

Eating Out the Healthy Way

While people are trying to become more health conscious when eating out, many restaurant meals are higher in calories than home-cooked versions. These tips can help you make quick, healthy decisions when eating out, which will allow you to enjoy your food without excess calories!

Choosing the restaurant

- Choose restaurants that offer healthy options, such as grilled and broiled meats, and healthy side items, such as fruits and vegetables
- Avoid buffets, if possible, where people tend to overeat and you cannot take home food for future meals
- Look for lunch or early bird specials, so you can eat at establishments with healthier options for less

Choosing menu items

- Scan the menu for a “lighter,” “low-calorie,” or “healthy option” section, but do not let the name fool you; read the menu descriptions:
 - Look for good words such as baked, roasted, grilled, broiled, steamed, cooked in its own juices, marinara/tomato sauce, choice/select cuts of meat, and broth- or tomato-based soups
 - Order items less frequently that use words such as fried, sautéed, batter dipped, breaded, au gratin, scampi, Alfredo, cooked with butter or cream, gravy, prime cuts of meat, and cream-based soups
- Consider ordering a salad if you are searching for a healthy alternative, which is usually better than most entrees:
 - Ask for dressing on the side
 - Request reduced amounts of high-calorie options, such as cheese
- Look at the entrée menu, which sometimes contains the only healthy options at a restaurant. See if you can mix and match an appetizer with a side salad, soup, or another healthy option
- Ask someone to split a higher-calorie entrée or dessert with you, if you want to order one, so you can enjoy the food while having half the calories

Ordering

- Ask the waiter how items are prepared or served
 - Are the vegetables buttered? If so, can I get them steamed with no butter?
- Request toast and baked potatoes dry, or with spreads and toppings on the side

- Substitute vinegar, lemon, salsa, plain yogurt, or low-calorie salad dressings for higher-calorie dressings and toppings
- Tell your waiter to “hold the mayo” and put sauces, salad dressings, and other high-fat extras on the side, and use them sparingly
- Choose a side green salad, steamed vegetable, baked potato, or fruit cup in place of the coleslaw, potato salad, or chips which normally come with a meal
- Order smaller portions, such as half the rice or a small order of French fries, instead of the standard medium portion that accompanies most value meals
- Opt for the more basically prepared dishes, such as baked or broiled chicken, instead of ordering something that you are not sure about the ingredients, such as a casserole, stew, or other mixed dish

Dining

- Avoid overeating by drinking a tall glass of water before you start eating, and drink several glasses during your meal
- Request a to-go container immediately when your food arrives if you receive a large portion, and put half away before you start eating—two meals for the price of one
- Share a large meal or dessert with someone
- Do not have high-calorie dressings, gravies, or creamy sauces served directly on top of your food:
 - Have them served on the side instead
- Ask the waiter to remove your plate as soon as you feel full to prevent picking at it
- Request that your waiter remove the bread/chip basket or place it out of your reach, if you find yourself snacking too much
- Eat slowly, put your fork down between bites, and chew well