

How Can It Be?

Americans gain weight... while the French stay thin

Have you ever wondered why Americans struggle with watching their weight, while the French, who consume all that rich food—the bread, the cheese, the wine, and the heavy sauces—continue to stay thin? Now a report from Cornell University suggests a possible answer. A study of almost 300 participants from France and the U.S. provides clues about how lifestyle and decisions about eating may affect weight. Researchers concluded that the French tend to stop eating when they feel full. However, Americans tend to stop when their plate is completely empty, or they have reached the end of their favorite TV show.

According to Dr. Joseph Mercola, who writes extensively about health issues, the French see eating as an important part of their lifestyle. They enjoy food and, therefore, spend a fairly long time at the table. In contrast, Americans see eating as something to do quickly as they squeeze meals between the other activities of the day. Mercola believes Americans have lost the ability to sense when they are actually full. So they keep eating long after the French would have stopped. In addition, he argues that, by tradition, the French tend to shop daily, walking to small shops and farmers' markets where they have a choice of fresh fruits, vegetables, and eggs as well as high-quality meats and cheeses for each meal. In contrast, Americans tend to drive their cars to huge supermarkets to buy canned and frozen foods for the whole week.

Despite all these differences, new reports show that recent lifestyle changes may be affecting French eating habits. Today, the rate of obesity—or extreme overweight—among adults is only 6%. However, as American fast-food restaurants gain acceptance, and the young turn their backs on older traditions, the obesity rate among French children has reached 17%—and is growing.



A **UNDERSTAND FROM CONTEXT** Use the context of the article to help you choose the same meaning as each underlined word or phrase.

1 Have you ever wondered why Americans struggle with watching their weight ...

a have an easy time b have a difficult time c don't care about

2 ... while the French, who consume all that rich food, ...

a fatty, high-calorie food b low-fat, low-calorie food c expensive food

3 ... continue to stay thin?

a worry about their weight b not become overweight c gain weight

4 Researchers concluded that the French tend to stop eating when they feel full.

a like they can't eat any more b worried about their weight c hungry

5 ... the French see eating as an important part of their lifestyle.

a personal care and appearance b culture or daily routine c meals

A. Check all the items that make the statements true, according to the article.

1. Americans eat ____.
 - everything on their plates
 - canned and frozen foods
 - high-quality meats and cheeses
2. The French eat ____.
 - fresh foods
 - quickly
 - rich foods
3. Americans stop eating when ____.
 - their plates are empty
 - they're full
 - they're watching TV
4. The French stop eating when ____.
 - they feel full
 - their plates are empty
 - they travel

In your country, do people generally stay thin or do they struggle with watching their weight?