



Search

53°

FOLLOW US

Sign Up for Newsletters

Buy Tickets Your Home More

LOGIN REGISTER

- Home
- News
- Sports
- Health
- Best Of
- Events
- Heard On
- Traffic
- Weather
- Places
- Travel
- Deals
- Auto
- Circulars
- Latest News
- CBS Top Headlines
- Politics
- CBS MoneyWatch
- CNET Tech
- Business
- Entertainment
- Health
- National
- Galleries

NEWS

Hefty Holidays: American Indulgence In The Face Of A National Obesity Epidemic

By Candice Leigh Helfand

November 21, 2013 10:06 AM

Like 10 | 13 | 2 | [View Comments](#)



File photo of a display of holiday cookies. (Photo by Sean Gallup/Getty Images)

ATLANTA (CBS Atlanta) - In one week, families across the nation will gather for Thanksgiving – a celebration whose historical significance is overshadowed by the [food](#) that is customarily served and shared throughout the day.

After the fourth Thursday of every November, the holiday season begins, a time marked as much by the scramble for gifts as it is by increased food consumption. It's a spell that remains unbroken until the time comes for making New Year's resolutions.

CBS Atlanta



DEAL OF THE DAY
38% off at Trademark Global

[See Details](#)

[See more Deals for CBS Atlanta](#)

Get CBS Atlanta Deal Alerts by email

Enter email address here

Filed Under

[News](#)

Related Tags

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [christmas](#), [diet](#), [Hanukkah](#), [Health](#), [Holiday Meal](#), [Holiday Season](#), [holidays](#), [KWANZAA](#), [Obesity](#), [thanksgiving](#)

Ours is a society that embraces indulgence in general, but we especially do so around this time of year. However, ours is also a nation with critical, widespread health issues, many of which stem from obesity.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, an estimated 35.7 percent of adults and 17 percent of children between the ages of 2 and 19 are considered obese.

"During the past 20 years, there has been a dramatic increase in obesity in the United States and rates remain high," researchers additionally noted on the [official CDC website](#).

More people are becoming aware of the dangers inherent in being overweight and obese. a recent [Pew Research Center](#) study shows 69 percent of Americans view obesity as a significant public health problem in the U.S. Yet the holidays remain a time of accepted gluttony.

Will our acknowledgement of our weight and health issues as a country ever lead to a shift in our societal attitudes toward holiday [eating](#)? It isn't likely, according to the experts.

SEND US YOUR PHOTOS



In fact, Dr. Jim Painter, a renowned educator and speaker in the field of food psychology who produced the documentary "Portion Size Me," responded to the notion with a "resounding no."

"We don't [eat](#) because of knowledge," he said to CBS Atlanta. "We eat because we like it."

Others agreed, including Wilhelm Hoffman, an assistant professor of Behavioral Science at the Booth School of Business of the University of Chicago who studies consumer health and habits.

He noted, "Without real changes in the social norms towards eating (towards which education is a first but incomplete step), real large-scale change is unlikely even though individuals may succeed in curbing their intake of high-caloric, unhealthy foods through extra efforts."

Though a study published in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) asserts that holiday weight gain tends to stay below two pounds for the average person, the unhealthy consumption habits that many fall into around this time of year could have serious consequences if not kept in control.

Despite the risks, many seem unable to resist the edible temptations that come with celebrations. In addition to attempting to turn the tide, the phenomenon also raises the question of what is it that compels people to eat as they do during the holidays.

Kelly Morrow, a core faculty member in Bastyr University's Department of Nutrition and Exercise Science and a clinical supervisor at Bastyr Center for Natural Health, noted that "most major religious and cultural events usually involve some kind of food."

"Holidays and food are very much intertwined in all cultures around the world," she told CBS Atlanta. "Food has, for as long as people have been around, been involved in celebrations. It's a central aspect of celebration."

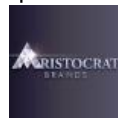
Painter agreed, and additionally emphasized the connection between nostalgia and food.

"[I]t is true that food is a social thing, it is in every culture I've studied," he said. "Food is a cultural thing. We [eat] when we socialize. And the things that we ate as children are embedded in us very deeply. They give us comfort and pleasure."

He added, "Even if it's not a religious holiday, when groups of people have an event, whatever it is, there's food involved. Because the



Sponsored Links



ASCC Top Stock Pick

Investors Fired Up About Rapid Industry Growth-- Learn More! www.LuxuriaBrands.com



Check ANYONE in Daytona Beach

Did you know that your record is Public? Search Anyone Instantly! www.instantcheckmate.com



FTTN Strikes Oil

Are You In on This Incredible Growth Opportunity? Invest Today! www.FirstTitanEnergy.com

Buy a link here

holidays innately have people getting together ... food is very important."

