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Nutrition Notes

A Monthly Newsletter About Health and Nutrition

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Navigating Menu **MINEFIELDS**

Ah, summertime. Who really wants to be slaving away in a hot kitchen when the beach or swimming pool beckons? When the mercury hits 80 or above, I always avoid turning on my oven. If you're like me or if you're just plain busy, you probably eat out a lot. If you don't cook, then the likelihood that you're eating food prepared by someone else is pretty high. It can be difficult to eat healthfully when you don't know what's in your food or how it's prepared. So, whether you're eating out or ordering in, I have a few tips for navigating restaurant menus when dining out.

Even if you're a dietitian, it's still difficult to figure out what's in your food. A dietitian friend of mine once told me that she went to a new restaurant several years ago and asked the server what items on the menu were vegetarian. He recommended the black beans. Well, they were the best black beans she had ever tasted and she started frequenting the restaurant at least once a month. After several months went by, she finally asked to speak to the chef to ask him to give a heart-healthy cooking demonstration to her clients. When she gushed over the black beans, he told her that they weren't vegetarian at all; they contained prime rib au jus, schmaltz (chicken fat) and brownie frosting! Even

we "experts" can have a difficult time navigating restaurant menus.

To be perfectly honest, you're not going to find a lot of restaurants that make your health their first priority. Their job is to make your food taste good, and the easiest (but not necessarily the best) way to do this is to cook with lots of fat and salt. Restaurants also want to give you value for your dollar, so portion sizes tend to range from large to gargantuan. Research shows that when larger portions of food are presented to people, they tend to eat more than if smaller portions are presented. You can deal with this by ordering appetizers as your entrée, by sharing, or by packing up half of your entrée before you start eating. But it's not just how much you eat, it's also what you eat that counts.

If you cook, you're probably good at recognizing items that tend to be higher in fat and calories. If you're culinarily challenged however, you might not know that a "cutlet" or "Milanese" preparation of meat or chicken is breaded and then fried in oil or butter.

You might also not be aware that that cutlet would be a better choice than something cooked "parmigiana" style, since it would be breaded, fried, smothered in tomato sauce and cheese and then baked.

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Navigating Menu Minefields continued...

The following is a glossary of cooking terms that tend to indicate that a food is high in fat and calories. You don't need to avoid them at all costs, but try to eat these items less frequently than healthier choices.

Caveat Eater: Watch out for these terms!

Term	Description
Alfredo	A sauce made with butter, parmesan cheese and cream
Au Gratin	In cheese sauce
Batter-Fried	Dipped in bread or starchy batter and then fried
Béarnaise	A sauce made with egg yolks, butter and wine
Breaded	Food is dipped in bread crumbs before cooking, egg is usually used to help the breading stick, food is usually fried after it is breaded
Beurre Blanc	A sauce made with butter and wine
Buttered or Buttery	Butter is added (usually liberally)
Creamed or Creamy	Cream is added (usually liberally)
Crispy	Describes the texture of the food; usually obtained by frying
Deep-Fried	Food is submerged in a large quantity of hot oil or other fat
Double Crust	Twice the amount of crust
En Croute	Means in a crust, usually a flaky, buttery Phyllo or croissant-type crust
Escalloped or Scalloped	Cooked with cream or milk and usually cheese
French-Fried	Food is sliced into strips, and then deep fried
Hollandaise	A sauce made with egg yolks and butter
Light Cream Sauce	Still creamy, made with light cream instead of heavy cream or cream sauce is diluted with tomato sauce or other sauce
Oil Marinated	A food is left to sit in seasoned oil for a set amount of time before cooking or serving (as in the case of olives and artichoke hearts)
Pan Fried or Sautéed	Fried in a pan using oil or butter in moderate quantities
Pastry	A sweet or savory dough made with flour and lots of butter
Pesto	A sauce made with olive oil, pine nuts and cheese
Rich	Means a lot of fat is used

You may have noticed that a lot of the glossary entries involve sauces, and for good reason. Sauces can add lots of calories to perfectly healthy foods. Plain doesn't have to be the name of the game, though. Toppings such as fresh salsa, marinara or other tomato sauce (ordered easy on the oil), barbecue sauce, vinaigrette, mustard, and chutney are usually low in calories and fat but still add flavor. The following is a glossary of cooking terms that indicate that a food is probably prepared in a healthful manner.

