

# Episode: Cleaning Your Plate



## Full Transcript

HEALTHY EATING FOR BUSY WOMEN PODCAST  
WITH KAT RENTAS

# Episode: Cleaning Your Plate

Hello. Welcome back to the podcast this week. I'm very excited to talk with you today. In this episode, we're going to talk about the concept of cleaning your plate. And what I'm referring to here is the belief system that many of us grow up with where we're taught that we should always eat everything on our plate. That we should never waste any of the food we're given. And if this is a belief system you have with food that is causing you some trouble now, you're not alone. So many of my clients come to me with this belief system. And it's obviously a belief system around food they were taught when they were young. And it's super, super common. So I want to talk a bit about that today. So you can walk away from this episode knowing why you may have this belief now, how this clean your plate mentality is affecting your eating habits now, and how you can evolve past this mentality moving forward. Since this is something many, many women struggle with. So I'm really happy to be sharing this insight with you today. First off, in case you weren't aware, we all have food beliefs. Meaning we have belief systems around food that have been conditioned from the time we were young. And these food beliefs, these thought patterns, will dictate how we eat in adulthood. And what food beliefs really are, are just mental chatter. It's the mental chatter you experience when you're planning meals. It's the mental chatter you experience before you're deciding what to eat. It's the mental chatter while you're eating. And it's the mental chatter after you've eaten. So, a ton of mental chatter exists around food, to say the last. And this is just representative of the truths you hold with food. It's your belief systems around food. And this will determine your eating habits. The belief systems you create with food during your childhood will determine your eating habits in adulthood. It's just the way it goes. And this is actually why the first step I take with each client is to dive into their food past. Because we want to have a really clear picture of what brought them to the eating habits they have right now. This is crucial information that I want you to be really curious about.

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And something else I'll mention, just to clarify, is that this concept of belief systems with food can seem super heavy. But beliefs are just thoughts that you've repeated over and over. So every single belief you have about food or your body right now, started with a single thought. And I'll use myself as an example. Growing up the thought "More food is bad for me". Or, in other words, I had the thought that more food meant I was less healthy. And this wasn't because of the way I was raised. It's because I grew up surrounded by diet culture. And many of you will have a similar experience. I at one point when I was young had the thought, "More food is bad". And I repeated this thought so often, because of the information I was consuming at the time, that I developed a belief system that "More food is bad". So I started acting as such. I began restricting my food intake. When I ate under a certain amount of calories for a week I would think to myself "Wow. I was really good this week". And this all came from the belief that "More food is bad". Or that "I should aim to eat less". And into adulthood this became a real problem. I had major resistance when it came time to allow myself to eat more. And it's just because of a single thought that became a belief system. Alright? So I hope this makes sense. If you grew up with the "cleaning your plate" mentality, and at every meal you were taught that you had to finish your meal no matter what, you likely have created some food beliefs because of that. And here are beliefs that may have been created from this "clean your plate" mentality. You may believe "It's wrong to waste food" or "There is not enough food". And these two thoughts are the most common I see with women who were raised with the "clean your plate" mentality. And where these types of thoughts really stem from are from food scarcity. So this is the mindset of there not being enough food, right? And that it's wrong to waste any food that is available to you. And that if you don't clean your plate, there is someone else out there in the world who is suffering because of it. In a sense, right? We will feel that sense of guilt. And I want to

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mention, that I'm not saying these beliefs are right or that they are wrong. You may want to believe that "It's wrong to waste food", right? I am not telling you that this belief is wrong. The point here is to really observe if your food beliefs, from that "clean your plate" mentality, are actually serving you. Because for most of you, they will not be serving you. They will not be serving your eating habits now. And here's why. I want you to really observe what it feels like to have the thoughts "It's wrong to waste this food" or "There is not enough food". I want you to observe, when you think this thought, what emotion comes up in your body? With this type of belief? "It's wrong to waste this food" or "There's not enough food". For me, the emotions that come up are guilt, shame, and overwhelm. If I'm sitting down with a plate of food, and I've reached the point of fullness. And then these thoughts come up where I feel like I have to keep eating because of the belief "It's wrong to waste food", I feel guilt, shame, and overwhelm. It feels very heightened, survival-based, and uncomfortable. It most definitely produces a stress-response in my body. Because I'm in this food scarcity when I'm having these beliefs. And if you're eating your meals from this place, from these types of emotions, your eating habits will reflect it. There are common characteristics I notice as a coach with the women who have this "clean your plate" mentality. So these are things you can look out for with yourself to examine whether you're having this food scarcity. So, I will notice that women with this mindset tend to feel very satisfied when they get more food for less money. Because of the belief that "it's wrong to waste food" or "that there's not enough food". So they tend to gravitate towards buffets, large meals at restaurants, free food at work – all of those opportunities where food is in abundance. And it seems kind of contradictory, right? With this "clean your plate" mentality, we can have the thought that "it's wrong to waste food and that there's not enough of it. ". Which promotes the belief that food is scarce. So, these women will tend to gravitate towards experiences where food

