

'Portion distortion'

By Nanci Hellmich, USA TODAY

Call it the supersizing of Americans. As portions have grown larger over the past 40 years, so have people in the USA, says Lisa Young, a nutrition researcher at New York University who has studied the trend she calls "portion creep."



Author Lisa Young analyzes portion sizes in her new book *The Portion Teller*.

By Luca Babini

Studies show that the more food put in front of people, the more they eat. And since the 1960s, the serving sizes of foods sold in stores and restaurants — from candy bars to burgers and sodas — have become much bigger, Young says.

This means that when given a cookie the size of a Frisbee or a bagel as big as a flotation device, people ramp up their calorie intake. "Americans have grown proportionally to increased portion sizes," Young says.

She has analyzed the increased serving sizes of different foods in her new book, *The Portion Teller: Smartsizes Your Way to Permanent Weight Loss* (Morgan Road Books, \$19.95).

Others agree with Young's premise. "Portion distortion is a major contributor to many expanding waistlines," the American Heart Association reports in its new book, *The No-Fad Diet* (Clarkson Potter, \$24.95)

About 65% of Americans are overweight or obese today, compared with 47% in the early 1970s and 45% in the early 1960s. Some of Young's examples of the perils of portion size:

- One cup of pasta has almost 200 calories, which used to be a typical restaurant serving. Now some restaurants serve three cups of pasta for an entree, racking up nearly 600 calories without sauce, she says.
- Bagels used to be 2 to 3 ounces, or about 200 calories. Today they're 5 to 6 ounces, which is more than 400 calories, depending on the type.

"People have no idea that a 5-ounce bagel is equal to five pieces of bread or 15 cups of popcorn," Young says.

For people who consume about 1,600 calories a day, a 5-ounce bagel would be the five servings of breads/grains that they should eat for the entire day, she says.

- A half-ounce cookie is about 50 or 60 calories, depending on the type. But some jumbo cookies are now 4 ounces, about the diameter of a CD, and pack in as many as 400 to 500 calories. "That means an oatmeal cookie is more like an oat meal," Young says.

Rather than cutting carbs, fats or proteins, Young says Americans should "smartsizes" their portions. She recommends using visual images to become aware of how much you're eating. For instance, a 3-ounce serving of meat is the size of your palm or a deck of cards.

Young says that once you get into the habit of monitoring your portions, it becomes second nature.

"Don't buy into the (idea) that what the restaurant is serving you is an appropriate amount of food to eat," Young says. It's possible that you're getting three to four servings of meat at one meal, she adds.

The heart association's *No-Fad Diet* book suggests cutting portion sizes by 25%. This technique is called "the 75% solution," and the heart association says it could be a way to cut 500 or more calories a day from your diet.

But there is no need to go hungry. You can increase the portions of some food, such as produce, says Keith Ayoob, an associate professor of pediatrics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York and co-author of the upcoming book *The Uncle Sam Diet* (St. Martin's Press, \$5.99), which is based on the new federal dietary guidelines.

You can eat lots of broccoli, green beans, deep-green lettuce, peppers, carrots, apple slices and strawberries without eating too many calories, Ayoob says. Most people do not eat enough fruits and vegetables to meet the dietary guidelines, he says.

Those bigger servings can pile on the calories


	Brand	Serving size	Calories	Serving size	Calories
Soft drink	Coca-Cola	8 fluid oz.	97	20 fluid oz.	243
French fries	McDonald's	Small, 2.6 oz.	230	Large, 6 oz.	520
Hamburger	Burger King	4.3 oz.	310	Double Whopper, 13.2 oz.	970
M&Ms	Mars Inc.	1.7 oz.	240	Megasize, 5.3 oz.	742
Coffee frappuccino	Starbucks	Tall, 12 fluid oz.	190	Venti, 24 fluid oz.	350
Ice cream (vanilla)	Häagen-Dazs	1 scoop, 1/2 cup	270	3 scoops, 1 1/2 cup	810
Frozen yogurt (96% fat-free)	TCBY	Kiddie cup, 2.75 oz.	110	Large cup, 11 oz.	450
Popcorn (popped in oil)	Movie theater	Small, 7 cups	400	Large, 20 cups	1160
Cinnamon bun	Cinnabon Inc.	3.3-oz. Minibon	339	7.8-oz. Cinnabon	813

Source: USA TODAY research and *The Portion Teller: Smartsizes Your Way to Permanent Weight Loss*

▪ [REPRINTS & PERMISSIONS](#)

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2005-06-21-portion-usat_x.htm

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.