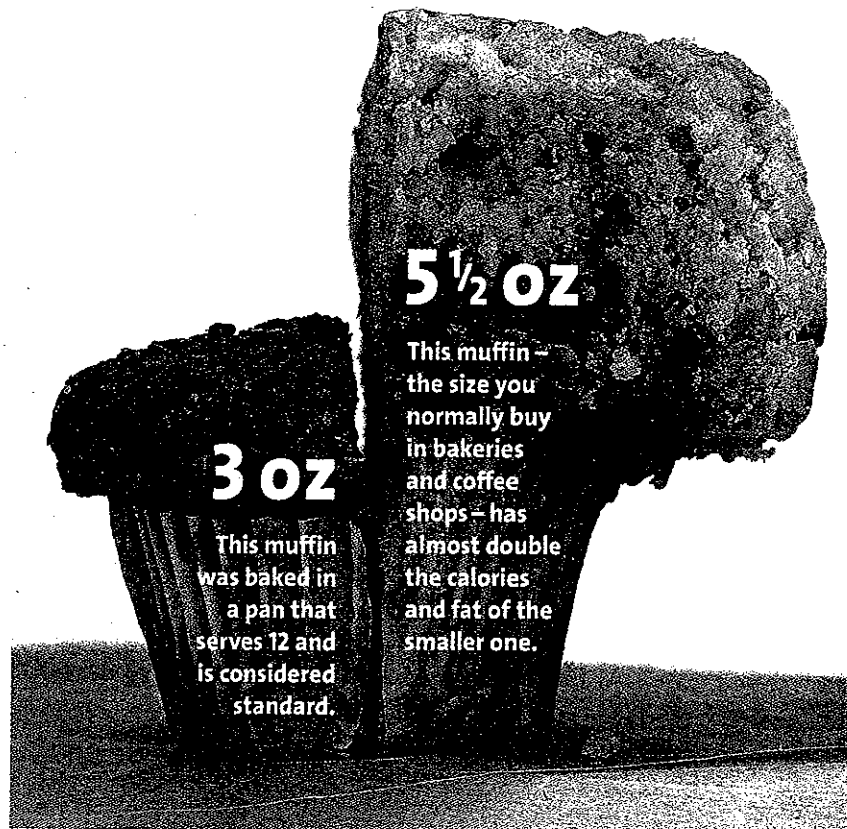


With bagels as big as bread-and-butter plates and french fries supersized, servings aren't what they used to be. Here's the upside of downsizing your portions.

BY LESLIE BECK



size matters

For most of us, New Year's resolutions include eating better and losing weight. But as the weeks pass, our commitment to those goals often wanes. Battling the bulge has become a national pastime – and considering obesity has reached epidemic levels in Canada, we're not faring too well on the fat front.

One of the factors underlying this health crisis is that our oversize appetites have become so used to eating larger portions, we've lost touch with what constitutes an appropriate serving size. Restaurants serve up gargantuan portions on larger plates. Fast-food chains pour oceanic drinks

and dish out more fries in bigger takeout containers than ever before while advertisements above the counter encourage us to supersize our already sizable selections.

Consider this: back in the 1950s, the average soft drink was six ounces. Today, a small soft drink can be double that size, or you can order a 64-ounce fountain soft drink that contains a staggering 65 teaspoons of sugar. Most supersized meals (including a burger, fries and a soft drink) will cost you roughly 1,500 calories and 65 grams of fat – an entire day's fat allowance for a healthy woman (based on a daily eating plan of 2,000 calories with 30 per cent fat). ▷

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sizing up servings



FOOD GROUP SINGLE SERVING

SERVING SIZE

Meat & alternatives *(Canada's Food Guide recommends 2 to 3 servings per day)*
 Meat/fish/poultry 3 oz (90 g)
 Beans/lentils 1/2 to 1 cup (125 to 250 mL)
 Tofu 3 oz (90 g)
 Peanut butter 2 tbsp (30 mL)

1 deck of cards / computer mouse
 1/2 to 1 baseball/lightbulb
 1 deck of cards / computer mouse
 1 golf ball

Grain products *(Canada's Food Guide recommends 6 to 12 servings per day)*
 Pasta/rice/hot cereal 1/2 cup (125 mL)
 Bagel 1 small

