

## Choice Fitness™ Today

### Article 501 - A Portion of Control

We've all been told to clear our plates if we want to grow up to be big and strong. As we approach the midway point of 2008, and some of us have reached middle age, we may find ourselves revisiting this adage. Perhaps it is not clearing the plate which is at issue, but the contents of the plate we clean.

Good morning North Carolina. Our state, as well as the rest of America, is in crisis. We are entering a fast moving but very public crossroad. The rise of obesity in adults and in our children has reached epic proportions. North Carolina has moved to an obesity rate of just over 25% (17<sup>th</sup> in the nation). In addition, nearly 20 % of young people ages 10-17 in North Carolina are obese (5<sup>th</sup> in the nation). Both figures have steadily increased since the start of the decade. Ten of the top fifteen "most obese" states are located in the South, with the state of Mississippi topping the nation at a greater than a 30% obesity rate. The fourth annual *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America, 2007* report found that adult obesity rates rose in 31 states in the U.S. over the past year, and now exceeds 25% in 19 states.

One of the main issues which has led to the increase in obesity is the increase in portion sizes. The FDA label on most food products offers a guideline to the correct serving size and the related calories. How often are we adhering to those guidelines and limiting our portions to one serving? Did you know, for example, that one serving of meat is 3 - 4 ounces (ie, a ¼ pound)? The standard serving size according to the FDA Food Pyramid is 4 ounces for meats and 3 ounces for fruits and vegetables.

The problem of portion control is compounded by the advent of competitive eating contests. One local restaurant offers a free 74-ounce steak to anyone that can eat all of it in one hour. 74 ounces of steak represents close to *twenty* servings (at 650 calories per 7 ounces), resulting in a whopping total of more than 40,550 calories!. Eating that one steak is equivalent to eating enough for twenty people in one sitting. There are many restaurants who offer regularly scheduled eating contests.

One of the most famous traditions is Nathan's Fourth of July International Hot Dog Eating Contest, which is sanctioned by Major League Eaters (MLE). The MLE is supported by the International Federation of Competitive Eaters (IFOC). 2007 crowned a new champion in Joey Chestnut of San Jose, CA who beat former champion Takeru Koayashi in setting a new "world record" by eating 66 Nathan's Famous Hot Dogs and buns in 12 minutes. Mr. Chestnut devoured 20,394 calories (excluding the buns!) in record time. Nearly 50,000 people attended the event.

According to Nathan's website "*During the event, the field of about 20 contestants stands on a raised platform behind a 30-foot-long table with drinks and Nathan's Famous hot dogs in buns. Most contestants drink water, but other kinds of drinks can and have*

*been used. Condiments are allowed, but are usually not used. The hot dogs themselves are allowed to cool slightly after grilling to prevent possible mouth burns. Whoever consumes (and keeps down until the contest has ended) the most hot dogs and buns ("HDBs") in twelve minutes is declared the winner. A designated scorekeeper, known as a "Bunnette," is paired with each contestant. The Bunnette flips a number board counting the hot dogs consumed. Partially eaten hot dogs count and the granularity of measurement is eighths of a length. Hot dogs still in the mouth at the end of the 12 minutes count only if they are swallowed. There can be deductions in score for excess HDB debris. Both hands may be used. After the winner is declared, a plate with the number of hot dogs eaten by the winner is brought out. Winner receives \$10,000."*

In 2008, College Sports Network has partnered with the Association of Independent Competitive Eaters (AICE) to stage and broadcast the first-ever Collegiate Nationals Eating Championship. The top collegiate eaters competed in a "picnic style" competition from the Wave House at Mission Beach, San Diego on Saturday, April 19th. The eating competition required the seven contestants to eat as many plates of "college food" as they could in seven minutes. Each plate consisted of two half-pound hamburgers, a jumbo hot dog and a quarter-pound of fries. The 2008 Eating Championship is part of the third annual Collegiate Nationals, a first-of-its kind event that crowns national champions in 11 events.

The challengers and their eating "resumes" included Top-seeded Christian "Muscox" McCarthy from the University of Kentucky whose varied eating accomplishments include eating 194 chicken wings at a Lexington *Hooters*. Second-seeded Pete Czerwinski is a Canadian attending McMasters University in Ontario who broke the world record for a 72-ounce steak, which he ate in seven minutes. He also ate a 106 ounce steak in 30 minutes, and holds the record for most bananas eaten in two minutes (18), among other things. The winner of the contest, Pete Czerwinski, ate three-and-a-half plates of food in those seven minutes. The remaining contestants didn't get much further than a single plate.

While these competitive eating events represent unusual eating practices, the glorification of over-indulgence and unhealthy fast foods, is having a profound effect on our children. While few people would consider entering a contest such as the above, many people every day eat a fast-food meal involving a large hamburger (such as a double whopper or a double-quarter pounder), a Large (or larger) container of french fries (more than ¼ pound) and a large soda or other high calorie drink. If you consider making the fries even larger, or adding a dessert or secondary item such as rings, strips, nuggets or cubes made of chicken, then you have the same plate as indicated above. Often eaten in about the same amount of time.

Eating even half of the 74-oz steak previously discussed (though high in protein) forces your body to attempt to consume and metabolize ten portions of food within a span of one hour. Even the fittest of athletes cannot realistically accomplish this. Your body normally works hard in the process but now it is forced to achieve the impossible. What the body does not metabolize is instantly turned to fat.

Controlling portions at every meal allows your body to burn calories effectively while not adding additional fat. Increasing your metabolism is a great way to burn calories more effectively. One of the best ways to increase your current metabolism is to increase the number of meals consumed per day. Not the size of the meals (or the volume of food consumed) but averaging 5 - 7 small meals per day (with controlled portions) leads to an increase in metabolism.

Other suggestions:

Avoid buffets - unless you really have some great self-control. It is very difficult to resist all-you-can-eat for one low price. The tendency after eating such a large meal is to sit or lay down. This will add to slowing down your metabolism and affect your digestion.

Read the package - every food item is required to state the ingredients in the products as well as the total calories, fat calories, protein content and serving size. Try to adhere to the serving size. If you purchase a 40-ounce bag of chips, only take out a serving size worth of chips, and eat separately. Close the bag and do not revisit it until a later date.

Battling the bulge takes constant effort and a sometimes a lifestyle adjustment. Controlling portions while at home or eating out is a start to achieving a healthy lifestyle. Coupled with regular physical exercise, portion control is a key to controlling and losing weight.

**Tyrone Irby and Kathy Fall**

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Tyrone and Kathy are also brother and sister, originally from Brooklyn, New York.

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