

Eating Right While Dining Out

► Eating out has become a part of many families' daily routines. How can you incorporate healthy eating when dining out? The following tips might help.

Make a plan before you go out.

Healthy food options can be found almost anywhere. Selecting your meal ahead of time can reduce the temptation of unhealthy options. Most restaurants make their menu, along with nutrition information, available online. You can use this information to help you choose a healthy option before you arrive.

Don't go hungry.

If you're hungry before you leave for the restaurant, eat a delicious piece of fruit or another small snack. Another healthy option is a cup of broth-based soup or a small salad. Those buttery rolls or bread baskets won't be as tempting before your entrée arrives.

Be mindful of portion size.

Many food establishments have become aware of the importance of portion size and low calorie menu options, but some have not. If portion sizes are large, share with a friend or ask for a take home box for a meal at another time. Always right size, never supersize.

Watch your condiments.

If you must have butter, cheese, toppings, salad dressings, sauces, and gravies with your meal, request them as a side item. You should control the amount you eat, not the food establishment. Ask for low-calorie, low-fat options to help with your calorie and fat intake.

Don't be afraid to ask questions.

It's all right to ask how a dish was prepared. Inquire if changes or substitutions can be made to your order. If you have a dietary restriction, inform your server and ask if the chef can adjust menu items to meet your needs.



Drink smart.

Choosing the wrong beverage can add unwanted extra calories. Do you want a drink that's healthy, filling, and has no calories? If so, order water or sparkling water with a lemon. Order unsweetened tea or other drinks without added sugar. If you must have a soft drink, order a small or sugar-free one. Keep in mind that alcoholic beverages may have more calories than you expect. They can stimulate your appetite, which can lead to unhealthy choices.

Pay attention to the description.

The wording on menus can tell you how food is prepared. If it's described as grilled, broiled, or steamed, this indicates that it's likely a healthier choice. Words such as fried, breaded, smothered, crispy, or creamy usually means that meals are high in fat and calories. A simple word or phrase can help you identify whether you make a healthier decision.

Use good manners.

A great way to cut calories is to be mindful of your manners. Take your time eating. This will help with digestion and you'll feel full before overeating. Chew your food thoroughly and put your fork down between bites. Share an appetizer, meal, or dessert to save calories and money.

Follow the 80 percent rule.

Eat until you're 80 percent full. Many people were taught to eat until the plate is clean. People should only eat until we're no longer hungry. The 80 percent rule is a great way to accomplish this. Push the plate away and save any leftovers for a later meal or snack.

Incorporate some physical activity.

You can make physical activity a part of your eating out plan. Choose a restaurant that's a 10- or 15-minute walk away. A quick walk before a meal gives you time to talk and enjoy your company. A leisurely stroll afterwards can help with digestion and burn a few calories.

Healthy choices can be found when dining out if you know what you are looking for. Restaurants offer healthy and unhealthy options. It's up to you to decide which is best for you. Choose wisely, plan ahead, and make your meal a delicious and nutritious one.



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