Green Light Glossary: Terms you can order regularly

Term	Description
Baked	Cooked in an oven using dry heat
Barbecued or Grilled	Food is basted in a seasoned sauce and cooked over an open flame
Braised	Cooked in liquid over low heat for a long time
Broiled	Cooked in an oven directly under a heat source
Chutney	Condiment made with fruit, vinegar and spices, sometimes spicy
Lightly Sautéed	Cooked quickly with a small amount of fat in a pan over direct heat
Marinara	An Italian sauce made with tomatoes, onions and spices
Poached	Food is gently cooked in a liquid or a sauce other than fat
Roasted	Cooked uncovered in an oven to produce a browned exterior and moist interior
Salsa	A flavorful sauce made with fresh vegetables and herbs, cooked or raw, with varying degrees of spiciness
Steamed	Cooked quickly in a covered pot just above boiling water
Stir-Fried	Cooked quickly in a very hot pan with a minimum amount of fat
Vinaigrette	A sauce or salad dressing made with oil, vinegar and spices

Sometimes menus aren't very descriptive, so feel free to ask your server about how items are prepared. Tell your server that you're trying to eat healthfully. Ask which fresh steamed vegetables can be substituted for high-calorie accompaniments, like mashed potatoes. Also, ask for fish and chicken to be grilled or broiled plain. Then, add some fresh salsa or other light topping on the side. Don't forget that you can request that ingredients, like cheese, be withheld, sauce be served on the side and other healthful ingredients, like tomatoes, be added. Remember: don't be afraid to ask for what you want—you're the customer.

If you don't have a lot of time to cook, or don't feel like eating out, Gelson's has some healthy options for you, too. Carving Cart Turkey, Spicy Grilled Salmon and Recipes from Jessica's Kitchen salads, which use healthy ingredients to create tasty, nutritious fare, are all great choices. Our salad bar also offers excellent selections and convenience for those looking for a fast and healthy veggie-based meal.

I know that eating out is often unavoidable, but it can and should also be pleasurable. Now that you have the tools to navigate restaurant menus, you should be able to build healthy meals anywhere you eat. Sometimes, however, you just want to enjoy your food the way it comes, and you should—just remember that leaving some food on your plate is always a good strategy when you're watching your weight and your health.

Our registered dietitian has a Masters in Public Health. However, she is not a doctor and her nutritional recommendations are general in nature and not tailored to specific health problems. Talk to your physician or other qualified health care practitioners concerning particular health issues or before beginning any nutritional program.

Good Nutrition is as Easy as 1-2-3

If you're confused about what foods you should eat, you're not alone. Food companies spend about \$36 billion dollars a year to help "re-educate" you about the benefits of eating their foods. It's a shame that you are bombarded with health claims and important-sounding nutrition headlines on a daily basis that leave you more baffled than enlightened.

When you feel like you're in a state of information overload, I encourage you to revert to your common sense to help you choose foods wisely. Go back to what you inherently know is good about foods. For example, when the latest diet book advises you to avoid carrots, ask yourself: are carrots really the reason why anyone is overweight? Is there any good reason for me to avoid antioxidant- and fiber-rich carrots? Of course not! But you already knew that, didn't you?

From now on, when you're faced with a food dilemma, use these 1-2-3 steps to help yourself sort through any dietary doubts:

1. Choose minimally processed foods

Avoid anything with the ingredients high-fructose corn syrup and partially hydrogenated oil. These harmful products are immediate indications that the food that contains it is cheap and highly processed. Processed foods are usually nutrient-poor and calorie-rich, which means they are major contributors to our obesity epidemic. Around 10-20% of Americans' calories come from high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS). A little bit of regular sugar won't harm you, but there is mounting evidence that HFCS stimulates your appetite, impairs blood sugar control and may even interfere with calcium utilization in your body. Partially hydrogenated oils are used to extend the shelf life of a processed food but they are of no benefit to you. They increase belly fat stores and encourage chronic inflammation. Next time you want to purchase a packaged food, read the ingredient label first. If you find the words "corn syrup" or "partially hydrogenated," put it back. If the product passes this test, next ask yourself if there are less-processed options. When comparing whole-grain crackers, for instance, look for the ones that list whole-grain flour first and then look for the shortest ingredient list. Don't believe the health claims that you read on labels, either. They're not a short cut to choosing healthy foods. Cases in point: Trix and Cookie Crisp cereals display the American Heart Association's seal of approval and Diet Pepsi is advertised as a smart beverage choice as part of the "Smart Spot" program. The healthiest foods don't tend to have health claims on their labels, if they even have labels at all.

