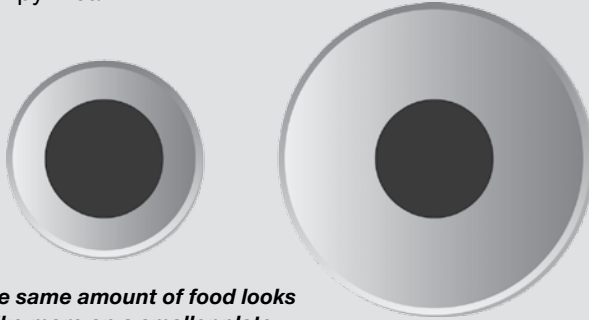CHAPTER THREE

HEALTHSTYLE

A Kinder, Gentler Way to Lose Weight and Keep It Off

10 Simple Ways to Eat Less Without Noticing

1. Use smaller plates

Regardless of the actual quantity of food, a full plate sends the signal that you're eating a full meal, and a partially empty plate looks like a skimpy meal.

The same amount of food looks like more on a smaller plate.

Using smaller plates and filling them up is a proven way to eat less without noticing.

2. Serve yourself 20 percent less

The mindless margin is about 20 percent of any given meal. In other words, you can eat 80 percent of the food you'd normally eat and probably not notice it as less, so long as no one points it out to you. You could also eat 20 percent more—not a bad idea if you're scooping vegetables. If you have those smaller plates mentioned above, serving yourself a little less should be just as satisfying.

3. Use taller glasses

Just as less food looks like more food on a smaller plate, height makes things look larger than width does, even when the volumes are the same. You can cut down on your liquid calories by choosing taller glasses rather than shorter, fatter ones.

4. Eat protein for breakfast

People love to hype eating breakfast as a miracle weight-loss cure, but only breakfasts high in protein have been proven to suppress appetite and reduce subsequent eating throughout the day. Skip the waffles and head to the omelet station instead.

5. Eat three meals a day

People often say that eating many small meals is better than eating three bigger ones throughout the day, but the data tell us otherwise. Though skipping meals can make controlling your appetite more difficult, eating more than three meals a day has not been shown to have any benefit and may even be worse for appetite control. Eat when you're supposed to and you shouldn't need any extra food.

6. Keep snacks out of sight or out of the building

Study after study has shown that people eat a lot more when food is visible rather than put away where it can't be seen, even if they know it is there. Research has also demonstrated that the harder food is to get to, even if the extra effort is just removing a lid or walking to the cabinet, the less likely you are to eat it. The extra work forces you to question the value of your action, and this gives you the opportunity to talk yourself out of a decision you may regret later.

To avoid extra snacking, keep tempting foods out of sight or, better yet, out of the house. On the flip side, keep healthy foods prominently displayed and easy to reach.

7. Chew thoroughly

Once you start paying more attention to eating speed, you may be horrified to observe that most people don't chew. If you're one of those who chew the minimum number of times before swallowing or shoveling in another forkful, chances are you're eating substantially more at every meal than your thoroughly chewing peers. Slow down, chew each bite (counting your chews can help develop the habit), and watch as you fill up faster on fewer calories.

8. Don't eat from the package

Your stomach can't count. When you can't see how much you're eating, you're more than a little likely to lose track and consume double or even triple the amount you'd eat if you took the time to serve yourself a proper portion. Use a plate, a bowl, or even a napkin. Just make sure you get a good visual of everything you're going to eat before taking your first bite.

9. Don't eat in front of the TV

For the vast majority of us, distracted eating is overeating. The end of a show or movie is another powerful cue signifying that a meal is over, so parking in front of the TV with your plate for a *Battlestar Galactica* marathon is probably not the best idea. With the invention of DVR, there's no reason you can't take thirty minutes to sit down and have a proper meal before enjoying your shows.

10. Don't pay attention to health claims

But wait, isn't healthy food supposed to be better for you? In theory, yes. But truly healthy food—vegetables, fruits, and other unprocessed foods—rarely have labels at all. Instead, foods with health claims tend to be processed junk repackaged as better-for-you alternatives.

Even worse, research from Wansink's lab has shown that people drastically underestimate the number of calories in foods with visible health claims on the packaging. People also tend to eat more food overall as a result of this miscalculation. He refers to this effect as the "health halo," and it's a recipe for packing on the pounds. For real health, stick to humble foods without labels.