

# Portion Size Is Key

How good are you at “guesstimating” the number of calories in the foods you eat? Even the pros have a hard time. “Nearly everyone -- including me -- underestimates the calories in restaurant foods,” said Marion Nestle, a professor of nutrition, food studies and public health at New York University. “People underestimate calories even more when the portions are large or the meals are promoted as healthful.”

Normal portion sizes were smaller 40 and 50 years ago. How do we know? Look at old plates and drinking glasses. A standard dinner plate used to be 9 inches in diameter. That’s the size of a child’s plate today. Juice glasses held 4 ounces. Today they’re 6 or 8 or even 10 ounce glasses.

Grab a bowl and a glass from your cupboard, fill them with water and measure the volume. You might find that a cereal bowl you thought held a cup of cereal actually holds 2½ cups, meaning you’ve been eating more than twice what you planned.

At dinner, put your food on a smaller plate and pay attention to the “serving” size. A serving of meat, fish, or poultry is about 3 ounces -- or about half a can of tuna -- but most of us have become accustomed to portion sizes of 8 ounces or more, according to a recent issue of the Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter.

## Follow the “Half-Plate Rule” for Balanced Meals

Brian Wansink, food psychologist, director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab and author of “Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think,” suggests this easy way to keep portions and calories in check. At lunch and dinner, half the plate should be vegetables and fruits and the other half should be protein and starch. If you remember the Half-Plate Rule, you won’t think that a plateful of spaghetti and meatballs is a balanced meal. (Add a salad.)

## Asparagus with Orange Zest and Shallots Makes: 3 servings

Vegetables are essential in any sound weight-loss program. They contain little or no fat, they’re very low in calories and their fiber provides a sense of fullness. Research at Tufts University suggests that the greater the variety of vegetables in your daily diet, the fewer calories you’re likely to consume -- and the less you’ll weigh.

Asparagus is plentiful in markets now, and at about 85 calories per pound, asparagus is a real bargain for calorie counters.

### Ingredients

1 pound asparagus spears, tough ends trimmed  
1 large orange, scrubbed  
1 shallot or 2 scallions, thinly sliced  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

### Nutritional info / serving

*47 Calories*  
*0.5g Fat*  
*0.1g Saturated fat*  
*4.0g Protein*  
*9g Carbohydrate*  
*2.4g Fiber*  
*16mg Sodium*

### Preparation

1. Choose a skillet just large enough to hold the asparagus and set it over high heat. Add water to fill 1/2 inch deep.
2. With a paring knife or a vegetable peeler, remove 2 or 3 long strips of orange peel and add to the skillet. Slice the orange in half and squeeze the juice into the skillet. Add the shallots or scallions as well.
3. When the water comes to a boil, add asparagus spears and cook until just tender, about 2 minutes.
4. Drain, season with salt and pepper and serve.



Source:  
Healthy Living Kitchens