2. Spend your food dollars wisely

Go for quality over quantity. I would much rather see you eat a \$5 organic heirloom tomato than a flavorless mealy tomato that costs \$3. By doing so, you will not only derive more pleasure and reap more nutritional benefits, but at the same time you will be helping to protect our environment and support sustainable agriculture. Cheap food is a core American value—we believe it is our right to have access to an abundance of inexpensive food. But that cheap food is contributing to our rising obesity and chronic disease rates, the destruction of the environment and the use of non-renewable fossil fuels. These external costs are not built into the cost of these foods. The price of a food can often be positively correlated with quality and nutrient value. Which, in turn, are correlated with health. So when you shop, shop for nutrient density (foods with the most naturally occurring nutrients and the fewest calories). Although some high-quality foods may be high in calories, too, they are much more enjoyable and more satisfying than junk. Use all your senses when you enjoy your high-quality foods but try to eat less, too.

3. Every time you eat, try to include a fruit or a vegetable

The third easy step to good nutrition is making sure that each meal or snack you eat includes at least one fruit or vegetable. You need to eat more produce than you think, and the only way to make sure that you're getting enough is to eat some with almost every meal. Most people need at least 2½ cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruit a day. Trust me, if you wait until dinner to meet your produce needs, then you won't be able to eat enough of it, at least not without getting a stomachache! A recent study compared the eating habits of obese people with those of healthy-weight people. It turned out that the healthy-weight subjects ate more fiber from whole-grain carbohydrates and more fruit than the obese subjects. The obese subjects also ate one more serving of meat per day than the lean subjects. Produce is your ally in health and leanness. It is the most nutrient-dense food on the planet—and it doesn't even come with a health claim stamped on it!

Choosing the right foods can often be overwhelming and confusing, but now you have a few tools to help simplify the process. Every time you eat, you have choices to make. Just remember that if you eat cleanly, choose quality, and eat your veggies, you'll always have a nutritious day.



**Food
of the
Month**

Lettuces

Summertime is salad time! Crisp greens are light, refreshing and low in calories, which works out well when you're dealing with warm weather and fewer clothes. Conveniently, they can help you meet--or even exceed--your nutritional needs, too.

There are over 40 types of salad greens, each with varying amounts of nutritional benefit, but they all contain good quantities of vitamins A and C, folate, beta-carotene and lutein. Vitamin A, beta-carotene, and lutein enhance vision and help protect our eyes from cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. Folate is an under-consumed nutrient for many, but it is important for lowering artery-clogging homocysteine levels in the blood and for preventing neural tube defects in developing fetuses. Vitamins A and C, folate, and beta-carotene are all important for the formation of healthy tissue and skin, and therefore help protect our immune systems.

A serving of raw greens is 1 cup and has between 5 and 20 calories. Small leaves and baby lettuces are more nutritious than large leaves because when larger leaves are torn they lose vitamin C and other water-soluble nutrients. Try to eat a mixture of different varieties of greens, so you can reap all the nutritional benefits they have to offer. Mâche, my personal favorite, contains about 20 calories, 100% DV for vitamin A, 50% DV for vitamin C and 20% DV for iron in just one cup. Arugula and watercress offer even more nutrition because they are actually members of the cruciferous

vegetable family (along with cabbage, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower), which contain indoles, antioxidants that help protect against cancer. Remember the color rule, too: the deeper the color, the more nutritious the leafy green or vegetable. Those with red stems or purple edges offer even more antioxidants.

Greens are abundant all year long at Gelson's, and are sold in heads and in bags, (both organic and conventionally grown) and in bulk (organic). The difference among them is really just a matter of convenience, but I recommend that you choose organic when it's available. Whichever you buy, make sure the leaves are crisp, free of brown edges or spots, and are moist, but not wet. At home, store your lettuce in the crisper, inside plastic bags with a few holes in them for up to a couple of days or until the expiration date. All greens need to be washed just before you use them, even the bagged stuff, to remove any grit and sand. A salad spinner is your best bet for properly washed and dried leaves. Paper towels are helpful for removing extra moisture, too. Whatever your preferred method, make sure your lettuce is dry, since dressing will not stick to wet leaves. Tear rather than cut greens if they're too big, and do so just

before you eat them, to preserve their vitamin C content and to prevent browning. Dress and toss your salads just before you bring them to the table and don't be shy about experimenting with making your own olive oil and vinegar dressings.

This month, try my recipes for Organic Steak with South American Chimichurri Sauce, Spanish Watermelon Salad, and Chopped Basil and Arugula Salad.



Jessica's July Store Appearances: Food Sampling*

Jessica will be offering complimentary samples of *Recipes from Jessica's Kitchen* items in the Service Deli and answering your questions about weight loss, food and nutrition.

Century City

Monday July 17, Noon

Marina del Rey

Tuesday July 18, 5:00 pm

Northridge

Monday July 24, Noon

Visit Jessica at her new office, now located in the Century City Gelson's!

Mayfair Hollywood

Monday July 17, 5:00 pm

Valley Village/ North Hollywood

Friday July 21, Noon

Irvine

Monday July 31, Noon

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