

2010 WINTER SHOE REVIEW

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SMART DINING OUT
How to Make
Healthy Choices

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2010
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plus
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CONTRIBUTORS

1. MICHELLE GIBEAULT TRAUB Freelance health writer Michelle Gibeault Traub has been a registered dietitian for 13 years. "I began studying nutrition because I love to eat, and I wanted to learn how to enjoy food while still maintaining my health," she says. As Traub stresses in the article "**Mastering the Art of Dining Out**" (page 56), hunger management is key. As a result, she keeps a small container of nuts in her purse at all times. She also avoids over-eating through regular exercise, including daily yoga (her cat Pip often joins in). You can learn more about Traub at webhealthwriter.com.

2. COURTNEY JOHNSON Freelance writer Courtney Johnson left full-time teaching to pursue a career encompassing her lifelong love of anything sports. She has combined her love of traveling, running and writing for this

issue's Active Getaway article "**A Runner's Paradise**" (page 44) about the Big Island of Hawaii. "A trip to Hawaii is usually associated with relaxation, but for me, I find that I want to see and do more than is ever possible during my visits," she says.

3. HELEN M. RYAN Spinning instructor Helen M. Ryan helps people find their passion and, in the process, discover their hidden



A photograph of a woman in a red t-shirt sitting at a table in a restaurant, eating a meal. She is using a fork and knife. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and the interior of the restaurant. The text is overlaid on the image.

Mastering the Art of Healthy Dining Out

By Michelle Gibeault Traub

No matter how healthy our eating habits are at home something happens when we eat on the go. Blame it on stress, the lack of healthier menu options, or simply a desire to be indulged, but we rarely make healthy choices when dining out. When you consider research shows that nearly half of all money spent on food is spent in restaurants, it's clear that focusing on improving how you eat outside of the home is vital to your overall weight management and wellness goals. Luckily, there are five simple tips that can help you make smarter choices.



1 | COME PREPARED

Healthy eating is a lot like training for a marathon. The more advanced practice and preparation you do, the easier it will be to succeed when the pressure is on. The following strategies will ensure you are always ready to make the best food decisions.

PACK HEALTHY SNACKS. By having healthy options available like fruit, granola bars, trail mix or unsalted nuts you can always keep hunger at bay. Registered Dietitian Janel Ovrut recommends packing portable snacks in your purse, gym bag, office drawer and even in your glove compartment so that they are always available.

SURF THE MENU. What better way to prepare for a restaurant visit than to pick your meal ahead of time? By reviewing a restaurant's website before your visit you can establish a game plan. Most popular restaurants provide nutritional information, and for those that don't you can estimate the potential calories through food database websites like calorieking.com.

MAKE A RESERVATION. If you know you are going to be eating out for dinner, it is often wise to go lighter on your breakfast and lunch. However, using this tactic can be risky. If the waiter makes you, well, wait, you could end up feeling ravenous. To alleviate that risk, make a reservation, and eat your lunch or afternoon snack no more than four hours before your special meal.

TIP

If your time is just too tight for careful planning, then ask the waiter or manager for a healthy suggestion.

2 WATCH FOR WAFLING WILLPOWER

You can walk into a restaurant or party with the best intentions of making a healthy choice. But there are often saboteurs lurking. Be mindful of the following situations that can destroy your plans:

THE FAMISHING FAST. The brain needs a constant source of glucose. When you go for more than four hours without food, your glucose levels drop leaving your mind cloudy and your willpower thrown totally out the window. To avoid this situation, nosh on a few unsalted nuts or a small piece of fruit. Although it may seem counterintuitive because you have the potential to spoil your appetite, remind yourself that too hungry = out of control. The few extra calories you get from a sensible snack will be far less than those you would consume if your hunger becomes unmanageable. Starting a meal with a broth-based soup or garden salad with dressing on the side can help to quickly take the edge off of hunger, making it easier to select a healthy entrée.

SENSORY OVERLOAD. The delicious smells and tempting sights in a restaurant can be overwhelming. Lori Auerbach Sullivan, a consulting dietitian in Connecticut, reminds her clients not to fall victim to the powerful marketing techniques at work. She recommends that they spend as little time as possible reviewing the menu so as not to be persuaded by the mouth-watering photos and delicious descriptions. Ordering a simple dish like baked chicken or fish with vegetables is a safer bet than restaurant creations that have a multitude of ingredients making it impossible to know just how many calories they contain.

TIP

If your willpower is waning recite the mantra “nothing tastes as good as healthy feels.”



“The standard garden salad containing lettuce, tomato, cucumbers and onions is an excellent starter to a meal.”

3 THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK

When searching through a restaurant’s menu, it is no surprise that steering clear of the dessert section is a good idea. But, what might surprise you are the calorie-laden choices in another area of the menu—the drink section. It’s best to stick with water or unsweetened iced tea while steering clear of the following liquid indulgences.

