

Transcript

Dining out presents several challenges to trying to eat healthy. But whether you're eating Italian, Chinese, Mexican, or any other ethnic food, the strategies to healthy eating are all the same. Manage your portion size, eat whole or multi-grain carbohydrates, and make sure the dishes are prepared in the healthiest way possible.

Talk with your server about changes you can make to make your order as healthy as possible. For instance, to get more fiber when dining in an Italian restaurant, ask for selections made with whole-wheat pasta and look for dishes that include a variety of vegetables. Look for dishes that use a tomato sauce, such as a marinara instead of a cream sauce, like alfredo or parmigiana. And don't forget about portion size.

If you prefer a Mexican restaurant, cut down on fat. Picking beans with your meal is a great choice but choose black beans prepared in water instead of refried beans. Keep an eye out for dishes with added cheese, it can add a lot of extra calories and saturated fat. You can also ask for a baked tortilla instead of having it fried and get your cheese, sour cream and guacamole on the side to limit portion size.

What about Chinese take-out? Order a broth-based soup to start. Ask for your vegetables steamed. Many Chinese restaurants have great selections that include tofu and nuts, both healthy selections. If your menu selection includes vegetables that you do not enjoy, ask to swap them for vegetables you like eating. Choose brown rice instead of the fried rice, and ask for your food to be cooked in light oil. Chinese food is usually high in sodium. So if you are watching your blood pressure, pay attention to this when making your selections.

If pizza is the family takeout meal of choice, select low-calorie toppings. Load up on vegetables instead of fatty meat toppings. They are low in fat while increasing nutrients. You could limit high-calorie cheese by ordering half the cheese, or maybe even no cheese.

"Hey its Bif, I need to order a pizza."

Ask if there is an option for thin crust or whole wheat crust.

"With a whole grain crust."

Remember your portion size and eat just one or two slices. And skip the sides, unless it's a salad with light dressing.

Just as important as knowing how to recognize healthy dishes, it's also important to know what not to choose. And that's not always easy.

Read menus carefully to determine not only what's in the dish, but how it is prepared. To avoid choosing rich, fatty dishes, avoid the ones with these descriptive words: au gratin, con queso, and parmigiana. These mean that the dish is likely high in fat and calories from cheese, butter sauce, or buttered, thickened gravies and sauces; such as alfredo, béarnaise, and hollandaise, brown sauce, or those loaded with cream. Soy sauce is low in fat and calories, but is loaded with sodium. Stay away from anything fried, or deep-fried. These dishes are usually described as crispy or extra crispy, battered, coated or breaded.

Ask your server what healthy menu items they recommend; often there are options that are not on the menu.

Many restaurants have their nutrition information available on their menus and online. This information can really help you to decide what meal is best for you. Try looking up the menu before you go, and decide ahead of time the best choice for you. Also, other websites like Calorie King or apps contain nutrition information for many restaurants.

Making slight changes in the foods you eat, or how they are prepared, can make eating these foods more healthy and enjoyable for you.