
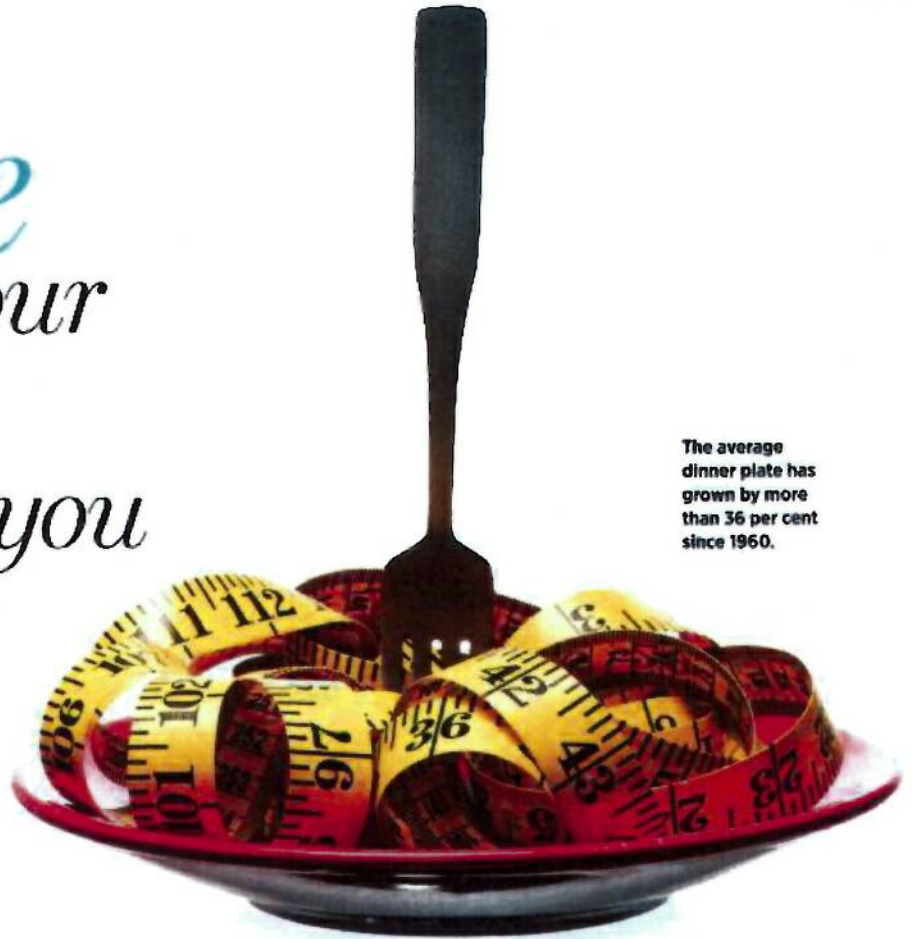




Nutrition 

# Is the size of your plate making you fat?

Welcome to the supersized world, writes **Sue Williams**, where plates and portion size - and our waistlines - grow.



The average dinner plate has grown by more than 36 per cent since 1960.

**F**ANCY A BISCUIT? And how about a coffee to go with it? Twenty years ago, that would have meant a biscuit you could have fitted whole - at a squeeze - into your mouth. Today, it's the size of your hand and with about 10 times the calories.

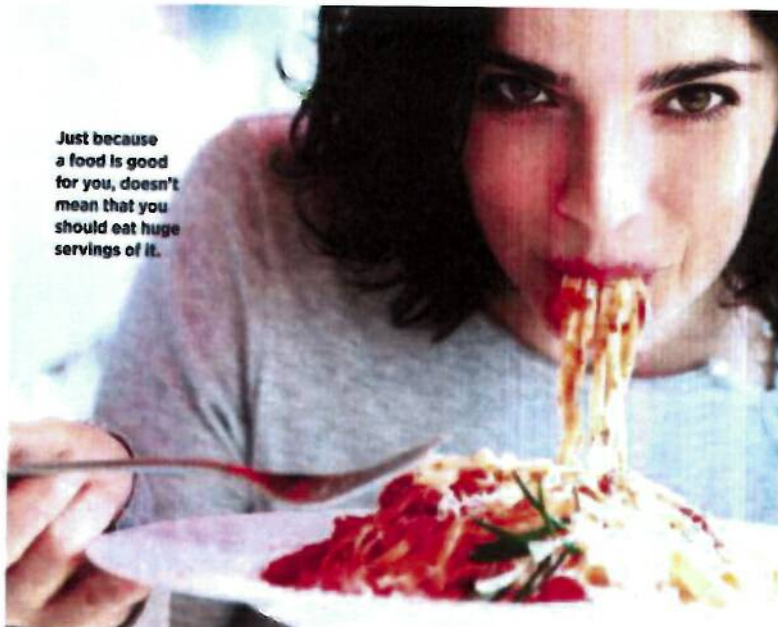
The coffee hardly washes that down comfortably, either. In 1991, it was made with water and served in a 200ml cup. Even with milk and two sugars, it had only about 400 kilojoules. Now, we buy a 470ml full-cream milk-based coffee, with more than 2000kJ.

