

NEWeighs Fact Sheet

Restaurant Assertiveness Training

Dining Out Without Filling Out

Ask Questions Before You Choose A Restaurant—Do they prepare meals ahead of time, or do they attend to special orders? Do they have a lot of lower-calorie menu choices?

Menu Maneuvers—Keep in mind that menus are designed to \$ell. Much time and energy is spent on mouth-watering adjectives to appetize your hunger. If you are very hungry, or wish to avoid the hazards of menu management, avoid the menu and ask for what you'd like. This is also a good time to excuse yourself from the table to miss out on all the pre-ordering chatter that may make eating out more difficult. You probably won't be missed and you'll miss a lot.

Ask More Questions When You Get There—find out as much as you can about what you may be ordering:

? How is it prepared, fried? Baked? Broiled? In butter?

? Does it come with a sauce or gravy

? Can you get it with the sauce or gravy on the side

? Can it be cooked without fat

? Is it breaded

Send The Bread Back. Or ask that the bread not be served when you sit down, or when with others, make sure it is placed "out of sight, out side". Many restaurants put a lot of emphasis on hot breads to make a great first impression. It is an inexpensive, but very effective way to compensate for an over-inflate bill or mediocre foods. Don't be fooled!

Avoid Fried and Fatty Foods. Ounce for ounce, you can add about 25 extra calories per ounce if it is fried. Baked skinless chicken is about 55 calories/ounce; fried with skin comes to about 100 calories/ounce. Six ounces of fried chicken can be 600 calories, baked chicken about half as much. Calorie-wise, a one pound steak = 16 medium baked potatoes.

Accent the Vegetables. They are generally the lowest calories options. Order more vegetable side dishes, preferably without added butter or special sauces.

Order the least complicated food. Usually, more complicated foods have more calories and fat added. If you do order more elaborate dishes, ask if you could have the dressings, creams or sauces on the side. For instance, a little dab will due you. Ask for the sour cream or guacamole on the side and add a little yourself.

Avoid the 3 D's of Dieting: Do's, Don'ts, and Deprivation! Often, particularly when dining out with the best intentions, we can easily set ourselves up for failure. Expecting not to be tempted by foods we generally don't serve at home is not very realistic. Eat more low calorie and less high fat foods, but try not to deprive yourself. Often, a bite or two of another's more high fat food choice are enough to satisfy your craving. Split a dessert four ways. Many times a food may sound or look delicious but not taste very good. If you don't order or taste it, you may obsess about it later, never realizing that it really didn't taste half as good as it looked.

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Be a Restaurant Critic – quantity does not equal quality. Watch for the JUMBO words; large, over-stuffed, “for the hardy appetite”. Be sure to consider the service and presentation.

Redirect Your Attention. Many of us eat out primarily for socializing with our friends and families. We often over-consume because of all the excitement of the moment. Concentrate on talking, rather than eating. Excuse yourself from the table for a few minutes after you are finished eating. Take someone aside for a brief walk to catch up on more personal matters. Planning these socializing strategies ahead can help.

Slow Down – eat slowly. Put your fork down between bites. Talk and listen more. Practicing slow eating techniques at home can make the process easier when you’re eating out. Remember, it takes approximately 15 minutes for your stomach to send a message to your brain that it is receiving food. Whether you eat a little or a lot, it still takes 15 minutes. Chewing your foods thoroughly helps digestion and adds more bulk to satisfy your hunger. Ask that each course be served only after you are finished your previous course. Savor the food and the company. Relax. If you only have a short time to eat, order a few appetizers or plan to take something to go, for later.

Doggie Bag It – do your best to plan to take something home. This can help prepare you to set limits before you begin to eat, plus you’ll have something ready made for tomorrow.

Avoid the “Starvation Syndrome” – Many times diners know they are going out to dinner and don’t eat all day. When they finally make it to the table and have a drink, their defenses are down and their hunger is up. Try to pace yourself throughout the day, and “bank” calories throughout the week, rather than on the day of the event.

Have a Drink? Drinking can add to the festivities, but remember drinking: (1) lowers your defenses; (2) increases the secretion of stomach enzymes, which in turn increase appetite; and (3) depending on choice, is often high calorie. Light beers, spritzers, and dry wines are low calorie choices. Sparkling water with a twist, between alcoholic beverages, slows down your calorie intake and maintains your defenses.

Remember the E.R.R.E. Theory – Eat Right, Relax, and Enjoy! Eating out can be a very enjoyable experience when you plan a little ahead and develop personally designed defensive technique that work for you. Setting unrealistic goals can easily lead to failure and no fun. If you include some behavior change strategies that do not require an overwhelming amount of psychic energy you can taste the forbidden, while savoring the better choices and situations. Proper planning prevents poor performance. You can eat out without filling out, and feel good instead of guilty.