



Eating Out at Restaurants and Staying Healthy

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Restaurants are notorious for sneaking in unhealthy ingredients. Some people think that the only way to remain truly healthy is to avoid eating out at most restaurants altogether. Or perhaps you can *only* eat at restaurants that are geared solely towards maintaining health. This simply isn't true!

The truth is that ***with a little research and smart thinking, you can enjoy most restaurants*** from fast food joints up to four-star establishments and still maintain a balanced diet.

Here are some important tips to keep in mind as you continue to enjoy eating out:

- 1. Look for the light menu.** Every restaurant won't have a light menu, but a growing number of chain restaurants are promoting light alternatives without much searching. You may even find light menus up on the fast food board. You'll soon find that ***light doesn't always mean you'll be giving up flavor.***
- 2. Take half your dinner home.** Dinner is served in larger and larger portions all the time. Sometimes your meal won't be unhealthy, but your portion size will be. To avoid overeating, you can simply ask your waiter to serve you half the meal and box up the other half for you to eat for lunch tomorrow.
- 3. Go grilled.** One way to eat smart is to opt for grilled instead of fried items. Fried foods have gobs of additional calories and fat. Grilled chicken or fish make great choices because they're lean proteins as well.
- 4. Avoid drinking extra calories.** If you're watching those calories, don't forget to count the calories that you drink. Drinking soda products or alcoholic beverages while you're out can add calories quite quickly.

- Choose water as an alternative and then you'll only need to worry about the calorie content of your meal.
- 5. Be salad smart.** You can choose a salad as your main dish as a way to eat smart. You'll probably find that there are bigger salads on the menu beyond the house or side salad. Many of them contain a bigger vegetable variety or meat such as chicken.
 - Ask them to serve your salad dressing on the side rather than on the salad. Then the amount of dressing you put on the salad is up to you. When it comes to dressing, ***a little bit can go a long way.*** Here's a tip: avoid the creamy dressings. That's the fatty stuff!
 - 6. Appetizers can make the meal.** If the restaurant serves tasty appetizers, you can order an appetizer as your main dish. If that's not enough food, you might want to order two appetizers. Many times two appetizers will still be less food than a main course selection.
 - 7. Choose healthy sauce.** Be aware of how the sauce is made in the dish of your choosing. If you're eating Italian, for example, choose an option with a tomato-based sauce. This will provide you with a bigger benefit than a cream based alternative. This is also the case when it comes to choosing your soups; avoid the cream based ones if possible.
 - 8. Include fruits and veggies.** You know that fruits and veggies are an important part of your diet at home, so you should continue to seek them out when you're making your selections at a restaurant. Steamed vegetables can be a great side dish, and fruits can likely be ordered in place of a dessert item.

Keep in the mind the same healthy information you use when building your home meals while you're out. Don't be afraid to indulge yourself from time to time, but ***maintain an awareness of your eating habits and portions*** and you can't go wrong.