the results are based on a simple comparison of two groups of women (adventurous vs. non-adventurous) who may differ on many other unmeasured factors (e.g., maybe those that are adventurous with food are also of higher socio-economic status and can afford healthier foods – nothing to do with adventurousness, and everything to do with relative wealth).

In the meantime, why not buy an unfamiliar vegetable at the grocery store on your next trip, find an online recipe, and try your hand at a new dish?

Variety is the spice of life, after all.

By the way, would you be classified as an adventurous eater based on the above list of foods. (For the record, the one thing I've not eaten on that list was seitan, which I had to Google. Guess what's just been added to my list of things to try!)

**More information:** [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10...  
2/oby.21154/abstract](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/oby.21154/abstract)

*This story is republished courtesy of PLOS Blogs: [blogs.plos.org](https://blogs.plos.org).*

Provided by PLOS Blogs

Citation: Are adventurous eaters healthier? (2015, July 31) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-07-adventurous-eaters-healthier.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.