

Seven Ways to Trick Yourself Into Eating Better

BBC Future | June 2026

Legend / : Difficult English words are shown in **blue bold**. Immediately after each word: | English synonym — all inline, within the same sentence.

We might believe we are in **control** [قابو اختیار | command] of what we choose to eat, but our **senses** [حواس | perceptions] are **constantly** [مستلزل ہمیشہ | continuously] **manipulating** [سے متاثر کرنا | influencing] what we buy and how much we **consume** [استعمال کرتے ہیں | eat/use]. Here's how to turn them to your advantage.

1. Beware of Bright Packaging

When we shop, our **eyes** [آنکھیں | vision] play a huge role in the choices we make. The **colour** [رنگ | hue] of a **package** [پکیج ڈبہ | container], a **brand logo** [برانڈ کا نشان | trademark symbol] and even how **glossy** [چمکدار | shiny] the **packaging** [پکیجنگ ڈبہ بندی | wrapping] is **primes** [تیار کرتا ہے | prepares] our brain for what to expect about the food inside.

And when food **stands out** [نمایاں ہوتا ہے | is conspicuous] **visually** [بصری طور پر | in appearance], it is more **appealing** [دلکش پرکشش | attractive] to us. One study found that participants **selected** [منتخب کیا | chose] photographs of healthy food significantly more often when the **colours were boosted** [تیز کیے گئے | colours enhanced], even when an unhealthy option was right next to it. This **taps into** [فائدہ اٹھاتا ہے | exploits] a concept known as "**salience bias** [نمایاں چیز کی طرف کھینچاؤ | attention bias]", meaning our attention is drawn to items that are the most **eye catching** [نظر کو اپنی طرف کھینچنے والا | visually striking].

We also **gauge** [اندازہ لگاتے ہیں | judge/estimate] the health **properties** [خصوصیات | qualities] of food depending on the colour of the **packing** [پیکنگ | wrapping], says Betina Piqueras-Fiszman, an **associate professor** [اسسٹنٹ پروفیسر | junior professor] of **marketing** [مارکیٹنگ فروخت | selling/advertising] and **consumer behaviour** [صارف کا رویہ | buyer behaviour] at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. Brown, green and white products tend to be considered as more healthy whereas red, yellow and purple, or even "shiny" objects tend to be more **associated** [وابستہ | linked] with **indulgent** [لذت بخش عیاشانہ | rich/sinful] ingredients.

2. Look Up, Down and Avoid Checkout Temptation

Where food items are placed on the **shelf** [شیلف طاق | rack] is worth paying attention to — we all tend to take **shortcuts** [آسان راستے | easy routes] and prefer items that are in closer **proximity** [قربت | nearness] or directly in our **eyeline** [نظر کی سیدھ میں | line of sight]. This is known as the "**principle of least effort** [کم سے کم محنت کا اصول | minimum effort rule]" and can be **exploited** [فائدہ اٹھایا جا سکتا ہے | taken advantage of] by **retailers** [خوردہ فروش | shopkeepers] to **influence** [متاثر کرنا | affect] the food we buy.

Supermarkets tend to place **tempting** [للچانے والی | enticing] products near the **checkouts** [ادائیگی کی جگہ | payment counters] and more expensive products at **eye level** [آنکھوں کی سطح پر | at sight height], which can cause us to buy and **consume** [استعمال کرنا | use/eat] products we hadn't intended to. England, for example, **banned** [پابندی لگائی | prohibited] foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) near checkouts.

When unhealthy snacks like sweets are removed from checkouts, it removes the **temptation** [urge/desire | لچ] to buy **impulsively** [بغیر سوچے فوری طور پر | without thinking]. Other research has found that when fruit was placed near the checkout counter, it **encourages** [حوصلہ افزائی کرتا ہے | motivates] consumers to buy more.

3. Eat with Heavier Bowls

It isn't just our eyes and ears that **influence** [متاثر کرتے ہیں | affect] our **experience** [تجربہ | encounter] of food. How it is **served** [پیش کیا جاتا ہے | presented] counts too. When **desserts** [میٹھے کھانے | sweets/puddings] are served on white round **plates** [پلیٹیں | dishes] they are often rated as tasting **sweeter** [زیادہ میٹھے | more sugary] compared to the exact same food served on a black **angular** [کونے دار | sharp-cornered] plate. A similar effect occurs with **packaging** [پیکجنگ | wrapping] shapes — with people preferring **rounded** [گول | circular] packaging to **angular** [کونے دار | sharp-edged].

