



The SMART CHOICE Guide To

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# DINING OUT

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Making Better Food  
Decisions When  
Going Out To Eat

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HEALTH · FITNESS · NUTRITION

# YOUR CLEAN-EATING GUIDE TO RESTAURANT MEALS

Enjoy your meals ... *and* how you feel later!



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## WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE ABOUT GOING OUT TO EAT?

**All those delicious foods, prepared for you ... and no cleanup!**

Dining out is even more enjoyable when you're in good company with family, friends and loved ones.

But when it comes to nutrition and your health, making your way through a restaurant menu is like walking through a minefield. Many foods contain added fat, salt, sugar and preservatives ... and excess calories. In fact, many meals contain more than enough calories to fuel you for an entire day.

We're committed to helping you achieve results, which is why we created this guide to help you make the best choices no matter what cuisine you're eating. Dining out should be a pleasure ... and not derail all your efforts!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Restaurant Eating	101 - 3
Success Strategies	- 4
Breakfast & Brunch	- 5
Delis & Sandwich Shops	- 6
Coffee Shops	- 7
Burger Joints	- 8
Mexican Food	- 9
Chinese Restaurants	- 10
Steakhouses	- 11
Sushi Bars	- 12
Italian Restaurants	- 13
Fast Food	- 14



# RESTAURANT EATING 101

When you go out to eat, it can be hard to know exactly what's IN the food you're eating. Is it made from scratch at the restaurant, or is it processed with preservatives at a factory and heated up locally?

No matter where it's prepared, study after study shows that restaurant food contains more salt and fat than home-cooked meals ... and also hundreds (if not thousands!) more calories.

In fact, one study showed 92 percent of non-chain restaurant meals had more calories than “typical energy requirements for a single eating session” ... with many of them racking up between 1,205 to 1,670 calories (even salads).

Studies also show that the restaurant environment encourages people to eat more. One study found that when people ate the same restaurant meal at home, they actually ate LESS of it!



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*92 percent of restaurant meals contain more calories than you need to eat at a single meal.*

In the United States, new laws require chain restaurants to show calorie information on their menus. But calories can be only part of the story!

Remember: your mindset is your best asset, especially if you eat out regularly. When we eat at a restaurant, we often think of it as a celebration ... even if it's just a regular meal that happens to be eaten away from home.

When you indulge, make sure it's truly worth it!

This guide contains general tips for eating out no matter where you eat, as well as a cuisine-by-cuisine list of suggestions.

# SUCCESS STRATEGIES

01

## PLAN AHEAD

- Look at the menu online before you leave home and choose what you want to order. Most restaurants post their menus on their websites or social media.
- Find out if the restaurant offers a gluten-free menu. Often, gluten-free options contain fewer grains and more veggies.

02

## BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- Eat a light snack (example: an apple and a couple almonds).
- Drink 8 ounces of water.

03

## AT THE RESTAURANT

- Always order sauce on the side.
- Avoid anything fried or in a cream sauce.
- Choose a protein with 2 vegetables and a healthy fat (such as avocado).
- Order your burger with no bun or on a salad.
- Ask for no added salt.
- Add extra vegetables.
- Instead of pasta, potatoes or rice, ask for a double order of mixed vegetables.







# Breakfast & Brunch

Ordering a healthy, filling breakfast that will keep you going for hours can be a real challenge at some restaurants. These tips will keep you on track!

## *The basics*

- Pack in the protein.
- Include fresh fruits and veggies (including salsa).
- Steer clear of muffins, pastries and pancakes.
- Avoid fried potatoes, eggs and full-fat sausage.
- Skip the cereal bar.
- Stay away from flavored coffee creamers and fruit juice (these are often packed with preservatives and/or tons of sugar).

## *Order up!*

- Greek yogurt with fruit.
- Steel-cut or old-fashioned rolled oats with fruit or a side of scrambled eggs.
- A veggie omelette (hold the cheese!).
- Eggs: scrambled or poached .
- Turkey sausage and a side of eggs and fruit.
- If your restaurant serves whole-food smoothies, choose one that contains some protein, healthy fats and some greens

# Delis & Sandwich Shops

Finding a healthy meal at a deli can be easy. The key: keep it simple with fresh ingredients.

## *The basics*

- Steer clear of overly processed and cured meats.
- Say no to cheese, creamy dressings and mayonnaise.
- Watch out for huge portions of bread (or anything else, for that matter!).
- Remember: It's all about portion control

## *Order up!*

- Choose deli meats that are minimally processed: sliced chicken or roast beef. These tend to have less salt and fewer preservatives.
- If you're going to order a full sandwich, go gluten-free or choose a sprouted grain bread or wrap.
- Another option: order an open-faced sandwich.
- Load up with veggies.
- Use oil and vinegar as your dressing.
- Order a salad instead of a sandwich.







