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from Bay Area moms

*L*ORGEOUS
LOOKS FOR A
BIG NIGHT OUT





Portion Distortion

Beating the Holiday Bulge

BY CHRISSEY GRAY

➤ **THE HOLIDAY SEASON** is officially here along with the festive events that come with it. It's wonderful time of year when most of us will be eating, drinking and being merry—and inadvertently packing on the extra pounds. Every year, countless Americans eat their way through the holidays and end up gaining an average of 4-7 pounds, making weight loss the most popular New Year's resolution each year. The reason for weight gain during the holidays is simple: we are all overeating! It doesn't help that we already live in a land of gigantic food portions, where restaurants provide us with anything from giant mugs of soda and enormous bags of chips to the endless pasta bowls and super-sized pizza slices. Sadly, this portion distortion is not only true of restaurant servings. Americans overeat and misjudge serving sizes even in their own homes. This is especially true at large family gatherings and holiday dinners. It is clear that portion size has become grossly overestimated, and our idea of portion sizes is way out of whack! It seems that many people are now confusing portions with servings.

Portions vs. Servings

A portion is an arbitrary amount of food that you put on your plate, whereas

a serving is a specific measurement of food, for example in cups or tablespoons. Serving sizes are used to provide consumers with healthy and appropriate nutrition information and portion size guidelines. They are used by government agencies, like the USDA, to recommend to consumers standardized amounts of different types of foods needed for health and weight control.

If your portion sizes are consistently out of control, it is likely that you are supersizing your meals—and yourself. Nowadays, it is all too common to consume three or four, or even five, servings at a time as one so called “portion.” The best way to avoid the holiday bulge this season is to be mindful of serving sizes and to control how much you are putting on your plate at each meal. Below you will find several tips to help you to regulate portion sizes and better understand the “serving” as a whole.

Tips to Help You Beat the Bulge

Use Measuring Cups and Food

Scales Train yourself to know what recommended serving sizes look like in your bowls and on your plates. This will help you to establish visual cues so that

you can better estimate servings without using measuring tools in the future.

Read Labels When looking at the Nutrition Facts on product labels, get in the habit of glancing at the serving size. Many times there may be 3 to 4 servings in an item that you thought was only one serving. This way, you will be more aware of the total calories, carbs, protein and fat you will ingest if you consume that item.

Plan Ahead The holiday season is filled with parties and gatherings where food and hors d'oeuvres are abundant. These situations readily lend themselves to overeating. Plan ahead by eating a small meal or snack before you arrive at the party. This will keep you full and prevent you from binging on the food provided.

Minimize the Alcohol It is important to remember that beverages, especially alcohol, have calories too. It can be a huge source of empty calories, meaning there is no nutritional value to what you are drinking. Alcohol also lowers your inhibitions against food and can contribute to an increase in eating as well.

Use a Smaller Plate When eating at home, use a smaller plate for your meals. Often times a salad plate is more conducive to accurate serving sizes than a dinner plate. Researchers have observed that the average size of

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a dinner plate in the 1950s was 9 inches across. By the 80's it had grown to 11 inches, and today the average dinner plate is a monstrous 13 inches across.

Don't Clean Your Plate Most of us were taught from an early age that it was wrong, and even punishable, to leave food on our plates. That mentality has got to stop. Your mother is no longer staring over your shoulder making sure you eat every last bite, so don't. Get comfortable with the idea that it is okay to leave some food on your plate. Eat until you are full, then stop.

Leave the Serving Bowls Avoid putting serving bowls or containers on the dinner table. Often times, people tend to overeat just because the food is there and easily accessible. Hunger plays no part in the equation. To avoid this, prepare your plate and then go to

a separate area to eat it. If you are still hungry when your plate is empty, wait at least 15 minutes before serving yourself a second helping.

Eat Only Half At restaurants, cut your entire meal in half. Eat half and send the rest of your plate back to the kitchen to be wrapped up. This way, you consume half the calories that you otherwise would have, and you will have lunch packed up for the next day.

Order Small When ordering anything at a restaurant, order from the small plates menu, tapas, appetizer or kid's menu. These portions are usually smaller and will keep you from overeating. Remember, you can always order more if needed.

Prepare Only What You Need When cooking, try to prepare only as much as is needed. Overcooking leads to

overeating. If you are trying to cook for a holiday gathering of 12 people, follow recipes or alter them to make only 12 servings.

Don't Eat While Distracted Mindless eating, whether you are distracted by television, the computer or reading material, can lead you to eat far more than usual. When your main focus is not on food, you can miss your body's cues that you are full, leading to overeating. If you're doing something like watching a movie and you decide to have a snack, pause the movie until you're done eating. | M |

Through her experiences as a PA, Chrissy became particularly aware of the obesity epidemic in America, and the health problems that accompany this disease. She was recruited by Dr. Vistnes to manage the SkinSpirit REBALANCE Metabolic Nutrition Program in Palo Alto, CA.



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