

Top 10 Tips for Making Take-Out Healthier

With today's busy lifestyles, there is not always time to cook for your family. If you are having take-out night, consider the following tips to cut the calories and fat and make a healthier meal.

1. Chicken Night

Choose grilled chicken or chicken salad instead of a fried chicken sandwich. If you're going for fast food, skip the order of fries and order low-fat or fat-free milk (instead of soda) for the kids.

2. Mexican Foods

Get vegetarian refried or plain black beans. Opt for soft tortillas (such as a burrito) instead of fried taco shells. Replace the cheese or sour cream with salsa or guacamole.

3. Pizza

Opt for a thin crust and double the vegetables instead of doubling the cheese. Before you eat, grab a few paper napkins and blot the excess oil off your pizza. This saves you a few grams of fat right off the bat.

4. Indian Foods

Order the yogurt-based salads, tandoori chicken and fish, lentil or dal dishes. Go for the pappadams instead of thick naan bread. Watch out for food cooked in coconut milk, cream, or ghee (which is clarified butter) and try to stay away from the fried Samosas and thick creamy Korma dishes.

5. Italian Foods

Try to avoid creamy sauces and pesto on pasta that can add a lot of fat and calories. Instead, try a marinara sauce, pasta primavera, or a clam sauce. Consider sharing a pasta entrée and a salad with someone else.

6. Chinese Foods

Ask for wonton or sweet-and-sour soup. Order steamed rice, boiled, steamed, broiled or lightly stir-fried dishes. Pile on the vegetables such as broccoli and bok choy. Try to avoid from deep fried dishes, fried rice, egg dishes, and salty sauces.

7. Deli Foods

Cut the fat on sandwiches by omitting bacon, mayonnaise, cheese, and special sauces. Ask for mustard, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, and pickles instead. Try out lean meats (such as turkey breast) on your sandwiches and go for the wheat roll.

8. Japanese Foods

Opt for miso soup and steamed vegetables such as edamames and omega-3 containing fish such as salmon. Avoid anything "tempura" which indicates "fried." Sneak in some avocado in your rolls, they add richness and contain unsaturated fats.

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9. Burger Night

Opt for the regular or kid-size portion. Load on the lettuce and tomato and try to skip the cheese. Try a side salad instead of fries or onion rings. Go for a low-fat milkshake instead of a soda for an extra calcium boost.

10. On- the-Go Breakfasts

Opt for a whole-wheat high-fiber muffin, bagel or toast (and be size wise about the portion). Go for the low-fat yoghurt or fruit instead of the home fries. Replace the bacon or sausage with ham. Watch out for sugar-loaded fruit juices.

Extra tips for all take-out meals:

Decipher the Take-Out Menu

Look for key words that indicate a low-fat option. These often include: *au jus* (in its own juices), *baked*, *broiled*, *fresh*, *grilled*, *poached*, *lean*, *roasted*, and *steamed*. Avoid menu items that might be high in fat like those described as *au gratin*, *battered*, *breaded*, *casserole*, *creamed*, *fried*, *crispy*, *rich*, or *sautéed*.

On the side

Ask that all sauces and salad dressings be served on the side so that you can control how much is added. Add a little bit at a time as you eat your meal. Try to avoid the creamy sauces such as ranch or mayonnaise and opt for lower-fat options such barbeque sauce, mustard or low-fat salad dressing.

Doggybag

Before you start your meal, use a plastic container in the house to make yourself a pre-meal doggybag. Take-out portions are often very large and this reduces the temptation to clean your plate on the first sitting.