

How vegetables make the meal

27 November 2012

Parents may have some new motivations to serve their kids vegetables. A new Cornell University study, published in *Public Health Nutrition*, found that by simply serving vegetables with dinner, the main course would taste better and the preparer was perceived to be more thoughtful and attentive.

Provided by Cornell Food & Brand Lab

"Most parents know that vegetables are healthy, yet vegetables are served at only 23% of American dinners," said lead author Brian Wansink, PhD, the John Dyson Professor of Marketing and [Consumer Behavior](#) at Cornell University. "If parents knew that adding vegetables to the plate could make what they prepare for dinner seem more appealing, or could increase their own "heroic" appeal, then maybe they'd be more inspired to serve vegetables."

Cornell researchers surveyed 500 US mothers. [Study participants](#) assessed the personality of women who either prepared or did not prepare vegetables with a family meal and rated four different meals that either included or did not include a vegetable. Respondents were asked to describe the meal preparer as well as evaluate the meal combinations.

The results suggest that vegetables can play a powerful role in increasing the overall enjoyment of the meal. Across all four meals, the addition of vegetables helped increase the positive response in multiple ways – making the meal seem more "complete," "loving," "tasty," and prepared with more effort or thought. [Respondents](#) also rated the vegetable preparing mothers as more loving and thoughtful and less boring or selfish.

"If a parent believes that adding a vegetable gives their family a better [perception](#) of the cook and what's cooked, it may encourage them to serve vegetables more often," Wansink said.

"Considering that most kids are not eating adequate amounts of [vegetables](#), we need to explore new approaches to increase consumption."

APA citation: How vegetables make the meal (2012, November 27) retrieved 24 September 2020 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-11-vegetables-meal.html>

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