

# CEEREAL's guide to understanding portion sizes (ps)

In an increasingly health focused age, more Europeans than ever are trying to watch both what and how much they eat. With obesity ever more present and a significant public health issue, it is more important than ever to grasp a clear understanding as to whether we are over or under consuming the nutrients we need each day, as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

As a strong supporter of the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, **CEEREAL** has clearly understood the issues at hand and aims to provide information to consumers in a consistent, harmonised manner. This information is both **realistic** and **reasonable**, in line with what people consume and, at the same time, providing adequate energy and nutrient intake, through full voluntary nutritional labelling.

Nutrition information is commonly provided per 100g or 100ml and helps the consumer compare the nutrient content of different kinds of foodstuffs in general. However, it fails to provide information on the actual nutrient content intended to be consumed, especially if the average portion of the consumed food is significantly larger or smaller (as is the case for breakfast cereals) than the 100g/100ml baseline. By providing nutrition information on a per portion basis, consumers are empowered with a more realistic idea as to which foods they can consume within a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

On this premise, **CEEREAL** members decided to define universal portion sizes, based on three important criteria: **history of use** (portion sizes traditionally used), **product density** (consumers fill bowls by volume, not by weight, meaning that portion weights are heavier for denser cereals) and **intake data** (people actually consume "around 30-45g").

## history of use

Portion sizes have remained unchanged for decades (the first reference to a portion size, 1 ounce – the equivalent to 28g – appeared on packs in the 1940s). These have often been supported by communications on packs describing in tangible terms how much a portion actually constitutes.

## product density

When ready-to-eat cereals are poured out of the pack, most people decide how much they want to eat by judging the volume in the bowl, rather than by weight. The density of different breakfast cereals varies substantially, so different portion sizes have been agreed for products of differing densities.



## actual consumption data

The annual per capita consumption of breakfast cereals in Europe is around 2kg; this varies between countries. Average portion sizes in Europe also vary, but usually lie between 30-50g, as is shown by the following studies:

- A study in Belgium by the Scientific Institute for Public Health carried out in 2004 revealed that consumers ate 30.1g on average of breakfast cereal in a single sitting.
- A study by the Danish Food Institute in 2004 found that the average portion of breakfast cereals was around 35g.
- A study undertaken in Ireland by the Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance in 1997-1999 revealed that the average man eats 48.6g of breakfast cereals per day while the average female adult eats 41.7g.
- In France, children consume 23.1g/d and adults 28.3g/d (data from the new INCA2 2008 survey).
- In the UK, the National Diet & Nutrition Survey reported that, for all women consumers, the mean intakes of wholegrain & high fibre breakfast cereals and other breakfast cereals was 39g and 19g per day on average

Using these three criteria, **CEEREAL** members have come to an agreement on four different portion sizes for their products:

## CEEREAL portion sizes



30g	40g	45g	2 Biscuits
Toasted and/or extruded flakes	Toasted and/or extruded flakes with inclusions*	Muesli (all type)	Big biscuit type cereals
Toasted and/or extruded flakes with inclusions*	Extruded cereals (including pillows) and puffed cereals with inclusions*	Filled shredded cereals	
Extruded cereals (including pillows) and puffed cereals with inclusions*	Rolled oats and steamed cooked flakes from rye, barley and wheat	Granola	
Extruded cereals (including pillows) and puffed cereals	Shredded cereals		
Filled extruded pillows, i.e. pillows with cream inside	Mini Biscuits		

\* Inclusions are defined as non-cereal pieces/ingredients such as but not limited to fruit, chocolate, nuts, seeds, etc. Owing to density variations and different functional benefits of inclusions, products with inclusions may fall in the 30 or 40 gram portion sizes. N.B. Owing to the high number of very diverse products in the sector there may be a few niche products that are not covered by this table.

In conclusion, by providing nutrition information on a per portion basis, **CEEREAL** hopes to empower consumers, giving them a more realistic idea as to which foods they can consume within a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

For more information on **CEEREAL** please contact info [info@ceereal.eu](mailto:info@ceereal.eu) or visit [www.ceereal.eu](http://www.ceereal.eu).