



Dining Out... and Eating Smart

10 Tips and Healthy Requests to Make to the Chef

No matter how “good” you may be at home, eating out can easily thwart your best efforts! Here are some tips and requests to make of the chef to help you stay on track:



1. Hold the bread. Most restaurants serve a carbohydrate-heavy side in addition to the cut of fish, chicken or beef you order – usually some kind of potato, rice or pasta. Bread before a meal with carbs can be overkill, and if you end up filling up on it, it can cause your insulin levels to spike.



2. Make it broiled, baked, grilled, or lightly sautéed instead of fried. Deep-fried foods like fried fish and French fries can be full of oxidized fats (due to high-heat frying), which are linked to heart disease



3. Add a lean protein like chicken, fish or beef (and choose organic or wild-caught when possible). Pasta, especially in portions usually dished up in American restaurants, can cause your insulin levels to soar. If you’ve gotta have some pasta, make sure the entree has some protein in it, and limit the amount of pasta you actually eat. Better yet, order it as a side that everyone at the table can have a few bites of. Adding a lean protein can also make for a more substantial salad. Learn more about balancing carbs with proteins and healthy fats.



4. No more than 1 cup of that carb-heavy side, or none at all. There’s a reason your plate often arrives to you full of pasta, potatoes, bread or rice – they’re much less expensive to produce. Regardless of how much money you save, it’s never a good deal to fill up on insulin-spiking carbs. Ask to receive a smaller portion or replace them with lower-glycemic choices like steamed or sautéed vegetables (I like to ask for garlic spinach or broccoli di rape, broccoli, or even a vegetable medley). Even better, order a few extra sides of these to make sure you’re not leaving hungry.



5. Limit yourself to 1-2 alcoholic beverages. [Alcohol](#) is sugar, and like bread, can cause your insulin levels to spike. If you have to wait a while for your meal, order a protein- or fat-rich appetizer like marinated olives or a cheese plate to help keep your blood sugar down while you enjoy your beverage. If you struggle with maintaining a healthy weight, it's probably best to avoid having any alcohol at all; limit yourself to 1 drink maximum if you must have it.



6. If dining family style, order as many vegetable-based plates as possible, with enough healthy protein for everyone eating. This may be more expensive in the short-term, but is a better long-term strategy to keep everyone from having a blood sugar fiesta due to too much pizza, pasta or lo-mein. Learn more about [optimizing macronutrients](#).



7. Olive oil and vinegar or lemon with the salad or veggies, please! Skip the creamy dressings that are likely loaded with inflammatory [omega-6 fats](#). Olive oil is much [better for your heart](#). Since high-heat cooking destroys the healing polyphenols in [olive oil](#), it's best to add it to food just before it's served; if you opt for veggies instead of a salad, order them steamed and drizzle olive oil on them when your plate comes.



8. Sauce on the side. Yummy sauces and condiments are often loaded with unhealthy omega-6 oils, [salt](#), MSG ([linked to increased risk of weight gain](#)), and artificial colors and flavors. Order the sauce on the side to limit how much you actually put on your food.



9. Lots of water, please! If the waitperson has to keep filling up your glass - great! Order without ice for better digestion. DEFINITELY skip the [soda or diet soda](#).

10. Many forks with dessert. If you've just gotta have dessert, share it with someone else or a group; if everyone has just 2 or 3 small bites, it ends up being a tasty treat that doesn't [put anyone over the edge](#). If it's just you getting your sweet fix, remember, there's no "waist" in "waste."