

## SESSION 6 EATING OUT

The **art** of eating out. Most diet programs insist that you eat only their food while on the program....now how are you going to learn about eating in real life by doing that? For most of us, eating out is a part of our lifestyle today. And why not? After all, the food is good tasting and often nutritious....fast food restaurants offer good prices and it sure is easier than fixing it yourself. Now we realize that there are also a lot of people that simply don't like to eat out all that often, no problem. But even for those folks, sometimes it's inevitable, like when you're traveling, or for business lunches or dinners, or for a party given at a restaurant. So for those who love to eat out and do it often, and for those who only eat out when they have to, in other words for everyone, this is for you.

Most restaurants offer some rather excellent choices now, but it's very important that you know how to 'order' your food, or you're likely to wind up with a few too many 'hidden' calories from fats and other ingredients. It's important for you to remember one thing when you're in a restaurant.....you're the customer. You're the boss! The restaurant is in business for only one reason, to make money. In order to do that, they must sell food. In order to sell food, they have to put it on your plate. So....since you're the boss, and since they are 'totally dependent on you' for their living and income...let's start ordering and eating the way we know is right. Not the way the restaurant thinks we should eat. It's your life and your body.

First of all, let's look at some real general guidelines for eating at different kinds of restaurants. We'll talk specifics later. Let me ask you a quick question. Do you normally order an appetizer before the meal? Sometimes? Always? Only when you see something appealing? Yeah, you're normal. We want you to become aware of something though, and that's while some of us don't consider appetizers a part of the dinner, they're a big part of your total food, calorie and fat intake for the day.

If you live in the southwest for example, Mexican restaurants normally serve tortilla chips, salsa and cheese sauce prior to ordering, just so the customer will have something to munch on while the cook is preparing the meal. A small basket of chips, along with cheese contains about 700 calories and 100 grams of fat. Now often that's more than the meal itself, and the real food hasn't even arrived yet. You're going to eat a full dinner after the chips. But we don't often consider the chips as a problem, after all...their light, tasty, and non-filling...so what can it hurt, right? Well you just learned that's wrong! And Mexican restaurants are just an example of what I'm talking about. There are good choices for appetizers at Mexican eateries, and we'll talk about them in a little bit. But first a few general rules to follow in nearly any restaurant.

For an appetizer, try raw vegetable plates or relishes, fresh fruit, shrimp cocktail or a clear, broth-based soup. We know there's fried cheese on the menu, but what will eating that do to your body? You know vegetables and fruit are great tasting and great for you. So avoid the high fat appetizers such as fried cheese, fried vegetables, escargot dripping in butter or the stuffed mushrooms and pate.

On to the salad. If there is a salad bar, you have complete control over your choices, and we'll talk about salad bars in a minute. But if you order a salad, ask for the dressing on the side. Then, instead of pouring the dressing on the salad, try this little trick. Dip the tines of your fork into the dressing and spear a couple of bites of salad. This way you get the taste of the salad dressing in each bite, but not a big glob of the dressing, and since most salad dressings are fat-based, they're very high in calories. In fact, most salad dressings have between 70 and 100 calories for one level tablespoon. Now, many eating establishments offer reduced calorie versions of traditional salad dressings, so be sure to ask for them. A few other excellent options include vinegars, lemon juice or lime juice to dress a salad. Experiment and live a little.

Salad bars are great options, but you have to be careful what you pile on your plate. One of the real problems is that people have fooled themselves into thinking that, if a food is on the salad bar, it must be low calorie. 'Not!' A lot of it is fat-laden and packed with calories. In fact, salad bars can be downright misleading. If you select various mixed salads such as coleslaw, macaroni salad, potato salad or others that are mixed with mayonnaise, sour cream or other fat-based dressing you're about to receive a large dose of calories.

Topping a salad with bacon, olives, avocados, nuts, seeds, croutons or cheese add loads of extra calories and fat. Other prepared salads such as tuna, chicken or ham salad are usually loaded with mayonnaise and therefore high in fat. Have I ruined the trip to the salad bar for you yet? Hang in there, here comes the good stuff.

Next time when you go to the salad bar, select various salad greens along with tomatoes, radishes, cucumbers, broccoli, cauliflower, green pepper, carrots, sprouts and onions. These foods are filling, require lots of chewing, so you'll eat slower. Have some fun, try different combinations, and you'll find that the mix of natural raw food from the salad bar will make a tasty combination, and will average only 25-30 calories per cup. Don't forget to dip your fork in the dressing on the side for a little extra taste. Try it, and remember, as with anything else you change, it will take several times before it starts to seem right to you. But when it does, you'll feel great, and just watch that waist line start to go down.

One thing I like in a restaurant is soup. But if soup is served, be careful. Generally broths, consomme or vegetable soup are fairly low in fat, but if the soup has the word 'cream' in its name, you can bet it's quite high in fat. The problem is that you really don't know how much fat has been added in the

preparation. The best choice is to select foods in the natural form, such as the raw vegetables so that you know no other calorie sources have been added. Don't forget that fresh fruits can complement a salad nicely.

Let's talk sandwiches. Have you noticed all the sandwich shops that are popping up around the country? People are beginning to learn the value of a good sandwich. Sandwiches are good food and, when you use a little reason, good healthy choices as well. Here are a few good options that just about everybody likes. Grilled chicken breast, grilled fish steaks, lean sliced roast beef or turkey. Be sure to use a wide variety of breads, such as whole wheat, rye, pita or sour dough. Sometimes I ask for my bread and mustard on the side, so I can add it myself. Order lettuce, tomato, onion and sprouts to go on the sandwich, even if those things are not listed on the menu for that sandwich, you're going to be surprised, most of the time, the restaurant will gladly put them on the plate for you.

