

Half and half, Eat more Fruits and Vegetables

Double and treble portions of fruit and vegetables make you feel better

In his book *El mono obeso* («The Overweight Ape»), José Enrique Campillo says there are two things Spaniards would like to do without having to make an effort: learn English, and lose weight. 30% of Spanish children are now overweight, and 15% are obese.

The European Fruit & Veg project (1998) and, later, the 5 Al Día association's initiative (June 2000) are some of the awareness-raising efforts in Spain aimed at improving eating habits. The 5 Al Día («Five A Day») message recommends higher fruit and vegetable consumption, in the same way that the rest of food industries try to sell us the health properties of their product, whether it is wine, walnuts, beer, chocolate, yoghurt, and so on.

«We want what we eat to make us feel better,» says the chairman of Nestlé, José Arcas. Food manufacturers and distributors want their foods to be popular and to be regarded as «healthier» than their competing products. Advertising consultants therefore construct images for a new kind of marketing for today's offerings from Knorr and McDonald's, for instance.

The Naos strategy of the Spanish Food Safety Agency, which aims to combat obesity and its associated diseases, now exerts some influence on the economic activities surrounding agrifood. To promote fruit and vegetables, the most modern campaigns designed by some advertising specialists, independent consultants and producer organisation are changing the classic «5 a day» message. Now, both here and in America the message is more specific about which fruit and vegetables we should eat, how much and how.

We know that fruit and vegetables are good for us. But European consumption surveys show that in most countries people's intake of fruit and vegetables is still too low. Fruit and vegetables are the foods that arouse the best «desire perception» among consumers who trust their image of a healthy, natural and easy-to-prepare food. The «5 a day» message is known among professionals in the European horticultural industry. In the field of food marketing, the best-known designation used in Spain and Italy is the Mediterranean Diet concept, coined by the association of the same name.

It is easy to assume that consumers know they should eat fruit and vegetables - whether the amount is three, four, five or twenty a day. Of course consumers are aware of the message in France, Italy and Spain. In France



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and the United States, the campaigns are even more explicit: «More is better.»

In France there is a national programme called «Nutrition and Health». According to Saida Barnat of Aprifel, three out of five French people know that one should eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. «What do we do now for them to follow through?» she says. Her proposed strategy is to teach consumers to consume.

The magazine Horticultura published a cover feature last year to explain a new message - «half of every dish should be fruit and vegetables».

In the food world, the perception of «healthy eating» is becoming hazy. There are a multiplicity of messages - organic, no pesticides, low-fat, and more. Areflh, the Fruit and Vegetable Horticultural European Regions Assembly, thinks the industry should move away from messages overused



by multinationals and promote natural, fresh produce, frozen products and minimally processed fruit and vegetables (washed, chopped and packed; ready-made salads, etc.). Fruit & Veg Project says, «We can create enthusiasm about fruit and vegetables and bring about a 'fruit revolution' to change consumers' eating habits.»

In France, the strategy to promote fruit and vegetable consumption will now experiment with messages other than the now universal - though just as valid - «5 a day» tagline. Rather than generic campaigns, the goal now is to design a new - though still simple - form of promotion that says «half your diet in fruit and vegetables». The campaign would adopt different formats and images associated with breakfast, tea and main meals, where half or the whole of each dish is fruit and vegetables. The public would be shown stimulating images of seasonal produce, regional products and specific varieties. The message sponsors want to highlight special features of the flavour of new kinds of fruit and vegetables, much like the Italians and their promotion of arugula (rocket) lettuce. Campaign designers hope to join forces with chefs.

At the last Produce Marketing Association trade fair in the United States, the Produce for Better Health Foundation put out a new message to replace «5 a day»: «Fruits and veggies - more matters.» The new message aims to head off some consumers' perception that making the «goal» of the 5 daily portions recommended by the WHO is enough - PMA and PBH want to emphasise that anything you do to eat more fruit and vegetables is good for you, even beyond five portions.

Try to treble your fruit and vegetable intake

At the end of last year, the Spanish Minister of Health, Elena Salgado, announced that she will sign specific individual agreements with companies advertising certain foods to make them partners in the Naos strategy. McDonald's and VIPS restaurants are willing to enter into specific agreements. The Spanish Health Minister, for her part, has expressed concern about Burger King's advertising campaign for double and triple Whopper hamburgers which promoted their meals with the slogan «eat like a man, man.»

Eating more is only healthy - whether you eat double or treble your usual intake - when it involves eating more fruit and vegetables.