

# Ask Dr. Tastebud

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**Dear Dr. Tastebud,**

*I am trying to stick to my new healthy life style but I thoroughly enjoy dining out. How do I indulge without feeling guilty?*

*-Tired of eating at home.*



Dear Tired,

Great job on committing to a new healthy lifestyle! Furthermore, you are in luck! It is possible to fit restaurant dining into a new healthy routine. You only have to know the right tricks.

- Plan Ahead
- Order Confidently
- Moderation
- Don't Always go for the Obvious Option

## Plan Ahead

- Spoil Your Appetite-Yes, you read that correctly! Before you leave for the restaurant have a hearty snack, a piece of fruit or bread or perhaps a boiled egg. Restaurant waiting times can be rather lengthy and a snack will help you resist the over-the-top restaurant appetizers.
- Avoid the bread basket- The bread offers unnecessary calories, not to mention the butter or oil that often accompanies it. It also is one of the top causes for restaurant overeating. It can be difficult to resist the bread if it is left on your table so simply request that it be removed. If you want to enjoy a slice of bread, take that one slice and have the remainder sent back to the kitchen.
- Limit yourself to one alcoholic drink- Alcohol can weaken your resolve for exercising moderation. It is also just empty calories that will only serve to dehydrate you.

## Order Confidently

- Don't Be Led Astray By the Menu- Menus are specifically designed to make you want to buy the most expensive, least healthy items on the menu.
- Don't Be Afraid to Customize- A dining experience should be YOUR dining experience. If you want your salad dressing on the side, then ask for it to be served that way. The wait staff is there to ensure you enjoy your dining experience.

## Moderation

- Take the Leftovers - Restaurant portions are notoriously large. Some people need that many calories in one meal, most of us do not. If you don't need the whole meal, do not feel like you must eat the whole thing. Taking the leftovers is an easy way to save yourself the extra calories and a little bit of money along the way. Last night's leftover chicken carbonara makes a great lunch for tomorrow!
- Split the Meal-Splitting the meal with someone is also a simple option for two people not wanting to eat an entire restaurant meal. Simple, of course, once you agree upon what to order!
- Make Restaurant Dining a Special Occasion- Avoid dining out multiple nights in a week. It is difficult to keep track of calories when you do not have access to a nutrition label.
- Avoid "All you can eat" buffets-At these establishments there is extra pressure to "get your money's worth" by over-eating.

Here are some examples from popular restaurants. The nutrition facts are based on serving size, so the dishes with particularly high numbers might be good choices for splitting with another person or as leftovers.

Menu Items	cal	fat	Sodium
Chicken and Shrimp Carbonara Olive Garden	1440	88g	3000mg
Black Bean Veggie Burger Max and Erma's	649	28g	1495mg
Rainbow Trout with Broccoli Red Lobster	225	9.5g	390mg
Cranberry Apple Pork Loin (1) Bob Evans	241	12g	596mg
Tuna Supermelt Friendly's	810	52g	1540mg



### Don't Always go for the Obvious Choice

- Sneaky Salads- Salads are often hiding extra unnecessary calories with bacon, cheese and a river of dressing.
- Vexing Veggies- Veggies are often smothered in heavy butter-based sauces.
- Of course, this is not to say to avoid these delicious choices, but just be aware that they may have hidden calories. It is possible to get the dish or side lightened but it helps to know what to ask for.

### Fast Food Frenzy

In our fast paced lifestyle it is easy to stop by the drive-thru on our way home from work or school. Fast food dining is a different experience from formal dining.

- **Don't Fall Prey to the SUPERSIZED-** The sizes that fast food offers are simply huge. It leaves you with an impression of getting more for your money, but it is simply unnecessary.
- **Pass the French Fries-** If you do get the supersized fries or onion rings, share them. Many fast food restaurants have a self-serve system in place for the beverages. Do not feel like you have to fill the drink all the way to the top.
- **Reach Back To Your Childhood-** It may seem childish, but ordering from the kid's menu might be an option. The portions are slightly more realistic for an adult eater. You can even ask to not receive a toy, but what fun is that!
- **Try the Healthy Options-** The healthy options in a fast food restaurant are often only slightly healthier than the regular menu items. That being said, they are still more healthy. Give the salad a try every other time you visit the fast food restaurant.

For more information visit these websites:

[americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org)  
[diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org)  
[cancer.org](http://cancer.org)

