

Finger Fruits: Pre-Sliced Fruit in Schools Increases Sales, Selection, and Intake

Brian Wansink David R. Just Andrew S. Hanks

Abstract

Background: Laddering interviews indicate that a leading reason younger children do not select fruit is because braces and small mouths make it difficult to eat. Older children – especially females – avoid it because it is messy and makes them look unattractive when eating it. One solution for both sets of reservations would be to offer pre-sliced fruit.

Purpose: Does offering pre-sliced fruit increase the selection and intake of fruit among elementary students and middle school students?

Design: Two studies were conducted. Following a pilot study in elementary schools, three out of six middle schools were randomly given commercial fruit slicers and the selection and consumption of sliced apples was compared to that of the control schools.

Setting/Participants: Researchers collected data in the cafeteria so all students who purchased an apple were included in the study. Only waste data were collected so no personal identifying information was recorded.

Intervention: In both studies, treatment schools were given a standard commercial fruit slicer (also referred to as a “sectionizer”). These slicers have a reservoir into which a piece of fruit is placed (apples, oranges, pears, grapefruit). A plunger with different configurations of steel blades is then pushed down and it cores the fruit and cuts it into six symmetric pieces into a bowl below. The process is quick, taking an average of just over 3 seconds per fruit.

Main Outcome Measures: Apple sales, percentages of apples wasted, and percentages of apples consumed.

Results: Results from Study 1 show that the fruit slicer increased apples sales in elementary schools by 60.6%. In study 2, apple sales increased by 41% and apple consumption increased by 17%.

Conclusions: Environmental interventions are useful in influencing people to eat more healthful foods. This study relies on the principle of convenience and provides evidence that sliced fruit is more appealing than unsliced fruit, simply due to eating convenience and neatness. There is plenty of opportunity for research to identify

effective applications of convenience, or other environmental changes that promote healthy eating behavior.

Brian Wansink, 15 Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801. Tel: 607-254-6302. E-mail: wansink@cornell.edu. David R. Just, 16 Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801. Tel: 607-255-5024. E-mail: drj3@cornell.edu. Andrew S. Hanks, 17 Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801. Tel: 607-339-6942. E-mail: ah748@cornell.edu.

The authors recognize the U.S. Department of Agriculture - ERS/FNS for their support.

In review at the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*

Please do not cite these results as they are subject to change.