



# 8 ways the food industry can hijack your brain!

**Excess sugar, fat and salt are just some of the tricks that get us to overeat**

In the 21st century the food industry is creating and marketing unhealthy food in much the same way that tobacco companies manufactured and sold cigarettes in the 20th century.

But overeating doesn't only affect people who are overweight. In fact, more than 70 million Americans have become conditioned to overeat, and it affects people of all different weights. Dr.

## Too much sugar, fat and salt

Most of the foods served at restaurants combine tempting amounts of sugar, fat, and salt.

They are either loaded onto a core ingredient (such as meat, vegetable, potato, or bread), layered on top of it, or both. For instance:

**Potato skins:** The potato is hollowed out and the skin is fried, which provides a substantial surface area for "fat pickup." Then some combination of bacon bits, sour cream, and cheese is added. The result: fat on fat on fat on fat, loaded with salt.

**Buffalo wings:** The fatty parts of a chicken get deep-fried. Then they are served with creamy or sweet dipping sauce that's heavily salted. Usually they're par-fried at a production plant, then fried again at the restaurant, which doubles the fat. The result: sugar on salt on fat on fat on fat.

**Spinach dip:** The spinach provides little more than color—a high-fat, high-salt dairy product is the main ingredient. The result: a tasty dish of salt on fat.

## Easy-to-chew food

It's food that literally melts in your mouth. By eliminating the need to chew, modern food processing techniques allow us to eat faster and consume more calories. Processing meat and produce — a techniques employed by many restaurant chains and food manufacturers — creates a kind of "adult baby food." The harder-to-chew elements, such as fiber and gristle, are removed in foods such as chicken nuggets, spinach dip, and bean burritos. The result is food that can be eaten quickly, and without much effort.

Consider Chili's boneless Shanghai chicken wings. Removing the bone reduces the need for chewing, making the food faster to consume. In addition, the wings contain a solution of up to 25 percent water, hydrolyzed soy protein, salt, and sodium phosphate. The water is there to bulk up the chicken — the industry calls this "reducing shrinkage." Water is also cheaper than chicken breast, so it's less costly to produce. And finally, water makes the food softer and chewing easier.

## Brain conditioning

The food industry focuses on several factors to influence irresistibility, including calories, flavor and ease of eating. Food scientists create “hyperpalatable” foods and the food industry markets “fun foods.” One way marketers make food fun is by adding dips or sauces, such as Dippables products. Foods such as milkshakes and candy bars stimulate the appetite and prompt us to eat more even after we’re full. These foods layer sugar, fat, and salt in optimal amounts in a way that conditions our brains to eat more and more. Instead of satisfying our hunger, we are setting ourselves up to crave them again. By creating hyperpalatable foods that are entertaining, widely available and socially acceptable, the food industry contributes to this vicious cycle. Millions of Americans report loss of control in the face of food, lack of feeling satisfied, and a preoccupation with these foods.

## **When in doubt, throw cheese and bacon in it**

It’s a standard joke in the world of chain restaurants. But it works. Along with enhancing melt and making food easy to eat, these layers are cheaper to produce than the central ingredient (such as meat or fish) they flavor. They’re also visually appealing, straightforward, and familiar. Example: T.G.I. Friday’s Parmesan-Crusted Sicilian Quesadilla, is described on the menu as follows: “Packed with sautéed chicken, sausage, bruschetta marinara, [and] bacon and oozing with Monterey Jack cheese. We coat it with Parmesan and pan-fry it to a crispy, golden brown, then drizzle it with balsamic glaze.”

## **Restaurants assemble food, not actually cook it**

Restaurants make use of “individually quick frozen” foods. Shrimp, potatoes, and chicken nuggets are blasted with cold air, cold nitrogen, or cold carbon dioxide as they travel along a conveyor belt so they freeze in discrete pieces. They are often partially fried before they are quick-frozen. Then they are plunged, straight from the package and still frozen, back into fat for a second frying. The processing, preservatives, and extra frying required for these kinds of foods add to the caloric content.

## **The myth of healthy grilled chicken**

Think you’re eating healthy when you order grilled, marinated chicken? Think again. A common way to get marinade into meat is through needle injection. Hundreds of needles are used to pierce the meat, tearing up the connective tissue, to add solutions of salt, sugar, and fat. These injections not only increase flavor, but they also make the meat fall apart in our mouths.

## **Sneaky sugar**

If a food contains more sugar than any other ingredient, federal regulations dictate that sugar be listed first on the label. So, to trick health-conscious mothers who scan food labels for the word “sugar,” manufacturers hide the amount of sugar by listing its different sources separately, pushing each down the list. Breakfast cereal, for example, often includes some combination of sugar, brown sugar, fructose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, and molasses — each listed separately.

## **Creative chemistry**

Chemical processing evolved to extend the shelf life of products and to lower food costs. More recently, the industry has directed its creative chemistry toward increasing sensations like “mouth feel” and finding new ways to artificially simulate real flavors using flavor enhancers. It’s all about creating novelty and impact to encourage people to consume more.

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/31832558/ns/health-diet\\_and\\_nutrition/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/31832558/ns/health-diet_and_nutrition/)