# Coffee Shops

Coffee shops have become a staple in our culture but sometimes their specialized lingo can make it hard to know what to order. If you're confused, check their website for nutrition info.

## *The basics*

- Avoid sugary sweeteners and flavors, which can add hundreds of calories and more than a day's worth of sugar to your intake.
- If you can't go without your favorite flavor, order half the amount.
- Caffeine watch: up to 400 mg a day (4 cups of brewed coffee) is generally considered safe. But you may need to reduce this amount further if you have certain medical condition (for example, high blood pressure).
- Steer clear of the baked goods and pastries. If you use non-dairy "milks," check to see if they contain carageenan, which can upset your stomach and cause bloating.

## *Order up!*

- Cold-brewed iced coffee's mellow richness requires less flavoring, creamer and sugar.
- Experiment with nutmeg, cinnamon and cocoa to help cut back on sugar use.
- Consider mixing it up and ordering tea, which can offer different health benefits. If you want to get something to eat, try oatmeal or order just the egg from an egg

# Burger Joints

It's easy to be tempted by the "extras" at a burger joint. Your best tactic: avoid supersizing and include fresh ingredients!

## *The basics*

- Keep it simple: patty, lettuce and tomato.
- Get rid of the bun (or eat it open-faced) ... many places use factory-made buns that contain preservative your body doesn't need.
- Check to see if the restaurant offers lettuce-wrapped burgers.
- Don't assume turkey burgers are automatically "healthier" or have fewer calories ... if that's your priority, be sure the burger is made from real turkey breast meat!
- Many condiments (ketchup, barbecue sauce, honey mustard) are loaded with high-fructose corn syrup.
- Just say "no" to the fries!

## *Order up!*

- Choose a smaller-sized burger (quarter-pound vs. a half-pound).
- Get grass-fed beef if it's available.
- Load your burger up with veggies.
- Add some fresh guacamole or salsa.
- Enjoy with a side salad.







# Mexican Food

Ordering healthy options at a Mexican restaurant can be surprisingly easy. Focus on fresh, whole foods and stay away from fried meals.

## *The basics*

- Steer clear of the chip basket!
- If you order a drink, skip the sugar-laden margaritas and choose tequila and lime. A typical 10-oz margarita made with a sugary mixer contains more than 450 calories!
- Avoid cheesy apps and entrees.
- Choose fresh toppings and condiments: guacamole, salsa or pico de gallo.
- If you must order something with a tortilla, go for corn as they tend to have fewer calories and less sodium and fat.

## *Order up!*

- Substitute veggies and guacamole for chips and salsa.
- Try a salad (grilled shrimp and black beans is a great combo).
- Order your tacos in a lettuce wrap.
- Grilled fish tacos are a fresh choice.
- When in doubt, grilled fajitas are a safe option.

# Chinese Restaurants

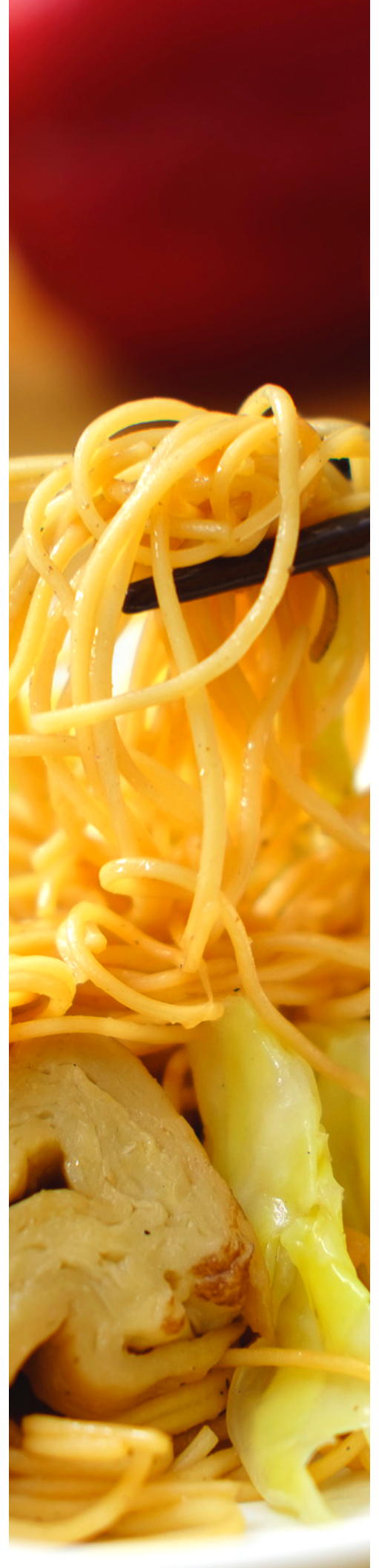
Eating healthy at a Chinese restaurant requires some restraint, especially at a buffet. Be sure to drink extra water to offset all the sodium!

