

HO 6.2 Defensive Dining

If you are a special occasion diner, you eat out infrequently. Try to choose restaurants that have a variety of choices and that allow substitutions, and take more time to savor your eating-out experiences.

Here's a list of strategies you can use to help you attain your HEED goals when eating out. Go through the list and identify the strategies that you would like to try. Use some of these strategies as you set new goals, or write them on your food log form as a reminder when you go out to eat.

Balancing calories

- Park several blocks away from the restaurant and walk.
- Split large meals with a friend.
- Take half of your meal home.
- Order a lunch portion even at evening meals.
- Have an appetizer or dessert but not both.

Increasing fruits and vegetables

- Order a large salad as a meal.
- Double or triple up on vegetable side dishes. Watch out for cheese and butter sauces!
- Order a vegetable dish as your meal.
- Choose broth-based soups (low-sodium, if available) that have lots of vegetables in them, such as minestrone, lentil, or vegetable beef.
- Choose dark green leafy greens over light green (iceberg) lettuce.
- Order fresh fruit as an appetizer or dessert.
- Order fruit juice instead of an alcoholic beverage. It may not be listed on the menu, but most restaurants have it.

Decreasing unhealthy fats and added sugars

- Look for items that are described as steamed, poached, broiled, baked, grilled, stewed, or braised.
- Ask for dressings and sauces on the side.
- Choose fruit, seafood (without sauce), or salad (with light dressing) as an appetizer.
- Choose broth-based soups (low-sodium, if available).
- Choose tomato-based sauces instead of creamy ones for pasta or Mexican foods.
- Choose lean cuts of meat such as filet mignon, flank steak, top round roast (often called London broil in the U.S.), shish kebob, or top sirloin.
- Choose poultry without skin.
- Avoid fried foods.
- Share fatty or sugary desserts with a friend.
- Choose sugar-free or low-sugar beverages.

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- Add fresh or dried fruit to cereal or oatmeal instead of sugar.
- Cut back on the amount of sugar or honey you use on foods or in drinks, or use a sugar-free substitute.

Increasing whole grains

- Choose oatmeal or whole-grain cereals for breakfast instead of eggs and bacon.
- Ask for whole-grain rolls, bread, and pasta.
- Ask for brown rice instead of white rice.
- Try different grains. Many ethnic restaurants serve uncommon grains such as kashi, bulgur, and quinoa that are delicious and nutritious.

Increasing dairy and dairy alternatives

- Ask for a glass of low-fat or nonfat milk. You might be surprised at how many restaurants have it but don't list it on the menu.
- Ask for a light sprinkling of Parmesan cheese on your pasta dishes.
- Choose yogurt with no or low added sugar. Many restaurants have a fruit and yogurt option on their breakfast menus.

Decreasing sodium and salt

- Ask the waiter or waitress if they offer low-sodium options.
- Ask if a food has a spice, rub, marinade, or sauce on it; these can contain high amounts of sodium.
- Ask for sauces, gravies, and dressings on the side, or skip them altogether.
- Use salsa and ketchup sparingly, as they are high in sodium.
- Taste your food before you put salt on it, and use it only in small amounts.
- Squeeze lemon juice on vegetables rather than salt.
- Bring along your own low-sodium spice mix to flavor your food.