

Eating Competence in Action: Season's Eatings

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Does your holiday season bring constant and often losing battles with food temptation? If you get caught in this struggle, you are likely to feel bad if you give in and eat and feel bad if you miss out on luscious food! It need not be so. Learn to trust that you will get enough of even delicious food.

Holidays let us celebrate good food

The holidays bring visions of tables full of food: Tasty and delicious, warm and savory, bountiful and rich, sweet and so appealing! Cooks and chefs pull out all the stops to make the most wonderfully scrumptious food. With all of these warm-fuzzy adjectives, why is anyone worried or concerned about holiday eating? But wait! Are you afraid you will eat more when food is plentiful and delicious? Understanding and applying the Satter Eating Competence Model (ecSatter) teaches us that it is safe and even *better* to trust and work with your hunger and appetite rather than fighting against them.

Trusting your internal regulators will save the day

- Begin by giving yourself permission to eat any and all foods. Permission to eat, strangely enough, gives you permission to stop.
- Try your best to be hungry when you start the meal. This is hard to do when you spend extra time in the kitchen "taste-testing" and when there are lots of foods sitting around. If it is possible to avoid eating until it is mealtime, do it. When you begin eating hungry, food tastes better and it is easier to tell when you are satisfied.
- Pay attention to your appetite - to how good the food tastes. It will tell you clearly which foods you want to eat and which you don't. To feel satisfied, you need to eat foods you enjoy.
- Structure helps. This is without a doubt where the holiday style of eating derails many folks by making delicious food available at all times. Try to maintain your usual predictable schedule of meals and snacks.
- Set things up so you can pay attention to your delicious food. Easily-grabbed food squanders your eating because you won't be paying attention.
- Reassure yourself that there is plenty to eat. There is no need to eat more than you want now because there will be more tasty food when it's time to eat again.
- Don't dump on yourself for eating more than usual. If you let it be, your body will regulate naturally by using more energy and by requiring less food on subsequent days.



Have delicious food all year long

Becoming a Competent Eater will let you have delicious food, without overeating, all year long. Foods that are no longer forbidden become ordinary foods that can be consumed in ordinary ways. Large portion sizes become less appealing in the context of regular and reliable meals and snacks featuring adequate amounts of rewarding food. “Healthy” foods become enjoyable rather than dreary foods that must be eaten.

References

1. Serdula MK, Mokdad AH, Williamson DF, Galuska DA, Mendlein JM, Heath GW. Prevalence of attempting weight loss and strategies for controlling weight. JAMA. 1999;282:1353-1358.

Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family

Ellyn Satter tells you how you can be a Competent Eater, that is relaxed and positive about your eating, on holidays and all year round. Read *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family*.