1/2 baseball/lightbulb
 1 hockey puck

Vegetables & fruit *(Canada's Food Guide recommends 5 to 10 servings per day)*
 Fruit 1 medium
 Salad greens 1 cup (250 mL)
 Vegetables 1/2 cup (125 mL)

1 tennis ball
 1 baseball/lightbulb
 1 baseball/lightbulb

Milk products *(Canada's Food Guide recommends 2 to 4 servings per day)*
 Milk 1 cup (250 mL)
 Cheese 1 1/2 oz (45 g)
 Yogurt 3/4 cup (175 mL)

1 serving of cheese = 3 dominos

1 small measuring cup
 3 dominos
 1 single-size container

Other foods *(Canada's Food Guide recommends 1 serving per day)*
 Butter/margarine/oil 1 tsp (5 mL)

Tip of your thumb

1 serving of meat = 1 computer mouse

1 serving of fruit = 1 tennis ball

Check out Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/food_guide_rainbow_e.html. Another good website is www.healthyontario.com.

It's becoming easier to buy king-size portions at the supermarket, too. Breakfast staples are a perfect example of how we're overeating today. According to Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating, a bagel should weigh two ounces (60 grams), which translates into two grain servings. But most bagels you buy are the equivalent of four to six grain servings. Big food

has become the norm. Loaves of bread, hamburger buns, muffins, premade patties and candy bars have all got bigger.

Portion distortion has also hit home. Without realizing it, you may be preparing more generous servings than your mother did a generation ago. For instance, although they call for the same amount of ingredients, the identical cookie >

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and dessert recipes in new editions of classic cookbooks specify fewer servings than they did in the old editions.

The good news is that we can put portion size back into perspective and learn to feel satisfied with a healthy amount of food. Cutting your daily intake by 500 calories will help you lose one pound per week. Here are six ways to pare down your portions.

Buy small packages of food. Bonus-size boxes of cookies, crackers and potato chips may be a good deal, but they encourage overeating. When you do shop in bulk, divide jumbo packages into individual servings.

Ask for smaller portions. If you sit down to a plate heaped with food, chances are you'll clear it. When dining out, split an entrée with a friend or order two appetizers instead of a main course. And don't be afraid to ask for a doggie bag: save your leftovers for lunch the next day. **Tip:** Follow the plate model to portion your meal. Imagine your plate sectioned into quarters. Fill one quarter with protein-rich foods like meat or fish, another with a whole grain starch, and the last two with veggies.

Use smaller plates. You'll serve less food on a luncheon-size plate – the plate looks full and you will be, too.

Add fruits and vegetables to meals. Low-cal, high-fibre fruits and vegetables add fibre and volume to meals, which increases your sense of fullness. Sprinkle sliced bananas, raisins and dried cranberries on breakfast cereal. Load up pizzas with fresh broccoli, tomatoes and red pepper.

Plate your snacks. Never snack out of the package. When you constantly reach into a bag of chips, you don't pay attention to portion size and end up eating far more than you should. Check the serving size on the nutrition label, then measure your portion and put it on a plate.

Slow down. Chew your food thoroughly and put your fork down after every bite. Put more emphasis on conversation and the social importance of the meal. Also, don't eat dinner while watching TV or reading a book: you tend to not pay attention to what you're consuming and eat a lot more. **H**

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- 50 mL (1/4 cup) margarine or butter
- 1 package (250 g, about 40) marshmallows
- 1.5 L (6 cups) *Kellogg's* Rice Krispies* cereal
- Decorating icing, icing sugar, food colouring

1. In a large microwave-safe bowl, melt margarine and marshmallows in a microwave set on HIGH for 2 minutes, stirring after 1 minute. Stir until mixture is smooth. To create different coloured *Kellogg's* Rice Krispies* hearts, add food colouring to melted marshmallows before adding cereal.
2. Add *Kellogg's* Rice Krispies* cereal, stirring until well coated. Spread cereal mixture into a 33 x 23 x 5 cm baking pan coated with cooking spray or butter. Allow cereal mixture to cool slightly. Cut into heart shapes using a heart-shaped cookie cutter or knife. Use icing to decorate, and sprinkle with icing sugar if desired.

Yield: about 12 hearts.

