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**No Finger Foods**

**By Caryl Ehrlich**

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If you're really convinced that you're hungry, it's time to eat. This means food on a plate to be eaten with utensils (knife, fork, spoon, chopsticks), not fingers. What a radical thought.

When I was losing weight, a friend called me at work: "Did you have lunch?" Franklin asked.

"No. I just grabbed a hot dog on the corner," I said.

To me, the words just, grabbed, and on the corner" meant it didn't count because, a) it was only a hot dog, a small amount of food, b) I could hold it in my hands, so it was too insignificant to count, and, c) it was eaten on the corner with fresh air and sunshine. How could it be bad?

I thought that eating food sold on a street corner wasn't really a meal. It was . . . well, that's the point. It didn't fit any category. So I ended up having a second lunch with my friend.

Another friend and I were walking down First Avenue in Manhattan around 5 p.m. as Paula spied Ray's Pizza. She said: "Let's have a slice." Knowing it was a visual stimulus that had pushed her salivating button, I asked: "Are you hungry?"

"Oh yes," she replied. "I'm starving."

"Okay" I said. "Then let's have a slice of pizza which we can eat with a knife and fork, and order a salad, too. It'll be dinner."

"I'm not that hungry," she said. What she really wanted was to have a slice of pizza and eat dinner, too.

How frequently do you eat finger food and think it didn't somehow count?

## No Finger Foods

When I talk about putting food on a plate and eating it with a knife and fork, I mean committing to the structure of a meal.

If you eat slowly and thoughtfully, cutting, spearing, chewing, sipping, and swallowing, you are present at mealtime. You experience the feelings of satiation and enjoyment. The meal registers. Then, an hour or two later, if you're thinking of eating again because you see or smell something tempting, you know you couldn't possibly be hungry. You just had this terrific breakfast, lunch, or dinner two hours ago. You remember it.

When eating finger foods, the reverse happens. Even a few minutes after consuming a finger food you think: "I can eat again because I didn't really eat. I only had a bagel chip, some black coffee, one rice cake, a low-fat pretzel, and a carrot stick. It was nothing. It doesn't really count towards my daily food consumption because it was so small, or so low in calories, or so insignificant. It couldn't possibly count."

By rushing through the eating experience, by shoving food into your mouth, by not savoring your food, you numbly fill up your body, without satisfying it.

One cracker may contain only 11 calories. That's not the point. The question is: How many crackers are in the box and how many boxes have you knocked off already and it's only Tuesday in the middle of February, May, September, or whenever?

An apple a day becomes bushels at the end of the year. Do you eat bread so often you could count it in loaves? How much of your food enters your mouth without your seeing it so you think none of it counts? It all adds up.

How often do you mindlessly put your fingers into a box, bag, or basket of something and put the contents into your mouth without thinking about it? Do you wonder every morning why the scale remains where it was the day before, or, more depressingly, goes up?

Are sandwiches, bagels, muffins, and hors d'oeuvres at parties a part of your life? Is a bag of popcorn your appetizer? Are nachos a main course? How many chicken wings make a meal? Hard to count. Hard to know.

Now think: Are you hungry enough to commit to a real meal with food on a plate to be eaten with a knife and fork? Or are you not that hungry?

\* \* \* \* \*

"I finally understand about food on a plate, eating with utensils. Any bite on the run, even a raw carrot, is totally mindless - I'm not even aware of what I'm doing. And that goes for all sorts of Finger Food - whether it's pretzels and popcorn or canapés, it just finds it's way to my stomach magically." Joseph K

"Every meal was a special event, even if I was only eating Oatmeal. It broke me of my eating-on-the-run, eating-on-the-street, and eating-in-the-car habits." Karen C

## No Finger Foods

This article is an excerpt from the book *Conquer Your Food Addiction* published by Simon and Schuster. Caryl Ehrlich, the author, also teaches The Caryl Ehrlich Program, a one-on-one behavioral approach to weight loss in New York City. Visit her at

to know more

about weight loss and keep it off without diet, deprivation, props, or pills.

### **Baking Finger Foods**

**By Melissa Core**

It was our turn to organize the annual block party this year. The responsibility of organizing is rotated from one home to next. We live across street from a lake and the 12 homes along the one mile stretch of the lake attend the party. I found some very good material about this topic at

. The host and hostess supply the food and beverages. So, this year

we decided to offer finger foods. With finger foods we can prepare them early and can enjoy the block party day by visiting with our neighbors.

Many recipe books that have numerous finger foods recipes are at my home. These recipes ranged from savory items to sweets. Normally, the party starts at around 3 and lasts till 7 in the evening, so we wanted to offer food that would be good enough and equivalent to a meal. Many children also attend the party, so we wished to have food they even the children would enjoy having.

In preparation of the event, my husband and me procured the necessary ingredients for the recipes we wished to make several ahead of the event. We bought bread for sandwiches, different kinds of cold cuts and cheeses, ingredients for dips, spreads and salsas to compliment the finger foods.

The sandwiches were prepared, cut into triangles and arranged on platters to be put up near the gathering area. Large plates of fresh vegetable with a variety of dips were prepared and put with the spreads for crackers. Sweet finger foods had a number of bars and cookies which I prepared well ahead and had frozen them until the big day. For children hot dogs and stick ice cream treats were offered as finger foods.

Our gazebo area was filled and adorned by streamers and balloons. Lawn chairs laid out in several patterns beside the lake. Some were put in the sun and others in the shade so as to seat each of our guests.

It was fun filled and wonderful for everyone to move from one place to other and at the same time munch food. Since we did not have to call everyone for a meal there was more time to spend together. Finger food were liked by all and even became an item that many said they would serve when their turn arrives to host the event.

## No Finger Foods

After the party was over, not much was needed in cleaning and the small amount of food left could be easily stored. I think we have started a new trend that will be definitely adopted by others for future block party gatherings and will eventually become a tradition.

Melissa is actively involved with the following websites:

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