

Try These Tips for Healthier Dining Out

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Many of us have busy lives these days and sometimes it is so convenient to drive through a fast food restaurant or eat out at our favorite steakhouse to avoid a dirty kitchen at home. When dining out, it is easy to eat more calories and fat as well as food that is less healthy. Here are 10 survival skills for healthy restaurant eating.

Survival Skill #1 - Choose a restaurant carefully. Look for healthier choices like salads, vegetables, baked potatoes and whole grains.

Survival Skill #2 - Know what you want to order before you go. Get the restaurant's menu if possible and plan what you will get before you go inside.

Survival Skill #3 - Have it "your way." Ask whether the food can be baked, grilled or broiled without added butter or sauce. Serve extras on the side and ask for steamed vegetables instead of fries.

Survival Skill #4 - Curb a ravenous appetite. Don't go in the restaurant starving. Eat a light, nutritious snack like a salad or piece of fruit beforehand.

Survival Skill #5 - Split and share a meal. Share an entrée with someone. You could add a soup or salad on the side and instead of eating dessert by yourself, share it with someone or the entire table.

Survival Skill #6 - Fill a doggie bag before you dig in. Ask for a box when you get your meal and go ahead and put half of it in the box for later.

Survival Skill #7 – So, you decide to go through the fast food restaurant and pick up dinner on the way home. Make the fast food meal more nutritious by serving soup, salad and/or fruit.

Survival Skill #8 - If you just have to have a dessert select one and ask for extra forks and plates so everyone can have a bite. Or, wait for dessert until you get home and top the meal off with sugar free pudding, fudge pops, low or fat free yogurt, ginger snaps, teddy grahams, sorbet, low fat ice cream bars or ice cream sandwiches.

Survival Skill #9 – Balancing the buffet. Survey the buffet first and use a smaller plate for your meal. Only put 1-2 tablespoon(s) portions on your plate. Sit away from the buffet table so you won't be tempted to return and eat fruit for dessert.

Survival Skill #10 – To save money and calories take lunch from home sometimes. It is easier to pack smaller servings; fruits and raw vegetables and low calorie snacks.

No matter where you are eating, practice smaller portion sizes and healthier choices. Most restaurants have nutrition fact sheets for your convenience. You are in control so choose healthy foods for a healthier YOU!!

If you have a question, write to Sylvia V. Davis, Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension- Baker County, P.O. Box 220, Newton, GA 39870 or call the Extension office (229)734-3015, weekdays between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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