

# Tools to Help You Manage Food Choices When Dining Out

At restaurants you still have choices. And to help you make those choices healthy, there are tools you can use.

One tool is the menu. Some restaurants provide nutritional information right on the menu so you can make healthier choices.

For example: some menus include light or heart healthy selections that are specially marked. The amount of fat, carbohydrate and calories may be listed.

And if you are choosing vegetarian or vegan foods they also might be listed on the menu.

Sometimes you may need to know what not to choose. And that's not always easy.

Here are some words that signal a selection is probably high in fat: creamed, fried, sautéed, crispy and au gratin. Avoid these items when you can or ask that the meal be prepared differently.

If anything is unclear, use your best tool – your voice. Ask.

*"If I see something that I don't really like, I definitely ask the waitress, but typically I-- there's enough options on the menu that I don't have to worry about that."*

Try to make sure your order follows the plate method. Ask for more non starchy vegetables and have that make up half of your meal.

Most restaurants these days have their menu online. Look before you go for what healthy choices the restaurant offers or call ahead and ask. If they don't offer any selections you like, check another, it's your choice.

*"I do check that, and it's very, very helpful and especially for your pre-selection at home, because there you are more relaxed, and when you're at the restaurant everybody comes and says "Hey, what do you want to order?" and you feel like 'I need more time. I still need to check.'"*

Many mobile apps can be helpful too. See if a restaurant you enjoy has a nutritional app for your phone. Or use Calorie King or My Fitness Pal to find the nutritional values of your choices while dining out.

*"It's a great idea to pre-plan, and especially if there's restaurants that are chain restaurants that you frequent, to get their information either through something like a CalorieKing app or booklet or the restaurant itself."*

Ask your server what healthy menu items they recommend. Don't be afraid to ask how food is prepared. Or to ask for it to be prepared in a healthier way for you. Most restaurants are happy to do this.

Ask to have your fish or chicken entrée grilled, broiled or baked instead of fried. And have your vegetables steamed rather than covered in a creamy sauce.

Ask whether there are low fat versions of cream or cheese sauces.

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And remember, you can ask to have high-fat or high-calorie items like salad dressing, gravy, butter, sour cream or sauces on the side. This way you can use them sparingly.

You can use these tools when dining out at almost every type of restaurant. You don't have to always stick to the same ones and get bored. The trick is to think about the choices you can make. And use the tools provided to make the healthiest choice for you.

Remember to check the menu for nutritional information; use your voice and ask; try to use the plate method even when dining out; look up the menu online before you go; or use a nutrition app when you are on the go.

Talk to your diabetes care team about more tools you can use when dining out.

Although Diabetes is complex, it's manageable when you have the right information and support. Diabetes educators are trained to be your diabetes expert and can help you learn how to successfully thrive with diabetes. You deserve nothing less!

Ask your provider for a referral today! Find one at [www.DiabetesEducator.org/find](http://www.DiabetesEducator.org/find).