

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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If you're trying to lose or manage your weight, sit someplace else to eat! That could be the summary of some recent interesting research from the University of Southern California. While they were looking at what and how we eat, these researchers were not dietitians or even physicians. These folks are psychologists, and they were just looking at how much we eat, when we stop eating and how much our environment has to do with what we eat. They were looking at our bad habits and what we can do to break them.

What they found was this. When we eat a familiar food in a familiar place, we tend to keep on eating. When we eat that food in a place we don't usually eat, we tend to eat less. And when we eat it in a different place, we tend to be pickier about how it tastes.

They used popcorn, nice and simple. Where do we often eat popcorn? At the movies, right? So they gave people going into a movie theater buckets of popcorn. They could eat as much as they wanted, all the researchers wanted was the leftovers. But first, they asked them if they usually ate popcorn at the movies. The trick was that half the popcorn was fresh, the other half of the buckets held stale popcorn. Ugh.

The results were very interesting. The people who usually ate popcorn at the movies chowed down on their popcorn, whether it was fresh or stale. It appears that just by being in a place where they usually ate popcorn allowed them to keep on eating no matter how badly it tasted. But the people who didn't usually eat popcorn at the

movies were much pickier. If the popcorn wasn't fresh, they ate very little of it! For these people, the theater didn't bring out a bad habit of eating, so they could stop more easily.

The next part of the study also showed how much habits, rather than taste, control what we eat. Now they invited the movie-goers to watch a movie in a meeting room instead of a theater. They used the same kinds of popcorn, fresh or stale. But the results were very different!

Eating in a meeting room, instead of the same familiar theater seats, didn't bring out the same bad habits. The chairs were different, the sound was different. And now, even the people who usually ate popcorn at the movies could pay attention to how the popcorn tasted. In this different setting, no one liked the stale popcorn. Everyone ate less of it!

But how can we eat someplace else than the usual table at home? What can we do to change our eating habits there? The third part of the popcorn study tried another trick to help us. Same popcorn, same theater, but now the participants had to eat with the other hand. If they usually ate with their right, they had to eat with their left hand. This time the usual popcorn eaters ate even less of their treat when it was stale. Forcing them to think more about what they were eating made it even easier to stop eating the stale popcorn.

So, what does it mean for us? If you can identify a bad eating habit you have, look for a way to change where you usually eat. Or eat with your other hand every time you're in the same situation. Willpower alone is not enough, but tricks are legal when it comes to your health. Look for ways to trick your brain by changing where, or when or

how you usually eat. If we can change some parts of a bad habit, it's much easier to break the habit completely. That can be enough to get us over the hump of weight-loss plateau and onto the next big downhill slide. It'll be so much easier to slide!

Here's a good-tasting way to perk up your next pasta meal with a lot fewer calories. Serve with grilled chicken and iced tea. Enjoy!

Three Colored Pasta

1 medium yellow squash	2 cups broccoli florets
1 large red sweet pepper	8 oz whole wheat fusilli or penne pasta
1 lemon, juiced and zested	1 Tbsp olive oil
½ cup pitted black olives	½ cup chopped fresh basil leaves
¾ cup packaged grated Parmesan cheese	

Cut squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out the seeds, then cut in crosswise strips about ½ inch thick. Cut pepper into thin strips. Cook pasta according to directions on box. When 5 minutes remain before finishing cooking, add the pepper strips to the boiling water. Add the squash and broccoli when 2 minutes remain. When pasta is done drain all and place in large bowl. Whisk the juice and zest from the lemon with the olive oil. Add the oil mixture, olives, basil and cheese to the pasta and vegetables and toss gently. Season with salt and pepper if desired. Serves 4.