

'Tis the season to be SNACKING

Watch
your
Christmas
nibbles
to keep
weight gain
at bay,
writes
**Leah
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This time of year brings lots of work functions and social get-togethers, where the food and drinks will be flowing. But if you are not careful, all those tempting morsels of chips, dips and finger food can add up to a whole lot of calories.

It is sensible to come up with a game plan so you don't binge out, but don't be fooled into thinking that a clever way to keep your intake down is to starve all day until the party. Amanda Clark, dietitian and author of *Portion Perfection*, said restriction would probably achieve the exact opposite.

"This technique is likely to result in overconsumption, whether the food is good or not. Eat normally up until the party, then you'll feel in control and can be more discerning about what you eat."

Good strategies include standing away from the bowls of food to avoid mindless munching, and if there is finger food being offered around, don't accept just because it is there. She also recommended against chewing and swallowing quickly while in mid-conversation.

Health and the City author Caitlin Reid said bite-sized portions and snacks served in different-sized bowls could mean we might not be able to judge exactly how much was being eaten. She suggested serving food on just one plate to avoid constant nibbling and overeating, and if it was a function with a buffet, she said to fill the plate with just three different foods.

Studies show that we rely heavily on visual clues to estimate food intake. Researchers at the University of Illinois studied 54 people, some of whom had their soup bowls filled just once, and others who had their bowl refilled, to see how portion-size clues could influence the amount eaten and in judging fullness afterwards.

It was found that those whose bowls were re-filled, not only ate 73 per cent more, they also did not believe they had consumed more and did not report feeling any fuller than participants eating from the other bowls. The researchers said it appeared that people count calories with their eyes and not their stomachs.



Make smarter Christmas nibbles choices

Swap this:

- 2 small pieces coconut ice (200 cal) for 24 juicy fresh cherries (100 cal)
- 1 fruit mince tart (208 cal) for 1 mini raspberry friand (122 cal)
- 1 shortbread biscuit (213 cal) for 4 biscotti (88 cal)
- 5 Jatz crackers (100 cal) for 5 carrot sticks (15 cal)
- A handful of chips (110 cal) for baked pita crisps 20g (60 cal)
- 200ml punch (100 cal) for sparkling mineral water (0 cal)
- French onion dip, 1tbsp (50 cal) for salsa, 1 tbsp (8 cal)
- 2 deep-fried mini spring rolls (100 cal) for 2 Vietnamese rice paper rolls (3 cal)
- 30g brie on each of 3 Jatz crackers (360 cal) for 30g camembert spread between 3 wholegrain rice crackers (114 cal)

COURTESY OF AMANDA CLARK. AUTHOR OF PORTION PERFECTION