## *The basics*

- Avoid anything that's fried.
- If a meal is typically served with a thick sauce, skip it!
- Breaded items contain unnecessary calories and likely more preservatives.
- Watch your portion sizes. One serving of white rice = the size of your fist.
- Most menu items already come packed with lots of sodium, so you can skip the soy sauce. If you must use some, choose the low-sodium variety.

## *Order up!*

- Start with a broth-based soup (like wonton or hot and sour).
- Whenever possible, choose an entree with lots of veggies.
- If you order an alcoholic beverage, stick with a white wine.
- You can't go wrong with chicken and broccoli or Buddha's delight.
- If you want a healthy meal that feels like a treat, choose shrimp dumplings.







# Steakhouse

Steakhouse menus are packed with healthy choices. Just don't let those appetizers lure you in!

## *The basics*

- Stay away from anything fried ... the (in)famous onion “blossom” contains more than 2,800 calories!
- If you order an appetizer, shrimp cocktail is a good choice.
- Steer clear of the bread basket and rolls. If you must try them, make it only a few bites!
- Baked potatoes can quickly add up to 500 calories if you add toppings.
- Remember: restaurants often put butter on their steaks before they are served.

## *Order up!*

- Order a protein with two veggie sides.
- When possible, choose grass-fed beef.
- Chicken and salmon are also great choices.
- Try a simple peppercorn topping on your steak to avoid excess salt, fat or sugar.
- Ribeye steaks contain 150 percent more fat than sirloin, so if you're looking for a lean cut, sirloin is your top choice.

# Sushi

Sushi restaurants offer some of the healthiest restaurant food but sometimes decoding the menu can be tricky.

## *The basics*

- Order your salad dressing on the side.
- Broth-based soup can help prevent overeating.
- Try not to overdo the rice ... a normal portion is the size of your fist. It adds up quickly!
- Stay away from anything with the word “tempura” in it because that means it’s been breaded and fried.
- If you use soy sauce, choose low-sodium.

## *Order up!*

- Try ordering sashimi (which comes without rice). Salmon sashimi is a great option.
- When possible, order brown rice in your sushi rolls. Brown rice contains more fiber and other nutrients than white rice.
- Salmon-avocado rolls are packed with healthy fats.
- Seaweed salad is a healthy choice, since seaweed is packed with minerals and phytonutrients.
- Not a fan of raw fish? Try an avocado-brown rice roll with a salad and soup.







# Italian Restaurants

Traditional Italian food can be fresh, light and veggie-packed ... but in restaurants, it's often heavy and laden with cheese. Top tip: have a plan in place before you walk through the front door!

## *The basics*

- Skip the breadbasket.
- Be aware of your portion sizes. Pasta calories add up quickly – one serving equals a half-cup, or about the size of your fist.
- Avoid cheesy entrees and cream-based soups.

## *Order up!*

- Start with a big salad with dressing on the side.
- Minestrone or pasta fagioli are excellent soup options.
- Load up on veggies.
- Order a meat or tomato sauce over veggies instead of pasta.
- When in doubt, choose grilled fish or steak with veggies.
- If you order pizza or pasta, make sure they come with extra veggies.

# Fast Food

There are 3 basic rules when you eat at a fast food restaurant: Watch your portion sizes, stay away from fried foods and eat your veggies!

Don't be tempted by value meals bundling menu items together. Instead, pick and choose your meal options.

## *The basics*

- Avoid supersizing
- Stay away from the fries and onion rings.
- Say no to cheese
- Order your sandwiches without mayo or “special sauce”.

## *Order up!*

- Instead of soda, drink water with your meal.
- Order a plain hamburger and a side salad.
- Choose a salad with grilled chicken.
- Order a grilled chicken sandwich and eat it open-faced.
- Order “fresco” style soft tacos or black beans and rice.
- Chili may also be an option.





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