

Dine Out Smart This Valentine's Day!

9 Tips for Making Healthy Restaurant Choices



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Dining out is a popular and fun way for friends, couples and families to celebrate Valentine's Day. Unfortunately, between mega-sized portions and hidden fats and calories, eating out can derail an otherwise healthy diet. Here are some tips to help you make smart choices – not only on Valentine's Day – but any time you decide to dine out!

- **Start with a broth-based soup or a salad.** By filling up with soup or veggies, you're less likely to eat all of your higher-calorie entrée.
- **Skip the extras.** Side items like bread or chip baskets, appetizers, and sweetened drinks add extra calories to entrees that oftentimes carry an entire day's worth of calories and fat by themselves. Consider the Lasagna Classico dish at the Olive Garden – at 1,060 calories and 28 grams of bad fat (saturated plus Trans fat), it's like eating a BK Quad Stacker from Burger King, which has four beef patties, four slices of cheese, and eight strips of bacon (*Nutrition Action Newsletter*, November 2007). And remember, that's not counting the unlimited breadsticks and soup or salad!
- **Order an appetizer as your dinner.** Oftentimes appetizers are more realistic portion sizes than entrees.
- **Don't try to be a member of the clean plate club.** Box up half your entrée for lunch the next day, OR eat slowly and stop when you're full, OR share an entrée.
- **Order dressings and sauces on the side.** This way *you* control how much is used.
- **Ask how foods are prepared.** Many dishes at Chinese restaurants may *sound* healthy, but are deep fried or cooked in heavy sauces. Take lemon chicken for example – sounds healthy but is deep fried and weighs in at 1,400 calories. This entrée is like eating three McDonald's McChicken sandwiches plus a 32-oz coke (*Nutrition Action Newsletter*, April 2007).
- **Drink plenty of water and limit alcoholic beverages.** Alcohol is high in calories with no nutritional value, and can also weaken your resolve for making healthful food choices.
- **Veggies, veggies, veggies.** Order steamed veggies as a side dish instead of buttery dishes like mashed potatoes or rice pilaf.
- **Share one dessert with the entire table.** That first bite is always the best, so tame that after-dinner sweet tooth with a *couple bites* of dessert rather than a *whole piece*!



Choose dark chocolate for a Valentine's Day treat! A Harvard review of over 100 scientific studies (2006) concluded that 50 grams/day of antioxidant containing dark chocolate may reduce the risk of heart disease by 10.5% (50 grams is approximately 4 squares of a chocolate bar).

Information adapted from:

- Italian Restaurant Food – Belly-ssimo, *Nutrition Action Newsletter*: <http://www.cspinet.org/new/200710311.html>
- Making Healthy Restaurant Choices, *Health Castle Newsletter*: <http://www.healthcastle.com/healthy-restaurant-fittante.shtml>