

Fighting the crave for fattening food? Just surround yourself in its scent

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Just a whiff of fried food may entice you to order a high-calorie meal. But breathe it in for longer than two minutes, and you're more likely to be content with fruit.

A new study published in the *Journal of Marketing Research* finds ambient [food scent](#) can directly satisfy the belly. That's because the brain doesn't necessarily differentiate the source of sensory pleasure.

"Ambient scent can be a powerful tool to resist [cravings](#) for indulgent foods," said lead author Dipayan Biswas, Ph.D., marketing professor at the University of South Florida College of Business. "In fact, subtle sensory stimuli like scents can be more effective in influencing children's and adults' food choices than restrictive policies."

Biswas discovered a [direct connection](#) between the length of exposure time and whether or not one will indulge. He conducted a series of tests using an inconspicuous nebulizer, that separately gave off the scent of healthy and unhealthy food items. (cookies vs. strawberries, pizza vs. apples)

He found participants exposed to the smell of cookies for less than 30 seconds were more likely to want a cookie. But those exposed for longer than two minutes, didn't find that cookie desirable, and picked strawberries instead. He had the same results when the scent of pizza and apples were tested.

Since non-indulgent foods don't give off much of an ambient scent, they're typically not connected with reward, therefore have little influence on what we order.

Biswas's previous research has shown light and the volume of music impacts food choice. However, this the first study to prove one sense can compensate another.

Provided by University of South Florida

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