

## Eating Healthy When Dining Out: Is it Possible?

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As the holiday season approaches, we thank God for all our blessings. Friends and families gather around festive meals and often look for fast ways to feed their families as schedules become more hectic. During the non-holiday season, an estimated 50% of our food dollars are spent on eating outside the home. That number increases as holidays draw nearer. So how can you make healthy choices in restaurants? Here are some ideas:

- If you are trying to eat less, order an appetizer and salad as your meal.
- Choose foods flavored with herbs versus fats like oil and butter.
- Look for baked, grilled, broiled, poached, roasted or steamed cooking techniques.
- Share an entrée or ask for half of your meal to be put in a doggie bag *before* it is served to you. (1 serving of pasta is ½ cup, but the typical Italian pasta meal will have 8-12 servings!)
- Order salad dressings and sauces on the side so *you* control the amount eaten. Dip your fork into the sauce before taking a bite of salad or meat to enjoy the flavor of the sauce. Less will be consumed.
- Ask for substitutions such as a side of veggies/fruit instead of French fries.
- Cut away visible fat from meats.
- Have just one piece of bread and go easy on the butter (or not butter!). If it is too tempting to keep the breadbasket at the table, ask the waiter to remove it or set it away from you.
- Start with a soup (preferably broth-based with veggies) or salad to keep you from bingeing on your entrée later.
- Want dessert? Share it with a friend(s).
- Order sandwiches with mustard instead of mayo.
- Choose tomato-based sauces instead of cream-based sauces to lower fat and calories.
- Drink water, diet soda or tea/coffee to save on calories.
- Don't be afraid to ask for special low-calorie/fat preparation of a menu item. Restaurants aim to please!

For information on what to choose at fast food restaurants, try these web sites for suggestions:

<http://healthed.tamu.edu/pdfs/Nutrition/Fast%20Food%20Frenzy.pdf> (Many restaurants listed)

<http://fatcalories.com/> (Many restaurants listed)

<http://www.jambajuice.com/menuguide/smoothies/index.html> (Jamba juice)

<http://www.bk.com/Food/Nutrition/NutritionWizard/index.aspx> (Burger King)

<http://www.jackinthebox.com/ourfood/index.php?section=7> (Jack in the Box)

You *can* eat healthy foods in restaurants. Just remember, restaurants serve plenty of dishes made with lots of easy-to-like fats and sugar. They are in the business of giving you a “good time,” not extending your life. However, by making healthier choices on how foods are prepared or the amount you consume will help your favorites fit into your holiday diet.

