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Portions Out of Control

The portions, servings, helpings, slices and amounts of what we eat have grown dramatically over the past two decades.

The bigger-is-better motto has taken over the food industry, in conjunction with mass marketing to convince us to buy bigger sizes in order to save money. Supermarkets and restaurants use the promise of better value as a way of pushing extra food onto customers.

- Pizza pies were 10 inches in diameter back in the 1970s. Today the average size for a pizza is between 16 and 18 inches!
- A Hershey chocolate bar weighed 0.6 ounces its first year on the market. The standard bar now weighs 1.6 ounces. That's almost three times its original weight!
- All of the most popular burger restaurants have increased the size of their hamburgers. The original Burger King burger weighed in at 3.9 ounces, and today a Double Whopper is 12.6 ounces. McDonald's original patty started out at 1.6 ounces, and now the Double Quarter Pounder is 8 ounces – that's five times more meat!
- Even diet food has grown in size. During the 1990s, Weight Watchers introduced their Smart Ones frozen meals with larger portion sizes. Lean Cuisine offered Hearty Portions, with 100 more calories than the original meal.
- Starbucks once offered the “short” cup of coffee at 8 ounces, but it is no longer on the menu. The smallest cup you can order is the “tall.” At 12 ounces, this cup is nearly twice the size of what was once considered a regular cup of coffee.
- When Hot Pockets advertised that they had added 10 percent more filling to their microwavable sandwiches while keeping the price the same, their sales increased by 32 percent.
- If you compare the new edition of the classic cookbook *The Joy of Cooking* to the original, you will find identical recipes for cookies and brownies, except that the new recipe makes fewer servings: for example, 16 brownies instead of 30. The modern portions are twice as large.

○ The Olive Garden restaurant chain offers the “Never-Ending Pasta Bowl,” with

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unlimited refills of pasta for only \$8.95.

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Portion Distortion

Bigger portions mean we eat more than we need. When a larger portion is placed in front of us, we tend to eat 30–50 percent more! Most often, we don't even realize that we are eating more.

- Women ate 31 percent more, and men ate 56 percent more when served a 12-inch sub sandwich instead of a 6-inch sandwich.
- When cooking, people poured 4.3 ounces of oil from a 32-ounce bottle, but only 3.5 ounces from a 16-ounce bottle.
- Moviegoers ate 61 percent more popcorn when given the larger container than they did with a small size.
- Snackers poured about twice as many M&Ms from a jumbo bag (103) than they did when given a smaller package (63).

Adapted from *The Portion Teller*, by Lisa R. Young.