ALCOHOL Nothing wipes out willpower quite like alcohol. With lowered inhibitions, it is much more difficult to resist a slice of cheesecake or a second glass of wine. In addition, alcoholic beverages are deceptive. When served in a big fancy glass, it is very difficult to tell how much you are actually drinking. What appears to be one 5 ounce serving of wine at around 125 calories is likely to be double that amount. Frozen drinks like margaritas, pina coladas or daiquiris can be particularly dangerous since they are typically loaded with sugar and can contain anywhere from 300 to 500 calories depending on how they are made.

COFFEE DRINKS Coffee by itself is a healthy beverage. Once mixed with cream and sugary syrups—not so much. Stick to black coffee whenever possible, or ask for skim milk and add the sugar

yourself remembering that each teaspoon adds approximately 16 calories.

SODA It probably goes without saying that regular sodas are full of unwanted calories and sugar while providing little nutritional value. But, you may not realize that their calorie-free counterparts, diet sodas, can also spell trouble. The sweetness of diet drinks can perpetuate a cycle of craving sweets, which could ultimately leave you reaching for the dessert menu. In addition, the caffeine in most diet sodas makes it more difficult to stay hydrated.

TIP

Want a drink with a little extra pizzazz? Order a glass of seltzer water with a slice of lemon or lime for the sensation of sodium.

4 WATCH FOR POTENTIAL PITFALLS

If you had to choose the food groups that offer the best bets for healthy options, fruits and vegetables would win hands down. When prepared at home, you can rarely go wrong with those low calorie, high fiber, nutritious staples. The same can be said for lean chicken, fish and beef. On their own those foods are healthy options, but with the wrong preparation, the following foods can be calorie killers.

Calorie-Control Tips

- § Immediately cut portions in half to take home for a later meal.
- § Avoid fried foods.
- § Skip high-calorie extras like cheese, cream sauce, butter or bacon.
- § Ask for sauces and dressings on the side and use sparingly. Instead of pouring them on, dip your fork into the dressing or sauce before each bite.
- § Send the bread basket back. Start a meal with a low-calorie soup or salad.

FRUIT SMOOTHIES While a smoothie made at home generally includes just fruit and fruit juice, some smoothies served at restaurants contain added sugar, corn syrup and artificial flavorings. Likewise, they are served in large portions containing anywhere from 300 to 1,000 calories.

SALADS The standard garden salad containing lettuce, tomato, cucumbers and onions is an excellent starter to a meal. Even when topped with a tablespoon of light dressing, it only contains a modest 100 calories. Yet, once topped with bacon, cheese, fried

“Nothing wipes out will-power quite like alcohol.”

chicken strips, full fat dressing and croutons, some salads contain over 1,200 calories. That's enough calories for an entire day!

CHICKEN & FISH Chicken and fish are both excellent sources of lean protein when baked or broiled. However, when covered in batter or fried, they tend to soak up oil, and with it lots of extra calories and fat. Keeping in mind the every teaspoon of oil or butter has roughly 50 calories and 5 grams of fat, it's not hard to understand why fried chicken or fish are unhealthy options.

TIP

Pay attention to the ingredients and how a dish is prepared to truly decipher if a menu item is a healthy choice.

5 REMEMBER LESS IS MORE

Eating out at a restaurant is meant to be a pleasurable experience, and if you are someone who rarely allows yourself the indulgence, then ordering dishes sans sauce or choosing a plain entrée may take the joy out of the experience. In this case, focusing on portion control and truly savoring the meal is a better option.

TAKE HALF HOME. Melissa Nodvin, MS, RD/LD, encourages clients to ask for a takeout box when ordering their meal. Then, when the food arrives, they can simply pack half away for another meal. She also suggests keeping portions small from the start by ordering from the appetizer menu. Some restaurants allow adults to order

from the children's menu, or to split a dinner between two people.

SAVOR EACH BITE. We've been programmed to believe that when our pants get too tight it's time to stop eating. The truth is that we should stop eating well before we get that “about to explode” feeling. In fact, it takes about 30 minutes to truly sense when we are full. It's important to pace yourself so that you don't overindulge before even realizing you are full. Take time to chew each bite and put your fork down between mouthfuls.

TIP

Treat restaurant meals as a luxury and try to limit them to once a week. You'll save calories and money!

Eating outside of the home is inevitable given our busy lives. It is also a source of pleasure, entertainment and an opportunity to socialize. By being prepared and being mindful of menu traps, you can enjoy this pleasurable pastime while still maintaining your health. ■

THE BEST BITES IN SIT-DOWN RESTAURANTS



AMERICAN: grilled salmon or chicken, petite sirloin, vegetables, plain baked potato



ITALIAN: whole-wheat pasta with tomato sauce, baked chicken (no skin), vegetables



MEXICAN: black beans, grilled chicken, Mexican rice, salsa



CHINESE: brown rice, steamed vegetables, steamed chicken, sauce on the side

