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**Feeding Feelings: Survey Reveals Americans Are Turning to Junk Food When Stressed**

*Fitness and Diet Expert Bob Greene's Solution to Cope — Eat Healthy, Crunchy Foods and Exercise More*

**CHICAGO, (June 3, 2009)** – As financial insecurity mounts and stress levels rise, Americans are paying more attention to their bottom lines than their waistlines. In fact, a recent survey commissioned by Wasa Crispbread found that nearly 50 million people<sup>1</sup> – nearly a quarter (22 percent) of Americans, 18 years and older - admit they've been eating less healthy than normal during the last six months due to the economy. And 64 percent of Americans who eat while stressed typically reach for junk foods – likely the saltiest, sweetest or highest-calorie options.

According to the Wasa survey, Americans know they should be eating healthier - 79 percent even said they would prefer food with health benefits over an indulgence like ice cream if they were stranded on a desert island. But despite knowing what they should eat, evidence shows that Americans are losing the battle of mind over munchies. Fitness and diet expert Bob Greene believes there are simple steps people can take to break the emotional eating cycle.

“The Wasa survey showed that when it comes to eating, most people (64 percent) feel that being mentally satisfied is just as important as being physically satisfied. But when people get depressed, sad or frustrated, they tend to crave and choose foods they think will provide emotional comfort but merely set themselves up for guilt and added pounds later on,” said Greene. “To feel better in the long run, both mentally and physically, people should instead adopt a healthy lifestyle and incorporate a variety of nutritious foods and plenty of exercise.”

To get back on track, Greene recommends:

- **Choose nutritious, filling foods that crunch**

- Fifty-six percent of those surveyed felt crunchy foods, more than any other texture of food, left them feeling the most satisfied. Crunchy, high-fiber, whole grain foods can provide great mental and physical satisfaction. Crunching can also help relieve stress and studies have shown that the action of chewing longer, which is required by most crunchy foods, can aid in satiety<sup>2,3</sup>.
- Some healthy examples I recommend include almonds, carrots, a few tablespoons of granola and Wasa Crispbreads – the whole grain crackers that can be enjoyed as a snack or bread replacement at meal time, with any variety of healthy topping. The whole grain and fiber in Wasa, combined with its crunchy texture, help you feel full and keep you satisfied longer.

- **Add variety to your meal and snack options**
  - The survey showed that 40 percent of Americans would consider improving their diets if there were a larger variety of healthy foods to get on track
  - Delicious food combinations that provide fiber, whole grains, crunch and variety will help keep you motivated and satisfied. One of my favorite Best Life Diet recipes is *Margherita Pizza on Wasa Sourdough Crispbread*, which combines Wasa, mozzarella, tomato and basil and only takes around five minutes to prepare. Check out [www.wasa-usa.com](http://www.wasa-usa.com) to find many other healthy and delicious recipes to add variety to your diet.
- **Stock your "stress areas" with healthy snacks**
  - Don't succumb to unhealthy cravings when the pressure starts to get to you. If the office is where you feel the most stress, then keep a healthy snack at your desk and skip the trip to the vending machine.
  - Smart options include fruit, such as grapes and oranges, a few teaspoons of peanut butter spread on a Wasa Crispbread or two to three tablespoons of nuts
- **Exercise more**
  - Daily exercise can help to alleviate stress, curb cravings and leave you feeling and looking better
  - Stash a pair of sneakers in a desk drawer or closet at the office so you're ready to squeeze in some exercise whenever you have a free 10 minutes. Go for a walk around the parking lot or climb stairs in your building.
  - If you want to do some simple strength training, try exercises like calf raises or lunges, or invest in a fitness band to do moves like bicep curls and tricep extensions

Other highlights from the survey include:

- More women than men (26 percent vs. 18 percent) have indulged in more unhealthy foods than usual due to economic stress in the last six months. But in general, more men than women (40 percent vs. 34 percent) reach for junk food when snacking.
- Proving people know what they're *supposed* to eat, 92 percent agree that when they eat healthy foods they feel better about themselves, yet 63 percent confess they're not as healthy as they would like to be
- Sixty-three percent say that how they feel is the most important factor in determining how close they are to their health goals (more important than how they look - 10 percent - or doctor's advice – 14 percent)
- Almost all (92 percent) respondents try to diversify their diets by adding healthy ingredients such as whole grains and fiber
- Seventy-seven percent find it a challenge to incorporate healthy foods into their diets

### **About Wasa**

All-natural Wasa Crispbread makes eating healthy easy. Wasa is the perfect solution for those who turn to food in times of stress, since the mild-tasting Crispbread can be paired with healthy toppings for a combination that is mentally and physically satisfying and uniquely their own. Wasa can be used in place of morning toast, crumbled into soup or with their choice of dip during any meal or snack occasion. The options are as endless as they are nutritious and delicious.

Available in 10 varieties, including Crisp'n Light Mild Rye and Whole Grain (two new flavors hitting store shelves in July 2009), versatile Wasa Crispbread is made with wholesome ingredients, caters to the demand for diet diversity and can be enjoyed for breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack.

Wasa wants to know how consumers are enjoying Wasa Crisbreads. Consumers can visit [www.wasa-usa.com](http://www.wasa-usa.com) to be inspired by delicious, appetizing ideas and enter the *How Do You Wasa?* Sweepstakes every day for a chance to win a \$1,000 Grand Prize cash card or **instantly win** a \$400 cash card and spa robe package.

Since 1919, Wasa has been the world's most renowned (and largest) baker of all-natural, high-fiber, low-fat crispbread. As for its name, Wasa founder Karl Lundström was inspired by the Swedish word *vase*, meaning *sheaf*, which in turn refers to plant material, like wheat, bound together (whole grain rye is the primary ingredient for most Wasa crispbreads). Based in Stockholm, Sweden, since 1999 Wasa has been owned by the Barilla Group. Wasa products are baked in facilities in Fillipstad, Sweden; Hamar, Norway; and Celle, Germany, and sold in 40 countries throughout the world.

### **About the Wasa Survey**

The Wasa Satisfaction Survey was conducted by Kelton Research between February 10 and February 23, 2009 using Random Digit Dialing of listed and unlisted numbers. Quotas were set to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total U.S. population ages 18 and over. More than 1,000 people were surveyed. Results of any sample were subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. In this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 3.1 percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

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<sup>1</sup>Approximation based on the estimated 225 million adults ages 18 and older, currently living in the United States

<sup>2</sup>Murakami et al, "Hardness (difficulty of chewing) of the habitual diet in relation to body mass index and waist circumference in free-living Japanese women aged 18-22," *Am J Clin Nutr* 2007; 86:206-13

<sup>3</sup>Cassady BA, Hollis JH, Fulford AD, et al. Mastication of almonds: effects of lipid bioaccessibility, appetite, and hormone response. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2009; 89:794-800.