

Design

Heavier cutlery makes food taste better

By **JAMES TEMPERTON**

23 Jul 2015



The lightweight cutlery (left) weighed three times less than the heavier cutlery (right)

Credit **Charles Michel**

Eating with heavier cutlery makes food taste better, with researchers for the first time finding a direct link between the weight of eating utensils and people's enjoyment of [food](#).

banquets, resulted in customers willing to pay 15 percent more for their food compared to people eating the same meal with lower-quality utensils.



Charles Michel (right) and Andreas Fabian work on new cutlery designs

Credit **No Water for Whales**

The research, carried out by a team from Oxford University, also showed people eating with heavier cutlery thought food was more artistically plated and tasted better. "It is likely that the positive or negative values that we attribute to the cutlery gets implicitly 'transferred' to our judgments of the food -- a phenomenon that is often called 'sensation transference'" Charles Michel, who led the research, tells WIRED.co.uk

Michel, who is chef in residence at Oxford University's Crossmodal Research Laboratory, also speculates that [eating](#) with heavier cutlery may capture the attention of diners more, increasing their awareness and enjoyment of what they are eating. The research was published in the journal *Flavour*.



Eating from a gold spoon changes how viscous food feels in the mouth

Credit **Science Museum**

The 130 diners taking part in the experiment were served identical meals of trout with mashed potatoes, spinach and capers and brown shrimp butter, the only difference being the cutlery they ate it with. Half the diners used heavy cutlery normally reserved for banquets while the other half ate with cheap cutlery that weighed three times less. "It's interesting to think that the heavier weight of cutlery could be making us more mindful, without us realising it," he explains. A link between weight and our perception of quality in objects has been clear for some time, but Michel says this was the first time it had been linked to the enjoyment of food.

Research into so-called "gastrophysics" [is a growing field](#). Similar experiments have shown that background music played in restaurants can influence how sweet, salty or sour something tastes, an effect known as "sonic seasoning".

Another experiment showed eating from a bowl with a rounded bottom made people feel full on less food -- and Michel believes the same might be true of heavier cutlery, but is yet to test his theory.

heavier.



Experimental eating utensils could also change how people taste food

Credit **Comes Cake**

"The design of products shapes our behaviour in relation to them. Larger glasses, you will pour more, hence tend to drink more," he explains. "Given a larger spoon to serve yourself from a platter, you will put more food on your plate."

Working with designer and silversmith Andreas Fabian, who has a PhD in spoons, Michel is now developing eating and drinking vessels that could persuade people to eat more healthily. A spoon designed to be similar to a human finger could enhance how sweet or thick food is perceived to be, Michel explains, making low-sugar and low-fat dishes more appetising. "While cutlery is present in tables all around the world, we rarely think about it as something that can influence deliciousness," he says.