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Cooking on Campus: MYSTERY CLASS w/Chef Michael Omo
Tuesday, 3/13, 5:15-6:30pm @ UA Outdoor Rec. ONLY \$7!
For more info, visit: cookingoncampus.arizona.edu

Why Do We Overeat?

Why is it so hard for many of us to resist food at times we aren't hungry? Our ancient reward activation response was responsible for stimulating the drive in our ancestors to seek food, and to prize foods that efficiently provided ready energy. In our diets today, these are sugar, fat, and salt. We are *genetically programmed* to desire them!

A combination of any two (sugar, fat, salt) stimulates the reward centers in our brain. In addition, the amygdala regions of the brain catalog these rewarding occasions, creating pleasant memories of these foods. Just the thought of them can generate a desire for them. So, besides sight and smell, you can be triggered by the time of day, the location, or a particular action associated with these memorable foods.

Also, the more senses that are combined in a food, the more reinforcing it becomes. For example, ice cream involves sugar, fat, and cold, but adding ground Oreos and hot fudge adds texture and an aroma, increasing its attraction.

The food industry knows all of this and has become very adept at providing choices that have just the right

enticing combinations of sugar, fat, and salt. Food scientists call it "the bliss point." Think fries with cheese and bacon, or breadsticks with sugar and cinnamon. The combinations are endless and universally available.

So what can you do? David Kessler, author of *The End of Overeating* (Rodale), offers these suggestions:

- Plan ahead what you want to eat, then block out other choices
- Take less, don't go back for more
- Pick foods that satisfy, not stimulate
- Anticipate being challenged and have a plan
- Recognize emotional stressors that trigger behaviors to eat when not hungry and address them directly
- Turn off the image of trigger food before you debate whether to eat it
- Try pairing the trigger food with a negative thought or image

A lot about overeating is very individual and these suggestions are no doubt harder to implement than we'd all like them to be. For some guidance in this area, make an appointment with one of our Nutrition Counselors at the UA Campus Health Service.



CAMPUS HEALTH

NutriNews is written by Gale Welter Coleman, MS, RDN, CEDRD, CSSD, Sarah Marrs, RDN, and Christy Wilson, RDN, Nutrition Counselors at the UA Campus Health Service.

Food and nutrition services (including healthy eating, cooking skills, weight management, digestive problems, hormonal and cardiovascular diseases, and eating disorders) are offered year-round at Campus Health. Call (520) 621-6483 to make an appointment.