

Stress, snacks equal more pounds in Italy's virus lockdown

March 17 2020

Stress, boredom and a natural appreciation for culinary pleasures is sending millions of Italians under home confinement to the same place—the fridge.

Resisting the temptation to overeat is now front of mind in Italy, a country known around the world for the excellence of its food and wine, whose citizens have been shut indoors for a week, and almost a month in some places.

The danger of a few extra pounds pales in comparison to the real health threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed 2,503 people so far in Italy and continues to spread.

Nevertheless, on the already long list of worries, from money to keeping kids from going stir crazy at home, [weight gain](#) now begins to feature prominently.

"I'm going to eat a tube of Pringles," writes one Twitter user, Chiara. "Now getting fat is the lesser evil #coronavirus."

Articles offering tips on how to avoid adding pounds during the lockdown rival those detailing how to eat healthy to boost one's [immune system](#), while cooking and exercise videos by amateur cooks, nutritionists and personal trainers abound on social networks.

A widely circulated photo on Whatsapp, republished by La Repubblica

newspaper, shows a group of overweight beachgoers under the heading "Summer 2020—Gyms Closed."

Jogging is not prohibited, and those under lockdown can take walks alone in the neighbourhood, but gyms are closed and many confess they cannot stay at home for too long with little to do without snacking.

'Cookies, ice cream, junk food'

"We're all going to get fat," said Manuel, a grocery cashier in central Rome.

"Cookies, [ice cream](#), [junk food](#)" were showing up more and more in customers' carts over the past week, he said. "They're bored."

In one video circulated on Facebook, a man stands in front of the bathroom mirror, spritzing himself with cologne, while a man offscreen asks if he's going out.

"I'm going to the kitchen," says the first man. "We have lots to do."

Many Italians are cooking in their time at home, with sales of flour climbing 80 percent since the lockdown throughout the country was imposed on March 9, according to national farmers association Coldiretti.

"It's a boom in homemade bread, pasta and cakes for Italian families," said the group in a statement.

Also seeing a sharp rise were sales of sugar, up 28 percent, and milk, up 20 percent, according to data from supermarket chain Co-op cited by Coldiretti.

Cooking tutorials

The Campagna Amica foundation, which promotes national agriculture, on Tuesday uploaded to its website a series of cooking tutorials featuring the best of Italian regional cuisine.

The website, said Coldiretti, allows those at home to "stay in front of your ovens and your kitchen table" while taking a culinary tour of Italy and its beloved recipes, whether ravioli from Piedmont, spinach gnocchi from Lombardy, or Morello cherry torte from Calabria.

As the [coronavirus](#) pandemic continues to spread and millions more people around the world are confined, the problem of overeating appears not to be a purely Italian phenomenon, however.

In Britain, a woman who identified herself as an entertainment reporter named Jess Morcom said on Twitter that her home confinement which began Tuesday was off to a rocky start.

"Day one of working from home and I've already had my head in the fridge at least at least 10 times."

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