



## Dine Out Well

### Fast Food Dining Tips

To Make the Most of the Foods Offered at Drive-Through/ Eat 'N Run Establishments:

- Limit the number of deep fried foods, or avoid them altogether. You can also remove the outside chicken skin and breading and enjoy the lean protein within.
- Ask for water when you want to skip the extra sugar and calories, and save some dough. All dining facilities should serve a courtesy cup of plain water, when asked.
- If choosing a beverage besides water, opt for low fat milk (usually the least expensive beverage) or 100% fruit juice. Unsweetened iced tea and coffee are also good options, although their nutrient content is minimal.
- Look for menu options of fresh fruit or vegetables as a side menu offering. Many eateries now offer bags of sliced apples, mandarin oranges and baby carrots. Or, consider bringing your own fresh fruit for dessert.
- Select fast food establishments which cater to healthy food choices, offering some options of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains and 100% fruit juices.
- Check online for nutrient information on the foods at places where you like to dine. Are their low calorie options truly low-cal, or do they just play the game? Entrée salads should be available for 450 or less calories.
- Order small burgers or **grilled** chicken breast sandwiches with lettuce, tomato and onion. Hold the mayo or secret sauce if you have a limited fat or calorie budget. Try adding mustard or low-calorie dressing instead.
- When ordering pizza, try the thin crust pizzas with lots of veggies (i.e. tomatoes, mushrooms, onions, spinach, bell peppers). For meat, skip the cheap, oily pepperoni and opt for ham or Canadian bacon.
- Try small baked potatoes topped with broccoli, chili beans and a garnish of shredded cheese.
- Request a whole grain bun, bread, or tortilla to increase your day's fiber intake. You should be eating 20-35 grams of dietary fiber daily to keep your digestive system toned and help protect you from a number of health problems, including a higher risk of colon cancer. If wanting to avoid extra low fiber carbs and calories, order the smallest size of burger, burrito, or sandwich.
- Look for ways to obtain protective legumes (beans and peas) in your fast food dining. You can request baked beans (BBQ and Chicken-focused eateries), black beans (generally from Tex-Mex menus), and chili beans (such as from Wendy's). In Texas, it's common to find beans offered on menus. They are an inexpensive offering from a business-vantage point and beans continue to be hailed as an all-around good health food.
- Try the "small" or "kid's meal" portion if you must have the cheeseburger, French fries, chicken nuggets, etc. Controlling your portion size can provide a huge calorie savings, and splurging on your favorite items from time to time is okay.

### Dine-in Restaurant Tips

Don't feel embarrassed or afraid to ask how something is prepared. A restaurant's business is customer satisfaction, and they are generally happy to accommodate any special requests. This may include asking for your food to be prepared with little to no added butter or oils or to have your salad dressing or sauces served on the side.

- **Look for terms that indicate low fat preparation:**
  - Steamed
  - Garden fresh
  - In its own juice
  - Roasted
  - Poached
  - Broiled
  - Baked
  - Grilled
  
- **High saturated fat and cholesterol items may include terms such as:**
  - Butter or butter sauce
  - Breaded, batter dipped or tempura
  - Sautéed, crispy, pan-fried or fried
  - Creamed, au gratin, escalloped, cream sauce (i.e. alfredo, hollandaise, etc.) or cheese sauce
  
- **Watch out for items with high sodium content. These terms indicate lots of added sodium:**
  - Pickled
  - Cocktail sauce
  - Soy sauce or teriyaki sauce
  - Smoked
  - In broth or au jus
  - In a tomato base
  - Cured

**Think Green! Salad Bar Advice:**

1. Start with a bed of green. Combine fresh spinach, mixed spring greens, romaine, and dark green leafy lettuce when available.
2. Look over your vegetable options: peas, tomatoes, green onion tops, shredded carrots, fresh broccoli, baby corn cobs, chilies and bell pepper slices... Add a hearty portion of these items.
3. Cottage cheese, shredded cheese, diced ham or turkey, sunflower seeds, and beans are a few common choices which can add protein and other needed nutrients to your salad. Choose light to moderate portions of these selections. You should still be able to see lots of green after these additions!
4. Top with a couple of tablespoons of your favorite dressing. Vinaigrettes are popular and healthy lower calorie options, along with reduced calorie Ranch dressing. Steer clear of the high calorie, high fat “creamy dressings”.
5. Remember that if your goal in choosing a salad is to maximize nutrients with minimal calories, go light on the macaroni and potato salad-type of offerings and be generous with brightly colored veggies.