Not so good choices for sandwiches are: mayonnaise, margarine or fat-laden sauces such as tartar sauce or salad dressing. Instead of chips or fries ask for fresh fruit or vegetable garnishes.

Ok! Time for the main course. When ordering main dishes, in a restaurant, start by considering smaller sizes or lite meals to control portion size. If these aren't available, try eating slower, and stop after about three ounces. A good way to remember, it's about the size of a deck of playing cards and leave the rest, or take it home for a later meal. Order fish or poultry baked or broiled. Too many times fish and poultry are basted with oil or clarified butter during the cooking process, unless you specify that you want it to be cooked without any fat. 'Lean' cuts of red meat are also acceptable.

Kabob of scallops, shrimp or chicken are excellent choices, but, again should be broiled or grilled without added fat.

Bread and your meal! Do you love bread, and are you one of the millions of people that grew up thinking that bread and grains are fattening? Are you one of the millions of people that still believe that? I have a real treat for you. As our segment on nutrition said, there is almost no fat in most breads and grains. So, choose whole grain bread or rolls, bread sticks or soda crackers. Now, I didn't say smear butter on it, just try the bread plain. There's another reason I want you to order whole grain breads or rolls, they have more fiber and a richer fuller taste than plain white bread, and often you won't feel the need to junk it up with butter or margarine. Restaurants are famous for attempting to liven up the breads however, so make an effort to avoid the high-fat options such as croissants, buttered rolls, garlic bread, cheese toast or Texas toast.

How about dessert? Sometimes I'm full but just not finished at the end of dessert. Some good options are fresh fruit or sherbet, and one of my favorite gourmet coffees. Sometimes a cup of full flavored coffee is more satisfying on a full tummy, than the heavy stuff. And is nearly calorie free, as long as you don't add sugar, cream or milk, of course.

### **Ethnic:**

Ok, let's talk about going to ethnic restaurants. You still want to keep the same guidelines in mind about avoiding hidden fat sources. But here's some more info for you.

In **Chinese** restaurants, ask for combination dishes of steamed chicken, fish, tofu, shrimp or lean beef mixed with a variety of oriental vegetables. I know stir fry is quite popular these days, and as always the choice is yours, but you know that steamed is preferable to stir fried. Other great options are fish steamed with ginger or chicken steamed with wine. Specify steamed rice instead of fried rice and clear chicken broth or egg drop soup are great options. High fat duck and pork, sweet and sour dishes and all fried dishes such as garlic frittered chicken and those with rich sauces are your basic 'no no's' in Chinese restaurants. And here's a little surprise for you. The Chinese don't eat the fried foods in their daily diet. Their normal diet is steamed rice, meats and vegetables. They have some fried dishes for special occasions, but a number of those dishes you see in restaurants were invented for American and European taste buds, not because the Chinese like them so much. So the next time you hear that Chinese food must be good, because the Chinese people are so slim, that's right, but remember what they are eating. And it didn't come out of a deep fryer.

Let's take a walk down the street to a **French** restaurant. Here, the best choices include veal, fish, chicken, and frog legs. Again, these should be ordered without rich sauces or fat bastings. Tomato sauce and wine are good bases for sauces. Trout prepared in white wine is an excellent choice, as are veal meatballs with a tomato based sauce. Shell fish or lean lamb are other options. Avoid brains, liver, duck, sweet breads or goose. Also avoid cream sauces, hollandaise and bacon seasoned dishes.

Now for an all time favorite, **Italian restaurants**. Veal, fish or chicken in a wine, tomato, marinara, or primavera sauce are a smart move. Baked chicken with prosciutto, wine or tomato based sauces with garlic are good options. Linguini with red clam sauce and other pastas with marinara or vegetarian spaghetti sauce are excellent choices. Avoid sauteed or buttered dishes and linguini with white clam sauce, as this is generally prepared with cream. Avoid breaded dishes, as these generally also contain lots of fat. High fat cuts of beef, pork or sausage are real heart stoppers, as are parmigiana, meat sauces, cream sauces, alfredo and fried dishes, so let's not do those.

Ok! All you southwest lovers.....I promised you we'd talk **Mexican** food, so here goes. Chicken fajitas are good choices, but let's do a tiny bit of modifying to the order. Soft corn tortillas instead of the white flour ones have less fat, and you can ask for the chicken, onions and green pepper to be cooked in as little oil as possible. Get used to doing this. They don't mind really, and they'll also think you know your stuff when it comes to cooking. Order extra lettuce, tomato and salsa, and tell the waiter to leave the guacamole in the kitchen. Chicken tacos with chilis, onion, diced tomato and shredded lettuce, or chicken tostados are good choices. Pollo en salsa verde, which is chicken with green tomatoes, garlic, chilis and sherry, is wonderful. Remember the tortillas chips from before? Same goes for the nachos, sour cream, unless they have fat free sour cream, cheeses, deep fried foods, super tacos, tostados and burritos. All these generally have extra high fat ingredients, such as additional cheese and sour cream. Soft corn tortillas with salsa are much better than the corn chips, which have been fried. Some Mexican restaurants now have beans prepared without added fat. Be sure to ask.

Exercise:

1. What are typically your favorite restaurants that you like to eat?
2. What do you usually order?
3. How can you change your order to reflect a healthier, lower calorie fare?