

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #78: When Other People Decide What You Eat

Hi! You ready to talk about the times when you don't have options for what you're going to eat?

Sometimes you're put in situations where you don't get to decide what food is available to eat.

Maybe you're going to someone's house for dinner and you don't even know what they're going to be serving. Or you're going out and the other people you're going with decide where you're going to be eating. I've also had some clients of mine talk about going to retreats or conferences where meals are included and they don't get to choose or options are very limited. Or they're going away with friends or family and they're staying in a house and someone will be preparing most of the meals for everyone.

In all of these situations, you don't have the option of following an eating plan you usually like to follow or eat foods you usually like to eat.

Now, you do always have a choice. You could choose to not eat the food that's available. You could just not eat and eat later, or eat before, or fast, or bring your own food. You could. But in this episode, I'm going to assume that you're not going to make those choices and help you navigate the situations where you are choosing to eat whatever is there.

What you're given is what you get and you're going to eat it.

And you might freak out about it.

All the worries swirl and loop around in your mind.

You worry about eating too many calories, about gaining weight, about it leading to a binge.

So much worry. So much freaking out beforehand and during.

You're worried because you don't know what's going to happen.

You don't know if everything will be okay or if it's going to result in complete disaster.

Most likely, you're thinking it is going to be a disaster.

You're imagining eating too many calories and how that's going to affect you negatively.

You're imagining gaining weight and how you're going to have to restrict or cut back or exercise more or do something to reverse it.

You're imagining eating and then your mind getting stuck on eating and you end up bingeing because of some reason. Either you label the meal as unhealthy so you just keep being unhealthy since now your day is unhealthy. Or the food you're eating is highly palatable and pleasurable and your brain wants more of it so you feel urges for more. Whatever the reason, you're afraid a binge will come from eating this food.

Also, if you haven't been eating well, if you binged recently, you might be kind of annoyed that this is happening because you're ready to get back to healthy, regular eating and this food you're going to be eating might not be that.

That used to happen to me a lot. I'd waste my indulgences on bingeing and eating alone and then when someone else wanted to indulge with me, say they wanted to order pizza, I'd either say no or do it but feel kinda bad about it because I truly wanted to get back to regular eating the way I wanted to.

And as you're having all these worries, how are you acting?

I would guess that before you eat, you're not excited to be with the people you're with or calm and relaxed. And when you are eating, you're not present with the people. You're too focused on your worries and you're probably not even enjoying the food as much as you could be. We most enjoy food when we're able to focus on how good it is and focus on the flavor and texture but you're not doing that when you're worried or afraid, you're thinking negatively about this food and maybe even feeling kinda resentful about it. Or even worse, resentful about the person who chose it or made it.

Here you are, in a place where you could have a lovely experience with people you love, or like, and you're not even able to enjoy it because you're so worried about what effect this food is going to have on you.

And the craziest part about all of it, everything you're worrying about, might not even happen.

You might not go over your calorie goal, or gain weight, or binge. And yet you wasted so much time and energy and missed out on enjoying the experience and the people and the food.

You also are setting yourself up for the worst case scenario to happen.

Do you ever overeat or binge when you're worried, afraid, nervous, or annoyed?

Because you're causing yourself to feel those ways with all your worst case thoughts about eating the food, so you may be setting yourself up to do those things.

You worry about eating too many calories, and you overeat because you're feeling worried, and you go

over your calories.

You're nervous about bingeing after eating this food, and because you're nervous you eat to try and calm yourself down, and you keep eating because you're still feeling nervous, and then you don't even try to stop, you just let it continue and you binge.

So if you want to have success in a situation like this, then you have to calm down and relax.

There's nothing you can do to change the food presented, all you can do is choose how you respond to it.

How you respond to this will determine how you act, where your focus is, and how much you eat.

And how you choose to respond really depends on what your concern is.

I'd say the main underlying concern most people have is over consumption. They're afraid they're going to eat too much and that may mean they're overeating on the food or they're eating until proper fullness but the food is highly caloric and they're thinking they're overeating calories.

I think one of the best things you can do for yourself is to see this situation you'e been put in as temporary and short-term.

If it's one meal, it's only one meal of your life. How much damage can it really do?

Most likely, if you're not bingeing on it or after it and eating thousands of calories, then not much.

Even if you do see a higher number on the scale the next day, it's unlikely it's true weight gain.

If I have a day where I eat more carbohydrates than usual but I didn't binge and didn't eat way past fullness either, say I eat a few slices of pizza, drink beer, and have dessert, the scale will probably go up the next day. I've seen it go up a pound or two in one day and there is no way I gained a pound or two of fat in one day. There could be multiple factors at play here but what I usually assume is happening is that it's water retention. When you eat carbohydrates, you also retrain water. It's just the way the body works when it processes them.

So sure, the scale may say I gained a pound or two, but in the next day or two, it will most likely be back to where it was if I go back to eating how I normally do, meaning I'm not eating pizza, dessert, and drinking beer. I've seen this happen time and time again for myself.

That's why it's so important to not freak out when you see the scale go up, it really just might be a fluke. So don't use it as an excuse to give up.

Now, maybe this situation of lack of options is not one meal. Maybe it's a whole week. I'd still ask the same question – how much damage can a week do?

If you're eating until you're full during that week, no matter what the food is, the damage will be minimal.

It's when you're overeating and bingeing that your fears become reality.

Now, you may automatically start thinking that you're going to overeat or binge, that you're not going to be able to just eat until you're full.

That is not a useful way to think!

That kind of thinking causes the worry that will drive you to do exactly that!

You think you're going to binge or overeat then you will.

You want to eat like a normal person, right? This is what normal people do. They eat surprise food, are okay with it, and just eat it until they're full without any concerns about what it's going to do.

This allows them to actually enjoy the experience and the food and the people.

They're thinking about how good it tastes and how much fun they're having, not about how detrimental eating this will be.

No matter what the circumstances, whether it's something like what I'm talking about today where you don't have options for what is available or it's a time when you binge, the best thing you can do for yourself is just get back to how you want to be eating as soon as you can.

Don't use this as an excuse to blow it all and make a series of regretful eating decisions.

Eat what's presented to you and then do what you want to when you can.

What's going to matter most, what will make or break you, what will determine whether you eat too much or not, is your mindset going into this and while you're in it.

Your actions will be determined by how you feel and how you feel will be determined by what you're thinking. If you want to be calm and not over eat or binge so you don't make a possible unhealthy eating situation worse, you gotta think calm thoughts. You have to mentally calm yourself down.

It's just one meal. It's just one week. You can get back to eating what you want after. You are going to enjoy the people.

Don't just give up and give yourself permission to go crazy.

Take control of what you're thinking so you can take control of how much you eat.

Don't make a less than ideal situation worse by not managing your mind to create calmness for yourself.

The best thing you can do is to enjoy yourself, stay present, and relax. Then the eating will fall into place.

Stop the worrying and start the fun! Talk to you next time, bye bye!