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PII: S0195-6663(17)31775-0
DOI: 10.1016/j.appet.2018.02.033
Reference: APPET 3809

To appear in: Appetite

Received Date: 24 November 2017
Revised Date: 12 February 2018
Accepted Date: 27 February 2018


This is a PDF file of an unedited manuscript that has been accepted for publication. As a service to our customers we are providing this early version of the manuscript. The manuscript will undergo copyediting, typesetting, and review of the resulting proof before it is published in its final form. Please note that during the production process errors may be discovered which could affect the content, and all legal disclaimers that apply to the journal pertain.
Is eating pleasure compatible with healthy eating?
A qualitative study on Quebecers’ perceptions

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Abstract
Given that traditional interventions promoting the adoption of a healthy diet are having limited impacts on the population’s food choices and eating behaviours, researchers and health practitioners could explore alternative strategies such as the use of eating pleasure to promote healthy eating. To inform future interventions using this approach, this study aimed to explore how a sample of Quebecers perceives and defines eating pleasure and healthy eating. Specific objectives were to verify what commonalities can be found between their definitions of eating pleasure and healthy eating, and what differences can be observed in their answers based on their gender and body mass index (BMI). Twelve focus groups were conducted in Quebec City, Canada, among women and men with a normal weight and with obesity (n=92). Verbatim transcripts were double-coded using NVivo10. Participants mostly defined eating pleasure through food characteristics related to sensory qualities and psychosocial contexts. In contrast, they mostly mentioned food characteristics related to nutritional quality and ways to regulate eating behaviours to define healthy eating. Most salient perceptions were similar among subgroups based on gender or BMI. Results showed that in participants’ perceptions, the concepts of eating pleasure and healthy eating were different, but appeared to be mostly compatible, which

Abbreviations: BMI, body mass index; INAF, Institute of Nutrition and Functional Foods.

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