Morrow also observed that, in American society especially, Christmas itself heralds "a time of excess," between the abundance of food and rampant consumerism that have come to define the religious holiday for some.

In a nation with a growing weight problem and a nearly toxic relationship with food – sparked by a mix of fascination with food and frustration born from self-imposed avoidance of certain edibles – how can one find balance?

Morrow suggested that planning ahead could go a long way, both in regards to how a person eats before a social holiday gathering, and how one behaves during one.

"[People] eat because they see food. They might not have even been hungry, but if they have food in their visual field, then they will want to eat it," she said, adding that simply removing oneself from areas of temptation such as cookie trays or buffet tables could go a long way in curbing unnecessary eating.

In regards to altering habits during meals, Painter differentiated between the concepts of "knowledge" and "awareness," noting that focusing on the latter might have more of an impact on a person's lifestyle. He then mentioned the notions of writing down everything that is eaten, making recipe substitutions and utilizing "smaller everything" – from plates and bowls to drinking glasses – in order to curb the amount of calories people take in during the holidays.

"Don't tell people to eat less, it doesn't work. We need to focus on keeping track of what you eat. Write stuff down. It helps you, and can be phenomenally effective during the holidays," he added. "When you feel restricted, you rebel and you want more. [That is why] restriction doesn't work. You'll crave it and go back to it."

Hoffman, meanwhile, touched upon the idea of altering norms when it comes to the types of foods served during celebrations.

"[F]or as long as too many people at once believe that the way we eat is 'the way it's supposed to be' ... we will keep propagating an unhealthy lifestyle and keep passing it on from generation to generation," he said to CBS Atlanta, stressing that availability also plays a part. "[T]he easiest and probably most successful way of changing unhealthy lifestyles is by creating everyday environments that make healthy foods more available and cheaper and unhealthy foods less available and more expensive."

On a larger scale, Hoffman asserted that a perfect storm of sorts is what America requires for true, lasting and wide-spread changes to take effect. In his opinion, "It is a combination of motivational aspects ... ability ... and creating the right environmental conditions" that is needed for such shifts to occur on a societal level.

Sponsored



FBI Uses The Pimsleur Language Method?



New White House scandal could crash the markets



Do THIS before eating carbs (every time!)

Like 10 13 2 View Comments

FROM AROUND THE WEB

6 Snacks that pass the backpack test (SheKnows.com)

The Surprising Truth About the Paleo Diet (Cooking Channel)

10 Foods That are Much Healthier Than You Think (Food Network)

Wakeboard Fail With Babes! (Ep. 4) - Fiesta Movement (Fiesta Movement)

Top 15 Slow-Cooker Recipes of All Time (Food.com)

What 100 Calories of Alcohol Really Looks Like (Shape Magazine)

WE RECOMMEND

Woman's Ear Turns Black And Dissolves After Poisonous Spider Bite

Game Day Coverage On CW69

Mechanic Invents Tool To Aid In Vaginal Delivery

Congrats To Coach Brewer On Picking Up 200th Win

Emory University Offers Counseling Service To Expectant Mothers

Study: Hookah, E-Cigarette Smoking On The Rise With Teens

Recommended by

TODAY'S CIRCULARS

JCPenney: 40-50% Off Arizona Juniors' Apparel

PetSmart USA: PetSmart Celebrate The Season 2013 Gift Guide

Guitar Center: Find The Right Guitar For A Better Price

Dell US: Gifts to Touch Everyone on Your List.

1 comment



Join the discussion...

Newest Community

Share Settings



Socialism is Organized Evil · 12 hours ago

Run-of-the-mill collectivists routinely attempt to confuse roads and fire departments with collectivism by referring to them as "socialism".

Reply · Share

Subscribe

Add Disqus to your site

blog comments powered by Disqus



Tailgate Fan Tailgates With Falcons Fans



The New Weekly NASCAR Power Rankings Are Out!



Pet-A-Palooza 2013 At Piedmont Park



92-9 The Game Play By Play



OTHER CBS LOCAL CITIES



©2013 CBS Local Media, a division of CBS Radio Inc. All rights reserved.

News CBS Top Headlines Politics CBS MoneyWatch Entertainment CNET Tech Galleries

Sports Braves Hawks Falcons STATS MLB NFL NBA NHL

Best Of Arts & Culture Shopping & Style Food & Drink Nightlife & Music Family & Pets Travel

Other Links & Numbers Contests & Promotions Traffic Weather

Contact Us CW69 WAOK-AM 92-9 The Game

Corporate About Us Advertise Connect With Us Mobile Contact Us Business Development WAOK General Contest Rules 92.9 The Game General Contest Rules

[Atlanta Business Listings](#) Restaurants Bars & Clubs Shopping Professional Services

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [EEO Report](#) | [WAOK General Contest Rules](#) | [Deals](#) | [Ad Choices](#)
Powered by WordPress.com VIP