

# Eating Out, Eating Healthy

A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you set specific nutrition goals and guide you in planning a personalized healthy eating pattern.

To find an RDN in your area, visit “Find an Expert” at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)



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**eat right.** Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics



Eating meals away from home is a regular part of life for many people. It is possible to eat at restaurants, enjoy your meal, and maintain your healthy eating style. The tips and advice that follow will help you find nutritious choices and limit the extra calories, saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium in your restaurant meals.

## Smart Strategies

To avoid the urge to splurge, try these strategies when you eat out:

- Think ahead about your food choices for the day. When you plan to eat out, cut back on calories, saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium in other meals that day.
- Research your restaurant choice ahead of time, if possible. Check the website for menu and nutrition information.
- Pass on all-you-can-eat specials and buffets.
- Start by drinking a glass of water while you look over the menu. This helps reduce your appetite so you'll be less likely to overindulge.
- For a lighter meal, choose an appetizer or “small plate” for your meal, or split a main dish.
- Look for *healthy* or *light* sections on menus.
- Eat a lower-calorie food first before you start your main dish. Raw vegetables, a small salad, or a cup of broth-based soup are good choices.
- Eat your meal slowly and savor the flavors. You may feel more satisfied—even with smaller portions.



## Master the Menu

Every section of the menu has choices, some healthier than others. Here are some tips to help you choose wisely.

### Breakfast

Opt for oatmeal with fruit or nuts, a fruit and yogurt parfait, a breakfast sandwich on an English muffin, a short stack of whole wheat pancakes with fruit, or an omelet with veggies.

### Appetizers

Look for lower-calorie options, such as shrimp cocktail or vegetables with hummus.

### Breads and chips

If a bread or chip basket comes before your meal, set aside a small portion to enjoy. Go easy on spreads and dips like cheese, butter, or olive oil.

### Salads

Consider ordering a salad as your main dish. Choose one that includes lean poultry, seafood, or a vegetarian protein like tempeh or tofu. For a side dish salad, look for a variety of greens and vegetables or fruit. Ask for dressing on the side.

### Vegetables

Look for steamed, grilled, roasted, or raw vegetables that are prepared simply. Remember that butter, sauces, and dressings add extra calories and fat.

### Entrées

Choose smaller portions of lean meats, seafood, and poultry that are broiled, grilled, or roasted, and remove the skin and fat. Try a vegetarian selection, but go easy on dishes loaded with cheese or rich sauces.

### Desserts

Consider splitting a dessert with a companion, choosing a mini dessert, or opting for a lower-calorie option, such as sorbet or fresh fruit.

### Beverages

Choose water, unsweetened tea, or other drinks without added sugars. If you have a beverage with alcohol, limit to no more than one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men.

