Price impacts what people think of food

By Kevin Short, Huffington Post

Which of these plates looks like a better meal to you?

According to science, you'd probably be happier with meal No. 2, since it's more expensive. A new study out of Cornell University found diners tend to rate the quality of their food higher if they pay more for it, and people who pay less for the same exact meal report feeling more guilty, bloated and uncomfortable.

"We were surprised by the results. Especially, we found that pricing has little impact on how much one eats, but a huge impact on how one interprets the experience," Brian Wansink, a co-author of the study and professor of consumer behavior at Cornell University, told Huffington Post.

The researchers offered 139 diners an all-you-can-eat buffet at an upscale Italian restaurant for either $4 or $8 dollars. Though the diners ate the same food and the same amount, those who paid $8 rated their meal an average of 11 percent higher. The $4 diners were more likely to feel guilty and that they'd overeaten.

The study adds to the body of research around how to maximize restaurants' bottom lines while managing customers'

waistlines. Price cuts can actually hurt people's perception of a restaurant and cause diners to feel their meal was less worthwhile, the researchers found.

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