

[IMAGE]

## Healthy Eating (When Eating Out)

By Julie T. Chen, MD

Choosing a restaurant when you're trying to maintain a healthy diet is always a challenge. Many of us are faced with the dilemma of having to break our diets when we eat out or abstain from eating completely, as restaurants are notoriously known for having a limited number of healthy options.

Among the most frequent questions I'm asked at my integrative medicine clinic are, "Which restaurants are the healthiest? Which ones cater to dieters most?" The answer, more often than not, is that mostly all restaurants are guilty of adding unhealthy fats and sauces to foods without customers even knowing. This doesn't mean you have to avoid eating out altogether – it's unrealistic to limit yourself to eat nothing while friends or family indulge all around you. Remind yourself of these pointers the next time you're eating out, as they apply to most restaurant fare and are helpful to keep in mind when you're traveling and/or have limited food options.

- If possible, avoid gluten (found in grains such as wheat, barley and rye) completely, as gluten-containing items are often laden with high-fat, high-calorie extras (butter, oil, sauces, creams, etc.) when prepared. Choose complex carbohydrates such as quinoa and brown rice instead, and always ask your server to not add butter to these dishes. Also avoid dairy-based sauces and creams, as they are also routinely packed with sodium and butter.
- Choose lean proteins with minimal fat content: chicken breast, turkey breast and fish. Avoid sauces or creams on meats and avoid fried meats at all cost, as they increase the risk of contamination with oil, fat and butter.
- Salads are the gold standard for dieters, but many don't realize restaurant salads are often loaded with fattening cheeses, high-calorie dressing and additional high-calories toppings such as candied nuts, croutons and bacon. Choose salads with fresh vegetables and fruit, but skip the cheeses, dressings and any toppings. For a healthier dressing option, ask for olive oil and vinegar or lemon – on the side, so you can control how much you add to your salad.
- As a healthy side dish, try steamed vegetables to go with your protein instead of starches or carbs. Again, be sure to skip any seasoning or butter / sauces that may come with your veggies; dress them

with olive oil and lemon instead. Cooked beans are also a great side dish, as they're loaded with protein and extremely filling. Skip refried beans or any beans that come mixed with flavoring or sauces – a hiding place for salt, margarine and oils.

- For those of us with a sweet tooth, skipping dessert can be a challenge at restaurants that offer a plethora of tasty treats post-dinner. The compromise: Indulge instead on fresh seasonal fruit, which will curb your craving for sugar without overloading on calories and fat.
  - Keep your alcohol intake to a minimum, as alcohol is extremely high in calories. Mixed drinks and liquor are especially dangerous to your diet because they are mixed with sodas or syrups that are high in calories and sugar as well. Drink unsweetened ice tea or ice water with lemon with your dinner instead.
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**Dr. Julie T. Chen** is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit [www.makinghealthyez.com](http://www.makinghealthyez.com).

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