

Is the economy making you fat?

As stocks drop, our scales are rising. Avoid recession pounds with our sanity-saving plan.

By Hallie Levine Sklar

Photograph by Bill Diodato

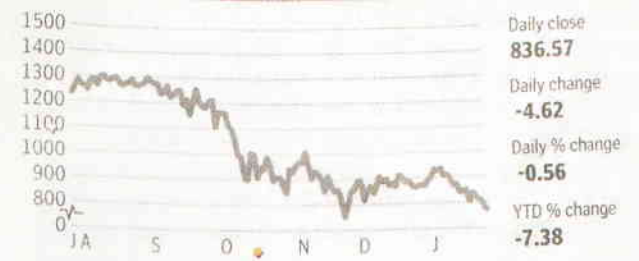
Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have a co-conspirator in the war on your well-being: Duncan Hines. During stressful times, overeating is practically our national therapy. In fact, nearly 50 percent of people say they soothe frayed nerves with unhealthy meals, according to a survey by the American Psychological Association in Washington, D.C. Ultimately, calorie overload—and the weight that results—only adds to our feelings of helplessness.

The solution: Take control of your diet. “You don’t have power over the financial markets, but you have complete autonomy when it comes to your eating,” says Heather Bauer, R.D., of New York City. Curbing your binges will also give you a sense of confidence—which may carry over to how you handle your finances. We found four women in dire need of diet makeovers and helped them learn to manage financial stress without Mallomar meltdowns. Read on >>> for their winning strategies.

NASDAQ COMPOSITE INDEX



STANDARD & POOR'S 500



20 Most Widely Held Stocks

Company	Last	Daily %Chg.	YTD %Chg.	Company	Last	Daily %Chg.	YTD %Chg.
AT&T Inc	26.83	+2.7	-5.0	Microsoft	30.00	+2.0	-8.7
AlcatelLuc	2.04	+3.0	-1.0	Amazon.com	1.00	+0.5	+8.8
Apple Inc	89.64	+1.0	-1.0	Bank of America	1.00	+0.5	+1.0
BkofAm	6.00	+0.5	-1.0	BlackBerry	1.00	+0.5	+1.0
Cisco	16.30	+0.5	-1.0	Facebook	1.00	+0.5	+1.0
Citigrp	3.33	+0.5	-1.0	Google	1.00	+0.5	+1.0
Disney	20.86	+0.5	-1.0	IBM	1.00	+0.5	+1.0
ExxonMbl	72.60	+0.7	-1.0	Intel	1.00	+0.5	+1.0
GenElec	12.42	+3.2	-1.0	Oracle	1.00	+0.5	+1.0
HewlettP	35.57	0.6	-1.0	SAP	1.00	+0.5	+1.0

Foreign Stock

52-wk. High	52-wk. Low
2200	2000
3200	3000
7350	7000
15100	14000
32100	30000

Interest Rates

Bank Prime	3.25
Federal Funds	0.00-0.25
LIBOR 3-month	1.17
Fannie Mae 30-yr. Mort.	4.53
Money Market Fund	1.52
3-month Bank CD	1.51

Set aside the paper: All those downers make you crave carbs.



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>> THE STRESS GOBLER

Emily Stern, 28, editor in New York City
Pounds gained since the market tanked: 15

Carb-heavy suppers calmed Stern while her company downsized but cost her a jeans size. And although she kept her job, she inherited the work of her laid-off colleagues. "After a long day, I'll watch TV while noshing on cheese and have a big spaghetti dinner."

Plan for pasta. Stern craves carbs at night because they lift serotonin levels—which makes her feel relaxed, Bauer says. Rather than ditch carbs altogether, Stern should seek balance, Bauer suggests, by choosing protein-and-produce-based breakfasts and lunches and saving healthy carbs such as brown rice or whole-wheat bread for dinner. "It's easier to resist temptation in the morning, and you'll want the comfort at night," Bauer says. Plus, including lean protein such as dairy, fish, beans or tofu at every meal will fill her up, so she'll eat smaller portions of starch.

Limit your triggers. Finding a relaxing, unplugged postdinner activity such as reading, journaling or taking a walk may help Stern say good-bye to her late-night snack habit, which is tied to television watching, says Jennifer Loudon, a personal coach on Bainbridge Island, Washington. Stern can also fill her fridge with portion-controlled versions of her favorite snacks. A Laughing Cow Mini Babybel Light (50 calories, 3 grams fat) will satisfy her hankering for cheese without completely blowing her calorie budget.

THE CHEAP EATER

Paige Donner, 41, writer in Los Angeles
Pounds gained since the market tanked: 15

Unsteady pay and fewer assignments have turned this freelance journalist into a bona fide food bargain hunter. "I'm buying whatever organic food is on sale, whether it's healthy or not," she says. "Last night I was making macaroni and cheese, thinking, Am I so broke that I'm really eating this?" Donner also often goes nearly all day without eating. "I won't plan ahead and then realize it's been eight hours since my last meal, but stopping for a green salad seems too expensive."

