

## Dining Out Guide

No matter the occasion, you can make the right choices and *still* have a great time with these dining out techniques.

1. **Stick to the appetizer and salad sections of the menu.** Make veggie-based choices for your appetizers. Make the main course a Cobb or grilled chicken salads. Avoid the fried chicken-strip salad and the Caesar salad.
2. **Dip into salad dressing.** Go for a fat-free or low-fat dressing. Dip your fork into the dressing, and then the salad—you'll still get the flavor you want, but not more than you need.
3. **You're special—so don't be shy about special orders.** Most restaurants are happy to modify meals to make customers happy. Don't be afraid to ask the server how a dish is prepared. If the dish is high in fat, ask if they can cook the steak without butter, or grill or broil the fish instead of frying. Even if you have to pay a little extra, the benefits to your health are worth the small difference in price.
4. **Always be the first to order.** Listening to the choices that friends or family make at restaurants may influence your decision, even if you have the best intentions. Eliminate the temptation by being the first to order. When you're done eating, ask for your plate to be removed, so you don't pick.
5. **Order à la carte** This is especially true for fast-food restaurants. For instance, the regular price for a sandwich might be \$3, but for \$4 you also get chips and a soda. You might think you saved money, but you actually spent more, got food you didn't want, and extra calories you don't need.
6. **Split meals with a friend.** Many restaurant portions are enough for two people to split—and making a meal a social occasion has the added benefit of forcing you to eat more slowly, so you sense satiety before you've overeaten. If you're on your own, get a doggie bag and place half your meal in it when it is served. It will keep that portion out of sight and make a great lunch the next day.
7. **Be vigilant—hidden calories can be anywhere.** Many dishes contain more calories than you realize because of breading, sauces, or frying. This is how hidden fat sneaks into your meal. If you aren't certain what a meal comes with or how it is prepared, ask your server. If you see any of the following words describing a menu item, your stealth calorie detector should start tingling.

Au gratin	Parmesan	Cheese sauce
Scalloped	Rich	Creamy, cream sauce
Buttered, buttery	Pastry	Breaded
Fried	Seasoned	Southern-style

8. **Limit your alcohol.** Alcohol is loaded with empty calories and it's all too easy to consume too much alcohol without thinking about it, especially when you're with friends, having a Friday lunch, or blowing off steam after work. Stick to white wines and the lighter versions of your favorite lager beer. Sparkling water with lime or lemon is a refreshing, healthful alternative.
9. **Ban the breadbasket.** Whether it's dinner rolls, breadsticks, or tortilla chips, ask the server not to bring it, or push it out of immediate reach. The starch basket tends to contain a lot of refined white-flour products—lots of calories, minimal nutritional value.
10. **Skip dessert or have fruit-based desserts.** Resist dessert if you're full and not internally hungry. Remind yourself you can have something later, when your body—not your psyche—is hungry again. Otherwise, consider good-tasting but low-calorie choices like sorbet, low-fat or fat-free frozen yogurt, angel food cake, or fresh fruit.
11. **Ask for backup. Let your buddies in on your program.** True friends will embrace an opportunity to help you. Ask them to keep the starch basket on their side of the table, and not egg you on to that rich dessert or second glass of Pinot Grigio.
12. **Monitor your emotions.** Slipping up is human, but you are less likely to do it if you ask yourself "What do I want from this meal?" before you enter the restaurant. If you do overeat, don't kick yourself. You're human and you've embraced a long term-based positive program for change. And, if you do decide to eat more, don't consider it a catastrophe later. Review your past Steps (accomplishments), chat with peers, or write in your journal to get back on track. One meal will not make or break your program for healthier change.