"**Flavour** [ذائقہ | taste] really is a **multisensory** [کثیر حسی | multi-sense] **construct** [تصور ڈھانچہ | creation] of the mind as opposed to being a simple **sensory** [حسی | sense-related] **perception** [احساس ادراک | feeling] in the mouth," says Spence. How heavy the bowl we're eating from could affect how **full** [پیٹ بھرا ہوا | satiated] we feel after a meal. One study found that consumers believed they would be more **satiated** [سیر پیٹ بھرا ہوا | full] when eating out of a **heavier container** [بھاری برتن | weighty vessel] before even tasting the food. Other research has shown that if we believe food to be more **indulgent** [لذیذ بھرپور | rich/sinful], we feel fuller too.

4. Make Your Plate Beautiful

How food is **presented** [پیش کیا جاتا ہے | displayed] on our plates also affects how much we **anticipate** [توقع رکھتے ہیں | expect] enjoying the meal and can make lower **calorie** [حرارے کیلوری | energy unit] food more **appealing** [دلکش | attractive]. One study arranged **salad** [سلاد | raw vegetable dish] to look like a Kandinsky painting, which led **participants** [شرکاء | those involved] to rate the food as **tastier** [زیادہ لذیذ | more delicious] and pay more for the exact same **ingredients** [اجزاء | components] due to how they were **presented** [پیش کیے گئے | arranged]. Spence **suggests** [تجویز دیتا ہے | recommends] adding a wide **variety** [تنوع | range] of colourful leaves and **vegetables** [سبزییاں | veggies] to a plate, which will in turn increase **appeal** [کشش | attractiveness] and **perceived** [محسوس کی جانے والی | felt/judged] freshness of a dish.

5. Play Slower Music

Sound is another **hidden** [پوشیدہ | concealed] **ingredient** [جزو | component] that can be used to change how we eat, a concept which has been **dubbed** [نام دیا گیا | called/named] "**sonic seasoning** [ذائقے میں تبدیلی | sound-based flavouring]". Slower music, for example, can make us eat slower — and eating slowly can result in eating fewer **calories** [حرارے کیلوریز | energy units]. You can even **modulate** [کرنا | adjust] how sweet or **bitter** [کڑوا | sharp-tasting] you find a food — higher **pitched** [آواز والی | high-frequency] music is **associated** [وابستہ | linked] with **sweetness** [مٹھاس | sugary taste] while lower **pitched** [نیچی آواز والی | low-frequency] music brings out **bitterness** [کڑواہٹ | sharp/sour taste], even making sweet foods like **toffee** [ٹافی | caramel candy] taste more bitter.

Avoiding [بچنا | پرہیز کرنا | refraining from] **distractions** [توجہ بھٹکانے والی چیزیں | interruptions] like the television or our mobile phones whilst eating can **reduce** [کم کرنا | decrease] **calorie intake** [حراروں کا استعمال | energy consumption] too. Listening to sounds of **nature** [فطرت | the natural world] can also **nudge** [دھکا دینا | ترغیب دینا | gently push] us to make more **sustainable** [پائیدار | eco-friendly] food choices.

6. Watch Out for the "Dessert-Stomach" Effect

Understanding that **external cues** [بیرونی اشارے | outside signals] regularly **bypass** [نظرانداز کرتے ہیں | go around] how full we feel is important says Spence. "We **rarely** [شاذ و نادر | seldom] eat because we're **desperately** [انتہائی سخت | urgently] hungry," he says. Usually we are **stimulated** [متحرک | ابھارا جاتا ہے | triggered] by what we see, hear and smell.

Consider for instance the "**dessert-stomach** [میٹھے کے لیے الگ پیٹ | sweet-craving stomach]" effect. Researchers have recently found that simply **seeing** [دیکھنا | viewing] a **dessert** [میٹھا کھانا | sweet dish] can make us want it even when we're already full. Taken together, it's clear we can help ourselves make **healthier** [زیادہ صحت مند | more wholesome] food choices by paying close attention to all of our **senses** [حواس | perceptions].

7. Use Your Senses Wisely: Putting It All Together

Taken together, the science of **sensory** [حسی | sense-related] eating shows that our **perception** [احساس | ادراک | awareness] of food is shaped by far more than just **taste** [ذائقہ | flavour]. The **environment** [ماحول | surroundings] we eat in, the **crockery** [برتن | dishes/plates] we use, the **ambient** [ارد گرد کی | surrounding] sounds, even the **visual presentation** [بصری پیشکش | how food looks] of our food — all of these **cues** [اشارے | signals] work together to **determine** [تعیین کرنا | decide] how much we eat and how much we enjoy it. By learning to **harness** [استعمال میں لانا | make use of] these **insights** [بصیرت سمجھ | understandings], we can **nudge** [دھکا دینا | gently push] ourselves towards **healthier** [زیادہ صحت مند | more wholesome], more **satisfying** [اطمینان بخش | fulfilling] choices — without even really trying.

I'm off to make some dinner and will put on some gentle slow music while I eat.