**Making Dining Out Safer & Healthier**

Eating out is part of many people’s day. Heeding the suggestions below can help make dining out a part of your healthy and balanced lifestyle and can help you avoid food poisoning.

### Focus on Food Safety:

- Check out the current health inspector's score for the restaurants and fast food eateries you enjoy. See the on-line site for the City of Denton at:  
<http://www.cityofdenton.com/pages/mygovplaninsphealthrestaurant.cfm>.
- Be observant of employee's food handling technique and sanitation practices, including the wearing of thin gloves and hair coverings.
- Note whether "hot foods" are actually served warm and whether chilled items (i.e. milk and salads) are served cold.
- Are tables clean? Are there flies or other critters visible which would suggest lack of attention to food sanitation in the kitchen? If so, exit and find yourself a safer place to dine.
- Make sure to store leftover portions in the refrigerator as soon as possible and throw away any foods that have been left at room temperature for more than two hours.
- When reheating leftover food in the microwave, make sure to rotate items to ensure even heating and to check for an internal temperature of 165° F or until hot and steaming. Food should be allowed to stand for a minimum of two minutes before eating.

### Focus on Nutritional Health:

- Most of us should **skip the "value meals"** and opt for a sandwich and milk, juice or water and a possible side of fresh fruit or a salad. Although bargain meals are sometimes a better financial value, the effects on your health are simply not worth it! Even purchasing a "value meal" with the intention of tossing the fries will often lead to temptation that you simply can't resist.
- **Good options for obtaining a delicious meal with variety, while keeping it affordable for your food and calorie budget:**
  - Share your meal; ask for a 2<sup>nd</sup> plate.
  - Order a half portion.
  - Before you start eating, divide your plate of food in half and request a take-home box to make two delicious meals from one.
- **Think "color" when ordering.** Look for the inclusion of colorful vegetables and fruit. Consider asking for a substitute to a side of fries, such as a side salad, a side of steamed vegetables or fresh fruit.
- **Skip the expensive sodas and order water with lemon.** Save some \$\$ and still be able to tip the waiter/ waitress well.

### Cost and Calorie Budgeting:

When you plan to dine away from home or the university dining halls, decide your estimated budget before you go. Otherwise, you'll find yourself ordering richer food than your wallet or body can afford. Also, do a bit of research before you decide on a restaurant. Many establishments now have menus and/or nutrition information online. It can be helpful to make sure that healthy options are available to you wherever you decide to go. This can also help you to avoid restaurants with temptations that you may not be able to say "no" to.

### Additional Reading & Resources

<http://www.healthydiningfinder.com>

<http://www.eatright.org>

<http://www.nutrition4texas.org>

<http://www.cityofdenton.com/pages/mygovplaninsphealthrestaurant.cfm>

[http://www.helpguide.org/life/fast\\_food\\_nutrition.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/life/fast_food_nutrition.htm)

[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose\\_wt/dine\\_out.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/dine_out.htm)

<http://www.cspinet.org/nah/chinese.html>

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=531>

[http://www.uhs.wisc.edu/docs/uwhealth\\_eating\\_out\\_203.pdf](http://www.uhs.wisc.edu/docs/uwhealth_eating_out_203.pdf)

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Factsheets/How\\_Temperatures\\_Affect\\_Food/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Factsheets/How_Temperatures_Affect_Food/index.asp)

*Get With the Program! Guide to Fast Food and Family Restaurants* by Bob Greene. Copyright © 2004 by Bob Greene Enterprises, Inc. Published by Simon & Schuster, Inc.

*Bowes & Church's Food Values of Portions Commonly Used, 18th edition* by Jean Pennington and Judith S. Douglass. Published by Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, 2005