



Restaurant Tips

Taking Control

In today's world, it may not be realistic to stop eating out completely. Instead, you can learn how to take control of your dining choices. Don't simply accept what restaurants have to offer. Learning to make informed decisions and special requests will help restaurant food fit into your healthy eating plan. Take control with the following steps:

Evaluate your restaurant choices. Before choosing a restaurant, think about what it specializes in. If the restaurant advertises "out of this world" French fries, cheese sticks or onion rings, steer clear. Choose restaurants that specialized in fresh foods like salads, whole-grain breads, and grilled or broiled meats and seafood.

Avoid the menu. Decide what you want in advance; then ask your server if they can make it for you. Most restaurants are willing to accommodate special requests when they have the ingredients on hand. Avoid foods described as fried, buttery or creamed.

Look up menu items on the internet. Most chain restaurants have web sites where you can find calorie and fat information for each menu item, or at least descriptions. Find out what your choices look like before you go out.

Dodge temptation. Once you've found a menu item you enjoy, stick with it. Order the same thing or if you need a change, think of a variation (shrimp instead of chicken or fruit instead of veggies) . If you look at other options, think of ways to make them healthy by avoiding sauces, adding steamed vegetables, or substituting fruit or greens for French fries or chips. Ask your waiter to remove your plate as soon as you feel full to minimize the temptation to eat more. Opt for healthy desserts like sorbet or fruits if you need something sweet at the end of your meal.

Order first. If you have good intentions to order a healthy meal, order before the others in your party. Hearing what they order may tempt you to break your commitment to healthy eating.

Healthier choices. Order foods that are broiled, grilled, stir-fried, roasted, steamed or baked. Order dressings, sauces and gravies on the side. By ordering them separately you can control how much you end up consuming. Order tomato based pasta sauces instead of cream based pasta sauces. Tomato based sauces are lower in calories and fat. Also avoid cream based soups and instead order vegetable or stock based soups.

Portions

You may feel you don't have much say in how much food you'll be served at a restaurant, but you do. Don't accept the standard portion sized offered at restaurants. Speak up!

Split an entrée with your dining companion.

Plan to take food home for a convenient next-day lunch.

Order a la carte to get just what you want and nothing more.

Order appetizer portions for your meal.

Order small plates, half-orders or child's portions.

Ask to be served smaller portions.