Redefine cheap eats. Donner equates healthful food with high-end salads and smoothies, and nothing else, says Jackie Newgent, R.D., of New York City. "Don't shy away from inexpensive canned and frozen produce and protein. It's packed at its peak and can last up to a year," she says. Try canned beans, peas, salmon and tomatoes, and stock up during sales. Create your meals around these nutritious foods, rather than indiscriminately buying whatever is marked down.

Stash snacks. "It's best to have smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day, rather than one big meal at night," Newgent says. Using this strategy can help Donner avoid starving all day, which sets her up to overdo it come dinnertime. Donner should eat a healthful breakfast such as oatmeal and then pack a

few protein-rich mini-meals such as whole-wheat crackers with hummus or a homemade trail mix containing dried fruit and nuts and munch every three hours to stay satiated and energized.

THE BURNED-OUT BINGER

Natasha Fenster, 33, real estate agent in Stamford, Connecticut
Pounds gained since the market tanked: 45

This overworked mom juggles two jobs while raising her sons, ages 3 years and 10 months. "I'm so exhausted and depressed that I eat and eat and eat," Fenster says. "I was stunned to realize I've regained all the weight I lost after my two pregnancies."

Make breakfast in a flash. Fenster eats a bagel with peanut butter or Nutella nearly every morning. "They're cheap and convenient," she says. But they're also weighing her down: A bagel with 2 tbsp Nutella adds up to 540 calories! Newgent suggests starting the day with a 150-calorie English muffin and a scrambled egg instead: "Once a week, while the kids sleep, Fenster can cook a skillet of eggs, put them into the muffins and freeze them." She can nuke one low-cal combo each A.M. for a punch of filling (cheap!) protein.

Break the stress cycle. The more worried Fenster feels, the more carelessly she eats. When she panics about her finances, she should write down her specific fears and research solutions,

Loudon says. (Find answers to common money woes on page 154.) Once she gathers information, life will feel more manageable. Fenster can also stop buying treats and instead set out bowls of fresh fruit so she has lean bites on hand when she needs a nosh.

THE SOCIAL GLUTTON

Rebecca Collins, 28, student in Newtown, Pennsylvania
Pounds gained since the market tanked: 5

Collins headed east from Los Angeles to begin a career in green consulting, but her switch was ill-timed. "No one is hiring," she says. She lives at her parents' home to cut costs and spends much of her downtime overeating. "I can't resist my mom's home cooking," she says. After long days of job hunting, Collins goes out to dinner and drinks with pals to lift her spirits, which hurts her wallet and her waist.

Put on your chef's hat. "One pitfall of moving home is we regress to childhood behavior, which for Rebecca means letting her mom do the cooking," says Willow Jarosh, R.D., of New York City. Collins should shop with Mom to take ownership of her own eating and cook calorie-conscious fare for the family, such as veggie and bean burritos or chicken stir-fry.

Host a healthy happy hour. "We tend to drink more when we're stressed because it relaxes us. But it loosens inhibitions and stimulates appetite," Loudon says. Support is crucial, so Collins should throw a healthy potluck or work out with pals and, when she goes out, pick lighter fare such as sushi and sip seltzer. Her bank account and her body will benefit. ■

A DOZEN SMART BITES FOR UNDER A BUCK

Toss 99-cent noodle packs aside and score these frugal yet healthy staples instead. —Merritt Watts

BROWN RICE 22¢ per ½ cup
 Women who eat more whole grains tend to weigh less, studies show.

RAISINS 27¢ per 1½-oz box
 Snack on these antioxidant-rich sweets or toss them into salads.

SNAP PEAS 28¢ per cup
 Net nearly half of your daily veggies for a little more than a quarter.

GREEN TEA 31¢ per bag
 Brew polyphenol-packed tea instead of buying bottled to save \$1 per cup.

BROCCOLI 33¢ per cup
 Steam this cancer fighter and add to stir-fries or serve as a side.

PLAIN YOGURT 37¢ per ½ cup
 Buy a 32-oz tub and mix a portion with fruit for a high-calcium snack.

BANANAS 39¢ each
 Their potassium helps lower blood pressure and protects bones.

BLACK BEANS 42¢ per cup
 Drain and rinse canned legumes to enjoy 15 g protein per tasty cup.

WHOLE-WHEAT PENNE 50¢ per serving
 Top with jarred tomato sauce for a cheap meal in minutes.

APPLES 71¢ each
 Flavonoids in apples may help your heart, and one has only 100 calories.

LENTILS 80¢ per cup
 One satisfying serving supplies 35 percent of your daily iron needs.

SWEET POTATOES 99¢ each
 They offer filling fiber (4 g per spud) and vision-guarding beta-carotene.