EATING OUT THE RIGHT WAY

WE KNOW THAT EATING OUT WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY CAN BE HARD WHEN YOU'RE PREPARING FOR COMPETITION OR TRYING TO LOSE WEIGHT. BUT THERE IS A WAY TO KEEP YOUR SOCIAL LIFE WITHOUT BLOWING THE KILOJOULE BUDGET.

By Gabrielle Maston

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Eating out is never advocated as the healthiest option but, on occasion, you need to celebrate those special days. After all, sharing meal times with friends and family can be the most memorable times of our lives.

Here are some helpful tips on how to schedule these special events into your weight loss plans.

SHARE THOSE CALORIES.

To avoid excessive consumption of food, share your meal with a friend or your partner. Alternatively, give everyone at the table a chance to taste your food. Every little mouthful you don't eat contributes to less time at the gym the next day. Typically, meals served at restaurants and fast food outlets are big enough for two.

COMBINE BIRTHDAYS AND SPECIAL EVENTS.

Eating out once a week with friends or family is normal. However, if you have a birthday, work lunch and engagement party all in one week this can start to tip the scales rapidly. In circumstances where you're in charge, combine celebrations into one joyful event. This way we are less tempted to splurge on food and eat our way through the weekend.

LEAVE SOMETHING ON YOUR PLATE.

As mentioned before, serving sizes of food when eating out are supersized. If no one wants to share your food then try leaving something on your plate. It's better to let the food go in the waste than around your waist!

CHOOSE HEALTHIER MEAL OPTIONS

When viewing the menu, it may be tempting to make poor food choices and resort to comfort food. However, if you look very closely there maybe some healthier dishes available. Have a look at our table on dishes to avoid when eating out. These foods are full of unwanted calories and high in saturated fat or sugar. We have also included a healthier choice menu. These dishes have more nutrients, are lower in fat and have higher quality protein.

THAI	HEALTHIER CHOICES
AVOID: • Deep-fried and battered items • Coconut milk based items • Crispy duck • Fried rice or noodles	• Rice paper rolls • Barbecued octopus • Skinless chicken or beef skewers • Clear soups with meat and green vegies • Stir-fries with lean meat and vegies • Curries without coconut cream • Steamed rice or noodles

CHINESE	HEALTHIER CHOICES
AVOID: • Deep-fried and battered items • Coconut milk based items • Crispy duck • Fried rice or noodles	• Clear soups with meat and green vegies • Dim sim • Hot pot • Steamed fish or duck • Stir-fries with lean meat and vegies with oyster, garlic, chilli, ginger or black bean sauce • Steamed rice or noodles • Steamed rice dumpling

ITALIAN	HEALTHIER CHOICES
AVOID: • Creamy risotto • Lasagne • Creamy sauces on meat or chicken • Deep-fried seafood • Sausage or salami dishes	• Tomato sauce based pastas and rice • Grilled or roasted meat, chicken and seafood • Soups and stews • Shellfish in tomato based sauce • Gnocchi in non- creamy sauce

MEXICAN

AVOID:

- Corn chips
- Crunchy tortilla
- Nachos
- Burritos
- Enchiladas
- Taquitos

HEALTHIER CHOICES

- Tostada
- Chilli con carne
- Chilli Verde
- Fajitas
- Tacos

PIZZA

AVOID:

- Deep pan, cheese crust or cheese and bacon filled bases
- Pepperoni / salami
- Meatballs
- Meat-lovers
- Supreme
- Extra cheese

HEALTHIER CHOICES

- Thin or classic bases
- Vegetarian
- Prawn or seafood
- Hawaiian
- Margherita
- Skinless chicken
- Capricciosa
- Gourmet pizza with basil and fetta

INDIAN

AVOID:

- Pulao rice (fried saffron rice)
- Naan
- Naan makhani (bread with butter)
- Deep-fried dishes
- Cream or coconut milk based dishes
- Cream curries

HEALTHIER CHOICES

- Plain rice
- Tandoori roti
- Vegetarian paratha
- Mango chutney
- Raita or dahl
- Marinated chicken skewers
- Lentil / veggie curries or Rogan josh
- Lean-meat vindaloo or tandoori
- Chicken tikka (roast chicken)

FAST FOOD

AVOID:

- Deep-fried and battered items (deep fried chicken, French fries)
- Supersizing, ask for the small
- Soft drink, ask for water
- Cream-based sauces (mayo)
- Creamy pasta salads
- Mashed potato with gravy

HEALTHIER CHOICES

- Heart tick approved meals with water, no fries
- Rolls: tuna, grilled chicken, teriyaki chicken, vegetarian
- Salads, low fat salad dressing
- Lean chicken burgers, pita pockets and wraps with no mayo
- Sushi rolls
- Skinless roasted chicken with potatoes and steamed veggies

"WHEN VIEWING THE MENU, IT MAY BE TEMPTING TO MAKE POOR FOOD CHOICES AND RESORT TO COMFORT FOOD. HOWEVER, IF YOU LOOK VERY CLOSELY THERE MAYBE SOME HEALTHIER DISHES AVAILABLE."

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So next time you need to make an appearance at a food function don't freak out. Eating with family and friends should be fun. Armed with the right strategies and healthy menu options you can still be in control and maintain your figure.

Gabrielle Maston

A qualified dietitian, nutritionist, exercise physiologist and personal trainer with eight years experience in the fitness industry. Gabrielle established her business Changing Shape to fill the gap between Diet and Exercise therapy and to meet the growing concern regarding obesity and lifestyle related diseases. You can learn about Gabrielle and her team at www.changingshape.net.au.