

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Treat Yourself to Some New Plates

Don't wait for Santa to bring you a gift. Invest in a set of new plates now. Your wise choice before the holiday eating begins could save you a bunch of extra pounds come the New Year. How's that for a good reason to go shopping?! Even if you simply buy colorful paper plates, they could make a difference. Here's what you want to look for at the thrift shop or paper goods aisle of the grocery.

First, be sure you get plates that are only 9 inches across. Most dinner plates and a lot of paper plates these days are 10, 11 or as much as 12 inches in diameter. The more space there is, the more food we're going to put on it. And the more food we have in front of us, the more we will end up eating. It's not our stomach that tells the brain we need to keep eating, it's our eyes. Our stomach will get around to saying 'Enough all ready', but that will take 15 to 20 minutes after we've eaten as much as we need. In the meantime, those eyes are still seeing food on the plate, and we're still eating. So smaller plates will help to limit the amount the eyes see and the mouth eats.

Now back to those new plates. You want to get at least one different color of plate than what you have now. If you can get several colors, all the better. The reason for different colors comes from new research from Cornell University. The researchers there found that when we eat from plates that match the color of the food, we eat a lot more. It seems that when our eyes can't easily distinguish between the food and the plate the size of the portion we have doesn't register.

For example, if you eat spaghetti with tomato sauce from a red plate you're likely to eat several hundred calories more of it than if you were served the same spaghetti on a white or yellow plate. By seeing more easily the amount of food we have, we do a better job of limiting how much we eat. When the food blends into the plate color, we eat more because we can't see the amount as easily.

Think about what you usually eat, especially what you often eat more than you know you should. What color is the food? Get plates that contrast with that color. That way your eyes can help your diet instead of contradicting it.

While you're looking at the plates on your shelves, take a look at the glasses too. The same researchers at Cornell have found that when we use short, wide glasses we almost always give ourselves more than we think we do. But if we use tall, thin glasses we usually get less than what we think. Actually they did the research with bartenders. Their job demands that they know how much they're giving people when they're pouring drinks. But even these 'experts', who practice pouring drinks for a living, were wrong most of the time when they used short wide glasses.

If your juice or soda glasses are the usual short and wide shapes, maybe investing in a few new tall thin glasses could help you cut back a little on the sugary drinks. We adults only need one 6 to 8 oz glass of 100% fruit juice a day. Children only need half a cup, 4 oz a day to get their vitamin C needs taken care of. More than that is more sugar and no extra vitamin value for us.

Here's one other plate-ful hint for the holidays or the football season. If you or your family likes to munch on nuts, buy nuts with the shells on. AND, put out a small bowl to hold the shells. If we allow the nut shells, or crab claws or rib bones, to pile up

on the table so that we can see how much we are eating, we unconsciously do a better job of managing how much we eat. But if the shells, claws or bones are removed quickly, we just keep on eating.

Visual reminders and aids are an easy way to jog our unconscious brain into working with us, not against us. Get some new plates and glasses!

Here's another way to cut some calories from a holiday tradition. All the fat and a lot of starch are in the crust of pies. So skip the fat and make a crust-less pumpkin pie.

Pumpkin Pie without the crust

2 large eggs	1 16-oz can pumpkin (not pie filling)
1 cup fat-free evaporated milk	2/3 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup flour	2 tsp pumpkin pie spice
1/4 tsp salt optional	1/4 cup raisins optional

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 9 inch pie plate with cooking spray. Beat eggs in large bowl. Add rest of ingredients and mix well. Pour into sprayed pie plate. Bake 45 min or until knife inserted into center of pie comes out clean. Cool on wire rack 10 min before serving. Refrigerate any leftovers. Serves 8.