



**Tapas**  
*Turning traditions from Spain into a healthy, balanced meal at home*  
By, Kate Axon and Rebecca Morley

**Large portion sizes** have become a standard in the United States, often leading to many health problems associated with excess weight gain. In today's newsletter we look at a tradition from Spain and how to incorporate it into your lifestyle in a healthy way that may help you decrease portion sizes.

**The popularity of tapas** has taken off, spreading around the world, today there are even restaurants that specialize and serve only tapas. So, what exactly are tapas? The most popular story of their origin is that of a piece of bread used to cover a person's drink (the verb tapar means to cover in Spanish) to keep the flies out. Eventually people would eat the bread, sometimes adding cheese or meat, and eventually bars and cafes were serving tapas as something separate you could order with your drink. Basically they are appetizers to help hold people over between the late lunches and dinners in Spain.

**Since their humble beginnings** as a piece of bread, tapas have evolved into a diverse array of flavorful treats ranging from the simple bread and cheese to intricate dishes of quail and caviar. Since they are smaller portions a person could try several different flavors before being full. There are now many places in Spain and a growing number in the states where you can make a whole meal out of your tapas experience. So, how can we Montana citizens incorporate the fun of tapas into our eating habits?

**The tapas experience**, which focuses around a shared experience of good flavors and good conversation, is one that easily lends itself to personal adaptation. Try throwing a tapas party instead of a dinner party, where guests will enjoy their food while still mingling. There are more and more cookbooks and recipes available for tapas. There are however, several things to watch out for as you incorporate tapas into your lifestyle. Below is a list of benefits and precautions with tapas.

**Benefits**

- Can generally make ahead of time and have around for a healthy snack
- Can assist people in eating smaller portion sizes, rather than the super-sized meals common in restaurants.
- Easy way to incorporate different foods and flavors into your diet.

**Precautions**

- Make sure that you don't eat a bunch of tapas and follow it with a meal. Instead, make a variety of tapas that will be the main meal.
- Stay away from tapas that are fried, very bready or too sweet. Instead use vegetables, fruit and lean meats as the center for the tapas.

**Using Spain as an inspiration** we can all enjoy a well-balanced and proportionate meal to improve our health.



Source : Tapas by Penelope Casa Published 2007 by Alfred A. Knopf

