

Eating on the Go Nutritional Sacrifice Not Required

By Angie Scheetz

Americans are eating on the run. The average household expenditure in 2005 for food away from home was \$2,634, or \$1,054 per person. The 2007 restaurant sales in Indiana were projected at \$8.3 billion. When people eat away from home, they often consume larger portions, increased amounts of sodium and many hidden grams of saturated and trans-fats.

In a fast-paced world, who has time to prepare labor-intensive, nutritious meals that everyone can sit down and enjoy? While finding time for a relaxed family dinner may be a challenge, preparing nutritious foods that are quick and easy is not. Packing lunch, dinner and snacks will require a little planning, but in the long run it will save you time and money. The following ideas may help you follow the guidelines of MyPyramid (www.mypyramid.gov) while you are on the move.

- **Grains Group:** Bagels, low-fat crackers, whole grain bread, pita bread, low-fat muffins, whole wheat pasta, brown rice, couscous
- **Vegetables:** Pre-cut vegetables, vegetable juices
- **Fruit:** Fresh or canned fruit, 100% fruit juice, dried fruits (e.g. raisins, apricots, prunes)
- **Meat and Beans:** Lean sliced meat (e.g. turkey, chicken), tuna, peanut butter, soy milk and other soy products
- **Milk:** Fat-free yogurt, low-fat milk, low-fat cheeses
- **Snacks and Desserts (use sparingly):** Graham crackers, fig bars, granola bars, vanilla wafers, low-fat snack chips, frozen yogurt

Making your own

The following items can be made into individual brown bag stuffers on the weekend. Put the foods into small zip-lock bags and store in the cupboard. Then all you have to do is grab and go!

- Prepare snack mixes with peanuts, multi-grain Cheerios or pretzels, popcorn, Chex cereal and raisins
- Pre-bag pretzels and low-fat crackers into individual servings

Keep these items in your kitchen pantry or your desk at work:

- Canned, ready-to-eat soups
- Small cans or dry pouches of water-packed tuna (3 ounces)
- Fresh and dried fruit
- Individual serving size cans of juice or water-packed fruit
- Low-fat crackers and pretzels

Here are some quick ideas for combination meals:

- Mash pinto beans, sprinkle with low-fat cheese and wrap in a tortilla
- Mix leftover rice or pasta with frozen vegetables in a microwave safe bowl
- Grab a can of tuna, a bagel and a tomato
- A baked potato and cottage cheese

Dining out

Americans have doubled their food dollars spent outside of the home since 1955. With our busy lives, we are turning to dining out instead of spending time cooking. Sometimes it can seem challenging to find healthy options when dining out. However, by asking questions and using the following tools, you can easily put together meals at restaurants that are low in fat, high in fiber, as well as vitamins, minerals and other nutrients.

- Order first, you will tend to be less influenced by what others order
- Eat slowly and engage in more conversation
- Ask for sauces, salad dressings and other condiments on the side
- Remember that alcohol can increase your appetite and provides added calories without added nutrients
- Remove tortilla chips or bread from the table if you cannot stop eating them when they are sitting in front of you
- Eat a portion of the meal and take the remaining home
- If your food does not come the way you ordered it, send it back

Restaurants use various adjectives on menus to describe the way foods are prepared. The following can help you determine if a low-fat preparation or high-fat preparation technique was used for a particular food item.

- **Low-fat preparation:** steamed, roasted, in its own juice, poached, garden fresh, broiled, tomato sauce, baked, marinara sauce, grilled
- **High-fat preparation:** au gratin, creamed, basted/braised, crispy, fried/pan-fried, buttered, casserole, sautéed, cheese sauce, gravy, hollandaise

Questions that you can ask your server:

- How is the food prepared?
- Do you have a light or healthy menu?
- Do you have low-fat salad dressings or sauces?
- May I have the toppings on the side?
- Can you leave off the sauce or gravy?



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INFORMATION LINK

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