

Make Healthier Choices when Dining Out

Whether it's carryout, fast food, or a sit-down meal, healthy options are available. Here are a few tips:

Steak/Seafood

- Review nutrition facts on the menu or look up the information online.
- Order a to-go box with your meal, and put half the meal in the box before you start eating.
- Order the smallest entrée or share with someone.
- Split a baked potato.
- Request butter and salad dressings on the side.
- Request veggies without butter.

Buffet

- Walk around and look at the food items to see your choices before grabbing a plate.
- Fill half your plate with vegetables.
- Put butter and salad dressings on the side.
- Use a small plate.
- Pile no thicker than a deck of cards.

Deli

- Choose whole-wheat or whole-grain bread.
- Go light on meat.
- Choose mustard, vinegar, and peppers.
- Order baked chips, pretzels, a salad, or a fruit side.
- Limit high-sodium pickles, olives, and chips.
- Limit high-sodium smoked and cured meats.

Pancake/Waffle Restaurant

- Request a small stack of pancakes.
- Ask for butter on the side.
- Request egg substitutes or egg whites.
- Fill omelets with vegetables and try light cheese.

Chinese

- If you use soy sauce, try low-sodium.
- Choose dishes with more vegetables.
- Request plain rice instead of fried rice.
- Order steamed dumplings instead of egg rolls.
- Select chicken and seafood dishes instead of beef, pork, or duck.

Mexican

- Ask for unsalted tortilla chips.
- Leave tortilla chips and salsa off the table.
- Order à la carte or split an entrée.
- Choose soft, not fried, tortillas as in burritos or enchiladas.
- Ask for sour cream and guacamole on the side.

Pizza

- Start with a garden salad to fill you up.
- Avoid extra dipping sauces.
- Limit or avoid extra sides such as breadsticks.
- Choose a thin-crust pizza.
- Avoid cheese-stuffed crust.
- Choose healthier toppings like pineapple, Canadian bacon, ham, grilled chicken, spinach, tomatoes, broccoli, mushrooms, onions, and peppers.
- Avoid extra cheese.

Pasta

- Share pasta or get a to-go box.
- Choose tomato or marinara sauces instead of cream, cheese, and butter sauces.
- Choose whole-grain pasta or vegetable pasta options like zucchini noodles.
- Go light on bread doused in butter or oil.
- Choose seafood or chicken rather than meatballs or sausage.

Fast Food Burgers/Sandwiches

- Order regular, small, or junior-size burgers.
- Try a whole-wheat bun.
- Choose grilled chicken instead of fried.
- Use ketchup, mustard, or barbecue sauce instead of mayonnaise or special sauce.
- Split a small order of fries or choose a side salad or fruit instead.

Fast Food Breakfast

- Try turkey sausage or turkey bacon.
- Choose bagels with spreads on the side.
- Limit jelly, butter, and other spreads.
- Instead of biscuits or croissants, try an English muffin or whole-grain bread.
- Order specialty coffees with skim milk and a pump or two less of flavoring.

Tips

- You can use these tips anywhere you're eating.
- Always scan the menu before ordering, or look it up online before you go.
- Drink water before, during, and after your meal.
- Choose more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Choose healthy fats like olive oil, avocado, nuts, and seeds.
- Choose lean meats like turkey, chicken, and fish.
- Don't be afraid to ask your server questions about ingredients and options.
- Most importantly, enjoy!

Publication 3579 (POD-03-21)

Revised by **Qula Madkin**, Extension Instructor; and **Jacqueline Rustom, Sara Cagle, and Sara Talley**, Dietetic Interns, Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion. Adapted from University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service by Natasha Haynes, Extension Agent, Hinds County.

Copyright 2021 by Mississippi State University. All rights reserved. This publication may be copied and distributed without alteration for nonprofit educational purposes provided that credit is given to the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Produced by Agricultural Communications.

Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity institution. Discrimination in university employment, programs, or activities based on race, color, ethnicity, sex, pregnancy, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, or any other status protected by applicable law is prohibited. Questions about equal opportunity programs or compliance should be directed to the Office of Compliance and Integrity, 56 Morgan Street, P.O. 6044, Mississippi State, MS 39762, (662) 325-5839.

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. GARY B. JACKSON, Director