



How to make healthier choices when eating out - April/May 2013

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Eating out these days can be a minefield when trying to eat healthily, portion sizes have increased and with so many fast food restaurants we are spoilt for choice but all it takes is a little thought and some useful tips and you too could be making healthy choices. This health article will help you to make those choices.

How to make healthier choices when eating out

Most restaurants recognize that many people would like healthier options and are happy to accommodate your preferences if they value your custom, so if you don't ask they will never know!

Moderation and sensibility is key to success when eating out, here are a few tips to achieving your goal when faced with dining out.

- **Avoid oversized portions**

If you have eaten in restaurants in recent years you would have noticed that the portion sizes have increased, so to avoid overeating:

- Remember that you don't have to clear your plate no one will be offended if you leave some
- Maybe have a couple of starters instead of a main meal
- Avoid filling up with bread before your meal

- Share a meal with your companion
- Avoid 3 courses, settle for less
- Stop when you are full

2. Careful what you order at a Fast-Food restaurant

Sometimes it is difficult to avoid Fast-food restaurants and they can be difficult when choosing healthy options, but if you're careful, you can occasionally enjoy a fast-food meal while sticking to a fairly healthy diet

Keep these tips in mind when you're ordering on the run:

- Take time to read the nutrition information so that you can make healthier selections.
- Seek out the healthier options that many fast-food restaurants have, such as grilled chicken, whole-wheat bread, low-fat milk and yogurt.
- Don't order extra-large portions. If you can bear to, order a children's size meal, or at least a regular size.
- Be aware that salads aren't necessarily as healthy as they may sound if covered with dressings, so choose a healthy option such as olive oil.
- Choose items that are grilled, broiled or steamed. Avoid those that are fried or battered.
- For drinks, stick to water, fizzy water, reduced-fat milk, decaffeinated tea or coffee.
- Only have one glass of wine and avoid having that extra one.
- Go easy on condiments such as dressing, ketchup, cheese sauce, mayonnaise and others that are high in salt and fat.

3. Cut down on saturated fats (animal fats)

You can still enjoy your food while cutting down on saturated fats

Select foods prepared with healthier cooking techniques - steaming, grilling, broiling, baking, roasting, poaching or stir-fry

Trim off any visible fat from meat or poultry and keep portion size small

Skip rolls or bread so that you avoid having any butter

Ask that your food be prepared with olive oil, rather than butter or fat.

4. Be aware of any hidden salt

As salt often enhances flavor it is often used a lot in restaurants but you can still take steps to control salt when dining out:

Remember to:

- Ask that your food be prepared without added salt, MSG or salt-containing ingredients.
- Be alert for ingredients, cooking styles and labels that indicate a dish may be high in salt, such as pickled, cured, smoked, soy sauce and broth.
- Avoid adding salt to your meal
- Limit or avoid condiments such as mustard, ketchup, pickles and sauces that are high in salt.
- Opt for fruits and vegetables instead of salty appetizers or snack foods.
- So as you weigh up your options be aware of the choices you can make, here are a few more to help you.
- Drinks - water, soda, diet soda, fruit juice, herbal tea. If Alcoholic drinks stick to moderation, one drink a day for women, two a day for men.
- Choose appetizers with raw chopped vegetables, fruits or fish with lemon juice instead of cocktail sauce. Avoid fried and breaded appetizers.
- Soups - careful of broths or tomato-based soups, which maybe high in salt or chowders and creamed soups that, may contain more fat. Before ordering soup, ask how it's prepared.
- Salads - mixed salads are a good option; avoid ones with salad dressings, ask for dressing on the side, limit you to one spoonful and stick to low-fat varieties. Ask what varieties of vinegar and olive oil are available.
- Breads - skip the bread course if possible or just one piece and choose wholemeal or seeded bread. Muffins, and croissants generally have more calories and fat.
- Entrees - choose a baked, broiled, grilled, poached, roasted or steamed entree. Ask that dishes be prepared without extra salt, butter or oil. Meats and vegetables sautéed or stir-fried in a small amount of oil, broth or water are usually lower in fat. Avoid entrees that are fried, fricasseed or creamed, and steer clear of stuffed, buttered, breaded or basted entrees, as well as gravies.
- Side dishes - choose vegetables or salad. Baked potatoes, boiled new potatoes and rice also may be good options. Skip the chips, potato chips and onion rings, as well as vegetables slathered in cheese or cream sauces.
- Condiments - choose fresh tomato, cucumber and lettuce for sandwiches. Avoid pickles, sauerkraut, ketchup and mayonnaise due to their salt, sugar and fat content; try pepper or lemon juice in place of salt.
- Desserts - Skip if possible but if you can't resist choose fresh fruit, sorbet or yoghurt.