



CONSUMED



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SAVE THE STUFFING FOR THE TURKEY: TRY MINDFUL EATING INSTEAD

By Michelle May, M.D.

This holiday season, experience maximal pleasure from all the wonderful food. By eating mindfully you'll eat less and enjoy these special holiday meals even more.

The key to mindful eating is to notice the details. Pretend you're writing an article about your Thanksgiving or other holiday meal for a gourmet magazine. The following tips are from *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat: How to Break Your Eat-Repent-Repeat Cycle*:

- Focus on the people you're sharing your meal with. Engage in interesting conversations. Ask questions and *really listen* to your companions.
- Notice how hungry you are. If you aren't hungry yet, become aware of the reasons you feel like eating anyway. If it's for social reasons, then be social for awhile longer, then eat when you get hungry.
- Decide how you want to feel when you're done eating. Stuffed and miserable? Or comfortable and content? Eating the right amount of food is not about *being* good but about *feeling* good. Fill your plate or order accordingly.

- Mentally describe the table setting and the ambiance. Notice the aromas, colors, textures, and presentation of the meal.
- Before eating, take a moment to be truly thankful about where your food came from, including all the people who invested their time, effort, and talent to get it from farm to plate.



- Choose food carefully by asking yourself what you want and what you need. Don't waste your appetite on cranberry sauce shaped like a can if you don't love it!
- Put one small bite in your mouth. You only have taste buds on your tongue so the flavors of a large bite of food are lost on your teeth, cheeks, and the roof of your mouth.
- Notice the texture and flavors of the food on your tongue then slowly begin to chew. Breathe

since flavors other than salty, sweet, bitter, and sour actually come from the aromas.

- Set your fork down between bites. If you begin to load your next forkful your attention will be on the next bite, not the one you are eating now. And if you are focused on the next bite of food instead of the one you're eating, you won't stop eating until there are no more forkfuls.
- Sit for a moment and let the flavors and experience linger before you take the next bite.
- Notice as the food gently fills your stomach. Pause for several minutes in the middle of eating to reconnect with your hunger and fullness levels and enjoyment of the meal.
- Food is abundant this time of year (actually all year for many of us). Remind yourself that you can eat more later or at another meal so there's no need to eat it all now and ruin the experience by being too stuffed.

Mindful eating is a great way to enjoy Thanksgiving and other meals more while eating less. You'll be thankful that you did!

Michelle May, M.D. is a recovered yo-yo dieter and award-winning author of *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat*. Download a copy of 101 Things to Do Besides Eat at <http://AmIHungry.com/>.