

Set Your Table for Skinny!

Sure, what you put on your plate is important — but new research reveals that what you put on the *table* may be the real key to diet success. Here, seven ways to cut down on calories before you even take a bite

1. Try the Blue-Plate Special

Of all the colors in the spectrum, blue is the most effective appetite suppressant, says Jill Morton, color researcher and author of the *Color Voodoo* e-book series. Blue foods are a rare occurrence in nature, and the color doesn't automatically stimulate the neurons in the part of our brain that triggers appetite, she says. To curb your hunger, eat on blue plates or use a blue lightbulb in the dining room.

2. Think: Small Is Beautiful

Using salad plates for main courses is a surefire way to reduce your calorie intake, says Brian Wansink, Ph.D., author of *Mindless Eating*. His studies show that you serve yourself less when you eat off a 10-inch plate instead of a 12-inch one. Regular-size portions look undersized on standard dinner plates, so they inspire extra helpings, but smaller plates make the servings seem like just the right amount of food.

3. Skimp on the Sides

The more sides you serve, the more likely you are to pile on the pounds, says a report from Pennsylvania State University. When you put several options on the table — like potatoes, bread and rice — you'll consume 23 percent more calories. That's because we are enticed by each new flavor, which spurs us to try bits of each item, according to Barbara Rolls, Ph.D., author of *The Volumetrics Eating Plan*. And that adds up to a lot more calories than if you just had one side dish to sample.

4. Grab a Tall One

Pour your drink into a tall, narrow glass and you'll sip much less than if you used a short,

wide one — but you'll think you're drinking the same amount, report Cornell University researchers. This perception is due to a visual trick called vertical-horizontal illusion. People have a natural tendency to register volume by focusing on heights instead of widths, explains Wansink.

5. Break Out the Good China

Setting a lovely table makes you want to linger at meals, and this encourages you to savor your food, so you eat more slowly, says Lisa Young, Ph.D., author of *The Portion Teller Plan*. The slowdown gives your brain more time to recognize that you are full. Result? You put less food in your mouth.

6. Do a Little Spooning

Use the teaspoons (rather than the bigger tablespoons) in your utensil set, and you'll consume less. In a Cornell study, diners who used larger utensils ate 57 percent more. Our eyes have trouble gauging proper portion sizes when we use large utensils, explains Wansink. These bigger items make our food look smaller, so we serve ourselves more, he says.

7. Go Undercover

Columbia University researchers found that people chow down less when the serving dishes on the table are covered. "It's like 'out of sight, out of mind' when food is in front of us. We eat more because we're seeing and thinking about the food more," explains Wansink. Forgo open containers for lidded ones, or keep serving dishes in the kitchen during mealtime.

>q&s tip

Dining by candlelight can cut calories! The lighting causes you to linger over dinner, according to a Cornell study, and that encourages you to appreciate each bite — and thus consume less!

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