Is it really any wonder that we're overweight? "Food portion sizes have increased significantly over the past 20 years, along with obesity," says >

## SUPERSIZE ME!

How our portions have grown in the past 20 years

| PRODUCT                 | 20 YEARS AGO                                             | TODAY                                                                             |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Flavoured milk          | A carton was 300ml and contained 924 kJ.                 | It's 500ml-600ml and has 1848kJ.                                                  |
| Chocolate bar           | Were sold as a small bar, weighing 20g, with 420kJ.      | Chunky king-sized versions weigh approximately 78g and have approximately 1718kJ. |
| Potato chips            | A pack weighed 30g and had 630kJ.                        | Packs are 50g and 100g, and have 1050kJ-2100kJ.                                   |
| Chocolate chip biscuits | Had a diameter of around 7cm, weighed 12g and had 210kJ. | They're 12cm-13cm in diameter, are much thicker, weigh 120g and have 2100kJ.      |
| Soft drink              | They were sold in 390ml bottles and contained 672kJ.     | They're in 600ml bottles and contain 1029kJ.                                      |



**Just because a food is good for you, doesn't mean that you should eat huge servings of it.**

dietitian Amanda Clark, author of the books *Portion Perfection* and *Portion Perfection Healthy Snack Bible*. "It's happened slowly, so we just haven't noticed how much they've crept up. We didn't realise we were eating so much more."

In the US, the average daily dietary intake has increased by 2520kJ (600 calories) - from 9122kJ (2172cal) to 11,655kJ (2775cal) to - over the past 37 years. Australians are not so far behind, with recent national intake surveys finding that our kids are now eating more than 840kJ (200cal) extra a day than they did 20 years ago. That

could mean a 10 kilogram gain in body weight in just one year.

The reasons are various. The average dinner plate has grown by more than 36 per cent since 1960. And portions in restaurants and fast-food outlets, where we eat much more regularly, have, in some cases, been supersized to more than double. In addition, food is now generally sold in much bigger packs and bottles, which consumers embrace because they think they're more of a bargain. In turn, food producers like to see us buy more, so it becomes a habit.

"It also has a lot to do with advertising and the images we see all the time of >

## HOW CAN WE DOWNSIZE?

- 1 Use small plates to serve meals and smaller glasses for drinks. Research shows we often feel much fuller more quickly as a result.
- 2 Use portion-marked bowls and plates or plastic moulds you can use to work out the size of appropriate servings.
- 3 Order entree-sized servings in restaurants and never feel obliged to finish everything on your plate.
- 4 Ask for a doggy bag to eat the rest the following day.
- 5 Buy the smallest sizes in packs, jars and bottles of food and drink.

- 6 Eat slowly, think about what you're eating, savour the flavours and concentrate on your food rather than eating in front of the TV when it's easy to lose track of how much you've had.
- 7 Never have seconds, it's so easy to get into the habit of going back for more.
- 8 Look at your plate and then look at your stomach. Think about how much food you really need to fill your stomach - it's much less than most people think.
- 9 Learn appropriate sizes for each food group. For example, you should be able to fit the protein you eat into the palm of one hand and vegetables or salads should make up half the total meal.
- 10 Share a meal with a friend as this will probably halve your portion.

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**Biscuits have become almost twice the size they were just 20 years ago.**

food," says nutritionist and naturopath Tania Flack. "We're presented with pictures of Brontosaurus-sized steaks that would be enough to feed three, but they're for one person. TV commercials show a massive Sunday roast, but just think back to the size of the kind of meals our grandparents served up – there's no comparison."

Back when all our energies were taken up with survival, food was available only at certain times, for instance when an animal was killed once every few days, clinical psychologist Sarah Edelman points out. Yet now we eat like it's our last meal, three times a day. "We're designed and wired to look for food, and we haven't made that evolutionary adjustment," she says. "Food is also now very much part of our social life and culture, and it's comforting to eat and it can reduce anxiety."

We're also far more confused about what a healthy diet involves, says Amanda Clark. Often, we think that we can eat endless quantities of the good stuff, not realising that's still too much. Plus, adds Tania Flack, people usually kid themselves they're being healthy by simply adding a small salad to a giant burger. "Instead, they should be adding a small burger to a big salad," she says. "That's the long-term solution." ■

**"NOW WE EAT  
LIKE IT'S OUR  
LAST MEAL."**

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