

Mason Jars can be a Fun and Easy Way to Control Portions

Over the past several years the obesity rates have increased all across America. Lack of exercise may be part of the cause, but a major cause of these increases is the amount of food we consume every day. It is recommended by the USDA that the average adult should consume approximately 2,200 calories a day for good health.

Whether we like it or not, portions have changed to be much larger and this is adding to the obesity issued that we face. Even meals cooked at home tend to be larger portions. Preparing meals at home can be healthier and help you to use portions that are more in the guidelines of Choose My Plate. Visit ChooseMyPlate.gov, for help in the correct portion sizes.

An easy way to eliminate large portions is to pack your own lunches or breakfasts at home. When preparing your own food, you are more aware of what you consume all day. One of the easiest ways to take your breakfast or lunch with you to work or school is inside of mason jars. Mason jars can be found in a variety of sizes and come with an airtight seal to keep the food inside fresh for later use. If you don't feel you have time in the morning to prepare your meal, you can prepare something the night before, put it inside a mason jar, refrigerate it, then grab and go the next morning.

Here are some ideas for making your own mason jar breakfasts and lunches.

Mason jar breakfast parfait. Choose your favorite yogurt, fruit and granola. Use a small 8 ounce jar. Place the yogurt inside first, add the fruits and granola. It can be made in advance and kept in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 days.

Mason jar oatmeal. Use oatmeal, fruit, nuts and seeds to make your oatmeal both hearty and filling. Make your dry oatmeal mix with nuts, dried fruit in advance and keep it in a dry cupboard. Simply add hot water or low fat milk to the mix and you have a great breakfast.

Mason jar smoothie. Mix together in your blender yogurt, fruit and some fruit juice and store in a mason jar. In the morning just grab the jar out of the refrigerator, blend it and take with you as you go.

Mason jar breakfast frittata. This breakfast is made in a 4 ounce heat resistant jar. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray jar with nonstick spray. Add 1 to 2 beaten eggs, some fresh or frozen vegetables to the jar and place it in the oven for 20 to 30 minutes.

Mason jar salad. Use an 8 ounce jar and place dressing on the bottom, lots of vegetables, add beans or meat for protein and finally some type of lettuce. Make sure the dressing is on the bottom or the leaves will get soggy by lunch.

Mason jar wrap-free burrito. In an 8 ounce mason jar, fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of the jar with cooked rice, $\frac{1}{4}$ with beans and meat. The remaining space with vegetables.

Mason jars can help a person control portions. While they may be great to prepare healthy food for work, when eating at home, try using smaller plates or bowls at meals. Cutting down on portions is a great way to lose weight as you teach yourself to eat less.