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is in abundance. But interestingly enough these instances usually create more opportunities for food to be quote unquote "wasted". So, hopefully that makes sense. But it's really interesting to think about. But anyways, yes. These women will gravitate towards experiences where food is in abundance. They will tend to overeat when they get access to a surplus of food. They will often pride themselves in never wasting food. They see finishing your meal as a kind of moral obligation. Like if they don't then that means something negative about them. They will often be the ones to eat leftovers of friends or family. And there's no one-size-fits-all way to have a "clean your plate" mentality. So, you don't have to have all of these characteristics to have those beliefs. But these are just the most common examples I see with my clients. When they're living with the belief that "It's wrong to waste food, because there's not enough of it." then this is how it often shows up in their eating habits. The big problem with this mentality is that it creates a scarcity mentality around food that "there is never enough" of it. When you believe this, you will constantly be telling your brain, that you need more food because there's not enough. Which tells your body to hold onto fat and promote weight gain, because it thinks food is in short supply. It's sending those stress signals to your body that a famine is about to occur. So it's going to do whatever it needs to do to protect you from that famine and keep you alive.

And, I'll also mention, that this "clean your plate" mentality, this scarcity thinking around food, is totally separate from how much food you actually have access to. I will have many women who work with me, who are very comfortable financially. They have no problem providing themselves or their families with an abundance of food. But belief systems are established regardless of our circumstances. Those scarcity thoughts on food, if they're established since childhood, will still be there regardless of where you're at in your life now. Regardless of the amount of food you're able to put on the table.

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So, know that. And understand that this is why it's important that you're confronting these belief systems head on. They will not fix themselves by changing your outside circumstances. They will persist in the background of your mind if you're not having awareness over them. Which will mean, they will keep affecting your eating habits long-term. So, really awareness of this mentality is the most crucial step to changing it. If you're noticing any of these beliefs with food present for you now, this is good news. Because it means, you're one really big step closer to solving for them.

Now, I want to go back to what I said earlier, that there's nothing inherently wrong with the belief that "It's wrong to waste food", right? I on some level do believe that "It's wrong to waste food". But it's not in a way that's not serving my eating habits. Because here's the difference. I believe that. But not at the expense of my own body or my own health. And this is the place I want you to get to. Where you're able to stand strong in your food beliefs. But you're able to do so in a way that isn't compromising your goals with your health or body. And there is a way you can work with that part of your brain that thinks it's wrong to waste food. Logically, you can just decide that you're going to make an effort not to waste food. You can decide that you're going to make less of that dinner next week that you know you made too much of this week. You can decide to box up half of your meal at the restaurant so you can eat it for lunch tomorrow. You can decide to donate cans of food to charity to give back. This is the more tactical side of it, right? There's no strong, urgent, negative emotion here. We're not believing "It's wrong to waste food" from a place of guilt or shame. It's having this type of belief from a place of gratitude, service, and empowerment. Instead of believing "It's wrong to waste food" when you sit down at a meal, you can instead think, "How can I best make use of the food on my plate?". Sometimes just bringing it back to our logic really serves us here. And then, what you can also do, which is the most important, is to honor your fullness, always. So, the most common struggle I see with women who have

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food scarcity is that they neglect their natural fullness cues. They ignore them because their belief that “wasting food is bad” outweighs their body telling them to stop eating. And I want you to really observe if this is what's happening for you. Have compassion for it, if it is happening, right? And then kindly tell yourself, “No. We're going to practice honoring what our body needs right now”. And then from this decision you can then logically ask yourself that question, “How can I best make use of this food on my plate?”. You can logically think of ways you can save the food on your plate for later – whatever you need to do – to prevent yourself from wasting food. So, it's this balance of honoring your natural fullness no matter what, and logically doing what you can so you're not wasting food. Because that's important to you. It's all a balance my friends. It's all about working with the beliefs you have now that aren't serving you, and tweaking them so they do serve you. Especially when it comes to your eating habits. And sometimes it's just about reminding yourself, when you're in food scarcity, that you don't have to hold onto food at the expense of your health. We can always find ways to waste less food and to honor those well-meaning morals that we have. But if it's ever at the expense of your own health, that's when it's time to dig in and see what's really going on there. And then ask yourself how you can shift the beliefs you already have in a way that is most effective and that serves you? Alright. I know this was a very different and in-depth way of looking at this topic of cleaning your plate and everything that goes on with that mentality. I hope this was helpful for you today. And I'll talk to you next week.